

Southeast Sao Paulo Conference

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Southeast São Paulo Conference (APSe) is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church located in the territory of the Central Brazil Union Conference (UCB). Its headquarters is located at Senador Flaquer, nº 636, District Vila Euclides, in the city of São Bernardo do Campo, zip code 09725-442, state of São Paulo, Brazil!

The APSe territory comprises the metropolitan region of the city of São Paulo, the southeast subregion, the metropolitan region of the ABCD, MRR,² and the southeast coastline of the state. This region has an estimated population of 4,660,924 inhabitants. According to data from December 2018, the total number of members in the APSe territory is 19,792, or about one Adventist per 235 inhabitants. This conference assists a total of 40 districts, comprising 139 churches in its territory.³

In the territory covered by Southeast São Paulo Conference, there are 100 Pathfinder Clubs⁴ with 2,799 youth and 76 Adventurer Clubs⁵ with 1,550 children.⁶ APSe has a total of 926 servers, of which 850 are employees and 76 are workers; 41 are ordained pastors, six are licensed pastors, 11 are licensed missionaries, and 18 are credentialed missionaries.⁷

In the APSe territory, there are two care centers for needy children: The Day Care Center of Cubatao, in the city of Cubatao, and the Day Care Center of Itanhaem, in the city of Itanhaem.⁸ There are also eight elementary/middle and/or high schools located in its territory in the state of São Paulo: Diadema Adventist Academy, in the city of Diadema, with 1,595 students; Colégio Adventista de Jd. Utinga [Jd. Utinga Adventist Academy], in the city of Santo André, with 637 students; Colégio Adventista de Mauá [Maua Adventist Academy], in the city of Maua, with 896 students; Colégio Adventista de Praia Grande [Praia Grande Adventist Academy], in the city of Santo André, with 1,158 students; Colégio Adventista de São Bernardo do Campo [São Bernardo do Campo Adventist Academy], in the city of São Bernardo do Campo, with 1,159 students, and São Caetano do Sul Adventist Academy, in the city of São Caetano do Sul, with 674 students. This adds up to a total of 8,570 students in their administrative field.⁹

However, the Adventist work at APSe did not always result in significant numbers. In fact, the evangelistic effort in this territory faced challenges that are evident from the origins of the work in this populated region of Brazil.

Origin of SDA Work in the Conference Territory

On February 15, 1907, to improve communication by land and sea, an assembly of Rio Grande do Sul Conference relocated a printing house (up to then installed in Taquari, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul) for easier access,¹⁰ securing a suitable place for establishing what later became known as Brazil Publishing House (CPB). The place was a farm located near São Bernado Station, in the state of São Paulo — to later become the municipality of Santo André, in the state countryside.¹¹

During the second semester of 1907, with the printing house established in the new place, Pastor Emilio Hoelzle (responsible for São Paulo Mission at the time and editor of the review *Arautos da Verdade* [Heralds of the Truth]),¹² organized the church of São Bernardo, which started with only 14 members.¹³ Later, on July 4, 1920, the Braun family initiated a public evangelism campaign in the city of Santos – another city in APSe territory. The meetings took place in a tent built on the corner of Avenue Conselheiro Nebias and Street João Guerra.¹⁴ After a few weeks, on August 21, 1920, there were 30 Sabbath-keepers and many others interested in knowing more about the doctrinal preachings that were held in the tent. As a result, on October 23, 1920, the first baptism was conducted in the city of Santos.¹⁵

However, after such a great missionary effort, this public evangelism campaign was interrupted until 1937 when Pastor Ricardo Wilfart and workers T. Kanada, Ilka Reis, Iracema Zorub, and João Linhares¹⁶ restarted the evangelistic campaign meetings. Until then, there was no physical space for the church member meetings in Santos, which was built during the 1940s.¹⁷ Out of this latter lecture series held during the evangelistic campaign 16 people were baptized on October 3, 1937, at 3:00 p.m. in Praia das Vacas (currently known as Paranapuã Beach) – located in the bay of São Vicente, also in the state of São Paulo.¹⁸

At the time, the whole territory was administered by Associação Paulista [São Paulo Conference], which in 1937 had eight churches and about 2,460 members.¹⁹ Four decades later, in 1977, due to the advancement of the gospel proclamation, this conference reached a total of 54,221 members, and, therefore, had to divide its field in two. This reorganization resulted in the formation of East São Paulo Conference, based in Brooklin, in the city of São Paulo, whose president was Osmundo G. dos Santos; and West São Paulo Conference, based in Campinas, presided by Ítalo Manzolli.²⁰ Growth continued, and by 1982, East São Paulo Conference had nearly 50,000 members, and the field needed to be divided again. As a result of this new division, in Brooklin district — the southeast zone of São Paulo city — South São Paulo Conference was organized, with Rodolpho Gorski as president, and, in Vila Matilde district — the east zone of São Paulo city — the new East São Paulo Conference was established, and Arno H. Kohler was the president.²¹

In 1991, once again due to exponential growth South São Paulo Conference was divided, changing its name to Associação Paulistana [São Paulo Conference], with headquarters in Capão Redondo district, southwest zone of São Paulo City, presided by Osmar D. dos Reis.²² About two decades later, in 2014, growth demanded a new reorganization, and so Associação Paulistana [São Paulo Conference] reduced its scope to establish the Southeast São Paulo Conference, based in the city of São Bernardo do Campo, presided by Oliveiros Ferreira.²³

The challenge of preaching the gospel in the state of São Paulo, as well as the bold targets of growth of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church for this state are among the reasons considered for establishing Southeast São Paulo Conference (APSe). The last field organized within the union was the São Paulo Paraíba Valley Mission in 2002 when there were about 450 churches, 167 missionary districts, and 108,956 members.²⁴ Since then, the constant growth of the work done in São Paulo territory demanded the creation of a new church administrative unit in the southeast of the state, to better assist the Adventist members in that region.

Organizational History of the Conference

At the end of 2014, a Central Brazil Union Conference report presented the existence, at the time, of 364 missionary districts, with 1,089 churches, 747 groups, and 235,478 members. This growth justified the urgent need for the formation of a new administrative unit. Due to the large number of missionary districts that Associação Paulistana [São Paulo Conference] had in 2014 – a total of 164 churches, 98 groups, 16 schools, and six centers – it was clear that its territory would be the most suitable place for the new field.²⁵

The committee that proposed the foundation of the new administrative church unit in the southeast region of the state of São Paulo gathered on May 5, 2014, at 10:00 a.m., at the headquarters of Associação Paulistana [São Paulo Conference]. This committee sent the report to the South American Division (DSA) requesting the formation of a new field, the Southeast São Paulo Conference, with the acronym APSe (standing for Associação Paulista Sudeste). That same year, between June 10 and 11, a Central Brazil Union Conference Executive Committee was held, when the register of the New Conference Creation Committee Minutes was approved, through vote no. 2014-133, as well as the reorganization of Associação Paulistana [São Paulo Conference] and South São Paulo Conference territories - a necessary step for the work in the new field.²⁶

Thus, the creation of the new administrative unit was made through a redistribution of the territories covered by South São Paulo Conference (which gave part of its field to Associação Paulistana [São Paulo Conference] and to APSe), Associação Paulistana [São Paulo Conference] (which received fields from South São Paulo Conference and gave others to APSe), and São Paulo Valley Conference (giving fields to APSe). The new conference territory would cover all the region of ABCD and the south coast of the state of São Paulo, from the municipality of Peruíbe to the city of Bertioga.²⁷

Considering that the territory of the new conference would enable better assistance to the members of the southeast coast and reach the farthest places, the suggested city to house the new headquarters was São Bernardo do Campo, in the ABCD region, then with 765,463 inhabitants. This city is located within the regions of the ABCD, MRR, and the southeast coast, allowing easy access through Anchieta, Immigrants, and Rodoanel highways. Thus, during the same session of the UCB Executive Committee on June 10 and 11, 2014, the purchase of a plot to build the new conference headquarters was approved, through vote no. 2014-133. Hence, the headquarters is located at Avenida Senador Flaquer, nº 636, Vila Euclides district, city of São Bernardo do

Campo, since its beginnings in 2015.²⁸

With its creation, Southeast São Paulo Conference took over 30 pastoral districts, comprising 79 churches and 50 groups, gathering 16,517 members. There were in its field 76 Pathfinder Clubs, with 1,729 participants and 57 Adventurer Clubs, with 1,019 children registered, as well as two care centers for needy children. In its territory, there were approximately 4,483,691 people - an average of one Adventist per 273 inhabitants. To start the conference work, seven departments were formed. The first administrative leaders named to serve at APSe were Pastors Oliveiros Pinto Ferreira, as president; Jorge Mário de Oliveira, as secretary, and Marildo Vivan, as treasurer.²⁹

Since 2015, the year of its foundation, Southeast São Paulo Conference has been a field where men and women led by God work to bring salvation to people. In this context, the stated objective or mission of APSe is to preach the eternal gospel to the nearly 4.5 million inhabitants living in the 18 cities covered by this administrative unit.³⁰ In order to accomplish this mission, APSe members have been involved in several projects promoted by the South American Division and Central Brazil Union Conference. In the same year of its foundation, several social and evangelistic initiatives were carried out in Santo André, São Bernardo do Campo, and Praia Grande, through the Caleb Mission³¹ project and the Christian Summer School for Children.³² At least seven people were baptized as a result of this initiative.³³

Similarly, in subsequent years, Adventists from several cities in the conference territory participated in other projects such as Breaking Silence,³⁴ Hope Impact,³⁵ and Holy Week Evangelism.³⁶ However, in November 2015 some changes were made concerning the leaders of some departments. These changes included: the nomination of Pastor Robson Menezes to serve as a ministerial pastor (in addition to the departments of Evangelism and Global Mission); Pastor Anderson Santos for the departments of Sabbath School, Personal Ministry, and Adventist Solidarity Action; and Pastor William Roger as director of both Stewardship and Health Department.³⁷

Regarding the social and evangelistic initiatives held in the territory covered by Southeast São Paulo Conference, on July 30, 2016 of the following year, members of the Jardim Bom SDA Church went into the streets and inaugurated the so-called "His Day." This project created by church members offered live music presentations in the community, lectures, and giveaways, Bible courses, and the opportunity of joining Christian WhatsApp groups of Christian content.³⁸

However, although some cities in the conference region advanced regarding Adventist outreach, others such as Rio Grande da Serra, in the countryside of the state of São Paulo, remained static. In 2007, this city had just one Adventist per 1,000 people. Therefore, in that same year, APSe decided to concentrate the efforts of its workers and office employees there during Hope Impact, handing out 15,000 books to city residents.³⁹ As a positive result of this initiative, the current number of Adventists in Rio Grande da Serra has increased to 88, a considerable improvement in the percentage of Adventists per inhabitants when compared to the previous

situation.⁴⁰

Later, between April 5 and 8, 2019, the cities of Mauá, Santo André, Peruíbe, Praia Grande, São Bernardo do Campo, Diadema, and Guarujá received Pastor Luís Gonçalves as the official speaker of Caravan of Hope 2019.⁴¹ This project was watched by about 30,000 people who followed the program in person or on Facebook. The effort culminated in the baptism of 30 people and more than 600 decisions for baptism.⁴²

Intending to serve Adventists more effectively in its territory, as well as to intensify the work in some specific regions such as São Paulo ABCD region and Baixada Santista, APSe has also given special attention to cities with little Adventist presence.⁴³ The initiative has functioned well, which can be attested through the analysis of new member numbers linked to this conference. In its foundation year, 2,308 new members were received; which increased to 2,879 the following year; in 2017 there were 2,678 new members; in 2018, at least 1,452 people were baptized; and by September 2019, about 718 new members had been added to the number of Adventists in APSe.⁴⁴

However, there are still barriers that hinder the advancement of the gospel in this region: the secular lifestyle adopted by inhabitants;⁴⁵ the financial limitation of members, since the collection during the first quadrennium of the conference existence was shorter than expected by the committee responsible for its creation; and the strong financial crisis that severely affected the area covered by the conference, closing several large companies in the region, forcing them to fire thousands of employees, or even to close their doors.⁴⁶

Although recent, the journey of Southeast São Paulo Conference can teach several useful lessons and provide guidelines for the future of the institution. One is that it is necessary to be alert and to ensure that financial contributions are not smaller than the forecasts made at the time of the organization of a new field, and if this occurs, it is possible and necessary to develop a capacity to adjust and operate in a field with financial entries below what was originally foreseen.⁴⁷

Seeking to deal with the challenges and to reach the unreached, Southeast São Paulo Conference leadership has invested in evangelistic campaigns carried out by pastors or theology students, and by promoting total member involvement, using conventional evangelistic methods and diversified approaches — such as meetings held in houses.⁴⁸

Many plans have been made for the future of this institution: construction of the conference permanent headquarters for better management of church activities in the field and to better assist the brotherhood and population of the cities involved, as well as superior organizations; construction of a new school in the city of Guarujá, with the capacity to serve the region of Santos and the municipality of Bertioga; expansion of 70% of two existing schools; construction of 10 churches and the renovation of another 30; church planting (10 in the next quadrennium, and 10 in the following one); the baptism of 12,000 people in the next seven years; and the financial restructuring of the conference by increasing tithing and offerings inflows, to meet the above

mentioned projects.⁴⁹

Chronology of Administrative Officers⁵⁰

Presidents: Oliveiros Pinto Ferreira (2015-).

Secretaries: Jorge Mário de Oliveira (2015-2018); Cláudio Romero Leal (2019-).

Treasurers: Marildo Vivan (2015-2018); Gilvan Santos Correa (2019-).⁵¹

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Southeast São Paulo Conference," accessed on August 5, 2019, [http://bit.ly/2yCBDjG.?](http://bit.ly/2yCBDjG.)
2. ABCD, MRR is an industrial region of the state of São Paulo. Each acronym stands, respectively, for Santo André (A), São Bernardo do Campo (B) São Caetano do Sul (C), Diadema (D); and Mauá (M), Ribeirão Pires (R), and Rio Grande da Serra (R). Accessed on August 20, 2019, <http://consorcioabc.sp.gov.br/o-grande-abc>.
3. Eunice de Faria, e-mail message to Carlos Flávio Teixeira, May 2, 2019.

4. A group of boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 15, of different social classes, colors, and religions that meet, usually at least once a week, to develop their talents, perceptions, and skills under guidance. Besides that, they also do outdoor walks, climbing, explorations in woods and caves, and other activities. Accessed on June 27, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2FDRqTh>.
5. A group of boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 9, from different social classes, colors, and religions who gather normally at least twice a month to develop their gifts and talents together with their family. They perform activities according to their age and it is designed to help them learn along with their parents. Adventistas Brasil [YouTube Channel named Adventists Brazil], "O que são os Aventureiros? – Udolcy Zukowski Diretor para América do Sul" ["What are the Adventurers? – Udolcy Zukowski Director for the South America"] (Explicative YouTube video, Adventistas Brasil [Adventists Brazil], May 29, 2015), accessed on June 27, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2KH7PdN>.
6. *Youth Ministries: Pathfinders and Adventurers of APSe*, "Statistics – Southeast São Paulo Conference," accessed on August 5, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2OBbTij>.
7. Eunice de Faria, e-mail message to Carlos Flávio Teixeira, May 2, 2019.
8. "Southeast São Paulo Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, ID.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2016), 290.
9. Eunice de Faria, e-mail message to Carlos Flávio Teixeira, May 2, 2019.
10. Rubens S. Lessa, *Casa Publicadora Brasileira 100 anos* [Brazil Publishing House 100 years] (Tatuí, SP: Brazil Publishing House, 2000), 57-63.
11. Ibid.
12. The Review Heralds of the Truth was the first Seventh-day Adventist periodical to be published in Portuguese. Glória Barreto, "Pioneiro das publicações" [Publications pioneer], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review] (Online), May 17, 2016, accessed on August 5, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2YNEIs0>.
13. "São Paulo Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herold Publishing Association, 1908), 125; "Brazil Publishing House," *Seventh-Day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herold Publishing Association, 1908), 156; Emilio Hoelzle, "Missão Paulista" [São Paulo Mission], *Revista Mensal* 3 [Monthly Review 3], February 1908, 7.
14. Celimar B. Leutz, "Mensagem Adventista em Santos" [Adventist Message in Santos] (Monography, Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary), 2-6.
15. Ibid.
16. "São Paulo Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herold Publishing Association, 1936), 191.

17. Celimar B. Leutz, "Mensagem Adventista em Santos" [Adventist Message in Santos] (Monography, Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary), 2-6.
18. Ibid.
19. "São Paulo Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1937), 182.
20. *Associação Paulistana* [São Paulo Conference], "História da Associação Paulistana" [History of São Paulo Conference], accessed on May 23, 2019, <https://bit.ly/30SffQq>.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Eunice de Faria, e-mail message to Carlos Flávio Teixeira, May 2, 2019.
25. Ibid.
26. Executive Committee Minutes of Central Brazil Union Conference, June 2014, vote no. 2014-133.
27. "Southeast São Paulo Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, ID.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2016), 290.
28. Executive Committee Minutes of the Central Brazil Union Conference, June 2014, vote no. 2014-134.
29. "Southeast São Paulo Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, ID.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2016), 290-291.
30. Eunice de Faria, e-mail message to Carlos Flávio Teixeira, July 30, 2019.
31. Project Caleb Mission is developed by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in South America and challenges young Adventists to dedicate their vacation for evangelism and for witnessing in areas in which there is no Adventist presence so that new people can be gained to the kingdom of God. This project is a volunteer program. Accessed on May 2, 2019, <http://bit.ly/2HRpvRi>.
32. Christian Summer School for Children is a project conducted by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in South America, which aims to bring the gospel to children in a creative and instructive way, through games, songs, Bible lessons, stories, arts and crafts, nature study, temperance, and health. "Aulas extras" [Extra-class], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], September 2011, 27.
33. Isadora Schmitt, "Missão Calebe acontece no ABC e litoral paulista" [Caleb Mission takes place in São Paulo ABC region and the Coastline], *Notícias Adventistas* [Adventist News], August 10, 2015, accessed on May 23, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2XcFaQf>.

34. Quebrando o Silêncio [Breaking the Silence] is an annual project, developed since 2002, by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in eight countries of South America (Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay) which aims to educate and prevent against domestic abuse and violence. Accessed on May 28, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2HFxj8K>; Isadora Schmitt, "Quebrando o Silêncio mobiliza cidades e alerta contra a violência doméstica" [Breaking the Silence mobilizes cities and alerts against domestic violence], Notícias Adventistas [Adventist News], September 8, 2015, accessed on May 23, 2019, <https://bit.ly/30Mh5SR>.
35. Impacto Esperança [Hope Impact] is a project developed by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in South America which promotes reading and annual book distribution. Accessed on May 28, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2WZNdzY>; Lucas Rocha, "Líderes da Igreja em São Paulo traçam planos para distribuição de livros missionários" [Church leaders in São Paulo make plans for the distribution of missionary books], Notícias Adventistas [Adventist News], April 12, 2016, accessed on May 27, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2EF51Jp>.
36. Holy Week Evangelism is a project of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church since 1970 to recall the ministry, sacrifice, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for mankind. Accessed on May 28, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2Jk5dF>; Isadora Schmitt, "Lares, igrejas e colégios participam da Semana Santa na região sudeste de São Paulo" [Homes, churches, and schools participate in Holy Week Evangelism in São Paulo Southeast region], Notícias Adventistas [Adventist News], April 23, 2019, accessed on May 27, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2XfchDa>.
37. Isadora Schmitt, "Departamentos da Associação Paulista Sudeste passam por mudanças" [Southeast São Paulo Conference Departments face changes], Notícias Adventistas [Adventist News], November 23, 2015, accessed on May 27, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2I3YSri>.
38. Fernando Rosalez, "Igreja em Santo André realiza o 'Dia Dele' em praça pública" [Church in Santo André carries out "His Day" in public square], Notícias Adventistas [Adventist News], August 12, 2016, accessed on May 27, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2JKKpUc>.
39. Isadora Schmitt, "Funcionários e obreiros entregam livros em Rio Grande da Serra" [Workers and employees hand out books in Rio Grande da Serra], Notícias Adventistas [Adventist News], May 26, 2017, accessed on May 27, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2JJOWIA>.
40. Eunice de Faria, e-mail message to Carlos Flávio Teixeira, July 30, 2019.
41. The Caravan of Hope is a project developed by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church within the cities of South America, which aims to present biblical themes applied to present times, promoting reflections and encouraging decisions by participants. Accessed on May 28, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2Jliogj>.
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43. Isadora Schmitt, "Desafio à beira-mar" [Challenge at the seaside], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], January 2019, 41.
44. Eunice de Faria, e-mail message to Carlos Flávio Teixeira, July 30, 2019; Eunice de Faria, e-mail message to Carlos Flávio Teixeira, September 26, 2019.

45. Isadora Schmitt, "Desafio à beira-mar" [Challenge at the seaside], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], January 2019, 41.
46. Eunice de Faria, e-mail message to Carlos Flávio Teixeira, July 30, 2019.
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49. Eunice de Faria, e-mail message to Carlos Flávio Teixeira, July 30, 2019.
50. "Southeast São Paulo Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, ID.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2016), 290; "Southeast São Paulo Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Nampa, ID.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018), 232.
51. For more information about Southeast São Paulo Conference, access the website address: <http://apse.adventistas.org/>, or follow on social media: – Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram: @paulistasudeste and the YouTube Channel: Associação Paulista Sudeste.
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