

North Ecuador Mission

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North Ecuador Mission (Missão Ecuatoriana del Norte or MEN) is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church established in the Ecuador Union Mission (Union Ecuatoriana or UE) territory.

North Ecuador Mission's headquarters is located at the corner of 392 Atahualpa OE Ave. and Antonio de Ulloa, and its Zip code is 170508 in the Metropolitan district of Quito in the city of Quito in the Pichincha province of Ecuador.¹

This administrative unit is responsible for the progress of the Gospel preaching in the following northern provinces of Ecuador: Carchi, Chimborazo, Cotopaxi, Esmeraldas, Imbabura, Napo, Pastaza, Pichincha, Orellana, Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, Sucumbíos, and Tungurahua. Altogether, the MEN territory hosts a population of about 7,913,993 inhabitants, of which 29,040 are Adventists. These members are spread in 336 congregations (158 churches and 178 organized groups) and 36 missionary districts. So, there is an average of one Adventist per 273 inhabitants.²

Among its managed institutions, MEN – committed to the mission of educating for this life and the eternal one – serves kids and teenagers of the region through eight educational units of the Adventist Education Network. These units include: Miguel de Unamuno Adventist Education Private Unit, located at 10-04 Eloy Alfaro and Salinas, Center, city and province of Esmeraldas; Emanuel Adventist Education Private Unit, at Quito km 2 Ave., Napo, Lago Agrio, Sucumbíos; Ambato Adventist Education Private Unit, located at Brigada Eloy Alfaro and Cóndor Mirador, Macasto, Ambato, Tungurahua; and Ecuador Adventist Education Private Unit, located at Via Quevedo km 14 1/2, Santo Domingo, Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas.

MEN also manages: Santo Domingo Adventist Education Private Unit, located at km 4½ Chone Ave., with an entry to UTE that faces Balneario La Quinta, Buenos Aires, Santo Domingo, Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas; South Adventist Education Private Unit, at Anconcito Lote 61 and Tabiazo, Santa Bárbara Baja, Quito, Pichincha; Gedeón Adventist Education Private Unit, located at Charles Darwin St., Lot 244 and Vicente Solano, La Armenia of Pichincha province; and the Quito Adventist Education Private Unit, located at Santa Lucía E7-143 and December 6 Ave., Santa Lucía, Quito, Pichincha.

In the area of evangelism through communications, there are two radio stations in this mission field: Radio Nuevo Tiempo Quito (92.1 FM) and Radio Nuevo Tiempo Ecuador Tulcán (98.1 FM). These two stations impart

hope to their listeners in the region.³

To serve the northern region of the country, MEN has 148 employees and 42 active pastors, 27 of which are ordained and 15 who are licensed. Among other the workers, two are working with missionary credentials and one has a missionary license.⁴

The Origin of the Adventist Work in the Mission Territory

The Adventist message arrived in the region that MEN now manages back in 1902 when Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru were covered by the West Coast Mission.⁵ In that year, Pastor Thomas H. Davis and his wife arrived in Guayaquil, Ecuador. They started the evangelizing work through canvassing – selling Christian literature – in a country that was highly influenced by Catholicism.⁶ At the time, Ecuador found itself in an environment of change at the sociocultural, political, and religious level in which two powers were fighting to control of the country--the dominant church and the liberal or secular revolution.⁷

That conflict was appeased in 1905 with the presidency of Lizardo García who, through Congress, promulgated a decree that allowed the exercise of all religious worship that was not contrary to institutions or morals. This allowed Pastor Thomas to preach to the Ecuadorian people freely. Then, in that same year, Pastor C.W. Casebeer came from the U.S. to join Davis in the mission. Casebeer settled in the city of Ambato, Tungurahua.⁸

Through 1910, several missionaries passed through the region. However, precisely in that year, the number of workers increased; one of them was nurse John Osburn who combined the medical work with the evangelical one. In 1921, to continue missionary work, Pastor Orley Ford and his wife, who had worked with the indigenous people of Lake Titicaca in Peru, settled in the city of Quito. After five years of labor, in 1926, Ford baptized the first two students who had studied the Bible. In 1929, Pastor Ford was replaced by Pastor D. J. Replogle, who held the presidency of the Ecuadorian Mission (Missão Ecuatoriana or ME, currently the South Ecuadorian Mission) for two periods between 1929 to 1936.⁹

In the following decade, one of the first Adventist schools in the country was inaugurated in the city of Quito, and it received the name of “Ciudadela América” [“American Citadel”] – presently Quito Adventist Academy, and it started offering classes in 1940. Years later, this school changed its name and address twice, but what did not change was its mission – to prepare citizens to serve the society and especially the kingdom of God!¹⁰

Years later, the interest in strengthening the Adventist presence in the city of Quito continued to grow. In this context, Dr. Waldo W. Stiles, an American missionary doctor who was passionate about the city of Quito and who had the intention of “promoting physical, mental and spiritual health, following the example of the Lord Jesus,” begins with other professionals in health a small dispensary called “The Good Samaritan.”¹¹ This dispensary, which in its beginnings was conceived, carried out, and directed by Stiles, was acknowledged as official by the General Conference from September 1, 1960, having been given the name of “American Clinic”

(presently Quito Adventist Clinic).¹²

In this same period, several other Adventist educational institutions were opened in this region administered by MEN. An example of this occurred near the city of Santo Domingo when, in 1968 the opening of the Adventist College of Ecuador (presently Colegio Adventista del Ecuador or CADE) became possible.¹³ This school had the economic support of the South American Division, Inca Union Mission (now the South Peru Union Mission), and Ecuador Mission.¹⁴ At the moment of its inauguration, Pastor Bert Elkins, the ME president, symbolically presented the project to the president of Ecuador, Dr. Otto Arosemena Gómez, who took part in the ceremony.

¹⁵ So, for that occasion, the director designated to lead the school was Pastor Nathan M. Merkel (1968-1970).¹⁶

In the 1970s, evangelistic efforts through preaching, Adventist education, health, and other avenues had made it possible for the Adventist message to reach different regions, including the Ecuadorian jungle. Thus, on August 22, 1972, the first Adventist member of the Ecuadorian jungle was baptized in the Bomboiza River. Therefore, with the same purpose, the management of the Mission continues to pay attention to large cities. In 1987, the Church carried out a metropolitan campaign in the city of Quito and, as a result, 1,500 people who decided to join the Adventist church were baptized, and due to that, the administration managed to establish three new churches.¹⁷

Due to the increase in the number of congregations in the Ecuador Mission territory,¹⁸ which by 1990 had reached a total of 19,661 members, during an Extraordinary Conference chaired by João Wolff, the South American Division president, the organization of MEN was voted for 1993.¹⁹ In addition, during the 1990 Plenary Session, it was determined that ME would be responsible for providing a future headquarters building for MEN and for the South American Division to provide all the equipment.²⁰ Thus, the division of the Ecuador Mission into two local missions was authorized,²¹ and the Church would soon have a new administrative unit in Ecuador.²²

Mission Organizational History

The rise of the North Ecuador Mission, located since its organization at Calle Atahualpa Oe 392 y Ulloa, Quito, took place after the Extraordinary Conference in Quito on January 6 to 7, 1993.²³ Its first president was Manuel Egas Montalvo, and Patricio González served as secretary-treasurer. These two were part of the first Executive Board that directed Gospel preaching to the Carchi, Imbabura, Pichincha, Cotopaxi, Tungurahua, Chimborazo, Esmeraldas, Napo, Pastaza, and Sucumbíos provinces.²⁴

In addition, the new missionary field consisted of 18 organized churches in 14 districts, and it had 11 ordained ministers, 13 credentialed missionaries, three credentialed evangelists, and a membership of 9,288²⁵ within a population of 4.057.000. In other words, they had a big challenge ahead of them because until then, there was 1 Adventist per 437 inhabitants.

Then after its organization, from July 28 to 31 of that same year, the Council of Church Ministries was held in the MEN. There were a total of 185 participants who were trained to act in the departments of Home and Family, Youth, Dorcas, Stewardship, Music, Pathfinders, Sabbath School, Missionary Activity and Children's Evangelism, being trained by pastors Osmundo G dos Santos and José María Barbosa Silva from the Department of "Church Ministries" of the SAD.²⁶ Subsequently, MEN proposed to carry out ten actions that consisted of expanding the work in 10 municipalities where there was no Adventist presence.²⁷

In 1995, MEN began its intensive evangelism work in Cotopaxi, Chimborazo, Esmeraldas, Pichincha, La Unión, and Pelileo, and with the support of eight leaders, a total of 273 baptisms were accomplished.²⁸ Then, the First Festival of Sacred Music of the Adventist Institutions of MEN was held in Ambato in the City Hall.²⁹ Also, in Quito Expo Center, the "I International Health Fair" and the "Expo Mujer 95" were carried out, assisting an average of 2,000 people a day, to whom were presented the plans and projects of ADRA, the Adventist Clinic, the Vida Sana Center, and the Home and Health Educational Service.³⁰ On another occasion in 1995, with the intention of giving support to the churches regarding better ways of sharing the Word, a pedagogical training was held for the teachers of the children's Sabbath School.³¹ Around the same time, Buenos Aires Publishing House (Asociación Casa Editora Sudamericana or ACES) contributed to the training of a Library at MEN headquarters.³²

In 1996 during the triennial Congress, the new Clinic administrators were appointed,³³ and a proposal was agreed upon to advance in seven points regarding Adventist education, including the construction of classrooms, courts and offices in the facilities of Colegio de Quito and in the schools of Gedeón, Semillitas de Oro, Ciudad de Quito and El Limonal. Likewise, the purchase of a bakery oven for Rayitos de Luz school was proposed, and a class synthesizer audiovisual project was developed in Ambato.³⁴ In the same year, MEN replaced Church Ministries Departments for Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Departments and the Women's Ministries were also organized.³⁵ Finally, at the close of 1996, MEN had 27 organized churches and a membership of almost 11,000 Adventists.³⁶

The following year, in 1997, the Adventist Clinic of Quito inaugurated a medical dispensary to serve the sector of the People's Committee.³⁷ Thus, the Clinic personnel used these opportunities of assisting the people to bear witness. Around the same time, in the Personal Ministry area, an evangelistic campaign was carried out in the house and workshop of Brother Aguirre. These meetings were presented by Dr. Pablo Carrasco and, as a result of these studies, 17 people requested baptism.³⁸ Later, MEN organized the Youth Ministry, Ministerial Secretariat, and the Evangelism Department so that, through its new departments, MEN could better assist the Church.

In 1998, once MEN departments were creating new projects and ways of evangelizing, the evangelism team carried out conferences in Pedro Vicente Maldonado and Cascales.³⁹ And in the following year, in another conference in Pelileo, 22 people were baptized despite the opposition faced, because at the time the Adventist of the region were called Jews.⁴⁰ Later, on November 9, Radio Contacto Nuevo Tiempo was inaugurated⁴¹ in

Quito,⁴² and the series of Daniel study programs presented by Pastor Alejandro Bullón was distributed to various television channels.⁴³

After the Conference, MEN's new Mission and Quito Adventist Clinic administrators were appointed.⁴⁴ Later, in 2000, the Church in Ecuador bought Contact station Nuevo Tiempo-FM 92.1 thanks to the contribution of Dr. Milton Afonso.⁴⁵ An evangelistic campaign was also developed in Puerto Quito where 51 people were baptized. At the end of that year, La Unión territories Santo Domingo and the north-western regions of the country were added to MEN, adding up to a total of 41 organized churches and a membership of 13,873 people.⁴⁶

In 2001, the Executive Committee of the General Conference voted for MEN to become a part of the newly formed Ecuador Union Mission (UE) and that became effective on July 1, 2001⁴⁷ since it previously had been an associate field of the SAD.⁴⁸ In 2002, MEN organized the "X Pathfinder Fair" by gathering more than 800 young people from 10 to 15 years old to serve the community.⁴⁹ It also took part in the 1st National Communication and Publications meeting carried out by the UE.⁵⁰ Later, the "I MEN Quadrennial Conference" was carried out, and the new field administrators were appointed.⁵¹ In that same year, the "Health Ministry" was organized – which was joined to the Publications and Administration Department. Thus, these changes made the work in MEN more effective that year in such a way that, in 2003, there were a total of 47 organized churches and a membership of 19,402 Adventists.⁵²

In October 2005, the Mission Executive Board organized the departments of "Education," "Women," and the "Children's Ministry." The latter, with the goal of engaging the Church's children and teenagers, promoted a week of prayer known as "La Voz del Menor" ["The Voice of the Minors"]. During those days, young people had the opportunity to lead all evangelistic programs, and that consisted of preaching, singing, and welcoming their friends. And finally, at the end of that week, 417 baptisms were carried out throughout the entire field. The following year (2006), the "IV Ordinary General Conference of MEN" was held, appointing new administrators.⁵³ For that year, MEN had 29 pastors (20 ordained and nine licensed) to manage about 259 congregations and care for approximately 32,000 church members.⁵⁴

With the goal of strengthening its churches in 2009, MEN carried out many courses for lay leaders in the administrative and legal fields as well as for young people in leadership.⁵⁵ Furthermore, evangelism plans were strengthening,⁵⁶ and then the Canvassers Council was held where 120 Canvassers distributed 1,000 copies in just 20 minutes.⁵⁷

MEN administration, in addition to assisting the churches and other institutions, was responsible for caring for its workers and pastors. For that reason, before the end of 2009, a ministerial assembly was carried out in Atacames in the Esmeraldas province, and training on devotional life and financial administration was provided for the whole ministerial family.⁵⁸ Likewise, given that it was necessary to address the religious freedom subject in that region, they started educating the Church on those topics, and from 2006 to 2009, the Public Affairs and Religious Freedom Department was organized.

In 2010, 518 young Adventist volunteers from MEN joined the call of the first “Caleb Mission” (“Missão Caleb” or MC) developed by the Ecuadorian Union. In this project, young people were involved with evangelization in the different provinces of MEN and contributed to 696 baptisms taking place during that holiday period. From August 30 to September 5, the leaders of MC and the district pastor proposed the challenge of campaigning in the Taisha Canton of the Ecuadorian jungle. They set out on the journey to Taisha and preached the Good News of Salvation at the Taisha Coliseum. As a result of their work, 103 people decided to be part of the SDA Church through baptism. Due to that, three new congregations were raised (Taisha, San José, and Nuevo Paraíso), and an 800 m² land was acquired to function as the Evangelistic Center in the community, thus fulfilling the mission of the Church to instruct people to the return of Jesus.⁵⁹

In 2011, the positions of secretary and treasurer were definitively separated, and a new territorial delimitation was set in which the province of Orellana was officially added.⁶⁰ In 2012, MEN handed out Adventist literature through the project “Impacto Esperanza” [“Hope Impact”] – a program that began in 2008 under the initiative of the South American Division. The development of this project made an impression on the media in the city of Quito, marking a historic event for the Adventist Church. This was possible because MEN leaders followed a plan: First, they found a strong communicational argument to reach all the media; Second, before the big day, they delivered the book to 47 opinion-forming leaders in Quito starting with the president of the Republic; Third, they placed a book in every household; and finally, they mobilized the Church as an army on the day of the distribution.⁶¹

Due to actions carried out by the Church such as the delivery of missionary books, weeks of prayer, and service to the community among others, in December 2014, the MEN territory already had 135 churches, 171 organized groups, and a membership of 31,469.⁶² In 2015, to carry on fulfilling its mission of sharing the Message, once again Evangelist Alejandro Bullón was preaching in Valles de Quito, North and South Quito, Esmeraldas, Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, Riobamba, Ambato, and the northern Andina area. The campaign attained successful results with 357 people determined to give themselves to Jesus and be part of God’s kingdom.

The following year, in 2015, the Publications Department, as part of the literature evangelism program, had the participation of 238 students and permanent canvassers who sold an average of 45,390 books, 21,643 magazines, and 790 Bibles. Meanwhile, the Evangelism Department organized an evangelistic caravan that had Pastor Joel Flores preaching in Orellana, Sucumbíos, Ambato, Esmeraldas, La Unión, and Pedernales; Roberto Moreno in Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas; and finally, Evangelist Luís Gonçalves preaching in Quito. Thanks to the efforts made and prayers lifted in this great evangelistic campaign, more than 500 people decided to be baptized.

Other missionary actions have also involved youth in MEN field. Aware that “giving special care to new generations is one of the emphasis of the SAD,” on February 25, 2018, the Youth Ministry Training took place. Nearly 250 Adventurer, Pathfinder, and AY leaders participated in this event. Furthermore, AY training motivated

leaders to continue training to serve God actively and wholeheartedly since today, more than ever, there is a need for young people willing to work for future generations.⁶³ Today (2020), MEN has 208 Pathfinder clubs and 4,096 teenagers who take part in a club. Similarly, there are 143 Adventurer clubs and 1,795 boys and girls in these clubs.⁶⁴ They are all being guided and trained to serve in the cause of the Lord.

In sum, when looking back at Adventism in the northern region of Ecuador, one can see that the forerunners of the Adventist message, coming from abroad, were firm and persistent when it came to preaching the Gospel in this country. These men and women had the audacity to arrive in a country they did not know to evangelize its people, and so they faced the linguistic barriers and also ideologies that oppressed the Ecuadorian people. Thus, these acts inspire the leadership and members of the current MEN to also face possible difficulties with faith and perseverance, to continue developing various projects that allow large crowds and future generations to be part of those who await the return of the Lord Jesus. For this to happen, a complete and permanent surrender to the will of God has been necessary.

Chronology of Administrative Leaders⁶⁵

Presidents: Manuel María Egas Montalvo (1993-1995); Alberto Peña Salvatierra (1996-2000); Segundo Enrique Peñafiel Miño (2001-2003); Esteban Ricardo Palacios Cabrera (2004); Freddy Alexander Guerrero Córdova (2005-2014); Pablo Elías Carbajal García (2014-2015); Emerson Nunes de Freitas (2016-2018); Luis Alberto Velásquez (2019-Present).

Secretaries: Patricio Gonzáles (1993-1999); Carlos Rambay (2000-2002); Miguel Augusto Rivas (2003-2005); Cristian Gómez (2006-2010); Edmundo Cevallos (2012-2015); Augusto Martínez (2016-2019); Ricardo Peñafiel (2020-Present).

Treasurers: Patricio Gonzáles (1993-1999); Carlos Rambay (2000-2002); Miguel Augusto Rivas (2003-2005); Cristian Gómez (2006-2010); Nilson Fontana (2012); Wladimir Chuquimia (2013-2015); David Játiva (2016-Present).⁶⁶

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NOTES

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2. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, “North Ecuador Mission”, accessed March 26, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2W5vvvz>; *Seventh-day Adventist Online Statistics*, “North Ecuador Mission (2001-Present)”, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2Vlfeng>.
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19. Miguel Augusto Rivas, "Nueva Misión" ["New Mission"], *Revista Adventista* 93:7 (July 1993): 30.
20. South American Division Minutes, 1990, vote no. 702.
21. Ecuador Mission Minutes, 1990, vote no. 194.
22. "Breve Historia" ["Short History"], *La esperanza es Jesús* [*Jesus is the Hope*], May 2001, 15.
23. Miguel Augusto Rivas, "Nueva Misión" ["New Mission"], *Revista Adventista* 93: 7 (July 1993): 30.
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