



GEORGIA-CUMBERLAND CONFERENCE

1870–1879

1872

Letters and reports began appearing in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* from J. A. Killingsworth, who was living in Georgia. He related that the Adventist teachings faced serious opposition in this state because they “originated with the Yankees.”

1876

C. O. Taylor, the first official Adventist worker in Georgia, arrived in the area of Quitman in the southern part of the state.

Adventist work was taking root in the hills of Tennessee. M. J. Wetherbee, a member of the church in Blendon, Michigan, who had moved to Bledsoe County, Tennessee, sent a letter to the *Review* calling for someone to come and work in that state. Orlando Soule, a young man from Michigan, responded, starting in Bledsoe County, near Pikeville, Tennessee.

Soule formed the first Adventist church in eastern Tennessee, the Mt. Gilead Church in Cumberland County, now Georgia-Cumberland territory.

1878

“The first general meeting of those in Georgia who keep all the commandments of God” took place in Reynolds, Georgia.

Samuel P. Mitchell was imprisoned in Brooks County, Georgia, for “his adherence to the Sabbath,” and was tried and found guilty. Rather than pay the fine, Mitchell thought “he could do more good, could better help on the great work of the reform on the Sabbath, and bring it before more minds, by passing 30 days in jail.”

1880–1889

1882

W. F. Killen organized the first church in Georgia, located in Quitman with eight members, in March 1882. The church was reorganized in 1885 by G. G. Rupert.

1885

George A. King, the original Adventist literature evangelist, and Charles F. Curtis went to Georgia to sell Gospel literature.

1887

Charles Curtis and his wife were next asked to move to Atlanta to work with George W. Anglebarger and his wife, who were starting a mission in that city. They rented a house that could accommodate up to 20 workers and host weekly Sabbath School and other meetings.

1888

A church was organized by Pastor S. H. Lane. The 15 charter members held their first services in a tool shed at the corner of South Boulevard and Bryant Street in Atlanta.

E. R. Gillet built a church in Graysville, Tennessee, about 30 miles north of Chattanooga, with the help of P. D. Moyer and J. W. Scoles. J. M. Rees organized this church of 10 members, and it was later voted into the Tennessee Conference. Graysville became a center for the Adventist work in the South for several years.

The first Camp Meeting in Georgia was held in Reynolds, with about 60 Adventists in attendance. Four people were baptized and a course in canvassing trained ten canvassers.



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The Review and Herald opened an office in Atlanta. This office remained active until the Southern Publishing Association was formed in Nashville in 1901.

1889

The General Conference voted that the eastern portions of Tennessee and Kentucky would be joined together as the Cumberland Mission Field, while the western portions of those states were organized as the Tennessee River Conference.

1890–1899

1890

R. M. Kilgore made Graysville, Tennessee, the headquarters of District 2. The church constructed here was “the first building erected for the worship of God in the Cumberland Mission Field.”

1892

George W. Colcord opened the Southern Training School in Graysville, Tennessee. In 1916, this institution would move to Collegedale, Tennessee, and grow into what is currently known as Southern Adventist University.

1893

Churches were organized in several places. J. W. Scoles organized a church in Webster, Roane County, Tennessee; W. A. McCutchen in Gainesville, Georgia; and Grant Adkins in Knoxville, Tennessee. Also in Knoxville, a company of African-American believers were formed following house-to-house Bible studies.

1893

The Tennessee River Conference expanded to include the entirety of both the states of Tennessee and Kentucky. Later in the decade, the Tennessee River Conference was reshaped to once again include only the western portions of Tennessee and Kentucky.

Two believers, W. A. McCutchen and E. C. Keck, were arrested in Gainesville, Georgia, for building benches for the new school on Sunday. Charges were dismissed, and the city of Gainesville even granted electricity and water free of charge for the Camp Meeting held the next year.

1894

Twenty members from the Graysville and Dayton churches in Tennessee were arrested for Sunday labor. The incident, which was featured in newspapers across the country, forced the school in Graysville to close for a short time.

It was voted at Camp Meeting in Gainesville, Georgia, to begin taking steps that would lead to the organization of a conference in the state of Georgia.

1900

The eastern part of Kentucky and Tennessee again comprised the Cumberland Mission, and was organized as the Cumberland Conference during a specially called Camp Meeting in Harri-man, Tennessee.

1890–1899

1901

The Georgia Conference, with five churches and 145 members, was organized in 1901 during a Camp Meeting in Austell, Georgia.

1902

The first annual session of the Cumberland Conference convened at Graysville, reporting “eight churches having a total membership of four hundred and 17 [sic],” an increase of 37 members and a small increase in tithe.



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1903

R. M. Kilgore's leadership as president of Georgia Conference had a major impact on the early development of the Adventist work in both Georgia and eastern Tennessee. He went on to serve as the first president of the Southern Union from 1901 to 1902, and also as the second president of the Georgia Conference from 1903 to 1906.

In 1903, a sanitarium opened in Graysville, and in Atlanta the Review and Herald Publishing building was transformed into the Atlanta Sanitarium. The Atlanta Sanitarium continued operating in various locales in the city until 1958. Treatment rooms were opened in Knoxville in 1909.

1904

Georgia Conference membership had increased to 216. The conference office was located in Macon, Georgia.

1908

The Cumberland Conference's counties in eastern Kentucky were transferred to the newly-formed Kentucky Conference.

1920–1929

1923

During 1923 and 1924, eight more Georgia counties were transferred to Cumberland Conference, bringing the total to 10.

1924

Medical missionary work was seen in Greeneville, Tennessee. The Takoma Medical Center was established, first as a treatment room and cafeteria, then expanding to a sanitarium and fully functioning hospital.

1930–1939

1932

The Cumberland and Georgia conferences were brought together as part of a restructuring that took place at a joint quadrennial session of the Southeastern and Southern Union conferences held in Macon. After 24 years of separation, these two unions merged to form the Southern Union Conference. Most of the territory of the Cumberland Conference was merged with Georgia to form the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, with headquarters in Atlanta at 547 Cherokee Avenue, overseeing 49 churches and 2,634 church members.

1940–1949

1946

After the creation of the regional conferences, the Georgia-Cumberland Conference continued with 63 churches and 3,592 members. Since 1946, the territory of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference has remained the same.

1950–1959

1959

The Hurlbutt Farm property, located in Reeves, Georgia, just outside of Calhoun, was purchased by Georgia-Cumberland Conference for the purpose of constructing a boarding academy, the future Georgia-Cumberland Academy.

1960–1969

1965

Georgia-Cumberland Academy opens, with Ed Reifsnnyder serving as the first principal.

1970–1979

1975

The Georgia-Cumberland Conference office moved from Atlanta to a new office building in



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Calhoun, Georgia, situated in a highly visible location along Interstate 75.

1976

An emphasis on Branch Sabbath Schools led to 14 churches forming in the span of five years (1976-1981) in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference.

1978

Georgia-Cumberland Conference voted to purchase 580 acres, including a 45-acre lake, near Eton, Georgia, and construction began on Cohutta Springs Youth Camp.

1979

Georgia-Cumberland's Cohutta Springs Youth Camp opens for youth camp, following 23 years at its Atoka Springs property.

1990–1999

1995

NET '95, the denomination's inaugural satellite evangelism seminar was broadcast from the host site in Chattanooga and downlinked by nearly 700 churches across North America. Pastor Mark Finley, speaker-director for the It Is Written media ministry, was the main speaker for this seminar, a project of the North American Division, Adventist Media Center, Georgia-Cumberland Conference, and several other entities. The endeavor resulted in over 5,000 baptisms, including 250 in Chattanooga.

2000–2010

2004

Tragedy struck Georgia-Cumberland Conference on December 2, when a plane carrying six people, including four conference officials, crashed on takeoff from the Collegedale Airport. Five people

were killed in the crash: Dave Cress, president; Jim Frost, vice president; Jamie Arnall, communication director; Clay Farwell, assistant to the president; and the plane's pilot, John Laswell. There was one survivor, co-pilot Jim Huff.

2006

Georgia-Cumberland Conference adopted Atlanta Adventist Academy (AAA) as a second conference-sponsored high school. The school had opened in 1979 and was funded by several local churches. AAA operates with students and staff meeting at three main campuses in the Atlanta Metro area, and connected with virtual video streaming technology. This format has allowed other schools, both within the Conference borders and in other locales, to become distance-learning campuses of AAA.

2010–2019

2014

Georgia-Cumberland Conference took over the management of Home Health Education Service (HHES) within its territory. Several other conferences in the Southern Union joined in this cooperative, and the Georgia-Cumberland Publishing Department provides support services to full-time, part-time, and student literature evangelists.

2015

Smyrna Towers, a Georgia-Cumberland Conference-owned housing complex near Atlanta, was sold. Originally funded from a \$10,000 Conference investment in 1979, it was sold for \$11 million, funding construction of a Cohutta Springs Life Center building, new buildings at Georgia-Cumberland Academy, and an endowment for Atlanta Adventist Academy, among other projects.



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2018

Georgia-Cumberland Conference set up endowment funds for Georgia-Cumberland Academy, Atlanta Adventist Academy, Collegedale Academy, and Cohutta Springs Youth Camp.

Cohutta Springs Youth Camp in Georgia-Cumberland Conference opened a new building that includes an auditorium, fitness center, nurse's quarters, and a new outdoor pool.

Georgia-Cumberland Academy opened the Wally Fox Wellness Center that includes a new gymnasium, classrooms, and a cafeteria facility. New classrooms and a student center were also added to the administration building.

2019

Georgia-Cumberland membership reaches more than 40,000.

2020-PRESENT

2020

There are presently 242 Georgia-Cumberland Conference congregations, 43 schools, and approximately 42,456 constituent members.



GEORGIA-CUMBERLAND CONFERENCE

PRESIDENTS IN THE GEORGIA-CUMBERLAND CONFERENCE TERRITORY:

CUMBERLAND CONFERENCE

Sharp Smith, 1900-1903
O. C. Godsmark, 1903-1905
W. W. Williams, 1905-1907
J. F. Pogue, 1907-1910
P. G. Stanley, 1910-1913
W. H. Branson, 1913-1915
R. W. Parmele, 1916-1917
J. L. Shuler, 1917-1919
A. W. Coon, 1919-1921
B. F. Kneeland, 1921-1926
R. I. Keate, 1926-1932

GEORGIA CONFERENCE

C. A. Hall, 1901-1903
R. M. Kilgore, 1903-1906
George W. Wells, 1906-1910
C. B. Stephenson, 1910-1912
L. T. Crisler, 1912-1913
N. V. Willes, 1913-1916
W. H. Branson-acting, 1916
B. J. White, 1916-1917
B. H. Brown, 1917-1918
W. F. McMahan, 1918-1919
B. W. Spire, 1919-1922
A. S. Booth, 1922-1926
B. F. Kneeland, 1926-1932
H. E. Lysinger, 1932-1937

GEORGIA-CUMBERLAND CONFERENCE

R. I. Keate, 1937-1943
I. M. Evans, 1943-1949
G. R. Nash, 1949-1956
A. C. Fearing, 1956-1958
N.C. Wilson, 1958-1960
A. C. McKee, 1960-1963
LeRoy J. Leiske, 1963-1964
Desmond Cummings, 1964-1980
Gary Patterson, 1980-1985
Bill Geary, 1985-1994
Gordon Bietz, 1995-1997
Larry Evans, 1997-2002
Dave Cress, 2002-2004
Ed Wright, 2005-2019
Gary Rustad, 2019-