

History of the Seventh-Day Christian Conference

The Seventh-Day Christian Conference was incorporated as a religious organization on February 3, 1937, with headquarters in New York City. Its core mission is to:

- Promote the Christian faith.
- Foster spiritual growth among its members.
- Disseminate the teachings of the Old and New Testaments, emphasizing the Ten Commandments and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Seventh-Day Christians believe in the Bible as the inspired word of God, salvation through Jesus Christ, the binding nature of the Ten Commandments, the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) as the true day of rest, and the importance of Christian ordinances like baptism by immersion, the Lord's Supper, and fellowship.

The Conference originated from a group of former Seventh-day Adventists who, in 1928, left the denomination due to concerns about discriminatory policies. These individuals established independent churches across the United States under the name United Sabbath Day Adventists. In 1934, several of these churches formed the Seventh-Day Christian Conference, emphasizing the biblical principle of equality and rejecting all forms of racial discrimination.

The Conference has been led by several presidents:

- **R. Leo Soaries**
- **Philip J. Bailey, Sr.**
- **E. Leo Warren**
- **Dingwall C. Fleary**
- **DeForest B. Soaries**
- **Lionel W. Holness**
- **Buster Soaries**
- **Charles Ffrench**
- **Lesford Foreman**

In 1956, the Conference established a mission in Kingston, Jamaica. In 1964, they built a church and headquarters there. In 1979, the Conference acquired its own headquarters building in New York City.

The P.J. Bailey, Sr./George A. Harewood/E. Leo Warren Scholarship Fund was established in 1982 to support the higher education of young people affiliated with the Seventh-Day Christian Church.

In 1999, the Jamaica Mission gained greater autonomy and was established as the Caribbean Conference of Seventh-Day Christians, encompassing seven churches across Jamaica.

To address the need for future ministry leaders, the Conference, with support from the Ministers and Workers Educational Fund, has trained several young men and women for ministry roles.

Churches in North America:

- Victory Tabernacle S.D.C. Church, New York City
- St. Paul's S.D.C. Church, New Jersey
- Hope and Deliverance S.D.C. Church, Stamford, Connecticut
- Open Door S.D.C. Church, Toronto, Canada
- Regeneration Fellowship, Kissimmee, Florida

Seventh-Day Christian Conference Headquarters:

246 West 138th Street New York, New York 10030 Pastor Lesford Foreman, President

Caribbean Conference of Seventh-Day Christians Headquarters:

67C Waltham Park Road Kingston 11 Jamaica, West Indies Pastor Levi Rodney, President

Victory Tabernacle Seventh-Day Christian Church: A Legacy of Faith and Service

Established in 1934 during the Great Depression, Victory Tabernacle Seventh-Day Christian Church emerged from a community seeking solace and guidance amidst economic hardship. Founded by individuals committed to observing the seventh-day Sabbath as outlined in the Ten Commandments and adhering to the principles of the Bible, the congregation initially met in various locations for eight years. On January 1, 1942, they dedicated their current home at 252 West 138th Street in New York City.

Over the past nine decades, Victory Tabernacle has been blessed with the leadership of several dedicated pastors:

- **Elder Raynes Soaries (1934-1937)**
- **Elder Philip J. Bailey (1937-1964)**
- **Elder Henry Grant (1964-1972)**
- **Elder Dingwall C. Fleary (1972-1978)**
- **Pastor Garfield Hawthorne (1978-1982)**
- **Pastor DeForest (Buster) Soaries (1982-1985)**
- **Pastor Charles French (1991-2006)**
- **Pastor Desmond Johnson (2007-Present)**

Each pastor, along with a dedicated lay leadership, played a vital role in shaping the church's identity and guiding its mission. During periods without a resident pastor, the congregation demonstrated remarkable resilience and continued to serve its community through the efforts of its members.

Victory Tabernacle has a rich history of community outreach.

- **Educational initiatives:** Vacation Bible School, youth retreats, and tutorial programs have provided valuable learning experiences for both church members and the wider community.
- **Social support:** Project SHARE, a program offering food assistance in exchange for community service, has been a cornerstone of the church's outreach efforts.
- **Health and wellness:** The church has actively promoted community health through workshops on AIDS education, domestic violence, and asthma awareness.

Looking ahead, Victory Tabernacle remains committed to expanding its service to the community through initiatives such as a revitalized tutorial program and a dedicated program for senior citizens.

The Birth of Open Door Seventh-Day Christian Church, Toronto, Canada

In September 1996, President Charles Ffrench led a group from Victory Tabernacle in New York City to Oakville-Brampton, Canada, to connect with fellow believers, including Alicia Gordon-Smith and Yvonne Gordon, who had family ties to the Seventh-Day Christian Conference. This visit fostered early relationships within the Canadian community.

Research from Conference Bulletins (1996-2000) indicates efforts to encourage regular gatherings and identify potential members within the Oakville community. During this formative period, President Ffrench, Elder Neil Matthew, Pastor Lesford Foreman, and other Executive Board members made frequent visits to support the growing group.

In August 2001, a delegation led by President Ffrench visited the group meeting at the Ramada Inn in Toronto. Key members present included Pauline Faulknor, Gloria Brown, Miriam Brown, Angie Peart, Evangelist Percel Peart, Yvonne Gordon, and others. Pastor Alphanso Holding from Jamaica served as the group's leader.

During a business meeting moderated by President Ffrench, crucial discussions addressed the need for a permanent worship site, church registration, and leadership roles. Evangelist Percel Peart and Dr. Maria Peart were interviewed regarding their potential contributions to the church. "Open Door Seventh-Day Christian Church" was chosen as the official name. The meeting emphasized Pastor Holding's vision for evangelism and Dr. Peart's expertise in Bible teaching and leadership development.

In May 2002, Elder Neil Matthew and President Ffrench, along with a group from the Conference, attended a Sabbath service at Open Door. Highlights included a sermon by Pastor Lesford Foreman titled "Fit for Service" and the presentation of hymnals to the church in honor of Barbara Francis.

In May 2005, President Ffrench led another delegation, including his wife, daughter, and other members, to Toronto. Key events included a welcome address by Dr. Peart, a "Word of Wisdom" by Pastor Richard Evans, and a sermon by Pastor Peart. A meeting between the SDC Conference Executive Board and Open Door leadership followed, addressing key issues and concerns.

Pastor Alphanso Holding returned to Jamaica in May 2002 after successfully establishing Open Door.

In May 2008, Pastor Richard Evans and Vice President Carmen Matthew represented the SDC Conference at Open Door's anniversary services and annual banquet. They participated in services, met with the church leadership, and attended the celebratory banquet and auction.