




## A CHRONOLOGY OF PROTESTANT BEGINNINGS: PUERTO RICO


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(last revised on June 6, 2003)



### Historical Overview of Puerto Rico:

Conquered by Spain:	1509
Dioceses of Puerto Rico established:	1511
Spanish Revolution decreed religious tolerance:	1868
Spanish-American War, U.S. occupation begins:	1898
Ceded to U.S. from Spain:	1899
Granted U.S. Citizenship Rights:	1917
Obtained U.S. Commonwealth Status:	1952
Number of North American agencies in 1989:	38
Number of North American agencies in 1996:	25
Indicates European society*	



### Significant Protestant Beginnings or Events:

- 1598 - \*Anglican chapel services during British military occupation (five months)
- 1625 - \*Dutch Reformed services during brief Dutch occupation
- 1820 - First known distribution of Bibles in Puerto Rico by the American Bible Society.
- 1840s - \*Lutheran congregations formed among Danish immigrants.
- 1860s - Protestant services held in the area of Isabela-Aguadilla and Vieques, led by independent businessman Eduardo Heyliger and convert Antonio Badillo Fernández; the group was called “believers in the Word.”
- 1869 - A Reformed minister from St. Thomas holds first English service in Ponce.
- 1870 - Johannes Waldemar Zaccheus receives a shipment of Bibles from the American Bible Society in New York City; he engaged in a ministry of Bible distribution and evangelism during a period of religious tolerance from 1869 to 1873; in 1874 he has imprisoned briefly in Fajardo for “preaching the Gospel;” independent congregations established in Fajardo, Naguabo and Humacao during the 1870s.
- 1872 - \*Anglican Church formally begins work in Ponce; first service held at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in 1873.
- 1898 - Comity Agreement among North American Protestant missionary agencies for work in former Spanish territories, following the Spanish-American War (American Baptist, Congregational, Presbyterian, Methodist Episcopal, Disciples of Christ, Evangelical Lutheran, Christian & Missionary Alliance and Evangelical United Brethren)
- 1898 - Lutheran Church in America, West Indies Mission; missionary Gustav Swenson.
- 1898 - Presbyterian Church in USA, Board of Home Missions (received Badillo's group)

- 1899 - Protestant Episcopal Church Domestic and Foreign Mission Society takes over Anglican work.
- 1899 - United Brethren in Christ, Foreign Missionary Society (later known as the United Evangelical Church after a 1931 merger with the Christian Church-Disciples of Christ and the Congregational Christian Church).
- 1899 - American Baptist Home Mission Society (now, American Baptist Churches in the USA)
- 1899 - American Mission Society
- 1899 - Christian Church-Disciples of Christ: missionaries Mr. & Mrs. J. A. Erwin.
- 1900 - Christian & Missionary Alliance
- 1900 - The Methodist Episcopal Church: missionary Dr. Charles W. Drees in San Juan (now related to the United Methodist Church).
- 1901 - Seventh-day Adventist General Conference; missionary A. M. Fischer arrives in Mayagüez.
- 1902 - Methodist Episcopal Church, Woman's Home Mission Society
- 1902 - The Church of Jesus (independent, founded by Manuel Ferrando; united with Episcopal Church in 1922)
- 1908 - Federation of Evangelical Churches of Puerto Rico formed (later known as The Evangelical Union of Puerto Rico in 1916, the Association of Evangelical Churches of Puerto Rico in 1934, and the Evangelical Council of Puerto Rico in 1954).
- 1916 - Church of God Pentecostal, International Mission (affiliated with the Assemblies of God from 1921 to 1956; founded by Juan L. Lugo and Salomón Feliciano)
- 1918 - Assemblies of God Foreign Missions
- 1930 - International Church of the Foursquare Gospel
- 1931 - United Evangelical Church formed (merger of United Brethren in Christ, Christian Church-Disciples of Christ and Congregational Christian Church)
- 1934 - Defenders of the Faith (a national Pentecostal body founded by Francisco Olazábal and Juan Francisco Rodríguez Rivera)
- 1930s - Church of Christ in the Antilles, later known as Universal Church of Jesus Christ (a national Pentecostal body)
- 1938 - Missionary Church of Christ (a national Pentecostal body, formerly part of the Church of Christ in the Antilles)
- 1938 - Pentecostal Church of Jesus Christ (a national Pentecostal body)
- 1938 - Church of God of Prophecy Mission
- 1941 - Samaria Evangelical Church Council (a national Pentecostal body, founded by Julio Guzmán Silva)
- 1940 - Assembly of Christian Churches (a national Pentecostal body)
- 1944 - Church of the Nazarene, World Mission Division
- 1944 - Church of God World Missions (Cleveland, TN), known as the Church of God Mission Board.
- 1945 - Mennonite Board of Missions
- 1946 - Child Evangelism Fellowship
- 1949 - International Gospel League
- 1952 - Wesleyan World Missions
- 1955 - Baptist Bible Fellowship International
- 1956 - Southern Baptist Convention, Home Mission Society (now, International Mission Board)
- 1958 - Open Bible Standard Churches
- 1959 - Baptist Mid-Missions
- 1962 - United Pentecostal Church International
- 1963 - Grace Ministries International

- 1963 - Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
- 1965 - Baptist International Missions
- 1968 - Biblical Ministries Worldwide
- 1973 - Boriquén Presbyterian Synod in Puerto Rico, part of the Presbyterian Church USA work that began in 1898.
- 1976 - Christian Church and Churches of Christ
- 1981 - Macedonian World Baptist Missions
- 1983 - Maranatha Baptist Mission
- 1986 - UFM International (formerly, Unevangelized Fields Mission)
- 1989 - Apostolic Christian Church
- 1992 - InterVarsity Mission
- 1993 - Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
- 1996 - World Indigenous Missions

**Date of Origin Unknown:**

Baptist World Mission  
 Berachah Church  
 Bethesda Christian Movement Council  
 Brethren Assemblies (Plymouth Brethren)  
 Brotherhood of Charismatic Christian Churches  
 Christian Mission Council  
 Christian Reformed Church  
 Church of Catacumbas  
 Church of God Council, Inc.  
 Church of the Brethren  
 Church of the Lord Council  
 Damascus Pentecostal Council  
 Evangelical Lutheran Church  
 Federation of the Alpha and Omega Church Council  
 Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches  
 Free Methodist Church  
 Fount of Salvation Missionary Church  
 Good Samaritan Church  
 Gospel Fellowship Association  
 Grace Evangelical Fellowship  
 Habacuc Council, Inc.  
 International Bible Congregational Church  
 International Evangelical Church Soldiers of the Cross (formerly known as Gedeon's Band)  
 International Pentecostal Church of Christ  
 Latin American Pentecostal Council  
 Living Valiantly Bible Church  
 Missionary and Christian Union Movement  
 Missionary Christian Church Council  
 Missionary Episcopal Church  
 Mission of God in Christ Council  
 Mount Moriah Council, Inc.  
 Pentecostal Church of God of Puerto Rico  
 Pentecostal Council of Jesus Christ  
 Pilgrim Holiness Church  
 Reformed Episcopal Church  
 Revival Presbyterian Church  
 Southwide Baptist Fellowship

True Church of God Council  
United Christian Assemblies  
Worldwide Missionary Movement



**NOTES:**

- (1) Dates listed indicate the earliest recorded ministry or in case of discrepancies, the date most frequently indicated.
- (2) North American Agencies include U.S. and Canadian.

**SOURCES:**

- (1) Daryl L. Platt, "Who Represents the Evangelical Churches in Latin America? A Study of the Evangelical Fellowship Organizations." Pasadena, CA: an unpublished Doctor of Missiology dissertation, School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, June 1991. Used by permission of the author.
- (2) PROLADES (Latin American Socio-religious Studies Program), international headquarters in San José, Costa Rica: [www.prolades.com](http://www.prolades.com), [prolades@racsa.co.cr](mailto:prolades@racsa.co.cr)
- (3) Dayton Roberts and John Siewert, editors: ***Mission Handbook of U.S. and Canadian Christian Ministries Overseas*** (MARC 1989).
- (4) John A. Siewert and Edna G. Valdez, editors: ***Mission Handbook of U.S. and Canadian Christian Ministries Overseas*** (MARC 1997).
- (5) Jean-Jacques Bauswein and Lukas Vischer, ***The Reformed Family Worldwide*** (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999).
- (6) Justo L. González, ***The Development of Christianity in the Latin Caribbean*** (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969).