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


(2) PROLADES (Latin American Socio-religious Studies Program), international headquarters in San José, Costa Rica: www.prolades.com, prolades@racsa.co.cr


