



**Global Ministries**  
Celebrating 200 Years in Mission



## FRANCISCO PENZOTTI

### Founder of Peruvian Methodism

Francisco Penzotti, an Italian immigrant in Uruguay, encountered American Methodist missionaries as they were establishing a foothold in Montevideo. After his conversion, he worked with the Waldensian Church in Uruguay—an Italian Protestant denomination closely related to Methodists in Europe. Penzotti helped to establish mission churches across Uruguay at a time when the Roman Catholic Church was dominant.

In 1883, the Methodist Episcopal Church sent Penzotti across the continent to Bolivia with various *colporteurs* (peddlers of religious tracts and Bibles)—principally Andrew M. Milne of the American Bible Society—to establish mission posts. In 1885, Penzotti visited Venezuela, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile. He traveled again in 1888, but a cholera outbreak kept him in quarantine in Peru for six months. During this time, he established a church in Callao, the seaport of Lima. He wrote to his mission secretary, “As soon as I arrived here I sought to bring the people together,

and from that time, the attendance and interest have constantly increased.”

When a larger hall had to be rented to accommodate the growing church, Catholic clergy and the Peruvian government took notice. In 1890, Penzotti and a few other *colporteurs* were arrested for distributing Bibles in southern Peru. The case was appealed to Peru’s president, who ordered Penzotti’s release. After the Callao Methodist Society was formally organized, Protestant persecution intensified. Penzotti was arrested and thrown into jail without bail. Meanwhile, the Callao church kept growing.

Eventually, a couple of New York reporters published an article that gained international attention. After eight months, Penzotti was released. International interest and intervention from the U.S. Secretary of State helped to ease persecution of the church in Peru. Today, the autonomous Iglesia Metodista del Perú is organized in six districts under a bishop and a general assembly.