In Egypt, Adventist schools suspended this week, but church operations not affected

Small membership in country under spotlight

31 Jan 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Ansel Oliver/ANN

Two Seventh-day Adventist-run schools in Egypt have suspended classes this week due to ongoing national protests. Otherwise, Adventist operations are not affected, according to latest reports from the region.

A day before the Internet was shut down in Egypt on Friday, the president of the small Adventist community there said church operations were not affected by national protests.

"There is no news at all that any of our 12 churches, 700 members and two schools are affected in any way," Llewellyn R. Edwards, president of the denomination's Egypt Field, wrote to ANN in a January 27 e-mail.

Some 100 people have reportedly died in nationwide protests calling for President Hosni Mubarak to resign. The unrest follows similar protests in Tunisia and Yemen.

Phone service in Egypt was working again this weekend after most communication was shut down Friday, reports said.
Tibor Szilvasi, executive secretary of the church’s Middle East Union, with headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon, has since been in contact with leadership by phone. There are no reports of any threats to members or church property, he said.

Both Nile Union Academy and Zeitoun Elementary school in Cairo have suspended school this week, Szilvasi said.

About 130 students attend the academy and some 800 attend the elementary school.

"Our members in Egypt, like the general Egyptian population, are somewhat apprehensive and waiting prayerfully to see what will happen," he said. "So far all are reported to be OK."

---

**South Pacific: visit from Adventist president affirms identity of church**

*Wilson gives Bible study to prime minister, calls for revival in region*

1 Feb 2011, Wahroonga, New South Wales, Australia
David Gibbons/ANN staff

At the request of Papua New Guinea's prime minister last week, the Seventh-day Adventist world church president led a Bible study and prayed with the national leader.

Prime Minister Michael Somare, a Christian, told Ted N.C. Wilson that Adventists in his country model good citizenship and applauded the trustworthiness of those he employs -- 15 Adventists sit in the country's parliament, eight of whom are members of Somare's cabinet.

The meeting is part of Wilson's 16-day journey across the South Pacific, with stops in New Zealand, Australia, Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

Halfway through his tour, the Adventist world church president is reiterating a message he's honed since his election last summer -- the church's future depends on members embracing their identity.

Adventists "must be unique" to impact their communities, Ted N.C. Wilson said during several stops in the region.

In a message that echoed his recent speech at a world church business meeting, Wilson told hundreds of members in an Auckland church to be Christians first, but to safeguard what makes them distinctively
Adventist.

Without that uniqueness, the core of the church -- its belief in Jesus' soon return and commitment to the Biblical commandments -- is diluted, Wilson said, citing the church of Laodicea. Described in the Bible as neither hot nor cold, Laodicea is used as a metaphor to describe "lukewarm" Christians who have lost their fervor for Christ.

Rekindling that enthusiasm "is not something that committees ... can plan or legislate," Wilson said. "We need a revival that can only come from an outpouring of the [God's] spirit."

Since his keynote address following his appointment as world church president at the General Conference World Session last summer, Wilson has called for deliberate spiritual renewal among church members and leaders.

In Port Moresby, Wilson spoke to an audience of more than 100,000, reminding them to "focus on Jesus," not "distracting" issues that spur division among members. "[God's] spirit never brings confusion," Wilson said.

Wilson also asked church members to redouble their prayers for Jesus' soon return, joining Adventists worldwide in prayer at 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. for an outpouring of God's spirit.

"We have the word 'Adventist' in our name, yet we are still here," Wilson said, noting that church co-founder Ellen G. White wrote that Jesus could have returned a hundred years ago "and many times since," had the church been ready. "We need to humbly plead for revival and reformation in our lives," he said.

Wilson, who is spending this week in Australia, is expected to head for Fiji next week.

---

**European financial woes reflected in Adventist Church operations**

*How the church is handling financial uncertainty in Greece, Spain and Portugal*

26 Jan 2011, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States

Arin Gencer/ANN

With unemployed members and decreased tithes, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Europe has been struggling to contend with the global financial crisis.

Particularly in Greece, Spain and Portugal -- countries whose unemployment rates are among Europe's highest and where the financial crisis has been particularly dire -- the global Protestant denomination has been forced to make adjustments, striving to do the same work with less.
"With faith in our Lord Jesus Christ we are doing the best we can," said Apostolos Maglis, president of the Adventist Church in Greece, which has already seen the adverse effects of the country's debt crisis on the church body. He anticipates these will spill over into 2011.

Since receiving a bailout last year from the European Union and the International Monetary Fund, Greece has introduced a number of austerity measures to significantly reduce its public deficit, spurring several protests and strikes from unions.

The Adventist Church's Greek Mission, which consists of 10 churches, has seen the turmoil impact the church in various ways. These include a decrease in tithes -- down 20 percent at the end of 2010 relative to the previous year, for the first time in a decade, Maglis said in an e-mail.

The mission expects that number to further drop to 35 percent lower in 2011, he added. The economic challenges represent yet another hurdle to the Adventist Church in this part of the world, where evangelism already faces considerable obstacles, including the dominance of the Orthodox Church and the inability to conduct public religious programs, Maglis said.

"Many members lost their work and are unemployed," Maglis said, preventing them from paying rent and buying basic necessities. Several churches are collecting and distributing food to individuals in need, he added, "but this is not enough."

He described two recently launched evangelistic programs -- one training people to be missionaries at work; the other, showing members "how they can bring a friend to Jesus." He said both have led to a record 56 baptisms in the past year and brought membership to about 570. The Greek Mission's baptism goals set for this year now must contend with reduced funds.

Officials in the Spanish and Portuguese unions say they are experiencing similar problems, which are not limited to the Adventist Church or even Europe. The church's North American Division has reported slight but consecutive drops in tithe in 2008 and 2009, a decline attributed to U.S. economic woes.

The "delicate" economic situation in Spain -- where the unemployment rate is the second-highest in Europe, with 3 million people out of work -- has put the Adventist Spanish Union of Churches in a difficult position since 2008, said Juan Andres Prieto, the union's treasurer.

"The same thing that is happening in society is happening in the church," Prieto said, citing, as an example, a congregation of about 60 or 70 members, all of whom are jobless.
The union is operating on a savings policy: Whatever they don't bring in, they don't spend. And although they continue trying to serve the church in the same way with fewer resources, certain things have been affected, Prieto said.

Since November 2008, the union has suspended its practice of giving financial assistance to new groups just starting to rent meeting space, he said, and has even reduced occasional aid to established congregations. Union salaries have been frozen since that time as well.

In an attempt to meet the challenges of the day, the union has proposed a voluntary program that would take 2 percent of pastors' salaries to create a reserve fund for supporting church members in need.

Similarly, Portuguese church leaders are finding it difficult to perform certain activities, such as launching new congregations or establishing communities in certain areas, said Rui Filipe Dias, treasurer for the denomination's Portuguese Union of Churches. Unemployment in that country is at about 10 percent, he said.

"The biggest difficulty I've seen is supporting all the needs of our members," Dias said, adding that the union typically sees offerings decline in the midst of a financial crisis. "Their needs are much greater than in a normal situation."

"We are depending on the goodness of God to guide us," Dias added.
Spam
Not spam
Forget previous vote