Seventh-day Adventist Church world headquarters
April 26, 2011

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In This Issue:

In Ivory Coast, Adventist Church work resumes
One member killed, two churches destroyed in post-election violence
Historically Adventist community Loma Linda to see Saturday mail delivery
End of 80-year era of Sunday alternate

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26 Apr 2011. Abidjan, Ivory Coast
Gilbert Weeh/ANN staff

Employees of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s West-Central Africa Division headquarters are back at work, following weeks of national political unrest in post-election violence. Workers arrived at the headquarters April 14 to find a few bullet holes in windows, but the building otherwise undamaged. A core group of employees stayed on the premises during the heaviest fighting between forces of incoming president Alassane Ouattara and outgoing incumbent Laurent Gbagbo. Gbagbo was arrested April 11 in his home, just a few hundred yards from the division office. But church and community members weren’t as lucky in other parts of the nation. More than 1,500 died in clashes and as many as a million people may have fled the coastal city of Abidjan, Reuters reported.

One Adventist Church member was killed in the western town of Duekoue, where some 800 people were killed during clashes in March, Reuters reported.

Also, two Adventist churches were destroyed -- one in the Abobo district of Abidjan, and another in Duekoue, according to Benjamin Gonkanou, president of the Adventist Church in Ivory Coast.

“We have been comforted by the prayers and words of comfort by our brethren from all over the world,” said Agnes Weeh, an administrative assistant in the division Publishing department, who remained at headquarters during the heaviest fighting.

Small group worship flourished in many parts of the country -- with members reluctant to venture into towns, many attended neighbor’s homes for Sabbath worship. Kably Clotaire, a member of the Cocody Adventist Church was able to share worship with her neighbors of other religions.

In March, some 40 family members of division officers were temporarily relocated to the neighboring country of Ghana. Church officers had monitored the situation since the November election. Two missionary families and several church leaders were also relocated to Ghana. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and our minions in Ghana.