Seventh-day Adventist Church world headquarters
May 17, 2011

The ANN news bulletin is a weekly recap of stories published since the previous week's bulletin. To see news, commentaries, photos and reader comments as they are published, visit news.adventist.org.

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Church a 'valuable partner' in strengthening community, Angolan governor says

13 May 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a "valuable partner" in strengthening the community, a governor in Angola said following a recent meeting with world church President Ted N.C. Wilson.
"Whenever we are together with ... men of God, we learn how to walk in a world of adversity," said Luanda province Governor Jose Maria dos Santos Ferraz, citing the church's faith in God in response to challenges currently faced by Angolans. The nation is striving for stability and development after a 27-year civil war ended in 2002.

Both leaders signed a document formalizing "mutual cooperation" in continued efforts to benefit Angolan society, church leaders said. The church has gained national recognition for providing health ministries, community outreach and education in a country that saw much of its infrastructure -- including most schools -- demolished during war.

"When you are known to be reliable, peaceful people, people who are active participants in society and the community, then you are appreciated. Everybody's rebuilding the country right now. It's a mammoth task, and we are happy to be a part of it," said Paul Ratsara, who accompanied Wilson during his tour of the church's Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division.

Ratsara leads the church in the region, which includes Angola.

Wilson arrived in Angola last month to survey Adventist Church operations in the country and encourage growing membership there. During his tour, Wilson attended the opening of the newly formed Northeast Angola Union Mission headquarters in Luanda, the nation's capital and largest city. He also visited the offices of the Southern Angola Union Mission in Huambo province.

There, Wilson dedicated newly rebuilt classrooms and a cafeteria on the campus of Bongo Adventist Institute, a church-run school, seminary and hospital complex destroyed during war. He also unveiled a monument on the site where American Adventist missionary W. H. Anderson led the first Sabbath School class in Angola under a tree, Ratsara said.

Church officials voted last year to split the then Angolan Union Mission into two administrative structures. The move recognized sweeping infrastructure needs in Angola and the "marked" financial improvement of the church there since the end of civil war.

While in Luanda, Wilson spoke to some 67,000 church members -- among them thousands of young people -- who crowded the city's Cidadela Stadium during Sabbath worship services, many more listening from outside.

"You had to be there to feel the joy and enthusiasm of the members and leaders. They feel connected to and united with the world church," Ratsara said. "This is a spiritual feast for them."
Wilson urged the audience to embrace their identity as Adventists. "When you say you are a Seventh-day Adventist, you are already preaching a sermon -- where we come from and where we are going," he said.

Coverage of Wilson's visit to Angola -- including a portion of his sermon -- was later broadcast on prime time national news, Ratsara said.

More than 380,000 Adventists worship in nearly 1,000 congregations in Angola. In recent years, the church's Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division has experienced significant growth with the addition of 2.5 million members.

Following his visit to Angola, Wilson continued his tour of the region, with stops in Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion Island and the Seychelles.

While in Madagascar, Wilson was accompanied by a security detail led by two high-level government security officials, Ratsara said. Impressed by what they observed, both have requested Bible studies. "God willing -- and please pray for this -- we will come back and baptize them," he said.

"You know, they are body guards, so they are both tall and huge, like basketball players. I told one of them, 'I will need to practice how to baptize you.' He laughed. We've become very close friends," Ratsara added.

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**Updating Adventist property listings is 'ethical issue,' church risk management field rep says**

*Outdated building assessments could mean inadequate funds to restore lost, damaged property*

17 May 2011, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States

Arin Gencer/ANN

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's risk management and insurance organization is on a mission to ensure church-owned properties throughout North America are valued by current standards.

Adventist Risk Management is working with the denomination's local administrative conferences in the region to update property evaluations so that church and school facilities' insurance values reflect the actual cost of replacing damaged property, said Gideon Dayak, a risk control consultant with the organization. The alternative could mean not having adequate funds to restore a lost building.

"To go out and insure a group of churches and suggest that the possibility exists that if they have a total loss there may not be enough value there to rebuild a church...to me, is an ethical issue," said David Rawson, senior field service representative for Adventist Risk Management (ARM). "There was an ethical mandate to get out and get this done."

Rawson and his fellow field representatives in the region are engaged in "a constant process that we've pushed aggressively" to update files, he said, going into the field to evaluate facilities for the details required for a fresh appraisal. He estimated that ARM has completed about half of the project, which began about seven years ago.

Adventist Risk Management's efforts in the North American region follow a multiyear effort to address a similar issue in the world church's East-Central Africa, West-Central Africa, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean and Southern Asia divisions, Rawson said. A decade ago, property lists for those parts of the world were seriously
outdated -- not just in terms of property values but also having an accurate list of existing facilities, including the GPS coordinates for each location, he said.

"We'd have two properties on a piece of land sitting next to each other -- one building was obviously ancient and no longer needed to be insured; a brand new building sitting next to it had absolutely no insurance coverage," Rawson said, describing some of the scenarios encountered. "If you don't list the property on your insurance statement of values, and you have a loss, you have no coverage. So it was really important to get that cleaned up."

Dayak -- who conducts property appraisals and safety/risk control analysis -- said he has assessed some 300 North American properties in the past six months. The process involves a close inspection using an established property-insurance standard, and taking photos of the building. Dayak then enters the building's data into the Marshall & Swift commercial property estimator, which provides replacement costs based on zip code.

"You wouldn't believe the sense of appreciation and relief that they feel to know that they're valued correctly," Rawson said of the conferences he has worked with.

Since January 2011, ARM has conducted over 25 risk-management and insurance-coverage training seminars for church administrators, including those in North America's Southern Union Conference and South Africa's Zimbabwe Union Conference, said Arthur Blinci, ARM vice president for Marketing and Field Assessment.

Such sessions cover an array of topics, Dayak said, including the best way to care for properties; avoiding potential hazards inside buildings; having and following an emergency evacuation plan; and an inspection that identifies the cost of replacing lost property. The seminars help church administrators better understand their insurance coverage and learn how to report losses on a timely basis when an accident occurs, Blinci added.

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**ANN releases smartphone apps**

*News, photos, Commentaries free on iPhone, Android*

11 May 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
ANN staff

ANN released smartphone apps for iPhone and Android. Above, a user downloading the app on an iPhone.

Adventist News Network content is now available as an app for the iPhone and Android operating systems.

The newly released apps include news, photos and opinion commentaries as they are published. The apps also offer the ANN Styleguide and Glossary, which explains the rationale behind corporate news for a worldwide
Christian denomination.

"Regular communication can help keep members and leaders worldwide better connected with each other as well as enhance the church's corporate transparency to its members and the public," said Ansel Oliver, the Seventh-day Adventist Church's assistant Communication director for news.

The app was produced by Simple Updates, a Michigan-based developer, and is available in the iPhone App Store and the Android Market.

Users may also contact the editor or submit photos and story suggestions on the ANN website at news.adventist.org.