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God's timing isn't for us to know, Adventist leaders say

Predictions on Christ's return give false hope, disrepute on Christianity; 'been there, done that'

Review & Herald Publishing officers re-elected, board size trimmed

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24 May 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

ANN staff

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's Community Services-Disaster Response for Mid-America is coordinating with federal and local agencies in the wake of a tornado that struck Joplin, Missouri on Sunday.

The single deadliest twister to hit the United States since 1950 left 117 dead and leveled homes and businesses, including the southwest Missouri city's hospital.

While the Joplin Adventist Church sustained minor roof damage, the structure itself is sound, said Dwight Seek, who pastors the church. His wife, Jenny, said several church members' homes incurred damage, and the church treasurer's home was destroyed.

While all regular members have been accounted for, one non-attending member is missing, Jenny Seek said. "It's possible that she is out of town with family. We are praying she is OK," she said.
"Our hearts go out to our church family and indeed the whole community of Joplin," Thomas Lemon, president of the Mid-America Union, said in a statement. "It is at such times that the church community must become again the hands and feet of Jesus to carry His healing touch to people whose lives have been so devastated," the statement continued.

Dan Jackson, president of the church's North American Division, is expected to visit Joplin this week to encourage and pray with church members.

For updates on the developing situation, including Adventist response efforts, visit [www.outlookmag.org](http://www.outlookmag.org).

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**God's timing isn't for us to know, Adventist leaders say**

*Predictions on Christ's return give false hope, disrepute on Christianity; 'been there, done that'*

20 May 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

ANN staff

The biblical books of Leviticus, Matthew and Acts warn against predicting the future, but that hasn't stopped another Christian group from predicting the end of the world -- this time a rapture of God's people on May 21, followed by total world destruction in October.

For Seventh-day Adventists, members of a Protestant denomination that formed after an incorrect prediction of the end of the world in 1844, the media attention garnered by Family Radio Worldwide founder Harold Camping and thousands of his followers is an opportunity to refocus on the assurance of the biblical promise of Christ's Second Coming. More so, it's also a chance to accept God's timing, Adventist Church leaders and scholars in North America say.

Adventist Church leader James Nix says there's no reason for people to predict the date of Christ's Second Coming. A great thing came out of a mistaken prediction in 1844 -- the Adventist Church -- but it would be a mistake to make predictions again, he said. [file photo by Josef Kissinger]

"God can chose to come this Saturday if he chooses to, that's fine with me, but for a human to predict that and not know for certain if that's the case is foolishness," said Stanley Patterson, associate professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

"If [Camping's followers] understood correctly God's word, they would already know that this man is in violation of what God says," Patterson said.

He and others point to Matthew 24:36, which quotes Jesus saying, "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father."

Patterson said speculating about God's will isn't the job of humans, and doing so capitalizes on the fear people
have about the future. Setting a date may give some people hope, he said, but the tragedy is that it's a false hope.

"God has accepted responsibility for the day and the hour and not us," Patterson said. "If our hope becomes so strong that we stop regarding His word, that's a horrible irony. Ultimately, God is going to take care of the things he said he would care for."

Alvin Kibble, a vice president of the Adventist Church's North American Division, says he credits Camping's "Divine invitation," but warns that he sounds similar to what followers of preacher William Miller might have heard in the 1840s.

Miller -- then a Baptist layman in New York -- and his followers thought the Book of Daniel showed that Christ would return on October 22, 1844. When Christ didn't return, one group of followers restudied the Bible, including its prophetic statements in Revelation regarding the Three Angels' messages. That group is now the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a global denomination of nearly 17 million. Setting dates of future events are not part of the church's teachings.

In recent months, many of Camping's followers have quit their jobs and invested their savings in the campaign of billboards, online ads and pamphlets to promote the May 21 prediction. But this isn't the first time he has set a date for the end -- he made a similar prediction for 1994.

"As Adventists, we join them in longing to see Christ return, but given our history we also know what happens when mistaken predictions are made," said James Nix, an Adventist Church field secretary and director of the estate of Adventist Church co-founder Ellen G. White Estate."

"We've been there, done that," Nix said.

As of May 24, Camping said he miscalculated the May 21 date, and he is still predicting the end of the world in October.

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**Review & Herald Publishing officers re-elected, board size trimmed**

*162-year-old Adventist publishing house staunching money losses, officials say*

23 May 2011, Hagerstown, Maryland, United States
Mark A. Kellner, Adventist Review

The Review and Herald Publishing Association, the 162-year-old book and magazine organization owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church world headquarters, is showing signs of progress in the face of years of financial decline, leaders said at a May 19 constituency session.

The meeting also saw the revision of the group's bylaws, which will now include a Board of Directors with 30 members, down from 44. Also, top officers were re-elected, including President Mark B. Thomas.

The change in the number, RHPA board chairman Delbert Baker said, was to make the board easier to work with and more accountable.

Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist world church and a former RHPA president, attended the meetings at the Hagerstown, Maryland headquarters, and said he predicted constituents "will feel a settled confidence in what God has in store for the Review and Herald, and for the publishing work."
While reporting losses of $5.7 million for 2010, RHPA vice president and chief financial officer Graham Barham said the organization showed a small profit of $72,000 in April of this year, versus a loss of $1.054 million during April of last year. Product sales were $800,000 in the first three weeks of May 2011, and the firm is bearing down on a $1 million sales month, he added.

"The publishing work will go on," Barham said.

The past few years have been a difficult time for the RHPA, which saw a steep decline in sales, revenues and profits from the previous five years. Those challenges were not unique to Review and Herald; paper-based book sales have declined across a wide variety of markets. In fact, while the RHPA constituency meeting was taking place, Amazon.com, the titanic online seller of books and other media, reported that for every 100 printed books sold, the firm was now selling 105 digital volumes, known as "e-books."

RHPA also found itself in a difficult situation with its line of credit from a local bank, which wanted to call the loan or attach some of the association's real estate holdings. Barham noted, as reported earlier, that the Adventist Church headquarters has agreed to buy 47.5 acres of RHPA-owned land for $11.4 million, with 80 percent of that amount advanced before closing. That infusion allowed RHPA to retire the credit line debt of nearly $7.2 million. The balance of monies provided will be invested with the Columbia Union Conference revolving fund, Barham said.

Constituents underlined their confidence in the RHPA management team appointed during a 2010 reorganization by electing the group's officers to full five-year terms. RHPA president Mark B. Thomas was unanimously re-elected, as were all four vice presidents: Dwain Edmond, vice president, editorial; John Gay, vice president for graphics; Barham; and marketing vice president Dwight Hall.