Seventh-day Adventist Church world headquarters
May 31, 2011

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In Mexico, student killed in kidnapping attempt near Adventist university

Yoselin Perez Ramirez, communication major, was baptized in November

31 May 2011, Montemorelos, Nuevo León, Mexico
Inter-American Division News

A Montemorelos University student was shot and killed minutes away from the Northern Mexican school's campus in the evening hours of May 29, officials have confirmed. The shooting -- possibly a case of mistaken identity, a city official said -- happened just hours after the Seventh-day Adventist institution celebrated its 68th graduation ceremony.
Yoselin L. Perez Ramirez, 20, a second-year visual communications major, died of gunshot wounds after an attempted kidnapping. According to authorities, Perez and a friend were walking into a store at approximately 8:30 p.m. May 29 when they were approached and threatened. They ran away and her friend, whose name has not been released for security reasons, escaped. However, Perez was later tracked down and shot. She was about to return to her home in Oaxaca for the summer, according to a statement made by Ismael Castillo, president of Montemorelos University.

"This is a very sad and unfortunate situation," Castillo said in an email to staff and faculty hours after the news broke out. "Our university community mourns the loss of our student. We cling to Jesus' promise in the Bible that 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.'"

Salvador Sepúlveda Trejo, secretary of public security for the city of Montemorelos, said the investigation into the murder is ongoing. In recent months, the city has seen a rise of drug-related violence, with leaders of various "cartels" operating in the area and being arrested along with huge caches of weapons.

"Everything points to what could be a [case of] mistaken identity," Trejo said.

Perez, who lived on campus during the school year, was baptized during a week of prayer held at the university last November. University leaders are making arrangements with municipal and government officials to transport her body to her parents, who work at an Adventist school in the city of Santa Maria del Tule, Oaxaca, some 850 miles to the south.

A memorial service for Perez was held in the late afternoon of May 30 on the Montemorelos campus.

"We will always remember her for her good humor, bright smile and friendship, among her other fine qualities," Castillo said.

"Amid the current violence that threatens our country, we are convinced that through education, our institution contributes not only to the intellectual development but promotes peace and harmony to families and society," stated a press release issued by Montemorelos University.

--Benjamin Garcia contributed to this report

In Nepal, youth revival meeting is denomination's first

350 attend, many walk for days en route
A weekend youth rally in Nepal earlier this month, the first for the Seventh-day Adventist Church there, underscores how the denomination is growing in the formerly Hindu nation.

Some 350 Adventists under the age of 30 from Nepal and Northern India met from May 4 to 8 for the Nepali Youth for Christ conference in Banepa, about 20 miles east of the capital Kathmandu.

Many walked for days from their remote villages to bus stops to attend the conference, which included preaching and workshops on spiritual leadership, Bible study and health. At night, attendees slept on cement floors with a thin mat and blanket.

"These were some of the most earnest young Adventists I've ever met in my 10 years of preaching to youth," said Jeffrey Rosario, a pastor at the Cambrian Park Adventist Church in San José, California, United States, who spoke at the conference.

The conference leadership team was comprised of eight people, all between the ages of 16 and 21. Eighteen-year-old Madeline Cardona led in organizing the meeting.

Rosario said other young Adventists are helping to lead the church in Nepal. Flora, 20, helps run an orphanage that rescues children, many of whom are born and raised in prison with their inmate mothers. "For $400, a child can have food, clothing and shelter there for an entire year," Rosario said. "I felt like the guy at the end of Schindler's List: 'this car, it's worth 10 people, this gold pin, it's worth two more people.'" It made him think of his own possessions, he said.

"In my world, most 20-year-olds are more interested in Lady Gaga's new single or the latest gossip on Facebook," Rosario said.

Rosario's language interpreter for the conference, Philip Dangal, 19, and his younger brother David are recent converts and developing preachers. Their father was a witchdoctor who converted to Adventism.

"The gospel has clearly changed their entire family," Rosario said.
Attendees of the youth rally distribute literature to passers-by on the streets of Banepa, Saturday, May 7. Most of the Adventist Church's infrastructure in Nepal surrounds nearby Scheer Memorial Hospital, a church institution that was established in 1960.

Attendees spent Saturday afternoon on the streets of Banepa and surrounding villages sharing literature about Jesus, including church co-founder Ellen G. White's book Steps to Christ, translated into Nepali.

"It is heartening to see how the young people longed for the Adventist literature in the Nepali language, but that there are so few in print," said Bhaju Ram Shrestha, the first Adventist in Nepal.

"We want Jesus to come soon, and he is too kind to come soon because millions of Nepalese have not heard the sweetness of his presence, for what is the use of his second coming if the people have not experienced his first coming," Shrestha said.

Much of the Adventist Church's infrastructure in Nepal surrounds Scheer Memorial Hospital, an Adventist institution established in 1960.

According to the Adventist yearbook, there are about 8,000 Adventists in Nepal, up from about 5,400 in 2008. There are six ordained Adventist preachers in the country.

In 1993, Nepal had only 212 Adventists, according to the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia.

Nepal's population is more than 28 million. Formerly a Hindu nation, the Nepalese parliament declared it a secular state in 2006.

The next Nepali Youth for Christ meeting is scheduled for June, 2012.

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**Wilson opens historic South American Division Ministerial Council**

*Four thousand pastors hear emphasis on spiritual preparation*

26 May 2011, Foz do Iguacu, Paraná, Brazil
Felipe Lemos
"Are you really united in hope for the return of Jesus?" Seventh-day Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson asked some 4,000 pastors in South America yesterday during the opening of an unprecedented Ministerial Council, "United in Hope."

The meeting is a gathering of pastors from eight countries, and it is believed to be the first time any of the Adventist Church's 13 world divisions has brought all its pastors together in a single ministerial training event.

In his address to the pastors, who packed the convention center in the city of Foz do Iguacu, in the southern Brazilian state of Paraná, Wilson cited the recent episode in which an American religious figure predicted Jesus would return May 21. Wilson reminded his audience that Jesus will return on a day determined by God -- as the Bible plainly declares -- but that believers need to be genuinely prepared for that moment.

The president underlined his hope that the world's billions not miss the opportunity to be in heaven and that nothing diverts their focus from this great event. "The Lord Jesus is returning soon and we are looking for the blessed hope," Wilson declared.

Before the leader of nearly 17 million Adventists spoke, Erton Köhler, president of the denomination's South American Division, cited the legacy of his two predecessors, pastors Rui Nagel and John Wolff. He recounted the delivery of five million leaflets promoting the soon-coming return of Jesus Christ in a one-day evangelism outreach effort under Wolff's leadership on March 31, 1979, and the establishment of integrated evangelism when Nagel served as the Division's executive. Köhler also emphasized the need to pursue personal revival and reformation.

"Here we are citizens of heaven. Our [present] identity speaks louder than our origins," he said.

The intention to illustrate unity through diversity among the division's people and pastors was clear from the opening of the event, when representatives greeted those present in six different languages: Portuguese, Spanish, Aymara, Quechua, Guarani and Roma.
A special copy of the Bible, with nearly 70 supplements, including a full set of 27 Bible studies, was delivered to each of the pastors present. The Pastor's Bible was given as a gift, but was delivered with a sense of responsibility. Pastors were challenged to prepare themselves intensely to preach to the more than 300 million people living in the division's territory. In a moving scene, thousands of pastors placed their hands on the Bible in a pledge of dedication as world church's executive secretary G. T. Ng prayed for their faithfulness to God's Word.

On the opening night, there was also a first-ever census of Adventist pastors from South America. According to sociologist Tadeu de Jesus, all the participants were to complete a questionnaire consisting of 216 questions highlighting the pastor in his personal and professional life. This research will help generate indicators to measure processes and strategic outcomes for Adventist pastors.

At the close of the evening meeting, hundreds of prayer groups that will function throughout the five-day event were formed among the thousands of pastors present. Each group will focus its prayer time on the book "True Revival," which includes selections from Adventist Church co-founder Ellen G. White's writings.

Further definition on tap for Adventist fundamental belief on creation

New review committee follows 2010 Session action to 'strengthen' church's interpretation of origins

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

Members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's newly formed Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee are expected to meet in June, the next step in a five-year process to clarify the denomination's biblical understanding of origins.
Merging the church's fundamental belief on creation with the recently endorsed Reaffirmation of Creation statement will clarify the denomination's understanding of origins, said Adventist theologian Angel Rodriguez. Here, Rodriguez speaks at GC Session last year, just before delegates voted to endorse the statement. [photo: Gerry Chudleigh]

Last year, delegates of the 59th General Conference Session in Atlanta voted to reaffirm the church's belief in a "literal, recent, six-day creation." The vote formally endorsed a document drafted at the International Faith and Science Conference in 2004 and later that year affirmed by the church's Annual Council business meeting. The move addressed questions from some Adventists regarding interpretation of the denomination's Fundamental Belief Number 6.

The Reaffirmation of Creation statement specifies that the seven days in the Genesis creation account are "literal 24-hour days" and tags creation as "recent," while the existing fundamental belief reads, in part: "In six days the Lord made 'the heaven and the earth' ... and rested on the seventh day of that first week."

Because the Adventist Church cannot hold two official statements on the same belief, Session delegates also voted to grant top church administration what world church General Vice President Artur Stele called a "mandate" to merge the two statements' language and intent into one comprehensive fundamental belief.

The move is also expected to close what some Adventists claim is an interpretative loophole that hypothetically allows theistic evolution to explain the Genesis origins account, said Angel Rodriguez, director of the church's Biblical Research Institute (BRI) and Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee co-chair with Stele.

Theistic evolution posits that evolution is a natural process of creation, overseen by God, and seeks to make the biblical creation story compatible with natural evolution.

"We as the Adventist Church strongly believe that the Lord is our creator. If you take that away -- it's such a foundational belief -- or even compromise it, then there is an effect on other beliefs," Stele said.

Because theistic evolution stretches each creation day into epochs, many Adventists fear the theory threatens another of the church's core beliefs: observance of the seventh-day Sabbath as a celebration of the creation week.

While amending the church's fundamental beliefs might seem exceptional, it's neither unprecedented nor unsolicited. The preamble to the church's 28 Fundamental Beliefs invites revision as the church's understanding of truth expands.

"We state, 'This is how we understand Scripture,' but we also state that if we find a better expression or better wording -- or if our understanding is broadened -- then we will be open to change," Stele said. "We don't have doctrines like some other denominations -- unmovable, unchangeable.

**Why not?**

Early Adventist Church leaders were adamant that the emerging church not be corralled by creeds. "Making a
creed is setting the stakes, and barring up the way to all future advancement," church co-founder James White said during a discussion in 1861. "Suppose the Lord ... should give us some new light that did not harmonize with our creed?"

Ten years later, the then Review and Herald magazine published a list of "Fundamental Principles," drafted by early church leader Uriah Smith. They were printed with a disclaimer that sought to allay any remaining unease: "We have no articles of faith, creed or discipline, aside from the Bible. We do not put forth this as having any authority with our people, nor is it designed to secure uniformity among them as a system of faith, but is a brief statement of what is, and has been, with great unanimity, held by them," Smith wrote.

Those core beliefs shifted in number and content over the decades, but were never officially voted by the church until 1980.

Two years before the 1980 GC Session in Dallas, Texas, a few church administrators at church headquarters wrote a preliminary draft of what would become the Fundamental Beliefs. Shortly afterward, scholars and theologians at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, participated in rewriting the beliefs, launching a revision process involving academics, administrators and church members.

What emerged were a set of beliefs that condensed and codified key Bible-based principles universally held by the church.

"A major reason we've been able to achieve widespread agreement among Adventists worldwide is because the Fundamental Beliefs keep very close to the wording of Scripture. They either quote Scripture directly or paraphrase it," said Bill Johnson, who was among the group of scholars and theologians at the Seminary tasked with rewriting the preliminary draft.

**How a belief is changed**

The Fundamental Beliefs were first formally changed to accommodate the "Growing in Christ" belief voted in 2005 at the 58th GC Session. During that same Session, church administrators also voted to adopt a protocol guiding any further changes to the Fundamental Beliefs.

Suggested changes to the church's beliefs must be rooted, the protocol states, in a "serious concern" for the "well-being of the world church and its message and mission," as well as be Bible-based and "informed" by the writings of church co-founder Ellen G. White.

A suggestion can come from the world field or world church headquarters. In this case, then newly elected world church President Ted N. C. Wilson called for revision of the church's belief on creation, responding to challenges to the church's interpretation of origins.
Protocol states that once a revision is entertained, world church headquarters should create an ad hoc committee to "coordinate" the revision process -- this time, the Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee, co-chaired by Stele and Rodriguez.

Joined by Adventist Review Editor and Publisher Bill Knott and BRI Associate Director Gerhard Pfandl, Stele and Rodriguez will draft the first revision of Fundamental Belief Number 6 in the coming months.

Cue church administrators, theologians, scholars and local church members, all of whom will review the suggested draft as it circulates church business meetings at headquarters and each of the church's 13 world divisions. Later, to solicit feedback from members worldwide, the draft will appear online and in the Adventist Review, which historically published the church's beliefs as they evolved over the years.

"We want to make it as accessible to as many people as possible," Rodriguez said. "The committee will set up criteria by which to evaluate [the suggestions], trying to be as objective as possible."

Ultimately, the church's Annual Council will vote whether to add the revision to the agenda of the 2015 GC Session in San Antonio, Texas, where a final vote would occur.

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**In Bahamas, Parliament recognizes new Adventist administrative headquarters**

*Prime Minister commends church's outreach, introduces bill*

27 May 2011, Nassau, Bahamas

Nigel Coke/ACUM/ANN staff

During a parliament meeting this month, Bahamas' national leader said the Caribbean island nation welcomes the Seventh-day Adventist Church's emphasis on health, strong families and education.

"Your faith ministry and social outreach programs resonate with significant numbers of our citizens," said Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham, introducing a bill to recognize the church's newly established Atlantic Caribbean Union Mission as a legal entity of the church in the Bahamas.

Parliament unanimously voted to approve the legislation.

Church leaders first created the union mission when they split the former 104-year-old West Indies Union Conference into two administrative regions: the Jamaica Union Conference; and the Atlantic Caribbean Union Mission, which includes the Bahamas, Cayman Islands and the Turks & Caicos Islands and serves some 25,000
church members. The reorganization recognized membership growth in the region.

As well as granting official recognition, passage of the May 9 bill gives church administration in the Bahamas the authority to transact business and fulfill legal obligations, said Leonard Johnson, Atlantic Caribbean Union Mission president.

Speaking in favor of the bill, Parliamentarian Tommy Turnquest said the Adventist church in Bahamas should be proud of its role in the community, specifically its outreach to young people, the Bahama Journal reported.

Parliamentarian Fred Mitchell commended the church's humanitarian work on the island, citing food distribution and home repair projects. "I would like to thank them for it," Mitchell said. Other parliamentarians pointed out the church's high standards of education and outreach programs.

The Atlantic Caribbean Union Mission was inaugurated in January and comprises three conferences, one mission and six primary and secondary schools in the region. It also owns and operates with the Jamaica Union Conference the Northern Caribbean University in Mandeville, Jamaica.