In Guyana, President Jagdeo commends Adventist community focus

National leader enlists further support from church to address social, economic challenges

7 Jun 2011, Georgetown, Guyana
Barbara Savory/IAD/ANN staff

Guyana's national leader last week commended the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South America nation for its community focus.
"I wanted to personally say 'thank you' to the Adventist Church for the tremendous work it has done in keeping faith alive in Guyana and for assisting with the complex social task we have set for ourselves as a country," Bharrat Jagdeo said.

His comments came during a keynote address at a Guyana Conference business session, during which church administration recognized last year's recipient of the United Nations Champion of the Earth award for his contributions to the nation. Jagdeo was among several awardees honored for volunteering their time and expertise to uplift the people of Guyana.

Preaching to the converted once a week won't transform the community, Jagdeo reminded session delegates.

"Jesus' life was characterized not just by prayer, but by service," he said. "So we need not just to pray in beautiful edifices, but go into the communities where the people are."

Jagdeo recognized the church's role in national development, calling on Adventists to "strengthen the character of every Guyanese, both those who fear God and those who don't." The hallmarks of development and progress -- such as better access to healthcare, education and better paying jobs -- are, alone, inadequate to satisfy human need, he said.

A Hindu, Jagdeo made numerous references to scripture during his remarks. "The bible has all the lessons we need, whether we are Christian or non-Christian," he said.

Jagdeo also encouraged the Adventist Church to intensify its role as a support system for people struggling with social and economic challenges. During such situations, "The church has to be there ... to lend a helping hand," he said.

Using the speech as an opportunity to promote better race relations among Guyana's citizens, Jagdeo cited the biblical principle of "love your neighbor as yourself" established by Jesus in the New Testament. "If we follow this principle in our homes, in our society, here in Guyana, or in the world, then ... the relationships among people will be significantly better," he said.

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### In North America, Adventist leadership to provide direction for region's media ministries

'Don't be satisfied with what you did yesterday,' Jackson says; a call to embrace new media

6 Jun 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
George Johnson/ANN staff

Top Seventh-day Adventist Church leadership in North America committed last month to prioritizing the church's media ministries in the region.

"[Our church] offers a message of hope to a world in need. You and I have been given the privilege of delivering that message," Dan Jackson, president for the church in North America, said at the region's first media summit.

Jackson challenged Adventist communicators to honestly evaluate whether the church is reacting to a changing
media landscape. "Are we looking at all the tools that are available to us?" he said, later pledging the full support and direction of regional leadership in embracing new media.

The May 22 to 23 summit drew church leaders, lay people and media professionals to Ontario, California, to brainstorm ways church media can better connect with its audience. Among presenters were filmmaker Phil Cooke and social media guru Brian Solis.

Awareness of the church in North America does not match the considerable money spent on past media ministries and requires re-evaluation, Jackson said.

"Don't be satisfied with what you did yesterday," he said, later acknowledging that the need to expand the church's media ministries is not an indictment of past or current efforts. Rather, church leaders should take their cue from forerunners who were "on the scene" from the "very earliest development of technology," Jackson said.

"I commend all our broadcasts," he added.

The North American Division currently operates seven media ministries: Breath of Life, Esperanza TV, Faith For Today, It Is Written, La Voz de la Esperanza, LifeTalk Radio and Voice of Prophecy.

"I admire Pastor Jackson for taking ownership in this new direction that the division is taking," said Paula Sanders Morris, a summit attendee from Georgia.

Besides discussing traditional media platforms such as television and radio, attendees considered the role of social media in church ministry.

"In the past, our church has been afraid of [social media] because when you put your information out there, it isn't being moderated," said Gordon Harty, a California-based software engineer for the North America Division. "But ... if we aren't out there, we don't exist. We can either stay where we are and remain irrelevant or move forward, take the risk and stay relevant," Harty said.

Delwin Finch, pastor for Web ministries at Forest Lake Adventist Church in Apopka, Florida, said he attended the summit to hear the church's take on social media. Finch and his team enlist social media tools to enhance church services, including texting prayer requests during services, he said.

Church administration in North America is expected to review suggestions made during brainstorming sessions at the summit. A newly formed committee will study how best to implement a new media strategy for the region, leaders said.

"We have a well-defined territory and a well-defined task," Jackson said. "We're not talking about inventing something new here. We're asking 'how do we move into the future?'

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**Church Chat: London-area church finds Web technology helps members invite friends**

*Neves on 'inspiring' vs. 'convincing' content to reach big, secular city*

5 Jun 2011, Montego Bay, Jamaica
The tourist couple from Sweden seemed at home when they walked into the Wimbledon Seventh-day Adventist Church in England halfway through a recent service, even though it was their first time visiting. Pastor Sam Neves stopped his sermon to welcome and invite them to take the last two open seats, on the front row of the 160-seat sanctuary. He later found out they attend online and considered the congregation their own.

That result is rooted in a church board action 3 years ago, following Neves' bold request of 15,000 English pounds (roughly US$20,000 then) for a media ministry -- the exact number of the existing church budget at the time.

Over dinner at the GiEN forum, Sam Neves said that Adventist content should inspire, not just convince, which the church has done historically. Engaging content will inspire people from a secular background, he said. [photo: Ansel Oliver]

The board was equally divided, he said, but three meetings later it granted approval.

Now the technology is allowing members to more easily invite their un-churched friends to share experiences with their church family. Once a month, the church holds a secular-friendly service, and members share online links to videos and other resources for friends to "check out."

An online church presence isn't unique in the denomination, but Neves says the move is rare for a small church and underscores how technology is able to help connect people seeking God. The ministry also includes media-savvy members, who otherwise might not attend regularly, he says.

Neves, 29, is originally from Brazil and earned a master's degree in theology at Newbold College in England. He shared his story at last week's Global Internet Evangelism Network forum, an annual Web technology conference of the Adventist Church.

Before addressing the audience, he spoke with ANN about why messages should inspire, not just convince. He also shared what he's learned about Adventist evangelism and how he would have launched an online ministry differently.

Interview excerpts:

**Adventist News Network:** Why did you feel it was important to lobby your board for an online ministry?

**Sam Neves:** We wanted to go beyond the walls of our small church. Getting out into the community is sometimes just shooting yourself in the foot. We're in a central hub of a location, but my members live all over the place. My impact is not at the church, it's in those different locations. Yes we still keep the church open and feed the homeless, but the real impact won't occur here because members don't live there. So we wanted to bring what we have here to the environment where they are.
ANN: What's the focus of your service designed for secular people?

Neves: The key word to elders is to keep this service "entertaining." That's a dirty word in some circles, and some of my members aren't ready for that. But secular people like to be entertained -- they go to live shows and stand-up comedy, and they're no strangers to the stage. That service needs to be entertaining and inspiring and challenging because secular people want that. They expect to be challenged in regards to their indifference to the suffering that goes on in their world. So instead of "entertaining" I now tell my church that service needs to be "engaging" and I've had no problems since.

ANN: What have you learned in establishing this ministry?

Neves: This environment is a magnet for young professionals who are media specialists but have a stale faith because they have no outlet to produce media in a godly environment. Our Leandro Silva, he's a TV producer for Sky Channel 219, and now instead of on the margins of the church, he's being integrated. An app developer, Jader Feijo, when I met him, he was borderline leaving the church, but now he's happy producing media for the church.

ANN: Anything else you've learned?

Neves: We learned that evangelism works. Adventists find their guilt is released when their friends join their [church] community online and watch from home.

ANN: Guilt?

Neves: When I go from church to church we push evangelism, "bring your friends to Jesus," but in the western world, we don't really do that. We're not comfortable and some can feel guilty for that. Seems to be much easier for [the members'] street credit to invite [their friends] online.

ANN: Looking back, what might you have done differently?

Neves: I would have invested less initially and would have invested progressively as the right people joined the team and their technical ability increased. We spent about 13,000 pounds in equipment and setup.

ANN: Future plans?

Neves: It's not enough to do this once a week, so we're trying to start a Web channel. We don't have a lot of nice equipment, but we've found viewers will tolerate a cheap Web camera as long as it's live. We'll launch July 1, a Friday night, with an alternative service.

ANN: Alternative to what?

Neves: We've found that people at home are more engaged if they were mentioned [by name] and could ask questions. So Friday night we'll have that format. The sermon, I mean, the message will be 13 minutes and we'll spend 25 minutes on questions relating to that topic. We've also found the content has to be good.

ANN: How would you define "good" content?

Neves: "Inspiring." Not necessarily "convincing." Historically, Adventism has tried to convince. If we're going to have an impact in the secular world, we've got to learn to inspire.
ANN: How so?

Neves: Jesus, he had the truth, not because of the statements he said, but because of his life. It was the true life. This is why no secular person has a problem with Jesus. The true life is inspiring all by itself.