Chinese Protestant leaders' visit to headquarters precedes official visit to China next year

Wilson to facilitate relations with Adventist believers in China next March

4 Oct 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Ansel Oliver/ANN

Leaders from the official Protestant church in China paid a courtesy visit to the Seventh-day Adventist Church headquarters yesterday, the second time in two years.
The visit of representatives of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee precedes the visit of the denomination's president to China next year.

Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson and a small delegation from the church's headquarters is scheduled to visit China during March and April to strengthen relations with Adventist believers in China.

Leaders from the council previously visited the Adventist Church's headquarters in July of 2010.

"We are grateful to have contact and visit Adventist believers in China through the official organization, the China Christian Council," Wilson told Chinese officials during a protocol lunch yesterday. He thanked the leaders for helping to facilitate the visit.

The China Christian Council is a post-denominational organization of Protestants in China. There are some 23 million Protestant Christians in China, said Reverend Shen Xuebin, chairman of Shanghai Committee of Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church.

"Christians are a minority in China. Most people in China are atheists," Shen said.

Adventist believers in China fall under the China Christian Council and are recognized as a special group for their worship services on Saturday. It's estimated that there are some 400,000 Adventist believers in China.

In the past few years, Adventist believers in China have built several large churches in agreement with authorities.

Next year's trip would be Wilson's first visit to China. His predecessor, Jan Paulsen, visited China in 2009.

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**ADRA among agencies calling for eased restrictions on humanitarian aid in Somalia**

*Open letter asks factions within country to 'put people before politics'*

29 Sep 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
ANN staff

The humanitarian arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is among 20 non-governmental agencies publically calling for a dramatic shift in current restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian aid to Somalia.
An estimated 750,000 lives are now at risk in the East African country, where an insurgent group has attempted to ban Western aid agencies from the country and block starving Somalis from fleeing the country to neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia.

Low rainfall across much of the Horn of Africa, which includes Somalia, has contributed to the region's worst drought in 60 years. Six of the country's regions have now declared famine. In recent months, political instability within the country has exacerbated the situation.

In an open letter last week, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency joined other such organizations to call for an immediate and full "cessation of hostilities" across Somalia. The letter also asked for "free passage of assistance and for those seeking assistance" and the removal of "restrictions on the delivery of impartial aid."

With the onset of autumn rains anticipated in the coming weeks, fears of the spread of cholera and malaria are rising.

Such diseases "will have a devastating effect on malnourished [Somalis]," agency officials stated in the letter. "Current restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian assistance are preventing the rapid scale-up of aid that is so desperately needed," they said.

The letter called for "all-inclusive dialogue" and warned against the use of force in increasing humanitarian aid, citing the country's recent history, in which military action "has often led to increased death and suffering, and further reduced humanitarian access."

ADRA's recent efforts in Somalia have been "challenging," a press release from the agency stated last week. "However, the agency remains committed to the people of Somalia and continues to provide aid as circumstances allow."

ADRA and other agencies are calling the next few months in the Somalia "pivotal," where "putting people before politics could save thousands of lives."

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Possible Annual Council vote would change church's operations in Middle East

Upcoming business meetings to include discussion of membership audits, urban evangelism launch; 2020 Session location

3 Oct 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Ansel Oliver/ANN

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's top officials next week are expected to vote on a slew of business items, including a possible structural change for operations in the Middle East, as well as the location for the 2020 General Conference Session.
Meeting for annual business meetings, the Adventist Church's Executive Committee is also expected to witness the launch of a worldwide urban-area evangelism initiative, said Orville Parchment, assistant to Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson. Wilson will encourage participation in the initiative in each of the denomination's 13 world divisions during his Sabbath sermon on October 8, Parchment said.

The committee is scheduled to conduct business meetings starting Sunday at Annual Council, which is set for October 7 through October 12. Meetings will be held at the denomination's headquarters building in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

The committee is comprised of more than 300 world church executives, pastors and lay members.

An advance copy of the meeting agenda is not made public because it is not finalized until it is approved by the committee at the beginning of business.

Church officers confirmed that these items are set on the agenda, but specific details are not being released yet because of a need for committee members to hear of and vote on the items first, they said. Other potential agenda items include:

- A half-day of leadership development training.
- A demonstration of how some regions may require further membership analysis due to membership mortality rates being vastly different from local mortality rates of the general population.
- An announcement of research recently launched to guide future strategic planning. Studies will examine church employees, members and former members. Researchers will study their personal spiritual life patterns, as well as their views of the church and its operations.
- A discussion of the North American and Trans-European divisions' request for a variance to the requirement that conference presidents be ordained ministers.
- A continued discussion from Spring Meeting in April on how church administration can be more transparent and accountable.
In northern India, ADRA distributes supplies in wake of widespread flooding

In nearby state, earthquake damages homes, church; Wilson offers encouragement

4 Oct 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
ADRA/ANN staff

The humanitarian arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is responding in the wake of monsoon rains that have flooded wide stretches of northern India, killing at least 80 people since August.

Flood waters collapsed mud huts and stranded hundreds of thousands of people in recent days.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency is providing clean water, sanitation and hygiene supplies, focusing on two districts in the state of Orissa, which has seen the most damage. While the water is beginning to recede, rains continue in these districts and the threat of water-born diseases and malaria outbreaks remains high, ADRA India reported.

While ADRA India's initial response was hampered by heavy rains and muddy conditions, officials were able to distribute supplies before access was affected by a second round of flooding.

ADRA India reported that hundreds of thousands of people have been evacuated to higher ground to escape the floodwaters in low-lying areas. More than 2,700 villages have been affected, with more than 300 square miles of cultivated land submerged. Reports indicate that schools in severely affected areas are closed until floodwaters recede.

Meanwhile, Adventists in northeast India said members were affected when a 6.9-magnitude earthquake struck the northern state of Sikkim near the border with Nepal last month.

Landslides blocking roads and electricity interruptions have made it impossible to contact many members, said Gordon Christo, secretary for the church's Southern Asia Division. Reports so far indicate that many homes and at least one church incurred damage, he said.

Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson offered words of encouragement to members in India.

"May God guide each of you and your colleagues during this difficult time as the church and its agencies assess how best to help those in this situation," Wilson said in an email response to Christo.

For information on ADRA's continuing response in India, visit adra.org.
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Not spam
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