Jamaica PM commends Adventist contributions to society
Church’s focus on education, national development noted during meeting with Wilson

North America retracts “commissioned” ministers as top leader candidates
Division president acknowledges administration crossed policy

Remembrance: Persuasive bookseller Ramirez, 93, was first Hispanic GC director
Led Publishing department from 1980-’85
Seventh-day Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson met with top Jamaican national leaders during a recent tour of the island nation to promote the church’s Revival and Reformation initiative.

Wilson, his wife Nancy and local Adventist Church officials paid a courtesy call to Jamaica’s Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller and Governor General Patrick Allen. The visit coincided with the island nation’s 50th anniversary of independence.

Miller commended the church’s contributions to education and national development in the country. “The Seventh-day Adventist Church plays such an important role and has been doing a wonderful job in Jamaica,” she said.

There are some 270,000 Adventists worshipping at more than 650 churches in Jamaica. Church officials in the country estimate that about one in every eleven people there is an Adventist.

Wilson told the prime minister that he hopes the church in Jamaica continues to meet the “high Biblical standard of service to others and service to God.”

“We want to be seen as an integral part of society. We want Seventh-day Adventists to be known as people who truly and genuinely fulfill the ministry of Jesus,” he said, citing education, health outreach, social programs and spiritual guidance.

Before praying with the prime minister for the government and people of Jamaica, Wilson read Micah 6:8, which he said provides a formula for leadership. The Old Testament verse cites justice, mercy and humility as goals worth striving for.

While in the Caribbean, Wilson also toured Haiti. Two years after a devastating earthquake, Adventists there continue to rebuild churches and schools with the help of Maranatha Volunteers International, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency and the offerings of church members worldwide.

Wilson addressed the media, offered church members a message of hope and encouragement, and visited church institutions, including Haiti Adventist University. More than 25,000 displaced persons found refuge there after the earthquake.

Click here to watch a video report of Wilson’s visit to Haiti.
The president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s North American Division apologized to the division’s Executive Committee for some inadvertent oversteps in policy in the division’s quest to allow commissioned ministers – including women – to serve as top leaders of local administrative units of the denomination.

The acknowledgement from division President Dan Jackson came in a January 31 letter following the results of the administration’s own policy review of its actions at its Year-End Meetings in 2010 and 2011.

The review determined that the division had acted beyond its authority in modifying its Working Policy to include commissioned ministers as candidates for presidents of local conferences.

That policy discussion began in 2009, under previous presidents of both the division and the General Conference world headquarters.

In his letter, Jackson wrote that the division had continued to discuss the matter and operated under an incorrect “assumption” of the extent of its authority within its territory.

Jackson stated that the division “takes full responsibility for failing to do sufficient research into the constitutional issues that impacted our decisions. In bringing this matter to the floor in 2010 and 2011 we were doing so under the assumption that the North American Division had a constituency separate and distinct from the General Conference. Unfortunately, we were wrong and we sincerely apologize.”

The first page of the General Conference Constitution states, “Each division of the General Conference is authorized to carry out responsibilities in the territory assigned to it. …In order to carry the authority of the General Conference, the actions of division committees shall, of necessity, be in harmony with and complementary to the decisions of the General Conference in Session, and the actions of the General Conference Executive Committee between Sessions.”

Still, some church leaders both in North America and at the General Conference say the recent discussion highlights a need for a clearer definition of a division’s delegated authority.

Indeed, the General Conference is already moving on the matter. Last month, administration requested a group to review governance documents outlining the General Conference and division relationships, said Lowell Cooper, a vice president of the General Conference. That group will later offer a decision concerning whether additional clarity is needed, Cooper said.

Each of the 13 divisions function as extensions of the General Conference. Divisions do not have their own constituencies, constitutions or bylaws. However, within division territories, unions – which are comprised of conferences – each have their own constituencies.
In an interview, Jackson said the North American Division would continue to promote equality of men and women in leadership positions. He said ordination is “a separate issue” and would not be addressed at this time.

“We have no intention of dropping the consensus of the North American church that we need to empower our women of God who are called to be pastors and leaders,” Jackson said. “We will not move away from this, but we will not cross policy again.”

The Adventist Church currently allows only ordained ministers to serve as conference presidents. In 2005, the world church voted for this distinction to also apply to the denomination’s president.

The “commissioned” ministers credential was authorized by the General Conference Executive Committee in 1987. In 1994, the Executive Committee delineated positions that could receive such credentials – typically treasurers, principals, directors, university presidents, hospital CEOs, and others not on an ordination track. That move also granted the title to associate pastoral care givers, including women.

General Conference policy and model constitutions for unions and conferences state that a president shall be an “ordained” minister of experience. The North American Division’s change of its own policy in 2010 was intended to expand this statement to read “ordained/commissioned.”

In his letter, Jackson stated that 107 of the division’s roughly 4,000 ministers are women. He also stated his support for women commissioned ministers, citing the division’s women clergy conference in Berrien Springs, Michigan, April 23 to 26.

The North American Division includes Bermuda, Canada, the French possession of Saint Pierre and Miquelon, the United States, and the Pacific islands comprising the denomination’s Guam-Micronesia Mission.

*click HERE to see a pdf version of the letter.*

**Remembrance: Persuasive bookseller Ramirez, 93, was first Hispanic GC director**
Louis A. Ramirez was such a bold and effective salesman that he could sell religious literature to other Christian ministers who had denounced Seventh-day Adventist literature from their own pulpits.

Ramirez, who died February 6 at age 93, grew the door-to-door literature sales ministry throughout Latin America in the 1960s and ’70s and went on to become Publishing director and the first Hispanic departmental director at the Adventist world church headquarters. He held the position from 1980 to 1985.

Door-to-door literature sales flourished under his tenure as Publishing director for the Inter-American Division, said Hilda Matar-Montero, who served as his secretary in the 1970s.

When visiting Adventist colleges with fellow division officers, Ramirez preferred to stay in the dorm with students and take a few out selling door-to-door. A persuasive seller, in the 1960s Ramirez had about half of the Costa Rican Adventist vocational school students working as literature evangelists, then known as colporteurs.

He would often sell to busy shopkeepers whom students thought were sure to reject him.

“He was an outstanding gentlemen,” said Armando Miranda, a general vice president of the Adventist world church. “He was a persuasive, dynamic person and at the same time very kind.”

Ramirez had a knack for sales throughout life. He launched Jacuzzi Universal’s export business by convincing his reluctant boss to let him sell in Mexico, later returning with more orders than the company could fill. During World War II he was drafted into the U.S. Army and got out of a deployment to Japan by convincing his commanding officer to let him launch a radio show to entertain and support wounded troops on base at Buckley Field in Colorado.

He joined the Adventist Church in 1952 at age 34, having been exposed to the church by Adventist friends, missionaries, and, of course, its literature.

Ramirez was born into a Catholic family in 1918 in Richmond, California, United States. He was the only child of a railway worker who had fled the Mexican revolution. Their home, which had no plumbing, would shake when trains passed by 50 feet away.

Ramirez grew up speaking Spanish and became bilingual after entering school at age six. He was an avid reader and took several night classes in foreign trade and banking from the University of
California, Berkeley. He was a local celebrity in the Bay Area as a host of a bilingual show on KRE radio.

It was an Army buddy, Kenneth Holland – who would later become editor of the denomination’s Signs of the Times magazine – who first introduced Ramirez to the Adventist Church. Ramirez had him conduct chapel services on the radio at Buckley Field.

Ramirez worked for Jacuzzi from 1940 to 1958, having helped establish factories in Mexico and Argentina, where he would occasionally meet Adventist missionaries, including David Baasch. Aboard a Pan American flight in 1948 he met an Adventist who gave him a subscription to Adventist magazines. Ramirez’s wife, Virginia, read Signs of the Times and joined the church in 1950. He followed two years later, baptized by Lawrence Maxwell, a longtime denominational editor.

Ramirez continued to work for Jacuzzi and did colporteuring work in Northern California before being called in 1959 to serve as Publishing director for the Central American Union, based in Costa Rica. He was ordained as a minister there in 1963.

He was appointed associate Publishing director of the Inter-American Division in 1968 and director in 1972, a position he held until elected to serve at the world headquarters.

In a 1980 article in Publishing Digest, he said, “I am convinced that prior training and experience in business as a layman, the study of the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy, plus the good example and counsel of dear Christian friends have been among God’s means to prepare me for service in the literature ministry.”

In retirement Ramirez worked with the Pacific Union’s Public Affairs and Religious Liberty department and then moved to live with his son in McAllen, Texas.

His wife preceded him in death in 2002, as well as his daughter, Martina, in 2007. Ramirez is survived by his son Luis, daughter Loretta, and four grandchildren.

His son Luis, a retired art professor, said his father still made his mark selling after retirement. Bible publishing company C. D. Stampley hired him as a consultant to develop a bilingual edition. He sold so many Bibles in Los Angeles that his bosses told him to ease up. The other companies were upset, his son recalls.

“Dad was really a dynamo. He was my best friend.”

The **ANN news bulletin** is a weekly recap of news and information from the Communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist world church headquarters and is distributed by Adventist News Network.

**Reproduction requirements:** ANN encourages the republication of its news stories and accompanying editorial photos. Stories may be reproduced in full, in shortened form, or as one of several sources used to construct a news story. Please note that ANN’s material is copyrighted. When reproducing ANN stories, the words "Adventist News Network" must appear either under the headline or immediately following the article.
When reproducing photos that appear on ANN, please credit the photographer and ANN.

**ANN staff:** Williams Costa Jr., director; Ansel Oliver, assistant director; Elizabeth Lechleitner, editorial coordinator. Portuguese translations by Azenilto Brito, Spanish translations by Marcos Paseggi and French translations by Wenda Ozone-Mourandee.