In Rwanda, Adventist president highlights unity, reconciliation and lifting up Jesus
Nearly two decades after genocide, nation is healing; foundation stone laid for new campus in Kigali

Inter-America hosts nearly 100,000 evangelism events
Division's coordinated meetings are latest in series promoting revival and reformation

In Rwanda, Adventist president highlights unity, reconciliation and lifting up Jesus

Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson
Seventh-day Adventists in Rwanda are committed to bolstering society and bringing unity and reconciliation to the East African nation, world church President Ted N. C. Wilson said during an official visit last week.

Wilson, currently on a tour of the region, spoke for Sabbath worship service on March 3 at Rwanda’s Amahoro National Stadium in Kigali.

Wilson commended the spirit of camaraderie he observed. The nation continues to heal after genocide claimed the lives of as many as 800,000 people in 1994. The region has experienced intermittent war for decades between Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups.

“God is blessing Rwanda,” Wilson said, adding that he is grateful for the “great respect” Rwandans have for “God’s church.”

Several government officials, including the country’s prime minister and the mayor of Kigali, were present for worship services, which drew an audience of more than 30,000 people.

Wilson reminded government representatives that the Adventist Church is committed to supporting Rwandan society through education, health and spiritual programs. The church leader also took the opportunity to thank national officials for protecting religious liberty in the country.

“May it always be said that the country of Rwanda provides religious freedom for all its people,” Wilson said, citing the government’s policy to allow Seventh-day Adventists to complete their national community service on Sunday rather than Saturday.

“We do thank you for that special provision,” Wilson said, adding that Adventists “respect, foster and nurture religious freedom for all people.”

Earlier in the week, Prime Minister Pierre Habumuremyi joined Wilson in laying the foundation stone for an expansion of the Adventist University of Central Africa. The new School of Science and Technology in Kigali will “help advance God’s work,” Wilson said, adding that the extension campus will support many Rwandans in the community, not just Adventists.

“The government of Rwanda appreciates all the Adventist Church programs in the country, especially those in the education sector, health [and] preparing hearts of people to be good citizens,” Habumuremyi said, according to The New Times.

The church operates Voice of Hope in Rwanda, a radio station that covers 75 percent of the country. Radio is still a primary news source in Rwanda -- Africa’s most densely populated country -- where few people have television or Internet access.

In his stadium address, Wilson’s message focused on sharing Jesus.

“Is it sometimes easier to participate in the religious activities of the church than to talk about Jesus? For sure, these activities testify of Jesus. But are you willing personally to talk to somebody and tell them about your precious relationship with Jesus? Wilson asked.
“I want to urge every Seventh-day Adventist in Rwanda to lift up Jesus in Rwanda,” he said.

Part of that witness involves sharing the church’s foundation in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy, Wilson added, referring to the Bible and the writings of church co-founder Ellen G. White.

“Let the people know that you believe in God’s Holy Word,” he said. Wilson also encouraged Adventists in East-Central Africa to join in the world church’s initiative to distribute White’s book The Great Controversy.

The church in East-Central Africa has committed to sharing 15 million copies of the book, which traces God’s leading throughout history and provides spiritual answers for today’s unsettled world.

As he often does during official visits, Wilson also reminded church members in Rwanda to embrace their identity as Seventh-day Adventists.

“When people ask what religion you are, don’t be hesitant or tentative. Don’t just say, ‘Well, I’m an Adventist.’ Say, “I am a Seventh-day Adventist,” Wilson said.

Adventists preach a sermon "every time you say it," he said, explaining that “Seventh-day Adventist” embodies the church’s distinct beliefs -- observance of the seventh-day Sabbath and hope in Christ’s soon return.

Wilson also urged pastors and lay people in Rwanda to “work together in a dynamic way” to share the church’s message of spiritual revival and reformation.

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Inter-America hosts nearly 100,000 evangelism events

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Libna Stevens/IAD/ANN staff

Nearly 100,000 local evangelistic series across the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Inter-American Division last month marked the latest step in the implementation of the denomination’s Revival and Reformation initiative in the region.

The two-week effort was part of a plan involving thousands of church leaders and lay members working in small groups to promote the testifying and sharing of their faith.

Previous division-wide events in the program have focused on prayer and Bible study.
The series are part of a one-year plan leading up to the recruitment of 1 million people trained for discipleship.

Although the number of new members from recent outreach efforts are not all accounted for, organizers said the goal is not numbers but getting new members involved in the church and small groups. They are encouraged to invite friends and neighbors and become active disciples in fulfilling the mission of the church, organizers said.

The denomination held the local events in churches, auditoriums and community centers, said Melchor Ferreyra, Personal Ministries director for the division.

Ferreyra spoke to hundreds of people gathered at the Puebla Central Adventist Church in Mexico, where some 150 community members met each night to learn more about the Adventist Church.

Ferreyra said that small group leaders in the area were so motivated for evangelism that 22 were chosen to each establish a new church. Lay preachers and Bible instructors were also teamed up with each new leader, Ferreyra said.

During the day, Pastor Ferreyra met with small group leaders at churches to encourage and motivate for further involvement in the two districts. That pastoral district has only 2,000 Seventh-day Adventists in a population of about 3 million.

The Inter-American Division includes Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and the five northernmost countries of South America.

In Guatemala, more than 1,400 events were held with nearly 21,000 people attending. Church leaders reported that some 1,100 new members joined the church during the two week meetings were held throughout the Central American country.

In El Salvador, more than 800 evangelistic meetings were held, said Hector Sanchez, Ministerial Association secretary for the division.

Sanchez held the week’s series in the Cojutepeque Central Adventist Church, a small city close to San Salvador, the capital city. He spoke to dozens of church members and some 80 visitors each night.

On the island of Barbados, Belkis Archbold, Health Ministries director for the church in Inter-America, spoke at the Black Rock Adventist Church where more than 150 people attended a meetings. The series, held February 11-18, focused on health topics and offered health screenings.

"It was the kind of community outreach that drew members and visitors alike to listen to the health message so helpful for our daily living," Archbold said.

In Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, at the Quisqueya Adventist Church, Leon Wellington, vice president of the church in Inter-America, spoke to more than 40 visitors every night about Jesus being the solution to all problems.

The comprehensive initiative follows the appeal of Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson to facilitate spiritual revival and reformation.
Ferreyra said the coordinated efforts have already made a difference.

"This year is like no other," he said. "Because under the context of revival and reformation we have dedicated time for prayer, focus on the Bible and now with testifying. There cannot be effective preaching without revival and the step-by-step process is seeing results."

The next step in the initiative is a division-wide satellite program on March 31 based in Guatemala City. Church leaders are asking each member to bring one visitor to the program at local downlink centers.

For more information on Inter-America's Spiritual Revival and Reformation initiative and live programs, visit www.interamerica.org.

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**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.