Kenyan president Kibaki inaugurates Adventist university library
Church president Wilson also on hand for $6 million facility opening

In Romania, Wilson finds active community of Adventist believers
Visits to media center, shelter for abuse victims highlight impact

Revamped Adventist study center to expand research capacity of church
Historical analysis indicates God’s leading, guides policy and decision-making
Kenya’s President Mwai Kibaki praised the Seventh-day Adventist Church for promoting education to the nation and the wider African continent in a speech here last month to inaugurate the Adventist University of Africa’s (AUA) newly built Judith Thomas Library.

“I commend the Adventist University of Africa for championing one of the flagships of the social pillar by facilitating and promoting the provision of education,” said Kibaki, while acknowledging that the Adventist-sponsored university in Baraton was the first private university in the East African country.

On hand to host the Kenyan head of state was Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson, who underscored the Adventist church’s commitment to equipping the university to offer high quality education.

“The Seventh-day Adventist church believes and remains committed to offering an education that is socially, morally and spiritually enriching,” Wilson said. “The opening of this magnificent library is a testament to that focus.”

AUA typically enrolls about 380 students per semester and is directly affiliated with the Adventist world church’s headquarters.

Its new library, a three-story complex, was built at a cost of US$6 million, with the initial $1 million donated by U.S. philanthropist Judith Thomas. Another $1 million was mobilized through a special book project initiated by the late James Cress, then secretary of the Adventist world church’s Ministerial Association.

The library includes an Ellen G. White research center, which will house books related to Adventist Church heritage and an African heritage center featuring literature, art and cultural artifacts. The library also offers wireless Internet access and subscriptions to numerous online databases, providing student researchers with access to thousands of journals and books, said university Vice Chancellor Brepong Owusu-Antwi.

The foundation stone of the library was laid in 2005 by then Vice President of Kenya Moody Awori. The complex is located at the Advent Hill compound, which hosts the denomination’s East-Central Africa Division headquarters and Maxwell Adventist Academy.

The event was attended by local administrators, politicians and cabinet ministers. AUA council chairman Pardon Mwansa, a vice president of the Adventist world church, commended the church’s headquarters for its steadfastness in influencing transformational leadership through education.
A lighter moment of the ceremony came after the Nairobi Central Adventist Church choir led a musical presentation with Karura primary school students narrating a Biblical verse on peace. The students then released doves as a symbol of peace, but the white birds didn’t fly far. Wilson said to Kibaki in front of the crowd, “Mr. President those doves have not moved an inch from where their brief flight ended and I think that is evidence of the peace and tranquility that your coming here today signifies.”

In Romania, Wilson finds active community of Adventist believers

Jun. 18, 2012
Bucharest, Romania
Nelu Burcea/ANN staff

Seventh-day Adventists in Romania can use their position as Europe’s largest community of believers to positively impact the region, the denomination’s top official said during a recent visit.

Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson spoke to an audience of some 4,000 church members last week in Bucharest’s Palace Hall, once a landmark of the former Communist regime.

“God has blessed His people here in Romania. He blessed you with an enthusiasm for His work [and] He’s blessed you with love for the Adventist message,” Wilson said. “Your loyalty to God’s church is well-known. What a privilege it is to be part of this great family.”

Wilson called on church membership in Romania to continue to embrace the church’s “unifying” mission and support it through promotion of church initiatives such as The Great Controversy Project.

Church members there have already distributed more than half a million copies of the classic book by Ellen G. White, a co-founder of the denomination, said Teodor Hutanu, Adventist Church president in Romania.

Hutanu told Wilson that other church initiatives such as Revival and Reformation and Mission to Cities are likewise “well-known by the Romanian Adventist believers.”
“It is true that you are the strongest, largest contingent of Seventh-day Adventists in Europe,” Wilson said. “Reinforce that wonderful blessing God has given you in reaching out to every village, every city, every town.”

Impacting the community can only happen, however, if Adventists are “personally connected to Jesus through faith,” Wilson added.

While in Romania, Wilson toured the Adventist Media Center, the Life and Health Publishing House, the Adventist Theological Institute and an Adventist Development and Relief Agency shelter for victims of domestic abuse.

“I appreciate the involvement of the Romanian Adventist Church,” Wilson said after meeting and praying with shelter staff.

On Sabbath afternoon, Wilson took the opportunity to meet with young church members on the campus of the Adventist Theological Institute in Cernica. During a question-and-answer session, Wilson addressed topics ranging from Christian lifestyle and Adventist fundamental beliefs to his personal life as church president.

President of the church’s Euro-Africa Division, Bruno Vertallier, who accompanied Wilson on his tour of Romania, joined the Adventist leader in presenting brief spiritual messages during the session.

Later, in an interview for the church’s television network, Hope Channel, Wilson commended young Romanian Adventists for their “spirituality, depth and missionary zeal” and encouraged them to maintain their faith.

**Revamped Adventist study center to expand research capacity of church**

Adventist historian David Trim identifies a rare photo of an early church administrative meeting for current denominational officials, who look on. They were touring the newly expanded research center at Adventist headquarters on June 5 moments before its official re-opening. [photos: Ansel Oliver]
Seventh-day Adventist historians say a recent overhaul of the church’s research facilities signals a new commitment to deepening members’ historical understanding of Adventist identity and the denomination’s history.

The church’s Office of Archives, Statistics and Research (ASTR) opened a new research center at Adventist world church headquarters last week, with a reconfiguration of existing space that allows the office to accommodate four times as many external researchers as previously.

High-density shelving houses publications and periodicals, while rare historical photos decorate the walls. More photos, video- and audiocassettes -- along with 5,000 linear feet of the denomination’s documents -- are stored in a nearby temperature-controlled vault. The center also includes a computer, on which visiting researchers can access the office’s extensive online archives.

The June 5 official launch drew top church officials to the department, where they toured the new facilities and attended a brief ceremony.

“One of my goals is to encourage more people to research our history, because I do believe that, as Ellen White says, ‘We have nothing to fear for the future except as we forget the way the Lord has led us, and his teachings in our past history,’” ASTR Director David Trim told church leaders, noting that people often leave off the church co-founder’s mention of “teachings.”

“The way the Lord has led” is easy to remember, but ‘teachings’ requires, I think, some kind of analysis and study,” Trim added.

Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson, who also spoke at the launch, drew parallels between research done here on Earth and the records God is keeping. The New Testament book of Revelation, he said, indicates that the record books in heaven will stand as eternal testaments to God’s justice and mercy.

Likewise, Wilson suggested, the research center “will not only furnish people with a historical account
and accurate understanding of the past, but will also truly be a center of spiritual impulse."

“Let’s hope that people will see how God has led us in the past, how he will lead us in the future and how His teachings have contributed to the flourishing of His work in spite of the challenges and difficulties we face,” Wilson said.

He also noted that the expanded facilities reflect the “added emphasis” the church has lately placed on research. Last year, top church officials voted to establish a permanent budget for Adventist research meant to inform the church’s strategic plan. They also revised the name of the former Office of Archives and Statistics to include mention of its new research component.

The office has worked to restore numerous historical photographs once stashed in drawers, where they cracked and yellowed. Now treated, mounted and framed, the photos grace the walls of the research center.

For the occasion of the launch, ASTR staff also had on display a vintage glass slide projector similar to models used by many Adventist evangelists in the past, Trim said.

Among photos of notable Adventist historians on display is an early color photograph of the former missionary to India and world church President W. A. Spicer, after whom Adventist-run Spicer Memorial College in India is named.

“It’s nice to have a color photograph of one of our pioneers and remember that they were fully rounded people, and not living in black and white or sepia,” Trim said.

Another photo shows a meeting of the world church’s Executive Committee from 1958.

“As one guest observed, there are neither women nor anyone other than [Caucasians], so in some respects the church has changed,” Trim said. He added that Adventist world leaders meeting at a table in a sparse room is telling when many top leaders from other denominations would likely have met in “lavish, well-appointed” rooms.

“I think that says a lot about he Seventh-day Adventist Church,” he said.

As the 17-million member denomination continues to grow worldwide, Trim said he hopes the research center will help ground church policy and guide decision-making.

“We are keen that Archives, Statistics and Research not only takes things in, but also contributes to the wider mission of the church, and especially in helping the people [at world church headquarters] in making policy and strategy,” he said.

The expansion of research facilities is “a sign of our determination to lend some richness to our own understanding of what we’re doing,” Trim added.
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