Church Chat: ADRA Rwanda’s latest opportunity is its own church member refugees
Country director Kern’s perspective on mission, working for ADRA

In Inter-America, church leaders and teachers recommit to discipling children
‘Invest today’ in ‘church of tomorrow,’ Children’s Ministries director says

For Adventist chaplain at London Olympics, pins are tools of the trade
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Church Chat: ADRA Rwanda’s latest opportunity is its own church member refugees
Jefferson Kern last week discovered a curious thing about a recent wave of refugees fleeing the Democratic Republic of Congo into neighboring Rwanda: nearly 100 percent of them are Seventh-day Adventist.

The tip-off came when aid workers noticed so many refusing transportation on Saturday, a United Nations representative told him.

Kern, director of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency in Rwanda, says 80 percent of the refugees escaping civil unrest are women and children. The UN News Service reported up to half a million internally displaced people from the unrest in the past four months. This led Rwanda to open its fourth refugee camp, which ADRA supports with education and transportation logistics.

In an interview, Kern explained the plausibility of an abnormal influx of Adventist refugees and what ADRA is doing and what the church could do to help. He also discussed individual versus corporate service and ADRA’s projects in Rwanda.

Rwanda, located in Central Africa, is the most densely populated country on the continent. A largely Christian country, about 11 percent of its population is Adventist. Tithe in the Adventist Church here has increased annually by 30 percent over the past four years.

Originally from Brazil, Kern, 39, is the son of a missionary and served as a student volunteer for ADRA in Angola. He went for a one-year term and stayed three and a half years, becoming a regional project director. He later worked as a mortgage broker in New York for 10 years before finishing his theology degree to become a pastor. He previously served as director of ADRA Amazon in Brazil. He has served as director of ADRA Rwanda since 2010.

Edited excerpts from the interview:

**Adventist News Network**: How is it that nearly all of this influx of refugees is Adventist?

**Jefferson Kern**: This region of Africa is very territorial – one section is Anglican, another is Catholic, for example. That’s why we have this influx of mainly Adventist refugees – the region where they came from in DRC was Adventist. About 40,000 went to Uganda and 12,000 have come to Rwanda. We still have people coming in every day.

**ANN**: What is ADRA and the Adventist Church going to do to help these members?

**Kern**: We’re not going to help people because they’re Seventh-day Adventist, we’re going to help them because they’re in need. That’s how ADRA treats everyone. The Rwandan government already operates three refugee camps with a capacity of about 15,000 each, and a fourth camp has opened,
already with 12,000. The U.N. and implementing partners are taking care of their basic needs, like food and sanitation. ADRA Rwanda’s role is to help with education and travel logistics. There are about 4,500 students in the new camp. The church or a large academy could pick up a project and partner with us by sending supplies or some toys for kids.

ANN: What have you done since coming here in 2010?

Kern: Three main things. We’ve reduced personal. We were administration heavy. When I came here we had six directors. Now we have three – myself, finance and programs. This is a more common structure for ADRA. And second, we’re also now finishing compiling our policies into a manual. We had policies on finances, vehicle use, human resources, but they weren’t connected. And third, well, I’m sure every director did this, but we’re continuing to focus on creating and generating projects that sustain our organization and help us achieve our objectives to help people.

ANN: What are some of your top projects?

Kern: The Action For Social Change program. Just for you to have an idea, there’s a specific community association for beekeepers. They told us about their difficulties and we realized they were building traditional beehives. We introduced training for construction of modern beehives and the production of honey tripled. So that’s what we do for those associations. We offer techniques on growing corn, cassava plantations, clothing factories or sales or doing accounting or general administration. We’re basically consultants. We want to help strengthen civil society.

ANN: How would you describe your management style?

Kern: I believe we work in a cooperative way. In our administrative committee we don’t take votes. We always approve the decision by consensus. When something crucial needs approval and we don’t have consensus, then I take the decision because I’m responsible to the board. Overall we have 18 employees in the office and 94 around the country, but I mainly work through my other two directors – finance and projects.

ANN: What’s your perspective on development in Rwanda?

Kern: In terms of international development – I’m not going to get into the politics of it – in Rwanda, more and more I believe there will be a diminishing of the importance of development funds and emphasis more on the private sector taking over development, which should be the process in the development of a country. It’s rare for us to find funding for infrastructure projects because all that is done by the government. Sometimes the government can do a better job building a hospital than non-governmental organizations can. That’s why our emphasis is to empower civil societies to better play their role.

ANN: Many young people say they want to work for ADRA someday. Any advice?

Kern: I think working for ADRA should never be different than working for a ministry. ADRA needs good people. It needs committed people. You can be interested in improving the lives of other people, but if you forget mission you’re just going to be like any other NGO. For ADRA, I believe there is another element – we are doing this as a church to bring the corporate social responsibility as ambassadors of the church. I like to say this a lot – what God requires for us in social development, ADRA is now doing for the church corporately. But still each one of us needs to give our individual service.
In Inter-America, church leaders and teachers recommit to discipling children

Aug. 03, 2012
High Springs, Florida, United States
Libna Stevens/IAD/ANN staff

They came from hundreds of Seventh-day Adventist churches and congregations from across Inter-American with a common purpose -- to acquire new skills in order to guide children toward a life of discipleship.

The first-ever Children’s Ministries Leadership Convention in the church’s Inter-American Division drew more than 500 leaders and teachers to church-sponsored Camp Kulaqua in Florida, United States last month. The historic event gave them the opportunity to recommit to the work of directing children to a closer walk with Jesus.

“We want you to become genuine disciples of Jesus in order to shape the kind of disciples Jesus needs His children to become,” said Dinorah Rivera, Children’s Ministries director for the church in Inter-America and organizer of the event.

“If we want a church tomorrow, we need to invest today in those we hope to be the church of tomorrow,” Rivera said. One of the keys to membership retention lies in the effectiveness of Children's Ministries in the home and church, she added.

Top church leaders agree, saying that strengthening children and youth in the church is a top priority.

“We want every child stepping into our Adventist churches to experience joy and discover God’s love and grace through the spiritual leadership of leaders and teachers,” said Israel Leito, president for the church in Inter-America.

Attendees participated in dozens of seminars on effective leadership, children’s health, spiritual development, technology, psychology and more.

Linda Koh, Children’s Ministries director for the Adventist world church, spoke to the hundreds of leaders and teachers about the spiritual giants that will carry children through the challenges of life.

“As children’s ministries leaders, we need to become strong effective disciplers of children and encourage, empower and equip parents and families to be able to guide children and be able to provide the kind of supportive churches in which they need to grow,” Koh said. In keeping with the theme of the convention, "Fit With Jesus", Koh challenged leaders to model honesty and a close relationship with Jesus.

“We are here because we believe in this ministry and work with all our might to nurture our children
spiritually,” said Mari Ruth Murillo, who, along with 50 of her peers, traveled from the church’s South Mexico Union, where she serves as Children’s Ministries director.

Lorraine Vernal, Children’s Ministries director for the church in Jamaica, said she left convinced that methods toward connecting with and discipling children need to change.

“We are competing with so many distractions that captivate our children’s minds, like video games, television, dysfunctional homes, food addictions and we as leaders must think outside the box if we don’t want to lose opportunities to inject Jesus into their hearts,” Vernal said.

Vernal was particularly happy to see during the convention better ways to reach children with a healthy lifestyle. Promoting nutrition and health in Jamaica has connected with the society, which is plagued by obesity and lifestyles diseases in children, she said.

Already this year, Vernal has organized several health fairs geared to educate children in the church and the community on eating well, exercising and dealing with issues that can affect their health.

“We are serious about the health of our children,” said Bernal, who is working with the public school system in Jamaica to begin a series of health and nutrition activities for pupils in the coming months. “Reaching the children in our community is part of building a better church as well,” Vernal added.

Vianka Mendez, Children’s Ministries director for the church in the metropolitan region in Guatemala City, attended presentations by a team of experts from church-run Loma Linda University in California on how children are affected in the wake of natural disasters.

“I had never realized how vulnerable children could be after a disaster and looking for simple and deeper signs could aid in protecting them from being further affected,” Mendez said.

“Our country is affected by natural disasters almost every year and we must be on the look-out to apply techniques to help children overcome the trauma and help them through the process,” she said, suggesting that the task could be coordinated through a partnership between churches and professionals in the community.

The convention left Rivera excited and thankful as she continues efforts to equip Children’s Ministries leaders and teachers who are passionate about the hundreds of thousands of children who come in contact with the Adventist Church across Inter-America.

“I dream of a church that not only teaches children how to be ‘Fit with Jesus’ but lives in constant discipleship and seeks out the needs of the community,” she said.

For Adventist chaplain at London Olympics, pins are tools of the trade
Trading pins is a common hobby here at the Summer Olympics in London. Many people stop Adventist Chaplain Richard Daly to comment on the extensive collection he wears on his lanyard, which holds his Olympic Park entry credentials. [photos by Ansel Oliver]

Two of the chaplains staffing the media prayer room at the Olympics in London. Christopher Jamison, left, a Catholic priest, and Alan Boyd of the Church of England.

At the media prayer room at the London Olympics, journalists can submit prayer requests that chaplains
Six days a week during the Olympics, Richard Daly takes the Underground here to Olympic Park in East London, where more than 100,000 spectators swarm nine game venues.

Daly, a Seventh-day Adventist minister, is one of 60 chaplains volunteering at the games site. For the first week of competition he’s assigned to serve the media, along with 11 other chaplains who take turns staffing a media prayer room throughout the day.

He sometimes gets stopped while walking around Olympic Park, and it’s not always because he resembles a competing athlete. It’s usually for his extensive collection of pins on the lanyard around his neck holding his credentials.

“Wow, so many pins,” says a volunteer ahead of him in the lunch line. “That’s an impressive collection,” says another. Later outside, a woman shouts from the middle of a crowd walking to an arena, “You don’t have any Addidas pins to trade, do you?”

Here at the Olympics, trading commemorative pins is a serious hobby and well documented in local and international media. An NBC cameraman said he was doing a story on the custom as he captured footage of Daly negotiating with a trader wearing a vest festooned with pins from these games and Olympics past.

One pin he regularly shows to game goers is his Olympics “Faith” pin, a great conversation starter, he says.

“See this one, have you seen this one yet? Are you a person of faith?” he asked a security guard before inviting her to consider someday visiting the prayer room.

Daly, 45, pastors the Croydon Seventh-day Adventist Church south of London, and is spending his annual leave to volunteer here. He said working the Olympics is an opportunity to offer a ministerial presence at one of the world’s highest profile events.

“We want to provide a service and have a presence here,” he said Tuesday morning while walking among crowds of smiling people lucky enough to score tickets to games.

From the park’s security entrance gate it takes Daly almost 20 minutes of walking to reach the prayer room, located on “High Street,” a row of cafes, banks and service stores. For the 20,000 broadcasters, journalists and news photographers here these two weeks, High Street is the on-site shopping center located between the International Broadcast Centre and the Main Press Centre.

A religious center among journalists draws little traffic, even with its strategic location across from the
media gym. They’re mostly a secular bunch, Daly said, and constantly dealing with deadlines. While most won’t attend a service, some will come to write prayer requests on a card, which chaplains will later pray for together.

On Tuesday morning a few followers of Islam trickled in and out for prayers. The room has folding chairs, cushioned ottomans and two semi-private prayer areas behind white room dividers. On the wall is the Olympics logo with added words of inspiration, such as “determination,” “courage,” and “excellence.”

Because few come in, Daly goes out. Most of his connections happen in the cafeteria where people relax and open up about their life. That’s Daly’s opportunity to affirm their faith or offer a word of support, perhaps even an introduction to Christianity. Proselytism isn’t allowed, but he can explore their own faith with them or invite them to seek a deeper spiritual life.

Next week he’ll work with athletes. If that assignment is anything like past games, he’ll wait for athletes to come to him instead of going out to meet them, said Davide Sciarabba, an Adventist chaplain who served at the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin, Italy.

In Italy, Sciarabba would meet athletes who came to pray with chaplains in the interfaith center. Though rare, a few athletes have asked him to pray for them to compete well, something Sciarabba said he wouldn’t do, imploring of the athlete: “What if your opponent comes five minutes later and asks for the same thing?”

Daly said people are surprised to learn chaplains are at the games; however, his attempts to prove it Tuesday morning failed. “No, [I’m not] suprised at all,” said a woman sitting on a park bench with three friends.

A female security guard monitoring the entrance to the NBC broadcast studio said, “There’s chaplains everywhere – at hospitals, at work, even at the cemetery there’s chaplains.”

It could be because the Church of England – the Anglican Church – has made workplace chaplaincy a priority. So says Christopher Jamison, a Catholic priest also serving as a chaplain in the prayer room.

Prioritizing chaplaincy could also increase awareness of the denomination. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a small minority in Britain and little known in most areas. “SDAs are way down there,” Daly said.

“Seventh-avenue church?” said Kaye Wren from Birmingham, asking Daly of his religious affiliation, before admitting she hadn’t heard of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

At the Adventist Church world headquarters, Chaplaincy Ministries Director Gary Councell said Adventists “must rethink and expand how we do ministry beyond traditional paradigms. Jesus mingled with all types of people in His day. Chaplaincies are a way of mingling in the greater community, of extending ministry beyond the four walls of a church.”

To get his summer job, Daly had to apply two years ago and undergo a half-hour interview, which he said had little to do with acting as clergy or doctrines and focused more on his experience of “inspiring” people and “making a difference,” he said.

Daly said he’s often confused for an athlete in Olympic Park and in surrounding shops. It’s because of
his fit physique and a white Team Great Britain coat, which he bought at a gift shop to guard against the rainy drizzle. He’s even reluctantly signed a few autographs to oblige fans who refuse to believe he’s not on the national team.

Sometimes he’ll wear a minister’s collar, even though Adventist ministers don’t wear them. He says it better serves others, allowing them to more readily identify him as a chaplain.

“When you become a chaplain, spiritual care is the priority, not your denomination,” he said.

Still, if anyone does ask what church he’s from, he discusses his denomination and shows its logo. It’s a pin on his lanyard.

He hasn’t traded it.

Trademark infringement case sees North American pastor imprisoned

Jul. 30, 2012
Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

A North American pastor is in prison for defying a court’s ruling in a trademark infringement dispute case that underscores the significance of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s corporate identity.

Walter McGill was apprehended and turned over to San Bernardino County law enforcement on the campus of church-run Loma Linda University in Loma Linda, California on July 13. His arrest concluded a legal saga spanning nearly a decade and drawing widespread media attention.

McGill raised concern among church legal counselors when he used the phrase “Seventh-day Adventist” to name his small congregation in Guys, Tennessee, the Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church. McGill claimed he was an Adventist pastor, but a database of service records administered by the church in North America indicates otherwise.

In 2005, the Adventist world church’s Office of General Counsel first asked McGill to cease using the name “Seventh-day Adventist” on both his church building and several websites.

“At the time, everyone thought, ‘Oh, it’s just a little church in Tennessee,’ but our primary concern was McGill’s Web presence,” said Todd McFarland, an associate general counsel in the Office of General Counsel at Seventh-day Adventist world church headquarters.

A year later, the church’s Office of General Counsel pursued a trademark infringement case against McGill, suing him for wrongful use of “Seventh-day Adventist.” The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s name is a registered trademark and can legally apply only to official church congregations, entities, institutions, denominational ministries and certain lay and professional groups as approved by the world church headquarters.

Most such trademark infringement disputes are settled outside the court, with litigation a “last resort”
only after “months or years” of dialogue, McFarland said. More often, a ministry is granted a name-
usage license if they qualify, or are persuaded to change their name.

When McGill refused to attend a court-ordered settlement conference, the court dismissed the case. McGill appealed to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, but the Adventist Church won despite his eleventh-hour raising of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

The act, which the Adventist Church supports, is meant to prevent laws that encumber an individual’s free expression of religion. In McGill’s case, however, the Sixth Circuit ruled that the act did not apply. McGill responded by filing a writ of certiorari to the Supreme Court, seeking judicial review of the Sixth Circuit’s decision. The nation’s highest court denied the writ.

“In the interim, there were some orders for the signs to come down,” McFarland said. “They actually sent the marshals in to remove some signs, which McGill promptly put back up.”

In May, the Sixth Circuit found McGill in contempt for not complying with court orders to remove the signs, issuing a warrant for his arrest.

Responding to McGill’s recent apprehension, Seventh-day Adventist Church officials have emphasized that McGill was imprisoned strictly for ignoring the court’s orders.

“Mr. McGill is free to engage in any ministry he wants, preach whatever he wants, say whatever he wants,” McFarland said. “What he simply cannot do is falsely associate himself with the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

Garrett Caldwell, Adventist world church Public Relations director and church spokesman, added that in cases such as McGill’s, the church is fundamentally protecting its identity.

“People understand what identity theft means on a personal level and how devastating it can be to an individual or a family,” Caldwell said.

“When a congregation that has never had a connection with our denomination, and who does not wish to, because of differing beliefs, wants to simply co-opt our name, we should not overlook this or find this acceptable. To do so would be irresponsible on our part,” he added.

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