South Pacific youth congress promotes practical side of faith
Participants raise money, collect canned food to fight hunger

In Korea, ‘Love Church’ sees booming membership with homeless outreach
Caring elder oversees additional service for those in need

Remembrance: Konrad, 43, grew Adventist radio station in Washington, D.C.
Born to a fourth-generation pastor, he took ministry to the airwaves

South Pacific youth congress promotes practical side of faith

Jan. 08, 2013
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
Nathan Brown/SPD/ANN

Young people from across the South Pacific were commissioned to share their faith and change their world during a youth congress last week. More than 1,100 young people responded to an appeal to commit, recommit and re-focus their lives on Jesus and His mission on Friday evening, followed by a day of worship, commissioning and celebration.

"The commissioning was a highlight, engaging all our leaders and young people in the world-changing mission of the church," said Nick Kross, Youth Ministries director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s South Pacific Division. "So many young people have expressed their gratitude and delight with what they have experienced and connected with here – and that has been gratifying for us as leaders."

The youth congress, which is held every eight years, attracted young people and leaders from 14 nations to Watson Park Convention Centre from January 1 to 6. Delegates worshiped, attended workshops and participated in service activities.

The event’s main speaker, Sam Leonor, chaplain of church-run La Sierra University in the United States, challenged congress participants to not only be disciples of Jesus but also apostles. "I hope these young people will see their local context as a place God has put them to do something big," he said. "But I also hope they will see that when we worship together and act together, we can change the world."
“This event has been a great ‘slice’ of the church,” Leonor added. “We’ve had so many different kinds of people and cultures represented and I think there’s something holy about that. It is good for these young people to look around and see what the church really is. Living together for a week as the church has got to be empowering.”

The 1,500 congress participants worked together again on the last afternoon of congress – writing out the entire Bible by hand in about two hours, with the pages to be bound as a memorial to the congress. “People really got into it and it was a great achievement of this congress,” Kross said. “We have had a focus on the Word of God and this was a way to highlight this and get our people engaged.”

Together with the commissioning, he said the march against hunger was another highlight. Following a sermon based on Amos 5:24 from Joanna Darby, this event saw a flood of blue-shirted congress participants in Brisbane’s inner city, marching from King George Square to the City Botanic Gardens on January 3 to call for more action to combat hunger worldwide.

“It’s significant that we can get this number of young people to speak up on something more than themselves,” Kross said. “This is about thinking like a contributor and a servant of others, rather than a mere consumer.”

Delegates also had a “poverty lunch,” foregoing their usual meal to identify with the hungry. They raised $10,000 for the work of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) to fight hunger. They presented a check to Jonathan Duffy, president of ADRA International, together with a photo petition affirming the work of ADRA.

Groups of young people from the congress also worked in the northern suburbs of Brisbane to collect more than 3,500 cans of food for use in ADRA services across the city. “This is a critical time of year for these agencies who are working to help individuals and families doing it tough,” said Matthew Siliga, coordinator of the community outreach for the congress.

With a police escort, the march by congress participants stopped city traffic and sparked many conversations with passers-by about who this group was and what they were doing.

“At one stage, I stopped and looked back at our marchers, and seeing the line that stretched almost a kilometer back with banners and all those young people, I felt a sense of pride in our young people and what they were doing,” Kross said.

**In Korea, ‘Love Church’ sees booming membership with homeless outreach**

Jan. 11, 2013
Uljeongbu, Gyeonggi, South Korea
Korea Union and ANN staff

Four years ago, two homeless people walked into the Minlak Seventh-day Adventist Church reeking of body odor and booze. The pair sat with plenty of space around them in the pews.

But a sinking feeling when recalling the Bible verse, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” didn’t sit well with many who say they realized their poor...
Church volunteers often help serve members of the congregation who are homeless. Here, a member serves at a recent church luncheon.

Now the environment has changed at this congregation in the city of Uijeongbu, just north of Seoul. The church has a special service, known as the “Love Church,” that caters to the needs of the homeless. Membership at the congregation of 120 now has an additional 50 attendees with the special service. Love Church averages about 20 new members joining the church each year through baptism.

Church Elder Lee Young Hwa, who runs the service, says he knows Love Church attendees need both encouragement and accountability. Every week he takes attendance and charts each person’s progress. He also photographs each person’s portrait and records everything from their consultations and job searches to personal savings and contributions.

“When we provide people with what they need, they will trust us,” Lee says. “I believe this is Jesus’ way of helping others.”

Lee, 58, has become the group’s respected elder, and says he feels he connects with them because of his own struggles, albeit not as severe. For years he worked as a marketing consultant, both in New York and in Seoul. He later started his own business, but it failed and he soon suffered severe depression. It was during this period of despair that he read through the book “The Desire of Ages” six times. The book is a touchstone title by Adventist Church co-founder Ellen G. White.

Members now help Love Church attendees by recommending job offers and studying the Bible with them.

“Helping the homeless people through the Love Church was invigorating for the whole Minlak congregation,” said associate pastor Gil Chul Jong. “Many people’s hearts were moved by their selfless service. So many volunteers came to serve.”

Gil said the project wouldn’t have happened without Lee’s service.

“Through his sacrifice, dedication and persistent effort, he was able to bring many people to God,” Gil said.

This year, Lee plans to start an organization called “Light House,” which will offer assistance to people in the nearby community.

Remembrance: Konrad, 43, grew Adventist radio station in Washington, D.C.

Jan. 14, 2013
Takoma Park, Maryland, United States
Ansel Oliver/ANN

Christian radio station manager John Konrad ministered and encouraged people to come to
John Konrad was general manager of WGTS 91.9 FM in Washington, D.C. He grew weekly listenership 60 times since he took over in 1996, and he started a church congregation for listeners, complete with a full-time station chaplain. [photo courtesy WGTS]

Konrad, who died January 2 at age 43 from bilateral pneumonia, also served as a consultant to Adventist broadcasters worldwide, helping several of them replicate the model of providing listeners a congregation and ministerial support.

"He didn't want WGTS to grow just for the sake of growing, he wanted people to know about Jesus," said Ty McFarland, WGTS program manager.

Within six months of becoming general manager, Konrad led a format change from classical music to contemporary Christian music. He also set about doubling the station's coverage area with investments in equipment and hiring only top, on-air talent suitable for a major market.

WGTS 91.9 is now among the top 10 radio stations in Washington, D.C. and is one of the top three most listened to non-commercial, Christian radio stations in the United States.

The station was founded in 1957 and is owned by Washington Adventist University, located in Takoma Park, Maryland.

Born in Hinsdale, Illinois, to a fourth generation pastor, Konrad became interested in radio during high school at Takoma Academy, just down the street from WGTS. The station manager eventually hired Konrad, figuring he might as well put him on the pay role since he was always helping at the station anyway.

As general manager, Konrad learned through audience surveys that about 40 percent of listeners were unchurched. "He wanted to offer them something they would feel comfortable attending," said Terry Johnson, the station's full-time chaplain.

In 2008, the station held its first "Night of Hope" evangelism outreach event at a hotel ballroom. The annual event last year drew some 700 people, and about 20 percent typically go on to attend the station's Gateway Fellowship Church, Johnson said.

Konrad also served as a consultant for other Adventist radio stations in Europe, Africa and Australia. He encouraged a station in Liberia to replicate the ministry model, and it now reaches the entire capital city of Monrovia, encouraging listeners to attend a church.
“He’ll be remembered not only for his genius for radio work but his passion for ministry beyond the traditional ministry model,” said Rob Vandeman, who has served as WGTS board chair since 2011. “He reached people who weren’t connected to a church.”

Konrad was also a chief defender of the station when some viewed it as a cash asset for its parent owner. Before becoming Washington Adventist University in 2007, officials overseeing a then struggling Columbia Union College seriously considered offers to sell the station in 1997 and in 2007.

Konrad was also involved in community dog rescue, helping find adoptive homes for nearly 100 German Shepherds. A canine typically accompanied him into work as a station mascot.

Konrad is survived by his parents; his wife, Dawn; an adopted adult daughter, Marina; and a sister.

At his memorial service on Saturday, many speakers paid tribute to their boss, who shied away from the spotlight, but gave generously of his time to help and offer comfort.

A self-described trouble-maker student worker, Kevin Hippolyte said Konrad once drove him to a knee surgery appointment. At the hospital, Hippolyte learned, to his embarrassment, that someone would have to stay at the hospital all day and care for him at home for several days afterward.

“It’s OK, I knew all of this,” Hippolyte remembered Konrad telling him at check-in.

“I was the most rebellious of John’s student workers. He loved me into obedience.”

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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.