In Brazil, Adventists coordinate blood drive following nightclub tragedy
Local officials appeal to Vida por Vidas for emergency donations

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Ministry is key logistical support for Adventist Church in PNG

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A fire at a nightclub in downtown Santa Maria killed at
Seventh-day Adventist young people in Brazil rallied this week to donate blood in the wake of one of the world’s deadliest nightclub fires in more than a decade.

At least 230 partygoers died and more than 100 were injured on January 27 when a band’s pyrotechnics display ignited ceiling insulation at a club in downtown Santa Maria, releasing flames and toxic smoke into the panicked crowd.

As victims flooded local hospitals, medical staff urgently appealed to the Adventist-run Vida por Vidas (“Life for Lives”) blood-donation organization in South America. The denomination is known for handling large-scale blood donation drives, especially in Brazil, where health officials estimate the project annually contributes 3.5 million bags of blood.

Blood donors gathered early Sunday at the Central Adventist Church in Santa Maria and immediately headed to the city’s Blood Donation Center, said Vida por Vidas coordinator Adriano Luz.

Meanwhile, Adventist medical staff volunteered at local hospitals, among them Dr. Jocemara Fernandes, who received an emergency call to aid victims early Sunday morning.

“The scene of horror and despair I witnessed was unprecedented in my experience,” Fernandes said. She has worked in a local emergency room for more than a decade.

Fernandes treated at least 15 victims between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m. on Sunday. “Most people had problems related to smoke inhalation,” she said.

Another young victim suffered second degree burns and difficulty breathing, Fernandes said. Most victims were under the age of 30.

“What we can do now is pray for the injured and the bereaved families that God will help them,” she said.

Santa Maria Mayor Cezar Schirmer declared a 30-day mourning period, and local authorities continue to investigate the cause of the blaze.

Vida por Vidas was launched in 2006 and is overseen by young Adventists in South America.

Mission aviation engineer burned in accident in Papua New Guinea
An airplane engineer serving a mission fleet in Papua New Guinea suffered burns on 50 percent of his body Tuesday following a fire during a routine maintenance on a new plane.

Linden Millist, chief engineer for Adventist Aviation Services, was burned after a fuel tank caught fire at the AAS hangar at the airport in the city of Goroka in the Eastern Highlands. He was taken by medevac to Brisbane, Australia, where he remains in critical condition while undergoing treatment at a hospital.

Millist, 33, is the son of AAS CEO Roger Millist.

AAS is working with the country’s Accident Investigation Commission to determine the cause of the incident.

AAS plays a key role in the work of the Adventist Church in Papua New Guinea. Pilots transport pastors, teachers and building materials in the isolated and rugged highlands along the Fly and Sepik River systems. Many of the remote villages are otherwise a two-day walk from main roads. AAS also assists with medical evacuations.

The ministry owns two 10-seat planes and offered more than 1,000 mission flights last year. AAS also does commercial work to help financially sustain its ministry.

Millist is one of 13 AAS staff, four of whom are pilots.

The president of the Adventist Church’s Papua New Guinea Union Mission, Leigh Rice, is calling for Adventists to pray for Millist and his recovery.

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ANN staff: Williams Costa Jr., director; Ansel Oliver, assistant director; Elizabeth Lechleitner, editorial
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