Angola stadium rally is push for small group ministry
Members in Luanda challenged to increase network of unchurched friends

Moskala appointed dean of Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews
Czech native to lead denomination’s ministerial training center, think-tank

In Pakistan, mob burns homes in anti-Christian violence
At least 170 homes, businesses destroyed; 40 Adventist families affected

Angola stadium rally is push for small group ministry
Mar. 11, 2013
Luanda, Angola
Paul Charles and Ansel Oliver

Church leaders in Southern Africa are coordinating small group ministry outreach on a mass scale here in Luanda in response to the Seventh-day Adventist world church’s call for mission to large cities.

The push comes at a time when leaders say the window of opportunity is open for evangelism outreach in the capital city of Angola, now about a decade since an ongoing civil war ceased.

Some 52,000 groups of approximately five people are regularly meeting in homes. After a few months, the groups will be matched together with four other home groups to form what leaders call “cottage meetings.” The plan is to have by later this year about 10,000 of these larger meetings regularly studying the gospel.

The effort comes after a year of planning to implement the citywide initiative, which follows previous outreach by the Adventist Church in Southern Africa based on the premise that evangelism should not be a big, one-time event, but a sustained process.

“This method has huge overtones for effective membership retention,” said Mike Ryan, a general vice president of the Adventist world church, following his speech to a 40,000-person rally here last month.

A big challenge remains, though, Ryan said. Most Adventists don’t have a lot of friends who aren’t already members of the church. It’s true here, too, where members are being encouraged to make friends in the wider community.

The metro area of Luanda is home to at least 7 million people. In response to the denomination’s Mission to the Cities initiative, church leaders in the region in 2011 designated Luanda for outreach, the first time a major effort could be made here in the country’s recent, tumultuous past.

For decades, the Seventh-day Adventist world church had extreme difficulty offering support to the Adventist Church here in Angola. A nearly 30-year civil war was widespread and took the lives of 1.5 million. During that time, the denomination couldn’t give its 13th Sabbath offerings to projects in the country.

“We still have a lot of catching up to do,” said Paul Ratsara, president of the Adventist Church’s Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, based in South Africa.

The Adventist Church in Angola has little infrastructure. The Bongo Adventist Seminary in the town of
Haumbo has 115 enrolled students, and the compound also has a school, clinic and publishing house.

Angola is rich in natural resources, including diamonds and oil. Most products are imported, making Luanda one of the most expensive cities in the world for expatriates. But even as the country attracts foreign investment, more than 40 percent of the population lives in poverty.

Church leaders hope the renewed evangelism push, in addition to spreading the gospel, will help bring more people to an better understanding of healthful living and commitment to education.

“Small groups have proven to be an effective instrument in God’s hands to bring us more growth – spiritual growth, growth in relationships, growth in preparing disciples, and growth in planting new churches,” said Gilberto Araujo, chairman of the division’s Urban Evangelism Committee.

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**Moskala appointed dean of Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews**

Mar. 06, 2013
Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States
Keri Suarez

Old Testament scholar Jiří Moskala was chosen yesterday to serve as dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, located in the U.S. state of Michigan.

Moskala, who has served at the Seminary since 1996, will fill the role held by current dean Denis Fortin, who last October announced his intention to return to fulltime teaching at the seminary by this autumn.

Moskala currently serves as professor of Old Testament exegesis and theology and chair of the Department of Old Testament. His new appointment is effective July 1.

“Dr. Moskala is a fine academic scholar and very loyal to the church. I don’t know anyone who can question his commitment to the mission and values that we stand for,” said Ben Schoun, chair of the Andrews University Board of Trustees and a general vice president of the Adventist world church.

Of his appointment, Moskala said, “My vision for the Theological Seminary is to be the light for the world and the theological resource for the church. We are here to serve the worldwide church in
various capacities to prepare future church leaders to work and deal with different challenges in order to proclaim the eternal Gospel with conviction, urgency and passion, make a difference for good, and prepare people for the soon second coming of Jesus.”

The seminary dean is a member of the The Adventist world church’s International Board of Theological and Ministerial Education, the North American Division Executive Committee, and the North American Division Board of Theological and Ministerial Education. Additionally, the dean works closely with leadership from both the Adventist church’s North American Division and the world church headquarters.

Schoun said the seminary also acts as a think-tank for the Adventist Church. “For those of us in church leadership who are out encouraging the work on the ground to go forward, it’s nice to get the council of the thinkers who are here at the seminary.”

Seventh-day Adventist world church president Ted N. C. Wilson said Moskala comes from a “strong biblical and mission-oriented background.”

“He and his family are very focused on the tremendous task the Lord has given to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and out of that grows his passion for the educational process and mission of the church,” Wilson said. “It is a blessing to have someone like that heading the seminary, keeping in front of many theological students, not only the academic side, which is very important, but also the practical mission side as we approach Christ’s soon coming.”

A native of the Czech Republic, Moskala received a Master of Theology in 1979 and a Doctor of Theology in 1990, both from the Comenius Faculty of Protestant Theology (now Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University). In 1998, he completed his Doctor of Philosophy from Andrews University.

Moskala began his ministry as a pastor for the Czecho-Slovakian Union, serving in this capacity until 1989. When the Communist regime fell after the Velvet Revolution, he established and served as the first principal of the Theological Seminary in Prague. Moskala has also served as director of the Life and Health Society, Education Department and Health Department for the Czecho-Slovakian Union.

Moskala has served as a speaker for many Bible conferences and theological symposia in all 13 divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and he has lectured at Adventist universities and colleges around the world.

He is a member of various theological societies including the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, Adventist Theological Society, Chicago Society of Biblical Research, Society of Biblical Literature, and Society of Christian Ethics. Moskala has authored or edited a number of articles and books in both Czech and English. In addition, he has participated in several archaeological expeditions in Tall Jalul, Jordan.

The seminary’s mission is to prepare ministers and teachers for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It offers several master’s degrees and five doctoral programs: Doctor of Ministry; Doctor of Philosophy in Biblical & Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology, Religion, and Religious Education; and Doctor of Theology.

Andrews is an institution of both the North American Division and the Adventist Church world headquarters, which means that it serves a broad constituency beyond its own division. Two other
university seminaries are also institutions of the world church headquarters: the Adventist International Institute for Advanced Studies, located in the Philippines, and Adventist University of Africa, located in Kenya.

In Pakistan, mob burns homes in anti-Christian violence

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Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

Residents of a Christian community in eastern Pakistan, among them Seventh-day Adventists, are reeling after a mob torched their homes and businesses in response to alleged insults against Muhammad.

The unrest began last week after a report circulated that a young Christian man had committed blasphemy against Islam’s prophet. By March 9, the situation had escalated and thousands of protestors began setting fire to property owned by Christians in a Lahore neighborhood.

While some residents sustained injuries, there was no loss of life. Most Christians had earlier fled under threats of violence and police warnings to leave, a representative of the Adventist Church in Pakistan said.

Church property and the homes of Adventist members, however, sustained “tremendous damage,” church leaders said. The rented home of local Adventist Pastor Afzal Bhatti and his family was destroyed along with the homes and belongings of at least 40 Adventists.

Songbooks, Bibles and sound equipment at the local Adventist church were burned, but the building itself only withstood minor water damage as firefighters worked to control nearby blazes, an Adventist survey team reported.

At least 170 homes and businesses were torched, according to Associated Press reports.

Bhatti and his family were among residents who left as the mob headed for their community.

“In his haste, Pastor Bhatti left behind his cell phone and ID card,” a church representative said, adding that a protestor yanked the glasses off his face as he fled.

Bhatti and his wife, Parveen, returned the morning after the riots to comfort and pray with affected people.
community members. Later, the family began the process of rebuilding their lives by purchasing necessities for work, study and ministry.

Earlier this week, the Punjab State government pledged to compensate each affected family with the equivalent of US$2,000. Since then, the federal government of Pakistan has promised an additional US$5,000 per family.

The Adventist Church and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency in Pakistan are assessing the situation and assisting members of the affected Christian community.

Less than five percent of Pakistanis are Christian, and blasphemy against the Quran or the prophet Muhammad can carry the death penalty. Religious liberty experts have observed that blasphemy laws are often used to repress religious minorities or settle personal disputes.

In 2011, Salmaan Taseer, a Pakistani businessman and politician, and Shahbaz Bhatti, the only Christian in Pakistan's cabinet, were assassinated for their opposition to legislation against blasphemy. Religious freedom advocates have long urged Pakistan to ease its harsh controls on defamation of religion.

"We have always strongly opposed Pakistan's blasphemy laws, which are the source of so much injustice in the country, especially for religious minorities and Muslim dissidents," said John Graz, secretary-general of the International Religious Liberty Association.

"All religious liberty advocates should express solidarity with the affected families and encourage the government to reform this legislation," he said.

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