Redesigned adventist.org set for launch in October
Site to offer stronger branding; GAIN summit also unveils Creation film project

Four new unions created in West-Central Africa Division
‘More local structure grows membership’; first self-sustaining union in Nigeria

New documentary traces global impact of Adventist medical, mission outreach
Sustainable healthcare, medical schools set denomination apart, filmmaker Doblmeier says

Redesigned adventist.org set for launch in October

May 20, 2013
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Libna Stevens/IAD/ANN

The redesign of the Seventh-day Adventist world church’s website, adventist.org – scheduled for launch in October – will offer major enhancements in style and information architecture, say church Communication leaders.

The overhaul of the site will also include an improved design framework, creating an opportunity for better integration of the hundreds of websites throughout the world church. Church leaders say the
move will deliver stronger and more consistent branding across the denomination, which has a decentralized structure throughout the world.

“This will allow the church to define its brand, to clarify its voice and move from a place of multiple different sites to becoming a network of sites,” said Garrett Caldwell, associate Communication director for public relations at the Adventist world church headquarters.

Caldwell and other Communication department leaders from the Adventist Church headquarters announced the website revamp last week at the Global Adventist Internet Network summit, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The conference brought together 230 participants – top church administrators and technology and communication professionals – to network on unified efforts in sharing the gospel in a clearer way around the world via the Internet.

The new website will be offered in four languages – English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. The site is a key starting point for journalists, researchers and those seeking a spiritual community, Caldwell said.

"We want to invite each online visitor to join Seventh-day Adventists on a journey as we pursue a life of spirituality, vitality and service," he said.

The new homepage will have a simple, clear design that will complement its content database and interactive technical features, said Andrew King, the Communication department’s Web manager.

“We’re not just creating a new website, but a design framework for mobile, desktop and television,” King said.

Communication directors from across the church’s division offices agreed that unity and diversity are crucial to achieve successful
Church leaders from regions such as East Asia, Latin America and Africa are eager to integrate their websites with the new platform. Others, many of whom recently revamped their sites, will work toward adapting to the integration.

South Pacific Division’s Communication Director James Standish is open to seeing what the new website will offer for his territory. “I’m interested in universal excellence while allowing for customized design options,” Standish said.

Williams Costa Jr., the Adventist Church’s Communication director and organizer of the GAIN conference, stressed the importance of a unified digital presence.

“We understand the diversity around the world, the different tastes, colors, cultures and the need to have something that binds us, but people need to see us as a family and with clear content and visibility,” Costa said.

Offering greater unity of content and design was a need that prompted Corrado Cozzi, Communication director for the Inter-European Division, based in Berne, Switzerland, to attempt to integrate diverse and multi-language territory websites for branding more than a year ago. Cozzi and a team led by Klaus Popa of the Adventist Media Center in Germany have coordinated efforts with the Adventist world church’s new website project in the integration of microsites.

Following the launch of the new adventist.org in October, Communication leaders will hold a series of meetings to discuss options for integration.

In addition, the netAdventist platform for church websites will also be integrated into the new look and framework of the new website, said John Beckett, who oversees the platform as director of the church’s Office of Global Software and Internet.

In a Sabbath sermon, Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson addressed meeting participants and local church members at the Ras Al Khaimah Seventh-day Adventist Church, urging them to continue using all means possible to spread the gospel.
“Share God’s love, share the Three Angel’s Message as to how God is preparing people for His soon coming,” Wilson said.

Wilson challenged technologists to explore ways to use in a comprehensive integrated media approach to reach the hearts of people through various outreach initiatives.

Participants were also shown the new “Creation: The Earth Is a Witness” film project, which will be completed and distributed worldwide later this year. Wilson appealed to conference participants to collaborate in innovative ways to showcase the film in churches and other venues in every community possible.

GAIN’s 2014 meeting is scheduled to be held in India. The forum is held in different world regions each year to motivate and inspire local participants to understand the challenges and opportunities of fulfilling the mission of the Adventist Church in different cultures and regions.

Four new unions created in West-Central Africa Division

May 15, 2013
Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Ansel Oliver/ANN

The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s West-Central Africa Division this year will create four new union administrative units, an action that underscores membership growth in the region and a need for more strategic planning in local fields.

The move, which will go into effect December 31, includes new unions in Ghana, Cameroon, Nigeria, and will split the Sahel Union Mission into two territories, which church leaders said would save on the high cost of travel in the region.

“The present structure in all four unions placed an unmanageable demand on union staff, which limited their presence and effectiveness in the areas that they served,” said Rosa Banks, an Adventist world church associate secretary and liaison to church administrations in Africa. “Dividing these territories will provide a strategic advantage for the fulfillment of the mission of the church,” she said.

David Trim, director of the world church’s Office of Archives, Statistics and Research said it has been demonstrated that adding more local structure helps membership and tithe grow, as well as
increasing the rate of growth. “With more administrative units they can more effectively strategize and use resources,” he said.

The Ghana Union Conference reports a membership of nearly 397,000, which is more than the combined total of both of the denomination’s European divisions.

“Creating a second union in Ghana is long overdue, based on their tithes, membership or any other metric,” Trim said.

The current Ghana Union is a “union conference,” which means it is self-sustaining, both in finances and leadership. Other unions are classified as “union missions,” which rely on appropriations. Ghana currently has the only union conference in the division.

As part of the division’s reorganization, Adventist Church structure in Ghana will be divided into the South Ghana Union Conference, based in Accra, and the North Ghana Union Mission, based in Kumasi.

In Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, the Adventist Church’s two union missions will become three unions, one of them a union conference.

The current North-Western Nigeria Union Mission, based in Ikeja in Lagos State, will divide and become a union mission in the north and a union conference in the south. In this region’s northern territory, the church will create the Northern Nigeria Union Mission, based in Abuja in the Federal Capital Territory. In the Southwest part of the country, the church will create the Western Nigeria Union Mission, with headquarters in Maryland, Lagos.

“This particular step is to facilitate mission in the northern part of the country where the church has yet to penetrate effectively,” Trim said.

The Central Africa Union Mission, now based in Yaoundé, Cameroon, will relocate its headquarters to Bangui, Central African Republic, allowing the newly created Cameroon Union Mission to operate out of Yaoundé.

And the church’s Sahel Union Mission, now based in Lomé, Togo, will become two union missions – the Eastern Sahel Union Mission, based in Lomé, and the Western Sahel Union Mission, headquartered in Dakar, Senegal.

“Dividing this field into two unions will afford better administrative oversight in these challenging fields and will save money on the high cost of travel in that part of the world,” said G. T. Ng, executive secretary of the Adventist world church.

Ng emphasized that reorganizing structure is a step in the right direction but not an automatic cure-all for slow or stagnant membership growth. Rather, he said, it is with both reorganization and a strengthening of individual congregations that best contributes to growth.

“It has been shown that local church-based evangelism is the most effective model of evangelism,” Ng said. “Members are the most important assets of the church. Pastors have to double up as trainers beyond playing their traditional role as baptizers and have a discipleship program in place for new members.”
The West-Central Africa Division, with headquarters in Abidjan, Cote D’Ivoire, is home to a reported membership of approximately 866,000. It currently has six unions; the reorganization later this year will give the division 10 unions.

New documentary traces global impact of Adventist medical, mission outreach

May 21, 2013
Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

A documentary exploring the philosophy and legacy of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s international health and humanitarian outreach is scheduled to air on Public Broadcasting Stations across the United States beginning in September.

“The Adventists 2,” now available on DVD, is a follow-up to independent filmmaker Martin Doblmeier’s 2010 documentary, “The Adventists,” which traced the roots of the Adventist Church’s health message and ministry in North America.

Doblmeier’s latest film makes the case that the early integration of healthcare and theology is unique to the denomination. The Adventist Church was officially established in May of 1863, just two weeks before church co-founder Ellen G. White received a health reform vision that put physical and spiritual wellbeing at the very core of Adventism.

“That’s certainly not to say that Jews or Catholics or Presbyterians don’t have great hospitals or don’t consider the body to be a temple, but I think the notion of how healthcare fits into the whole philosophy of who Adventists are from the very beginning is distinct,” Doblmeier says.

The film also spotlights the Adventist Church’s commitment to long-term, sustainable healthcare through its emphasis on preventive medicine and establishing medical schools in developing countries.

On location in Malawi, Doblmeier highlights the church’s focus on HIV/AIDS education, where Adventists are seeking to integrate health awareness into culture through dramatic presentations. In Peru, the rapid growth of population pushes the limits of healthcare, but the recent launch of the School of Human Medicine at Adventist-run Peruvian Union University in Lima is grooming a new generation of doctors to address the challenge.
“This isn’t just Band-Aid help,” Doblmeier says. “[Adventists are] creating these medical schools in the developing world so that the best minds will stay in those countries, get their training within the Adventist education system, and then stay there. I think this is going to have long-term effects.”

The film also traces the history of a legendary hospital in China, follows a team of American doctors as they perform operations for underserved patients in the Dominican Republic, and features Adventist medical missionary work in the wake of a catastrophic earthquake in Haiti.

That country, perhaps more than any other, underscores the “staggering” need for sustainable healthcare, Doblmeier says. But, he adds, it also illustrates the resolve of Adventist humanitarians.

“It’s an incredible task, but hope has been at the core of the Adventist Church since the very beginning, and it remains one of the flagship reasons that it is present in the world today,” he says. “So in these countries around the world where the healthcare disparities are so enormous, I think [the church’s] presence creates a sense of hope, and that’s a really important thing to do.”

Doblmeier also devotes considerable time to the legacy of medical and mission service left by early Adventists. To illustrate their impact, he and his production team turn to Brazil, where for decades Leo and Jessie Halliwell brought healthcare by boat to isolated communities along the Amazon River. The Luzeiro (“light bearer”) medical boat ministry continues today.

“We heard again and again how people heard the story of the Halliwells and were moved. That says that their life and work had purpose and meaning,” Doblmeier said.

“That’s the power of story. And if we’ve done something to help keep those stories alive, I feel great about that,” he says. A portion of the DVD sales will go toward supporting the work of some of the organizations featured on the film.

“The Adventists 2” is the latest of Doblmeier’s more than 25 award-winning films on religion, faith and spirituality, which include “Bonhoeffer,” a documentary on Nazi resister Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and “Albert Schweitzer: Called to Africa,” a film recounting the Nobel Prize-winning humanitarian’s life.

Doblmeier is president and founder of Journey Films in Alexandria in the U.S. state of Virginia. He is currently wrapping up a documentary that explores the Adventist Church’s commitment to holistic education.

“I’ll go right back to the edit room after this interview,” he says.

The ANN news bulletin is a weekly recap of news and information from the Communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist world church headquarters and is distributed by Adventist News Network.

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