Storms don’t diminish NY13’s ‘Revelation of Hope’ opening

More than 500 pack Greenwich Village church for campaign kickoff

Obama’s mental health initiative receives faith, community support

Adventist Church among organizations committing to raise awareness, understanding

Equatorial Guinea expels Adventist missionary

Authorities claim FM transmitter was illegal satellite rig

In Europe, Adventist social media sparking interest in spirituality

Long-term outreach strategies paying off; reaching a Macedonian pop star

Storms don’t diminish NY13’s ‘Revelation of Hope’ opening

Jun 08, 2013
New York City
Mark Kellner, Adventist Review
The drenching rains of Tropical Storm Andrea, which deposited two inches of water on the streets of New York’s Greenwich Village, failed to dampen the enthusiasm of people who attended the initial “Revelation of Hope” campaign meeting on Friday evening, June 7.

Sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the meeting is one of hundreds being held in metropolitan area during June as part of the denomination’s “Mission to the Cities” campaign.

Already, officials of the Atlantic Union and the two area conferences say 1,100 people have been baptized as Seventh-day Adventists during the months leading up to the event. The NY13 campaign – which features 160 different evangelistic events across the region in June alone – is expected to culminate June 29 at the Nassau Coliseum with a rally attended by more than 15,000 people. The overall effort includes the participation of the Atlantic and Columbia Unions, as well as the Southern New England, Greater New York, Northeast and New Jersey Conferences.

Pastor Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist world church, served briefly at what is today the Historic Manhattan Seventh-day Adventist Church some 40 years ago when he first began his ministry. Following graduate education, Wilson also worked for several years as a leader of a city-wide ministry in the 1970s. He returned to the church to open the three-week evangelistic series, with his wife, Nancy, greeting visitors as they entered the lobby. Calling himself a “New Yorker at heart,” Wilson told the audience he had “started ministry right here.”

In recognition of the event, New York City’s public advocate, Bill De Blasio, sent his assistant Warren Gardiner to attend the opening meeting. Other public officials are expected to attend related NY13 events, said James Richmond, a community liaison for the Church’s Greater New York Conference.

Inside the 132-year-old church building, more than 500 people gathered in what master of ceremonies Mark Finley called an “oasis of peace” to hear a message which stretched beyond today’s storms.
Tatiana Featherstone, a 20-year-old woman originally from Barbados, said she attended in part because her father, a Seventh-day Adventist, invited her. She added the meeting met her expectations: “It was all good.”

Visitor David Tan, who called himself “a Singaporean retired and living in Thailand,” said Wilson’s message was a “good and clear” introduction to the book of Revelation.

In his message, Wilson declared: “The Bible is amazingly accurate. The Bible is filled with hope for the future.”

He added, citing Amos 3:7, “Surely the Earth’s events are not going to ‘sneak up’ on God. Unlike the dismal predictions of human beings, the Bible gives us hope.”

Obama’s mental health initiative receives faith, community support

Jun 06, 2013
Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America joined dozens of private sector organizations this week in pledging support for U.S. President Barack Obama’s initiative to increase understanding of mental health nationwide.

Katia Reinert, who represented the church at the National Conference on Mental Health, said it was an opportunity to build partnerships with likeminded groups and benefit from an arsenal of mental health resources, as well as share the church’s unique approach toward health.

“The Adventist Church has historically looked at people as holistic, with mental health and physical health both linked to spiritual health,” she said.

“Being able to bring this perspective from a faith community and letting others in the public sector know that Adventists care deeply about mental health and have active recovery and support ministries was significant,” said Reinert, who directs Health Ministries for the church’s North American Division.
In February, church health professionals launched Adventist Recovery Ministries, a pathway toward healing for those battling addiction and compulsive behavior. The 12-step program is one of the focuses of next year’s National Health Summit. The weeklong event will also offer training in mental health first aid, depression recovery and optimizing brain potential, Reinert said.

The church’s additional plans in the public commitment presented to the White House include:

- Designate February 2014 for special emphasis on mental health
- Devote February 2014 issue of “Vibrant Life” entirely to mental health
- Devote Health Sabbath, February 15, 2014 to mental health awareness and encourage the division’s 5,400 Adventist churches to promote awareness in their congregations and communities
- Plan a National Mental Health Conference with Adventist HealthCare in 2015
- Publish a youth devotional focusing on mental and emotional health in 2015

A task force organized by the church’s Health Ministries department in North America is overseeing the efforts. Members were culled from Adventist hospital systems, mental health facilities, education and research institutions, supporting ministries and publishing houses.

The church’s efforts are part of what the Obama administration is calling a national conversation about mental health. Ongoing dialogue will help lift the stigma associated with mental illness and improve healthcare for those struggling with such issues, particularly veterans and students, a press release from the White House Office of Communications stated.

Reinert said she hopes the conversation inspires Adventists to offer help, support and friendship to church and community members struggling with mental illness. She also wants Adventist churches to serve as centers of hope and healing in the community.

“Many of our members are not comfortable to come out of our churches and mingle with members of the community, as Christ did, but when we do that we build relationships and partnerships that enable us to share perspectives and make a positive impact for Christ,” she said.

“This is a great opportunity as we move forward in accomplishing our mission.”

Equatorial Guinea expels Adventist missionary

Jun 11, 2013
Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Mark Kellner, Adventist Review

The West African country of Equatorial Guinea last month expelled a Seventh-day Adventist missionary who was serving as president of the denomination’s local mission in the capital city, Malabo.

Manuel García-Cáceres, an inter-division missionary from Spain, was deported May 23, according to Pedro Torres, communication director for the church’s Spanish Union. The pastor left the nation
without being able to say goodbye to his wife and daughter, both of whom are waiting to return to Spain for a reunion with García.

García had been serving as president of the Equatorial Guinea Mission headquarters for 13 months and was expelled from the country after being falsely accused of “attempts against national security.” The nation, consisting of a mainland portion and five inhabited islands, is the third-largest sub-Saharan producer of oil, and has a population of approximately 704,000. Of that number, 137,000, or 40 percent, live in Malabo, which is located on a large coastal island.

According to Torres’ report, García was summoned to the nation’s Justice Ministry on May 21, and accused of bringing “special equipment for satellite communications,” into the country. He was alleged to have to equipment “to report outside of the country ‘internal information’ of Equatorial Guinea.” Officials accused García of having equipment that could elude Guinean security services detection, and thus García was deemed “a danger to national security.”

Apparently, “people close to García” informed authorities that FM broadcasting equipment, legally imported, was actually the allegedly illegal “satellite equipment.” Police then searched the pastor’s home and office, finding only one piece of electronics, Torres reported.

“The single object they found similar to what the detractors described was a radio FM transmitter, donated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Villajoyosa, in Spain’s Alicante province,” Torres reported.

Torres said, “The FM radio equipment was correctly reported at customs when imported from Spain. In fact, the equipment was still packed when the [search] took place.” At the time of the police raid, the gear had not been unpacked or used in the country, he added.

The next day, May 22, García was again summoned to the Justice Ministry, and this time ordered to pay a fine of one million Central African Francs, or approximately US$2003.85. Despite paying the fine, authorities jailed the pastor that day.
On May 23, Spain’s ambassador to Equatorial Guinea visited García in prison and informed the Adventist missionary that expulsion would follow. That evening, García was taken to the airport in Malabo, with his passport returned to him once the plane took off.

The deportation of a dedicated church worker illustrates the dangers still confronting missionary workers in some parts of the world, said John Graz, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

“The deportation of Pastor Manuel García-Cáceres after 13 months of good service for his church and for the people of Equatorial Guinea, shows how fragile religious freedom and the rule of law are in some parts of the world,” Graz told Adventist Review. “Missionaries who bring their knowledge and expertise for the good of people are [sometimes] subject to the will of political authorities, without any regards for the ministry they give, or for the international protection of human rights.”

The first Adventist missionaries arrived in Equatorial Guinea in 1960. The work was interrupted by the political situation in 1972, but resumed two years later, according to the Adventist Encyclopedia. As of 2011, there are 19 Adventist churches and nearly 2,500 baptized members in the nation.

In Europe, Adventist social media sparking interest in spirituality

Jun 04, 2013
St. Albans, England
Ansel Oliver/ANN

The development of a social media strategy for outreach in Europe is paying off for Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders trying to connect with those potentially interested in learning about God.

The online community LIFEconnect, launched in 2010, offers content and discussion groups for various lifestyle topics. This year, the online project began offering live meeting events and streaming presentations. Follow-up statistics from March and April meetings show the project is drawing tens of thousands of viewers and participants, and in some cases motivating them to visit an Adventist Church.

The initiative is operated by the Adventist Church’s Trans-European Division, based in England. The region includes 22 countries and is home to slightly less than 83,000 Adventist Church members.

Currently, 13 countries in the division are participating in the LIFEconnect project, with another half dozen expected to join this year.
“Jesus told us to go where people are, and today more than 2.5 billion people are on the Internet,” said Miroslav Pujic, Communication & Media director for the Trans-European Division. “Digital roads are quickly taking us to millions to share the story of Jesus Christ.”

While other church regions are finding success with major media outreach – such as television production and distribution in countries including Romania and Brazil – LIFEconnect is the denomination’s first major ongoing outreach initiative solely using social media. Though small for now, division leaders are finding some success in highly secular regions, where other methods of evangelism have yielded few results.

“I know of the challenges and sacrifices made to implement this project, and it’s thrilling to see this method of outreach delivering such great results, said Williams Costa Jr., Communication director of the Adventist world church. “Our church has been using other methods of outreach, and that’s fine, but we need to keep being innovative in finding new ways to share our message.”

In Albania, home to only 200 church members, more than 20 visitors came to an Adventist Church following a streamed LIFEconnect event. The nightly program had about 1,100 viewers.

In Serbia, organizers noted 10,500 viewers of a streamed program in one weekend. While some were church members, many community members participated in the program and at an auditorium event.

In Macedonia, a streamed program gained 3,300 viewers over a weekend. A national pop music recording artist came to a live event.

In Montenegro, 80 percent of registered users are not members of the Adventist Church. Some 3,000 people viewed a weekend program in March, with three people coming to visit and Adventist Church the following Saturday.

“This is becoming the major outreach method in Serbia,” said Dragan Grujicic, LIFEconnect leader for the Southeast-European Union Conference, based in Serbia.

Pujic launched LIFEconnect in June of 2010, following two years of planning and development. Church administrations in participating countries were required to designate a Web pastor for the project, a network developer and volunteers.

The initiative is operated at the division by a small team of developers, a marketing manager and a content manager.

Pujic said roughly 32,000 people followed streamed programs online or participated in corresponding events in auditoriums in March and April.

He said the division plans to add the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and several Nordic and Baltic countries to the LIFEconnect project by the end of this year.
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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