Christmas card campaign to offer support for imprisoned members

Seventh-day Adventist human rights advocates are urging church members worldwide to send encouragement in the form of Christmas cards to three members in prison on what church officials say are false charges.

More than a year and a half has passed since Seventh-day Adventist pastor Antonio Monteiro and church elder Bruno Amah were imprisoned in the West African country of Togo in a criminal case without evidence or a trial.

Cards for Monteiro and Amah should be sent to the Sahel Union Office, preferably in English or French. The address for sending cards to these men is:

Antonio Monteiro / Bruno Amah
Union du Sahal
B.P. 2157
Lomé, Togo

"Everyone can do something for our members in prison. We want to show them that they are not alone; that they have brothers and sisters praying for them," said John Graz, director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty for the Adventist world church. "Every Christmas card they will receive will be an encouragement."
In March 2012, a Togolese man implicated Monteiro and Amah as conspirators in an alleged blood trafficking network. A police search of the pastor’s home and local church headquarters produced no evidence, but Monteiro and Amah have not been released.

Seventh-day Adventists around the world have rallied to show support for their brothers in Christ. Last December, a social media campaign calling for a day of prayer helped raise awareness of the situation in Togo. Facebook followers interacted with ‘Pray for Togo’ content more than 50,000 times while the Twitter event hashtag reached more than 7 million users. Members are encouraged to visit the website Pray4Togo.com and sign the petition.

Church leaders are also urging members to send Christmas cards of encouragement to Sajjad Masih, who is being held in prison in Pakistan on charges of blasphemy, despite his accuser’s subsequent retraction and prosecutors’ failure to produce evidence of his involvement.

Cards may be sent to Masih at:

Sajjad Masih  
Pakistan Union  
Post Box 32  
Lahore  
Pakistan

Church officials have been working through legal procedures and diplomatic channels to have the three men released.

More divisions make recommendation to ordination study committee

More of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s 13 world divisions are preparing their recommendation to the world church’s Theology of Ordination Study Committee.

The denomination is in the midst of a five-year process of studying the biblical foundation of theology as it relates to gender and its implications if women were to be ordained. The Adventist world church does not ordain women as ministers.

ANN previously reported that the North American Division at its Year-End Meeting recommended that women be ordained as ministers. Now, more divisions are reporting their recommendation:

The Inter-European Division, based in Berne, Switzerland, released a statement saying it will recommend to the committee that there is room for the church to ordain women.

A spokesman for the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, based in Pretoria, South Africa, said in an email to ANN: “The action taken by the [division’s committee] supported the position against
the ordination of women to the gospel ministry” and “in the absence of clear biblical revelation, the established model and practice of ministry should be upheld.”

The Trans-European Division, based in St. Albans, England, reported it would recommend an inclusive ministry without gender distinction.

The South Pacific Division, based in Waroonga, New South Wales, Australia, said it does not see any scriptural principle that would be an impediment to women being ordained.

ANN will report the recommendations of the rest of the 13 world divisions as they become available.

The five-year process was established following a pledge at the denomination’s General Conference Session in 2010. Each of the Adventist Church’s 13 world divisions has formed its own Biblical Research Committee and is preparing its own report. Several study sessions of the full committee have already met. World church officials have promised to bring back a compiled report to the 2015 General Conference Session.