Wilson’s South Pacific visit includes meetings with government leaders, evangelism outreach

Seventh-day Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson this month visited several countries in the denomination’s South Pacific Division, meeting with government leaders, participating in an evangelism series and speaking at the opening of a new campus of an Adventist College.

Along with his wife Nancy and a delegation of local church officials, Wilson visited **Papua New Guinea** (PNG), **Solomon Islands** and **Fiji**—three countries that comprise approximately 75 percent of the South Pacific Division church membership.

The delegation met with Prime Minister Peter O’Neill, as well as with opposition leader Belden Namah and the speaker of PNG’s Parliament, Theo Zurenoc.

Namah, an Adventist, later said he was moved by the Bible verse from Romans 12 that Wilson quoted during their discussion, encouraging Namah and his opposition colleagues to refrain from a negative spirit in their work and to instead “overcome evil with good” as they work with the government for the good of the country.

Speaker Zurenoc explained to Wilson his recent orders that a number of traditional carvings be removed from Parliament House. He reiterated his concern that the totem pole in the Great Hall represents immorality and witchcraft and showed the Adventist delegation a concept drawing for a proposed “Unity Pillar” that he hopes will replace it.
With each leader, Pastor Wilson offered spiritual counsel and prayer, thanking the prime minister, in particular, for the religious freedom enjoyed in PNG.

Accompanying Wilson were SPD President Barry Oliver and PNG Union Mission President Leigh Rice.

Wilson was received in PNG with the same protocol offered to a visiting head of state, including security and police vehicles escorting the delegation through the streets of Port Moresby.

Prior to Pastor Wilson’s arrival, a series of evangelistic meetings at Port Moresby’s Jack Pidik Park had attracted daily crowds of more than 15,000. The main speaker, Chris Moses, secretary of the Central Papua Conference, offered the pulpit to Wilson for the final three meetings, which included the Sabbath morning service.

“It's good to see that when our world leader comes to Papua New Guinea, he opens the word of God,” said Central Papua Conference President Pastor Kove Tau.

Wilson and the delegation also traveled to Solomon Islands, where they met with Prime Minister Gordon Darcy Lilo. He congratulated the Seventh-day Adventist Church on its 100th anniversary since the denomination’s first missionaries landed on the nation’s shore, a government news release said.

"Mr. President, this year … marks the 100th Anniversary of the landing of Pastor Griffith Jones and his wife Marion in Solomon Islands," the Solomon Star reported. Lilo also informed Wilson about the role of Christian churches, including the Adventist Church, in nation building, particularly in the areas of education, health, youth development and spirituality.

“I would … like to wish all its members happy celebrations. Most important of all, I pray that God will continue to lead and direct you in the next 100 years," Lilo said.

Wilson told Lilo: “It is the first time for me to be in this part of the world and this is a historic visit for me,” the Solomon Times reported. “I will make sure I inform the Church members worldwide of your wonderful country and people.”

The Adventist leaders also travelled to Kukudu in Solomon Islands’ Western Province, the site of the establishment of the first Adventist mission.

The final leg of the trip was to Fiji, where Pastor Wilson officially opened the new campus of 109-year-old Fulton College at Sabeto, on the outskirts of Nadi. Also joining the delegation were Trans-Pacific Union Mission President Glenn Townend and Fiji Mission President Luke Narabe.

The new site—15 minutes from Nadi International Airport—caters to the nearly 60 percent of Fulton’s students who come from other countries.

"Without a well-prepared human mind, the abundance of information available can be a cacophony not a symphony," said Fiji Education Minister Filipe Bole, speaking at the ceremony. “Your education at Fulton will prepare you to conduct the orchestra of the world’s information.”

Wilson said Fulton was forever indebted to the people of Sabeto for providing land for the facility, the Fiji Times reported.
"This has been given with a lot of love and respect and I commend the people of Sabeto," Wilson said.

Innovation key to relevance in new ‘attention economy,’ media experts say

Pushing the boundaries is no longer enough. Seventh-day Adventist tech and media professionals at this year’s Global Adventist Internet Network conference were challenged to leave the boundaries in the rearview mirror or risk becoming irrelevant.

Speaking at morning worship February 13, Pardon Mwansa, a general vice president for the Adventist world church, told hundreds of Web professionals that the “boundary mindset” and the “expansion mindset” are limiting the scope of Adventist mission and ministry. A boundary mindset is throttled by traditions; an expansion mindset is content reimagining those traditions. What’s needed instead, he said, is a “creation mindset.”

“It’s easier to go where others have already been. But who is it who has improved this world? People who have broken the boundaries,” Mwansa said, citing early explorers, civil rights leaders and tech innovators.

“We will not get anywhere with a boundary mindset,” he told 400 GAiN participants meeting at the Conference Center at the Maritime Institute in Linthicum Heights, Maryland, United States.

Author and marketing consultant Martha Gabriel amplified that idea in her February 14 keynote, describing what she called “simplicity plateaus,” where an organization stagnates at a level of technology they have mastered.

“We can’t stay here. Know the next level you need to conquer,” she said.

And, perhaps more importantly, she added, know your audience. In today’s “attention economy,” messages compete for relevance, Gabriel said.

“You need to understand what makes your audience’s hearts beat faster. If you are not part of the message they want to hear, you are part of the noise,” she said.

Organizations that thrive in the attention economy know that the currency of ideas and information is no longer enough to succeed. “Ideas alone are worthless. What we need now are people who make things happen,” Gabriel said.

For Adventist pastor Sam Neves and a development team from the church’s British Union Conference, that meant not waiting for the church to get behind a comic book style trivia game called “Heroes.”
The first Seventh-day Adventist game for iPhone and iPad, “Heroes” was downloaded 3,000 times in the first 48 hours of its release, tripling the benchmark analysts say a mobile app should meet in its first week to be considered successful.

On the final day of GAiN, the Adventist world church Youth Ministries department signed a deal to help support the Android release of “Heroes.”

The game reintroduces players to heroic biblical characters—such as Abraham, David and Esther—while testing their Bible knowledge with quiz questions. Players can compare scores with their friends on Facebook. At GAiN, a demo of the game pitted players from the church’s Trans-European Division with other divisions.

“We realized that to bring a sense of identity to a new generation, we needed to remind them of who their heroes are,” Neves said. “And what better way, than to use a medium they are very familiar with?”

Indeed, said Daryl Gungadoo, distribution and network engineer for Adventist World Radio Europe, “gamification” is the new frontier and successful companies will find ways to engage their audience with games.

He cited an example from Sweden, where a marketing campaign from Volkswagen turned the oft-loathed speed cameras into a lottery, where people who drive the speed limit are automatically entered into a pool to win the fines paid by motorists who speed.

Another presenter challenged the popular adage that “content is king” in social media. Sonja Kovacevic, content manager of LIFEconnect in the church’s Trans-European Division, proposed that instead, “the audience is king.”

“[Our audience] prefers to trust someone they know. And they come to know us when we offer useful content. They come to like us when they enjoy our content. And they come to trust us when our content is credible, consistent and free,” Kovacevic said.

Brazilian businessman and philanthropist Milton Soldani Afonso received this year’s NetAward from Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson. Afonso was key in establishing and funding the Adventist Church's use of media outreach in South America.

“Even more than his money, his vision for the church in communication and technology has been his greatest contribution,” said Williams Costa Jr., Communication director for the Adventist world church.

This year’s GAiN conference also featured a presentation by Antonio Monteiro, who was released last month from a prison in Togo after nearly two years of detainment. Monteiro and four others were imprisoned on charges of conspiracy to commit murder in a case that captured the attention of the Adventist world church.

In December 2012, 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. Later, a Change.org petition to release Monteiro reached more than 60,000 signatures.
Monteiro received thousands of Christmas cards during a December 2013 campaign to encourage Adventists in prison on false charges and forced to spend the holidays separated from family.

“I told my wife, ‘We will plaster them onto a wall in our home,’” Monteiro said, thanking his world church family for their support during an ordeal he says both tested and strengthened his faith.

Church Chat: Partnering with major corporations, Romania’s latest campaign against domestic violence has different angle

For years the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Romania has promoted campaigns against domestic violence, but its most recent initiative in the Eastern European country had a new twist—showing good behavior instead of the usual depiction of violence and injuries.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency in Romania partnered with Adventist Church organizations, government agencies and corporations to launch a nationwide “True Man” initiative, which began in December and ran through the end of January.

Organizers chose the symbol of a blue scarf that women would give to a “true man” who showed care and love. The two-month appeal included partnerships with nearly 20 national and local media outlets, as well as posters and some 250,000 pamphlets distributed through partnering retailers.

The series of several campaigns over the years hasn’t just raised awareness of the issue throughout the nation, it’s also given the Adventist Church major recognition in a country where it finds itself a little-known minority.

The Adventist Church in Romania is one of many local administrative units that heavily promote messages against domestic violence. The focus saw resurgence after the denomination launched its first official worldwide abuse-prevention initiative in 2001.

In an interview, ADRA Romania director Sorin Goleanu explained why he thinks the benefits outweigh the risks of partnering with outside entities. The 38-year-old also discussed what he’s learned to do differently since the first campaign and the importance of knowing when to use professional help.

Edited excerpts:

**Adventist News Network:** Why did you think it was beneficial to show kind behavior instead of the usual method of depicting domestic violence?

**Sorin Goleanu:** All other campaigns against domestic violence use specific violent words, sounds and images in order to transmit their message. Basically they show a constant re-victimization—the victims are always placed in humiliating situations, and men, in general, are portrayed as
permanent aggressors. We think these generalizations bring damage both to the victims and to the general confidence in men as sensitive human beings interested in the well-being of their family.

ANN: How do you know this kind of message is needed?

Goleanu: According to data received from the national emergency number 112 (the equivalent of 911 in the U.S.), from January 1, 2012, until October 9, 2013, there were almost 140,000 confirmed cases of domestic violence nationwide. Unfortunately, these data do not necessarily reflect reality—many cases of violence remain unreported for various reasons such as shame, fear of being left without economic support, cultural and religious pressure, the victim is convinced that it was her fault or that it is an isolated case.

ANN: What has ADRA Romania done in previous campaigns?

Goleanu: There was one that featured Romanian boxing champion Leonard Doroftei and the slogan “You like to hit? Choose the right opponent!” Another one had the slogan “Shut out loud!,” in order to encourage women who are abused to take action and notify the authorities.

ANN: How have you built on the momentum of previous campaigns?

Goleanu: From our point of view, even each of our preceding campaigns was a success and helped us, image-wise, become the most visible organization among those who address this problem. This year’s campaign surpassed even our own expectations. And when I say this I’m referring specifically to our partnerships: Carrefour is one of the most important retailers in the country, with millions of customers every day. SanoVita is the biggest health-food company in Romania. They signed a strategic partnership with us, and they have on all their products stickers with ADRA Romania’s projects.

ANN: What was the reaction?

Goleanu: Three national television networks chose to double the broadcasting period—up to two months—and the TV spot was seen daily by millions of Romanians. Really, the reactions were amazing. Representatives of many public institutions, and, also, many people from the public had only nice words to say. For example, two partner institutions, City Hall of Bucharest and the Bucharest Police, said, “We are proud that we are your partners in such a big campaign against domestic violence.”

ANN: Are there any plans for similar campaigns in the future?

Goleanu: Certainly! All our actions must be supported by actual work as well as promoting an image. We are involved and interested in getting into society. Sure, not all of our campaigns have the same level because they have different audiences. In a few days we will launch a new campaign to raise 2 percent—in Romania, each employee can choose a direction for 2 percent of their total income tax. In previous years, because of our promotion of the issue, our revenues tripled for this initiative.

ANN: What have you learned over the years regarding how to make your campaigns more effective? In other words, what do you wish you would have known the first time you did this?

Goleanu: I learned that it is best to be professionals and to aim higher. Of course we’re grateful for our volunteers and it’s important to mobilize them, but in some areas you really need
professionals. Sure, it costs more, but the benefits are much higher in the end. We know how to be thrifty, to save, but never save in quality or trust in God. Also, we are usually more inclined to keep work inside the church, but we chose to go outside the church much more. Though it could have been dangerous, and some people were suspicious, God has helped us to prove the contrary. Now we have numerous partnerships with major institutions and large companies. That allows us to invest more in the development of people and society without weighing down the church and to maintain serious partnerships with the society in which we live.