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In Vietnam, president’s evangelism participation signals turning point

Wilson is first non-indigenous person since 1975 permitted to preach during evangelistic outreach

May 07, 2014 | Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam | Ansel Oliver/ANN

Seventh-day Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson last month became the first non-indigenous person permitted to speak at an Adventist evangelism event in Vietnam since 1975, a major step for the
church since the government granted permission for the denomination to resume operating here in 2008.

Local Adventist leaders hope the milestone is one that can help give a boost to growing evangelism efforts and lead to increased membership and ministry outreach in this Southeast Asian country. The Adventist Church here is still considered—at least in some ways—in its early stages of growth.

Wilson participated in a "Mission to the Cities" reaping evangelistic series from April 24 to 26 at the Phu Nhuan Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ho Chi Minh City, a municipality of more than 8 million people.

"We are grateful to the government for helping to facilitate this opportunity," said Khoi Tran, secretary of the Ministerial Association for the Adventist Church’s Vietnam Mission.

Wilson said he emphasized the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s focus on Revival and Reformation, the 777 Prayer initiative and the "Word of God" as the foundation of faith. He baptized 35 people, most of whom were young people, who joined the Adventist Church at the end of the series. They studied and prepared for baptism during the weeks prior to the evangelistic series.

Ten local evangelistic volunteers worked for one year prior to the event to bring awareness of the Seventh-day Adventist message to many people. A team of young literature evangelists also helped to prepare for the evangelistic series. The reaping evangelistic series welcomed over 160 visitors in addition to local church members who attended. On the final night, attendance spilled outside.

Wilson’s participation here also marked the first time that a president of the Seventh-day Adventist world church participated in evangelistic outreach in Vietnam, Khoi said. During his visit, Wilson also traveled to the capital city of Hanoi to meet with the government’s vice director of the Committee for Religious Affairs. Wilson visited the headquarters of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency in Vietnam and also visited a small fourth-floor church that was established by a blind member.

In the capital city of Hanoi, with approximately 6.5 million people, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has only two churches with a combined membership of less than 100 members. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Vietnam has approximately 11,300 members worshipping in 15 churches.

Expanding outreach has been challenging in the country of more than 90 million people, Khoi said, but a few milestones in recent years signal the potential of an encouraging future.

Since 2008, Adventists have been able to conduct outreach and service projects in Hanoi beyond what the denomination had established prior to 1975. In 2009, the church here celebrated the 80th anniversary of the arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist message. At that ceremony, the church held the first ordination of pastors in the country since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. And in 2012, an Adventist World Radio (AWR) studio was built and is producing programming. Wilson described AWR as “a great blessing to the outreach of God’s work in Vietnam and around the world.”
Ministry through literature evangelism also is expanding, especially among Adventist young adults, and several health expos are reaching communities with comprehensive health ministry.

Still, the Adventist Church has established operations in only a handful of the nation’s 58 provinces and municipalities. It can now minister to only six of the 54 cultural groups, many of whom have their own language, Khoi said. Also, most members live in rural areas while more citizens are moving to cities. “It is a challenge to shift our focus to mission to the urban areas,” Khoi said.

“Both of those challenges require workers to be sent, but we don't have a proper Bible training school yet,” Khoi said. “Please pray for the Lord to open the way that we will soon have a seminary to equip more people to be sent out for Christ.”

Nearly 80 percent of Vietnam’s citizens identify themselves as not affiliated with any religion, according census data. Nearly 10 percent are Buddhist, and almost 7 percent are Roman Catholic. Less than 1 percent are Protestant.

Visitors to Vietnam are fascinated by crowded traffic patterns. In Ho Chi Minh City, a city of some 3.5 million motorbikes, Wilson was told that if you can successfully cross the street here in heavy traffic, “you can go anywhere.” Wilson used the analogy during his preaching, telling local leaders that God wanted them to “cross the street” and realize the vision that He has for evangelizing Vietnam.

“We surely believe this event is a deciding step, opening the way for more public efforts to the cities,” Khoi said. “Please pray for Vietnam as we put our hands and efforts together to prepare a people for Jesus’ soon coming.”

‘Facts with Hope’ social media campaign offers sharable health tips

12 one-minute videos highlight benefits of healthful living

May 11, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | ANN staff

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recently released a social media campaign on healthful living for members to share with their churches and the public.

The “Facts with Hope” campaign offers 12 one-minute videos that share tips on the importance of physical activity, healthy eating, maintaining healthy relationships and gratitude.

The one-minute spots can be viewed individually, shown to groups and churches, embedded into websites and shared through social media.
This is a great way to share our messages on health, which have been backed up by scientific study,” said Katia Reinert, Health Ministries director for the Adventist Church’s North American Division. “We want people to know evidence-based ways of how to live healthier, happier lives.

The Adventist world church has promoted healthful living since the denomination was established more than 150 years ago. In recent decades, Adventists have been featured in books and magazines for longevity, and the U.S. National Institutes of Health is helping fund extensive research on what makes Adventists one of the longest living people groups ever studied. Also, in 2011, the Pan American Health Organization established a collaboration with the Adventist Church to help implement the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals at grassroots levels throughout North America and South America.

The “Facts with Hope” series was produced by the Adventist Church’s North American Division Health Ministries department and the Adventist world church’s Communication department.

See the campaign at factswithhope.org.

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**Two Adventist publishing houses recommend restructuring proposal**

**Boards of Review & Herald, Pacific Press set final vote for June 17**

*May 12, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | General Conference press release*

On May 12, 2014 the Boards of the Review and Herald Publishing Association and the Pacific Press Publishing Association, meeting respectively in Hagerstown, Maryland and by telephone conference in Silver Spring, Maryland, approved and recommended to their respective constituencies a proposal to reorganize their operations. The restructuring plan was jointly proposed to the publishing house boards by the executive committees of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and its North American Division in meetings held on May 8, 2014.

The General Conference and the North American Division have spent considerable time assessing optimal publishing house arrangements for the future that would meet the needs of both the General Conference and its North American Division. Publishing plays an integral part in the mission of the Church, and its close linkage with other church programs is of vital importance. Changes in the publishing industry and the church’s publishing ministries have caused financial challenges to operations, particularly at the Review and Herald, and have made this evaluation and proposed reorganization more urgent.

Under the restructuring plan the Pacific Press Publishing Association, located in Nampa, Idaho, will become an institution of the North American Division. It will serve as the base for the North
American Division’s publishing program and also provide printing, production and fulfillment services for the General Conference.

The Review and Herald Publishing Association will cease operations at its current location in Hagerstown, Maryland but will continue as a General Conference institution. Its corporate office location will be transferred to the church’s world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland where the reconstituted organization, without printing and production facilities, will oversee the publishing of various products that are currently produced by the General Conference headquarters, such as the Adventist Review, Adventist World, Ministry, The Journal of Adventist Education, Elder’s Digest, the Mission magazines, children’s and youth Sabbath School materials, the Sabbath School Adult Bible Study Guides, Biblical Research Institute publications and other products. The Review and Herald Publishing Association will also serve as publisher of other products as determined by the General Conference to meet the needs of the world field. This reorganized publisher will require minimal staffing since the editors of the present products are already employees of the world church headquarters.

“The General Conference recognizes the tremendous significance of the publishing work not only to past evangelistic blessings in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but also to our current and future heaven-entrusted mission of the proclamation of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14 and the fourth angel of Revelation 18,” said world church president Ted Wilson. “We want to follow the inspired counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy regarding the publishing ministries work and our goal is to see these institutions are best positioned to aid in finishing the work of preparing the world for Christ’s soon return through the power of the Holy Spirit. We greatly appreciate the dedication and commitment of the employees in the publishing houses and in every aspect of publishing ministries. God is blessing the publishing ministries worldwide and the North American Division will reach its full potential in utilizing an unprecedented expansion of publishing ministries outreach in fulfillment of its mission goals for its territory.”

“Please understand that this is an emotional time for so many dedicated workers at both publishing ministries,” said Dan Jackson, president of the North American Division. “We will move forward only after prayerful consideration and consultation. As ministry models change, one thing remains constant: our commitment to utilizing publishing as a means of reaching people with the hope of Jesus and its serving as a conduit to spreading the message of His soon return.”

A Memorandum of Understanding between the General Conference and the North American Division will outline additional details of the transition and future operations. The North American Division will establish a transition team to determine how the physical assets of the Review and Herald Publishing Association and the Pacific Press Publishing will be used going forward.

The transition team will also determine which personnel currently employed by the Review and Herald Publishing Association will be needed at the Pacific Press Publishing Association location. Every effort will be made to accommodate as many as possible of the current Review and Herald staff and incorporate them into the Pacific Press operations. However, a major restructuring will involve loss of jobs from the cessation of operations in Hagerstown, Maryland.

This restructuring plan does not become official until the constituent bodies of each publishing association approve it. The two constituencies will meet independently of each other on June 17, 2014, at the General Conference headquarters. The proposed plan, would take effect on July 1 if those constituencies give their approval.