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Adventist Church president wraps up extended trip to five countries with stop in Middle East

July 25, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review

Seventh-day Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson, wrapping up a nearly month-long tour of five countries, thanked Jordanian authorities for averting a possible crisis by renewing the official registration of
the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Middle Eastern country.

Wilson met with Jordan’s tourism minister, Nidal Katamine, on Wednesday afternoon and thanked him and the government for renewing the registration, which is required for Adventists to worship and had been in jeopardy just weeks earlier.

Jordan’s parliament resolved the issue, Wilson said.

“We asked the minister to give thanks to the king of Jordan and to the prime minister,” he said by e-mail.

The Adventist Church only has about 150 members in the country, whose population is about 95 percent Muslim. But the Church has been legally authorized to function there by royal decree since 1960.

Wilson said he met with members at the Amman Seventh-day Adventist Church on Wednesday night “to bring them spiritual encouragement during these challenging times in the Middle East.”

Wilson, who lives near the world church’s headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, has traveled in recent weeks to Britain, Switzerland, Thailand, Egypt and Jordan. Among the highlights was a weeklong health conference attended by 1,150 Adventist leaders and health professionals in Geneva, and a pastoral conference of 1,200 people in Bangkok.

Curiously, Wilson’s return flight to the U.S. did not go off without a hitch. His Lufthansa flight, scheduled to leave Amman at 2:55 a.m. Thursday, landed late and then took about an hour longer than scheduled to reach Frankfurt after the pilots circumvented the airspace near the Tel Aviv airport and instead flew south over Cairo and then up to Germany, Wilson said.

Airlines are on alert in the region after a militant rocket landed near the Tel Aviv airport earlier this week, and a number of them have canceled flights to the Israeli city.

“We praise God for His protection and ask for God’s blessing and protection for His people in the Middle East and North Africa Union,” Wilson said.

After a few hours of rest, Wilson will fly to the U.S. West Coast to speak Friday night and Sabbath at the Soquel Camp Meeting organized by the Central California Conference.

Nepali student gets one millionth dollar from scholarship fund
Women’s Ministries department reaches milestone with its 19-year-old fund

July 23, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Ansel Oliver/ANN

A Nepali student named Sunita became on Wednesday the recipient of the one millionth dollar from a scholarship fund backed in part by the sale of women’s devotional books.

The one-millionth dollar was included in a $500 scholarship granted to Sunita during a meeting of the Women’s Ministries Scholarship Fund at the world church’s headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.

The money will assist Sunita in paying for her tuition at India’s Spicer Adventist University, where she is majoring in education.

“By helping Sunita, we are strengthening our church in Nepal,” said Heather-Dawn Small, director of the world church’s Women’s Ministries department. “We’re wanting to strengthen the church worldwide by empowering women and supporting them in their higher education.”

Originally founded by the proceeds of an annual women’s devotional book, the fund over the years has awarded 2,164 scholarships to Adventist women attending universities in 124 countries. Department leaders say the fund has helped strengthen the Adventist Church worldwide, especially in developing countries.

Small praised the $1 million mark as “a big accomplishment” for Women’s Ministries.

“Education is one of our core focus points, and it’s the only department in the world church we know of that gives scholarships for women,” she said.

The fund began in 1993 from the royalties of what would become the department’s annual women’s devotional book. Its first recipient was May-Ellen Colon, who is now an assistant director with the Seventh-day Adventist world church’s Sabbath School and Personal Ministries department.

“It was an encouragement, an affirmation,” Colon said of her scholarship, the only one awarded that year. At the time, Colon was working on her doctorate in religious education. “It was great to be the first of a chain reaction that continues to this day. Hopefully the momentum will increase.”

The total value of scholarships has increased over the years, even as sales of the annual devotional book have declined in the past decade and the majority of funds now come from donors. The committee now awards annual scholarships totaling anywhere from $75,000 to $125,000, depending on available funds, said Women’s Ministries associate director Raquel Arrais.

Each of the Adventist Church’s 13 world divisions receives the same amount to award, and the number of scholarships and the amount vary locally, Arrais said. For example, the church in
Myanmar awards more scholarships with smaller amounts because of the lower cost of living and tuition; but in South Korea only a few scholarships are awarded because of the higher cost.

The scholarship fund has recently focused on Nepal and a host of other countries, often with a special fund. These include Myanmar, Cambodia, Ukraine, India, Cameroon and South Sudan.

Arrais—who herself was a scholarship recipient in 1997—said there are numerous other church employees, missionaries and lay members who are former recipients, including the Women’s Ministries director of the West-Central African Division, and the Women’s Ministries director and the Health Ministries director of the Mongolia Mission.

The General Conference Women’s Ministries department dates back to 1898 when it was established by Sarepta M.I. Henry, but it fizzled out after her death two years later. The denomination’s Executive Committee re-established Women’s Ministries as a General Conference department in 1990, and the 1995 General Conference Session meeting voted Women’s Ministries as a full department throughout the denomination’s world divisions.

To donate or apply to the Women’s Ministries Scholarship Fund, visit adventistwomensministries.org.

**Adventist leaders applaud announcement for nominee of U.S. religious freedom post**

Rabbi Saperstein nominated as State Department’s religious freedom ambassador

*July 28, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | ANN staff*

Seventh-day Adventist leaders said they applauded the announcement of a nominee for a religious freedom advocacy position at the U.S. Department of State, a post that has been vacant since October.

The White House today announced that Rabbi David Nathan Saperstein would be nominated to serve as Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. Saperstein was the first chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, beginning in 1999, and the director and counsel of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, where he has served since 1974. He is also an adjunct professor of law at Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C.

Saperstein would succeed Suzan Johnson Cook, who resigned last year. His appointment hinges on confirmation by the U.S. Senate.
The Adventist Church’s legislative affairs director, Dwayne Leslie, said he welcomed the announcement, saying the post is a key position for monitoring religious freedom persecution and discrimination worldwide.

“We’re glad the State Department will again have leadership to help address religious freedom abuses that are happening throughout the world on a daily basis,” Leslie said. “Rabbi Saperstein is someone who brings a wealth of experience to the table, and we’ve worked with him over the years on a number of religious liberty issues.”

The Adventist Church advocates for religious freedom and is a key sponsor of the International Religious Liberty Association, a non-sectarian organization. In 2009, the Adventist Church and the IRLA presented Saperstein the National Award at their annual Religious Liberty Dinner in Washington, D.C.