Headlines

Adventist Church releases its first women’s study Bible
New edition emphasizes women of faith, offers study materials for personal evangelism

Adventist Church celebrates 100 years in India’s Kerala state
Church President Wilson encourages members to continue serving society

Adventist volunteers increasingly coming from Latin America
Officials urging world church leaders to use more short-term missionaries

ADRA, USAID partnership to implement food security program in Madagascar
Nearly 265,000 to benefit from holistic initiative

Adventist Church releases its first women’s study Bible
New edition emphasizes women of faith, offers study materials for personal evangelism

October 23, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | ANN staff

The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Women’s Ministries department this month released the Woman’s Bible, the first study Bible specifically designed for women by the Adventist Church.

The Woman’s Bible, published by Safeliz Publishing House, is a New King James Version of the Bible that offers more than 100 commentaries, study materials and profiles on major and lesser-known female biblical characters.

All articles were written by Adventist women members, biblical scholars and pastors.

Women’s Ministries Director Heather-Dawn Small said she hopes the new resource will encourage women to read the Bible more often.

“We’re so glad we could offer this resource to encourage our sisters globally in their walk with God, to motivate women who may not read the Bible or read much of it to do so,” Small said. “We wanted to give women tools at their fingertips that can be used in personal Bible study and when giving Bible studies to others.”

Small said the project is one she pursued for four years without success. Safeliz, an Adventist Publishing House in Spain, approached her about a project 18 months ago. The two organizations spent the next five months gathering articles from a variety of female Adventist writers worldwide.

The project’s four main contributors are Jo Ann Davidson, a professor of systematic theology at Andrews University Theological Seminary; Carla Gober, director of the Center for Spiritual Life and Wholeness at Loma Linda University; Elizabeth Talbot, speaker/director of the Jesus 101 Biblical Institute; and Hyveth B. Williams, professor & director of homiletics at Andrews University Theological Seminary.

The Woman’s Bible also includes articles by more than 40 other writers around the world. It also features original color art on women in the Bible and a series of Bible studies. “A woman could give Bible studies to anyone with her own Bible,” Small said.

Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson prayed over a copy of the Woman’s Bible last week at the denomination’s Annual Council, saying the project would be a blessing for women worldwide.

The Woman’s Bible is available in English, French and Spanish, as well as four different covers. It’s available at adventistbookcenter.com.

Adventist Church celebrates 100 years in India’s Kerala state
Church President Wilson encourages members to continue serving society

October 28, 2014 | Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India | Pothen Kurian/SUD and Ansel Oliver/ANN

Seventh-day Adventists in the Southwest Indian state of Kerala last weekend celebrated 100 years of the Adventist Church’s work in the region, a century after the Adventist message first arrived with an Adventist bookseller from a neighboring state.

More than 4,000 people attended festivities held October 24-25 at the Al Saj International Convention Center in Kerala’s capital city of Thiruvananthapuram.

Seventh-day Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson attended the weekend celebration. Wilson spoke at two press conferences in which he emphasized that Adventists wish to serve God by responding to needs of society. Wilson also met separately with Kerala Governor Justice P. Sathashivam and with Sri Oommen Chandy, chief minister.

Chandy inaugurated the Friday, October 24 afternoon meeting. In his keynote address, he commented on the service of the Adventist Church in the state through its schools and hospital. He also expressed his appreciation for the service of the Church to everyone irrespective of caste. Discrimination of caste is a major factor that is detrimental to the progress of a society, he said.

Wilson challenged Church members to stand firm for truth and to serve others faithfully while waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus. He urged those in attendance to live a life based on Micah 6:8 “He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”

John Rathinaraj, president of the Church’s Southern Asia Division, which includes India, presented the history of the Adventist Church in the region. He began with an Adventist bookseller named Suvsheshmuthu who came from the present-day neighboring state of Tamilnadu. Suvsheshmuthu sold Adventist books and literature in the towns of Vadacode and in Danuwachapuram.

The Adventist Church’s work gradually progressed in the region through its heath ministry outreach and schools.

Today there are nearly 37,000 members in the state, as well as 27 schools and a hospital with a nursing school.

Kerala was formed in 1956 by combining several Malayalam-speaking regions.

More than 55 percent of Kerala’s population are Hundu and nearly 25 percent are Muslim. Roughly 20 percent of the population is Christian.

It is believed that Thomas, the disciple of Jesus, founded the first Christian church in India in what is now Kerala.
Saturday afternoon festivities included presentations on Adventist World Radio’s work in the region and the work of the local publishing house. Several books in Malayalam were released, and Church pioneers and retirees were honored during the session.

On Saturday evening, a delegation traveled to Kawadiar for the inauguration of the newly rebuilt Central Adventist Church. Wilson spoke at the dedication ceremony, saying he appreciated the beauty of the church and urged all members to be beautiful exhibitions of the character of Jesus in their own lives in order to attract others to the gospel.

**Adventist volunteers increasingly coming from Latin America**

**Officials urging world church leaders to use more short-term missionaries**

*October 09, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Ansel Oliver/ANN*

Latin America is becoming a growing supplier of international volunteers to the Seventh-day Adventist world church, a trend that underscores how the historic mission field is increasingly providing support to other regions of the denomination.

Church leaders say steady growth in numbers from the Church’s South American Division is the result of deliberate management and promotion of the Church’s volunteers program, which sends university students and recent graduates as missionaries abroad for two to 24 months. Volunteers serve in schools, clinics, ministry projects and administrative headquarters.

South America last year sent 136 volunteers, or 12 percent, of the denomination’s 1,100 volunteers. That figure is a marked increase since 2000 when the division sent 2 percent of the Church’s total volunteers.

Additionally, the Inter-American Division over the past year has increased its promotion of the volunteers program, which has long plateaued at a low level. Leaders there hope to boost the number of outgoing missionaries from the division, which is the largest of the denomination’s 13 divisions by membership.

The renewed focus of the program in recent years is giving more young members in Latin America an opportunity to offer their talents for service, gain cross-cultural awareness and help clarify their own future plans, Church leaders say. Both divisions have held several large-scale rallies supporting mission, and several more rallies are planned.

The growing numbers of volunteers is even prompting leaders at the world headquarters to urge world administrators to create more volunteer positions to meet growing demand.
“It’s exciting to see the growth, but we need to think about seeing if there could be more places for volunteers to serve,” said John Thomas, director of Adventist Volunteer Service, speaking to a meeting of the denomination’s executive secretaries earlier this week at the world headquarters.

Thomas said there are a high number of vacancies, but most are in specialized skill areas. More general service opportunities are needed, he told leaders this week.

“I think the door is opening for Church leaders to realize they can use volunteers in ways not considered before,” Thomas said.

The Adventist student missions program has its roots back in 1959 when leaders of Washington Missionary College in the United States sent a student to Mexico for three months. It took decades for the program to grow and become formalized.

The denomination’s North American Division is still the top supplier of volunteers to the world church. Last year, North America sent 563 of the world total of 1,098 volunteers, or 51 percent, according to Adventist Volunteer Service. Significant numbers over the years have also come from Europe, Australia, South Africa, Australia and the Philippines.

Thomas said there is a “good correlation” between the number of volunteers a division sends to the number of division staff solely dedicated to the volunteers program. North America has three. South America has two.

He tells regional leaders that if they lack the budget for a volunteers coordinator, that position itself could be filled by a volunteer.

Still, a few challenges remain regarding the program’s international growth, including cross-cultural understanding and language. Thomas said divisions need to address the adequate training that is needed to make volunteers more effective. He commends the North American Division and the Southern Asia-Pacific Division for gathering their new annual batch of volunteers for several days of training before they enter their term of service.

“North America has been able to see tremendous success of volunteers ready to serve instead of fumbling for many months while they learn to adjust to their new environment," Thomas said. “Both sending and receiving divisions need to offer cross-cultural training for volunteers.”

Also, the vast majority of positions require English speakers. South America in recent years has added English language instruction in many Adventist elementary schools, but it will be awhile before significant numbers of volunteers can serve in locations other than Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking nations.

South America, though, has made mission a priority, and dozens of English-speaking members and couples are successfully serving around the world.

Support for the volunteer program in South America comes from top leadership, and each local union and conference administrative unit has a designated volunteer coordinator to administrate and promote the program.

The South American Division has nearly 2.3 million members, according to the Church’s 2014 Annual Statistical Report.
“There is a significant awakening of the missionary efforts toward the countries within and outside our division,” said Debora Siqueira, volunteer coordinator for the South American Division. “[We] have a high number of young people among our members, and many are motivated to serve as a student missionary as they learn about the volunteer program.”

In Inter-America, efforts to promote volunteers increased last year when assistant executive secretary Janelle Scantlebury presented statistics on the student missions program to leaders at the division’s mid-year meeting. She received the go-ahead to create and implement a program to promote the volunteer program.

“I found our numbers [of volunteers] were not a good reflection of our membership,” Scantlebury said. “We were receiving 27 volunteers and our sending figures were no different.”

With nearly 3.7 million members, Inter-America is the largest of the denomination’s 13 divisions and one of the fastest growing. The territory includes Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and the five northern-most countries in South America.

Scantlebury, a native of Trinidad, created a plan to launch a missions program at each of the division’s 13 universities. Six have been created so far. The division has also held a major rally for missions in Guatemala, and two more are in the works for English- and French-speaking regions of the division.

“We are geared up for mission and will seek God’s guidance regarding the way forward,” Scantlebury said. “Soon you will see more of our volunteers in every corner of the world.”

—For information on volunteering, visit your university mission club or visit adventistvolunteers.org.

ADRA, USAID partnership to implement food security program in Madagascar

Nearly 265,000 to benefit from holistic initiative

October 27, 2014 | Antananarivo, Madagascar | Michael Rohm/ADRA/ANN

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is one of two agencies partnering with USAID in a $75 million food security initiative in Madagascar.

The five-year ADRA program titled Asotry—which means “harvest” in the local Malagasy language—will reduce vulnerability and food insecurity among
households in the nation’s central and southern regions.

The Asotry program will directly benefit 264,380 men, women and children. The program aims to improve health and nutrition, increase sustainable access to food, improve disaster preparedness and response and improve natural resource management. The targeted regions include Amoron’i Mania, Haute Matsiatra, and Atsimo Andrefana.

ADRA’s theory of change is centered around holistic development, said Imad Madanat, ADRA International’s vice president of programs.

“To address the underlying causes of poverty and malnutrition, it is critical that we implement an integrated, multi-sectorial program,” Madanat said. “In keeping with ADRA's core values, Asotry will help some of the most vulnerable communities in Madagascar.”

Because of the high rates of malnutrition and growth stunting in children under five, ADRA will work with women and children to improve health and nutrition. Women’s groups will deliver education and promotion regarding maternal health, breastfeeding, caring for common illnesses, sanitation and hygiene.

Additionally, farmers will receive technical assistance to sustainably increase crop yields and sales of products. Farmer Field Schools will introduce farmers to agricultural innovations, including drought-resistant seeds, soil management techniques and pest control.

This partnership with USAID follows a long list of successful ADRA projects in Madagascar, many of which were implemented with the help of USAID.

“We value our partnership with USAID,” said Madanat. “It has enabled us to deliver high impact interventions and foster positive change around the world.”