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New website can help connect Adventist Deaf community, offer resources for people who hear

December 03, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Ansel Oliver/ANN

The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s ministry to the Deaf is gaining traction worldwide with increased coordination to better reach and minister to members of the often-neglected subculture.
This year marks the first time that each of the denomination’s 13 world divisions has a designated coordinator for Deaf ministries in their area, a step that was announced at Annual Council in October.

Making the announcement in front of the world church’s Executive Committee was Larry Evans, an associate Stewardship Ministries director, who has long promoted mission to the Deaf and is helping the denomination coordinate the outreach effort.

“We’re seeing exciting things happening, and we hope to keep offering resources for both the Deaf and the hearing to understand the challenges of ministry for this unique group,” Evans said.

“Only about 2 percent of Deaf people are Christian,” he added. “We need to be talking more about reaching this unreached people group.”

The development of resources to the Deaf includes a new website, with sections for both Deaf and people who hear.

Deaf people are often isolated from the typical sources of spiritual teaching and encouragement. When they are members of a hearing church they are often not included in most church activities, including church leadership.

Some practices at Deaf congregations are noticeably different—heads are not bowed during prayer, hymns aren’t sung but signed, and applause is replaced by a waving of hands.

Evans and others, including North American Division Vice President Debra Brill, have continually pushed the denomination to understand how to better minister to the Deaf.

Summertime campmeetings for the Deaf have been held in the United States for more than three decades. In Kenya earlier this year, a school for the Deaf was opened that serves 18 students. In April, 75 people from several countries throughout Europe held a Deaf gathering in Germany. And in Brazil, more than 1,200 people attended a Deaf campmeeting last month.

In areas lacking a coordinated approach to Deaf ministry, Church members can think of ways to include the Deaf in church services and leadership, said Esther Doss of the Three Angels Deaf Ministries, based in Greenbelt, Maryland.

“Make friends with Deaf people and interact with them,” Doss said. “We don’t have to worry about making a mistake—they’re used to it.”

She added that churches can train or hire a sign-language interpreter to help the Deaf feel more welcomed. “Use your imagination a little bit, think how to make the environment more accessible,” Doss said.

Many proponents of the ministry say more resources are needed, including a Deaf Ministry training center to train Deaf pastors and Bible workers.

In 1996 Jeff Jordan became the first Deaf Adventist to earn a Master of Divinity degree from the Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. He now pastors the Southern Deaf Fellowship, an online church based in the U.S. state of Tennessee that ministers to the Deaf.

Jordan said Church employees working in fulltime Deaf ministry are few. “We need more workers
to help finish the great commission given to us by Jesus,” he said.

In the meantime, at least one more worker is becoming ready for service. Brazil’s first deaf Adventist pastor, Douglas Silva, will graduate from seminary this month.

For more information about Adventist Deaf Ministries, visit adventistdeaf.org.

Adventists Celebrate Religious Freedom in Papua New Guinea

IRLA opens a local chapter—and gets a government grant—to help keep that freedom

December 05, 2014 | Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea | James D. Standish/Adventist Review staff

Thousands of people from various Christian denominations marched in the capital of Papua New Guinea on Friday in an Adventist-organized celebration of the religious freedom that they enjoy on the South Pacific island nation.

The march capped a major symposium on religious freedom hosted by the Adventist-affiliated International Religious Liberty Association on the campus of Pacific Adventist University and attended by government officials and the leaders of a number of religious faiths.

Leigh Rice, president of the Adventist Church in Papua New Guinea, said Adventists participating in the march were saying “thank you” for a freedom that they don’t take for granted.

“We know many of our members around the world live under enormous pressure,” Rice told a rally following the march in Port Moresby. “How wonderful that this nation grants freedom to us, and not just to us, but to a broad range of religious practices.”

A senior Roman Catholic clergyman, Victor Roche, compared Papua New Guinea with other countries beset with religious violence and illustrated his point by mentioning the 28 Christians, including at least eight Adventists, who were killed by Islamic extremists in Kenya last month.

“We must be thankful,” Roche, secretary-general of the PNG Catholic Bishop Conference, told the crowd. “In PNG if you want to worship on Sunday, we can. If we want to worship on Saturday, we can. If we are Muslim and want to worship on Friday, we can.”

He implored the crowd to pray that the freedom continued unabated.

The International Religious Liberty Association, or IRLA, intends to play a role in securing that freedom by opening a local chapter. The government of Papua New Guinea is giving the new chapter a grant of 10,000 kina (US$3,900) to help it get started.

“We need to expand the religious liberty movement in PNG,” Delilah Gore, Papua New Guinea’s
minister for community, youth and religion, said in announcing the grant during the religious symposium on Thursday. “Even though PNG is a predominantly Christian nation, we have non-Christian religions coming here. A new chapter of the IRLA will help us peacefully and sustainably manage our growing religious diversity.”

The chapter will be coordinated by Gibbs Selika, deputy chief justice of the country’s Supreme Court and a Seventh-day Adventist. He said he looked forward to learning from other IRLA chapters around the world.

“We can learn from each other, and together we will be strong,” Sir Selika said.

John Graz, president of IRLA and religious liberty director at the world headquarters of the Adventist Church, said that the promotion of religious freedom through strong national chapters was vital in responding to a growth of violent religious extremism and other restrictions on faith.

“We hope that this first chapter in the South Pacific will be the first of many in the region,” Graz said.

Bienvenido V. Tejano, Philippine ambassador to Papua New Guinea, spoke passionately to the rally on Friday about the advancement of religious freedom in his own country after Graz instigated a Philippine chapter of the IRLA. Students were barred from taking national exams on any day other than Saturday at the time, and the IRLA chapter aimed to change that.

“Today students have the opportunity to take exams on a day that does not violate their conscience,” Tejano said. “This is the practical difference religious freedom makes.”

Publishing leaders gather in Spain to examine future trends

**Madrid’s Safeliz Publishing House headquarters re-inaugurated**

*December 09, 2014 | Madrid, Spain | Alejandro Medina, Safeliz/ANN*

Seventh-day Adventist publishing house managers, publishing directors and bookstore managers from more than 40 countries gathered in Madrid, Spain, from November 5 to 7 to attend a Special Conference on Publishing and New Technologies.

The conference, organized by the denomination’s Inter-European Division and the Safeliz Publishing House, was attended by several leaders of the Adventist Church’s General Conference, including President Ted N. C. Wilson, Vice President Delbert Baker and Associate Ministerial Secretary Jonas Arrais. The three officers and some department directors of the division also participated. Many attendees said they considered the event a historical milestone for the publishing ministry.

The printing industry and publishing as a whole has been challenged by a developing and highly
technological world, leaders said. One of the conference’s objectives was to consider how new technologies could be used in connection with the literature ministry in order to fulfill the mission of the church.

Presenters from various parts of the world came together to share what they are already experiencing in relation to new technologies.

Gabriel Maurer, secretary and Publishing director of the Inter-European Division, spoke about market trends of publishing. Tercio Marques, publishing director of the South American Division, presented “The art of recruiting professionals utilizing a special computer tool.” Samuel Gil, a specialist in new trends and also coordinator of social media at Safeliz, discussed the use of social media in the Publishing Ministry. Dominik Maurer, Publishing director for Advent-Verlag in Switzerland, shared how “Tablets can be used to make book presentations.”

Presentations were also delivered by Almir Marroni, vice president of the South American Division, Joao Pereyra, vice president for sales at the Brazil Publishing House, Dale Galusha, president of Pacific Press Publishing Association, and John Brereton, Publishing department director of the South Pacific Division.

Each presentation was followed by a time of interaction between attendees and the presenters, when both were able to present their remarks. As a result of the conference, the participants were fully engaged and able to better embrace the ideas, applying them to their own situations.

One of the highlights of the event was the launching of interactive books and a Web portal developed by Safeliz with the purpose of supporting literature evangelists in their ministry.

Wilson delivered a special presentation about “Ellen G. White on new methods and the future of SDA Publishing Ministry.” Wilson emphasized that Ellen White defended the need to develop and use new methods to advance God’s work, stating that “publishing in both printing and electronic media formats will continue to be relevant until the very end.”

Safeliz Publishing House, located in the outskirts of Madrid, Spain, also re-inaugurated its headquarters on November 6 following a massive remodeling project. Improvements include a bookstore, museum and a showroom.

Wilson praised the project, saying “the worldwide church is thankful for the great contribution Safeliz is giving to the proclamation of the three angels message of Revelation 14.”

Safeliz is one of the most international publishing houses of the Adventist world church, producing books in more than 30 different languages that are distributed by literature evangelists in more than 120 countries.

**ADRA’s holiday gift catalog features life-changing presents**
Christmas presents include animals, clean water, rescuing girls from trafficking

December 08, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | ANN staff

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency is offering donors the chance to purchase Christmas gifts for those in need, an action that can be life-changing for recipients and provide a sustainable source of income to feed a family or send kids to school.

**ADRA’s Really Useful Gift Catalog** features 36 gifts that include clean water and medical care to disaster relief and helping orphans.

Natalia Lopez-Thismon, ADRA’s associate director of communication, said the gift catalog is a great opportunity for people to give as individuals, but to also give together as groups.

“There’s a sense of community when churches, schools and groups can select another community to give to,” Lopez-Thismon said.

Her favorite gift, she said, is Gift #7, which gives a cow to a blind person. In some countries, a blind person can be a financial strain on the family, but teaching that person to care for the cow gives them purpose and a contribution, and the milk can be sold.

“It’s a gift that touches people who for so long have been marginalized in many countries,” Lopez-Thismon said. “This gift really empowers them to contribute to their family.”

Ashley Eisele, ADRA’s content manager and author of this year’s catalog, said she likes the annual catalog because it puts the projects in the hands of people who want to make an impact.

Eisele says her kids especially like to give the gifts of animals for someone in a developing country, such as chickens and goats. “Something so simple can make such a big difference for someone,” she said.

This year’s catalog tells the story of several previous recipients, including Cynthia in Rwanda. ADRA gave the nine-year-old a goat (Gift #6), which provided milk and money to keep her in school. Her family will soon have three goats, and she hopes the herd will continue to grow.

“I want to have lots of goats so we never have to worry about money,” Cynthia said.

Kopilla in India said she was rescued from being forced into human trafficking after volunteers intercepted her at a train station. Gift #16 helps girls escape from human trafficking.

“I never knew that we could be taken advantage of like this. If I hadn’t been intercepted, my life would have been ruined,” Kopilla said. “Thank God I was rescued and I’m safe.”

This year’s gifts can be found in the ADRA’s Really Useful Gift Catalog, available at **GiftCatalog.ADRA.org** or by calling 1-800-242-2372.