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Mayor of Belize’s largest city praises Adventist education
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"May this baptism bless our waters," Julia Mena, mayor of the nearby city of Granada, told the crowd.

Ted N.C. Wilson, president of the Adventist world church, who witnessed Sunday’s baptisms from the sandy shore with a group of church leaders and Granada’s mayor, said it was a thrilling sight.

“It was a privilege to be present at such an impressive scene, with young people standing in the lake, holding hands as a human shield to make sure people did not venture too far, and to see the scores of pastors participating in the baptism,” he told the Adventist Review.

Dozens of weddings also took place on the shore. Many Nicaraguans live in common-law marriages and have children, but they never legally tie the knot. So lawyers donated their time to come to the lake and marry those people in civil ceremonies before they were baptized. Under Nicaraguan law, a couple cannot be legally married by a pastor.

Among the people baptized was a woman whose son, an Adventist pastor, had prayed for her to accept Jesus for 15 years, church leaders said. The mother, in her 50s, made her decision at the lake and frantically began to search the crowd for her son so she could seal her commitment that day. Her son began crying when he heard the news, and the pair hugged tightly, not wanting to let the other go. The son later baptized his mother.

Sunday’s baptisms capped a yearlong evangelistic effort that began with the establishment of about 5,000 small groups that studied healthy lifestyles in Nicaragua and neighboring Costa Rica. The groups later began to study the Bible, and participants were invited to attend evangelistic meetings throughout the region. Evangelist Mark Finley arrived in Nicaragua last week to wrap up the initiative with four days of meetings to nightly crowds of more than 3,000 people in Managua, the country’s capital.

Lake Nicaragua, Central America’s largest lake, is located an hour’s drive from Managua.

The Adventist Church had 203,698 members in the South Central American Union Mission, which comprises Nicaragua and Costa Rica, at the end of 2014.

Finley praised the commitment of Nicaraguan Adventists in sharing Jesus with others.

“In Nicaragua evangelism is not an event, it is a way of life,” he said Monday. “Our church has
truly grasped the concept that the question is not simply how many people do we bring into the church. It is how many members do we send out equipped and trained to impact their communities for Christ.”

Finley said local administrators and church members were dedicated to the mission of the church, and their enthusiasm rubbed off on the people who attended his meetings.

“When public transportation did not run last Friday night, scores walked to the meetings,” he said. “One of our elders rented six taxis at great personal expense to bring Bible study interests to the meetings. Others took buses all night to attend our baptism Sunday.

“What mattered to so many of these Adventist believers was the salvation of their family, friends, neighbors, and working associates, and they were willing to make personal sacrifices to accomplish that dream. I leave Nicaragua inspired and challenged with the faith of our entire membership.”

Adventists to pray 100 days for General Conference Session

The initiative seeks an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the decisions made at the meeting

March 24, 2015 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review

Seventh-day Adventist believers worldwide will soon begin praying for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the upcoming General Conference session as part of a call to spiritual renewal and preparation for the coming of Jesus.

The 100 Days of Prayer program, which starts on March 25, aims to fulfill a plan that Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White said God was unable to realize for the church at the 1901 General Conference session in Battle Creek, Michigan.

God had planned to carry out a deep spiritual renewal and to change lives as attendees were reconciled through humility and the confession of sins at the 1901 session, White said after waking from a vision known as “What Might Have Been.”

But the breakthrough did not happen because hardhearted participants prevented the unity that God had intended, she said.

“Deeply disappointed, she understood that the Lord could have come back in the lifetime of those members, but His people would not respond to the Holy Spirit’s moving as they should have,” the General Conference’s Ministerial Association, which is organizing the 100 Days of Prayer, said in a statement.

The 100 Days of Prayer invites Adventist believers to spend some time every day praying for the
outpouring of the Holy Spirit, for church leaders, and for the decisions that will be made at the 2015 General Conference session, the quinquennial business meeting of the world church. The prayer initiative runs through July 11, the end of the 2015 session in San Antonio, Texas.

People can sign up to receive a daily e-mail, starting on March 25, from the Ministerial Association’s 100DaysofPrayer.org website. The e-mail will include practical, real-life devotional messages, a revolving list of names of church leaders to hold up in prayer, and significant needs to remember in prayer as preparations are made for the 2015 General Conference session. Participants can enroll as individuals, churches, small groups, or schools.

Jerry Page, head of the Ministerial Association, said he was praying for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit — similar to what Jesus’ disciples experienced in the upper room in Acts 2 — during the General Conference session.

“We realize that major decisions need to be made and different opinions need to be heard,” Page said. “We are praying that these vital meetings will be a time when God breaks through in the hearts of individuals and, as in the book of Acts, ignites a passion for sharing the good news with everyone in the world.”

But church leaders’ biggest hope is that the 2015 session will not repeat 1901 — and Jesus will come quickly.

1,500 baptized under El Salvador’s scorching sun

The local church aims to establish 100 new churches by June

March 23, 2015 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review

The Adventist Church in El Salvador has baptized 1,500 people, including 870 people on a sweltering Sabbath day, as it presses ahead with plans to establish 100 new churches in the first half of this year.

The church service at the Adventist Training School of El Salvador started early, at about 7:45 a.m. on March 14, to ensure that the 520 baptisms planned for the school could be held before the sun rose too high.

Visiting Adventist Church president Ted N.C. Wilson stood up to preach by 8:10 a.m.

“They wanted to protect people from the intense direct heat and sunlight of the middle of the day,” Wilson told the Adventist Review.

Wilson gave a sermon titled “Christ and His Righteousness” to an audience gathered under a makeshift outdoor "cathedral" of rippling parachutes at the school, located in the town of Opico, about 40 kilometers from the country’s capital, San Salvador.
The parachutes, which offered protection from the sun, were on loan from the military and secured through El Salvador’s assistant attorney general, an Adventist.

"It was one of the most unusual worship sites I've been to — beautiful with the undulating wind moving the parachutes," Wilson said. "It felt like we were going to take off for heaven any time!"

The 520 baptismal candidates exited the water before the temperature peaked at a wilting 93 degrees Fahrenheit (34 C) under a cloudless sky.

Another 350 people were baptized on Sabbath afternoon in the east of El Salvador, which is the smallest and the most densely populated country in Central America with nearly 7 million people living on 8,124 square miles (21,044 square kilometers).

The other 630 new members were baptized last Thursday at the close of evangelistic meetings.

Local church leaders have set a goal of adding 100 congregations to the country’s 708 churches and 236 companies by June 2015. The Adventist Church had a membership of 197,974 members as of the end of 2014, and it also operates 25 schools in the country.

El Salvador is Wilson’s second stop on a six-country tour of the Adventist Church’s Inter-American Division. Wilson started the trip of encouragement and support in Belize on Thursday and will fly next to Nicaragua, where more than 2,000 people will be baptized on Sunday.

Wilson praised God for His blessings on the church in El Salvador.

“The people in El Salvador are wonderful, wholesome, and mission-minded,” he said.

**Tears and hugs at mass baptism in Nicaragua**

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*March 23, 2015 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review*

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New Panama Union baptizes 2,530
The union announces the results of an evangelistic series at its inauguration ceremony

March 23, 2015 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review

The Adventist Church’s newly formed Panama Union Mission announced that 2,530 people have been baptized since January as the result of a major evangelistic series.

The baptisms underscored a commitment by the local church to prepare people for Jesus’ return and provided a moment of nostalgia for visiting Adventist Church leader Ted N.C. Wilson, who was reminded that his father had led an evangelistic series 31 years earlier in Panama.

“God’s spirit is moving in an unusual way in the country of Panama, and the church is responding in a dynamic response through personal and public evangelism,” Wilson told the Adventist Review. “I praise the Lord for the energetic proclamation of the three angels’ messages in Panama.”

Local church leaders, speaking at the inauguration of the Panama Union Mission this week, said enthusiasm for evangelism is strong in the Central American country and presented Wilson with a certificate about the latest baptisms. The document, which bears an image of Jesus’ Second Coming, says 2,530 people have been baptized as “a fragrant offering to God” during the “Journeys of Hope” evangelistic series. The meetings were held throughout the country and involved pastors, lay members, and children working together.

Wilson encouraged 2,000 church members, gathered for the union’s inauguration at the Hotel El Panama, to give the people of Panama “a positive and good report” pointing to Christ and His soon return.

The Panama Union Mission, which was spun off from the South Central American Union on Jan. 1, is led by president José De Gracia and has three conferences and two missions, 22 schools, and 107 pastors. At the start of the year, it had 76,250 members worshiping in 479 congregations.

Wilson made a two-day visit this week to Panama, the fifth in a six-country tour of the Inter-American Division. He arrived in Panama from Costa Rica and was visiting Colombia on Thursday.

Panama's church leaders tied the past with the present at a separate inauguration for a new conference headquarters and a radio station, 1560 AM - The Voice of Hope. The leaders spoke of how Wilson’s father, former Adventist Church leader Neal C. Wilson, led an evangelistic series in 1984 with Mervyn Hardinge, health director for the Adventist world church; and Charles L. Brooks, an associate Sabbath School director who provided special music. His interpreter at the meetings was Israel Leito, now the president of the Inter-American Division, which includes Panama. Leito accompanied Ted Wilson on his two-day visit to Panama this week.

Ted Wilson met a physician who was baptized in the 1984 evangelistic series and a couple, literature evangelist José Moreno and his wife, Rosita Baker, who were married by his father
during the meetings. All three are faithful Adventists today.

“What a privilege to see God’s blessings after 31 years,” Wilson said.

What Might Have Been — Can Be

A new church-produced film has not been completed because you and I have a part in its final scenes, including at the General Conference session

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Jim Ayer

What is your reaction to the following statement by Seventh-day Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White?

“By giving the gospel to the world, it is in our power to hasten the coming of the day of God. Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to the earth in power and great glory” (Review and Herald, Nov. 13, 1913).

That is a troublesome statement for some people to this day. The query is raised: “Can God really be waiting on us to help finish the work? He doesn’t need our help, does He?”

The answer is close at hand, recorded in the Old Testament. It’s the story of the Israelites and their wanderings in the desert. A survey of their history provides us with an understanding of both our present and future. The apostle Paul said it best, “And all these things happened to them as examples; and it is written for our warning on whom the ends of the world have come” (1 Cor. 10:11 NKJV).

It could have taken a mere 11 days to journey from Egypt and to enter the Promised Land. But instead the Israelites ate sand for 40 years, dying in the desert, because self continually rose up and fought against the perfect will of God.

Thus it was that Ellen White lamented after receiving a vision in 1903: “Had they given evidence that they received the counsels and warnings sent by the Lord to correct their mistakes, there would have been one of the greatest revivals that there has been since the day of Pentecost.”

Who are the “they” spoken of? Delegates to the 1901 General Conference Session held in Battle Creek.

White went on to say: “The leaders closed and bolted the door against the Spirit’s entrance. There was a stopping short of entire surrender to God.”

Do you notice the similarity of actions depicted here and those of the children of Israel?

Some may question exactly to whom the 1903 vision was referencing, but in so doing the true point may be lost in the haze of discussion. God is yearning for a body of people who will
surrender all to Him, desiring nothing less than to be fully consumed in a friendship with the One “altogether lovely” and to “follow the Lamb wherever He goes” (Song of Solomon 5:16, Rev. 14:4 NKJV). God is still yearning for such a people.

The film you are about to watch captures the amazing moments of “What Might Have Been” at the 1901 General Conference session. It was produced by the General Conference’s Ministerial Association and released to coincide with the start of the Adventist world church’s 100 Days of Prayer initiative on March 25. Adventists worldwide are invited to pray daily for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the upcoming General Conference session in San Antonio, Texas, in July.

The film’s final scenes have not been completed because you and I have a part in them — including at the upcoming General Conference session.

God wants to lead us, on our knees, into the Promised Land. How will it end? Just as with Israel, God has left that for you and for me to decide because What Might Have Been — Can Be.

View the complete film here.