World Church Seeks to Inspire Social Media Outreach

Williams Costa Jr., world church communication director (pictured here), is urging church leaders and members to engage more actively with the strengths of Web-based interaction and social media. This increased emphasis was a central theme of the Global Internet Evangelism Network forum held June 1–5 in Montego Bay, Jamaica. Read more about the GIEN conference HERE. Sam Neves, Wimbledon (England) Adventist Church pastor, doubled the size of his church’s annual budget to use Web technology to reach out to a secular audience. “Historically, Adventism has tried to convince,” says Neves. “If we’re going to have an impact in the secular world, we’ve got to learn to inspire.” Read the Adventist News Network interview with Neves HERE.

Walla Walla Graduation is This Weekend

Families from around the Northwest and beyond will make their way to College Place, Wash., for this weekend’s Walla Walla University graduation services. Consecration is scheduled for Friday evening beginning at 8 p.m. Baccalaureate services will be at 9:30 and 11:45 a.m. on Sabbath, followed in the afternoon by a teacher dedication, nurses’ pinning and other events. Sunday morning’s Commencement service begins at 8:30 a.m. The Friday evening Consecration and Sabbath morning Baccalaureate services will be streamed live on the Web. Read more about this and the entire graduation weekend HERE.

NAD Explores New Directions for Media Ministry

More than 100 media-oriented leaders from around North America held a two-day summit May 22–23 in Ontario, Calif., to brainstorm ways in which church media can more effectively connect with the public. Dan Jackson, NAD president, acknowledged the financial investment spent on media in the past has not reaped hoped-for results in public awareness. Beyond the ideas suggested at this summit, the NAD plans to form a new committee to propose a fresh media strategy for North America. “This is a long-needed step,” says Steve Vistaunet, North Pacific Union Conference assistant to the president for communication, who was at the summit. “Our legacy programs such as Faith for Today and Voice of Prophecy were cutting-edge ministries when they began. We must regain that initiative.” Read more HERE.

Looking Ahead

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GLEANER Blogs

- Cheri Corder
- Cindy’s Garden Blog
- Let’s Talk
- Mike Jones
- Monthly Archival Photo
UCA Shares Amazing Grace on You Tube
Need some inspiration for the weekend?
Watch Upper Columbia Academy’s “official music video” now available via You Tube. You’ll see a potpourri of students, faculty and instruments all patched together to create a compelling message of faith. Watch it HERE.

Adventist Health News Notes
Karen Kellar (pictured here) is the new Tillamook County General Hospital vice president for patient care services. She replaces Donna Bechthold who retired last month after a 31-year career. Kellar previously served at Adventist Medical Center–Portland and Southwest Washington Medical Center in Vancouver, Wash. Most recently, she was a patient care executive resident for White Memorial Medical Center, in Los Angeles, Calif. Adventist Medical Center–Portland won a bronze Aster Award in the newsletter/external series category. These awards are an elite competition recognizing healthcare marketing excellence. Jason Ladwig, AMC–Portland physical therapy assistant, has been named Clinical Instructor of the Year for 2010 by Mount Hood Community College in Gresham, Ore.

June 11 Offering to Benefit Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries and Multilingual Ministries
Do your part to help boost these two important areas of church ministry. Two-thirds of Adventist young adults in North America are attending public colleges and universities. In addition, 7,500 Adventists serve in the military. Increasing numbers of prison inmates are church members. More than 450 chaplains represent our church to these groups and the public. Multilingual Ministries provides resources to present the Gospel message to people groups within North America who speak a language other than English.

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Communication director urges greater commitment to social media, Web platform design

Annual tech conference highlights need for connectivity, engaging content

7 Jun 2011, Montego Bay, Jamaica
Ansel Oliver/ANN

A greater commitment to the design of Web technology and use of social media will yield more effective results in the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the denomination's Communication director said at a technology conference last week.

Williams Costa Jr. urged the church to increase its financial commitment to the design of information-sharing through the Web, as well as for administrators to further embrace the two-way communication that is offered by social media, which has become an industry standard.

"It's better for leaders to be prepared for interaction," Costa said on June 3 at the Global Internet Evangelism Network forum, an annual world conference designed to enhance the church's use of technology.

"If you want to be heard you need to hear. Corporations are listening because it's the essence of communication today," said Costa, the forum's organizer.

This year's event drew nearly 100 participants from six continents to Montego Bay, Jamaica, June 1 to 5. Most presentations and discussions centered around connectivity and information-sharing and less on Web technology as an end to itself. Many focused heavily on content-sharing through Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Several participants acknowledged that the discussion on social media has progressed: Instead of questioning its use, more Adventist administrators are increasingly incorporating social media into ministry. Doing so may increase vulnerability, but also honesty and relevance, they said.

In Central Jamaica, the administrative conference is using Facebook as a key communication forum among members and church leaders -- this despite administrators being against the idea at first. Now the group has 1,000 members, many of whom offered suggestions that were later incorporated into the conference's strategic plan.

"Members appreciate being consulted," said Kemar Douglas, Communication director for the Adventist Church in Central Jamaica.

Some attendees said administrators slow to incorporate technology are often part of a generation gap between technology users. One participant said a challenge is sometimes just educating church leaders that technology doesn't necessarily detract from interactive relationships.

"Understand, the virtual environment is a real environment," said Arnofo Ardilla, a media producer from Venezuela.

One speaker put the onus on forum participants in leading change. "I think it's up to us to develop examples [for administrators] of how social media can benefit the church," said Bryan Collick, an employee of Twitter, based in San Francisco.

The forum delivered overviews of technologies blended with ministry. One presenter, John Beckett, director of the Office of Global Software and Internet, offered training for netAdventist, the world church's website management platform.

Some had hoped to see demonstrations of even newer emerging technology. "Facebook and Twitter aren't really new," said Chris McConnell, associate Communication director for the church in the Mid-Western United States.

Still, the church is using standard social media effectively in some regions. In Spain, Communication Director Pedro Torres has converged all church initiatives into Facebook, where people can share content across ministries with one
Click. In England, Kirsten Oster-Lunding, a pastor at the Newbold College Church, said Facebook often lends itself to personal discussions with teens who otherwise might feel uncomfortable talking with a pastor about some issues. Other churches, including Forrest Lake in Apopka, Florida, United States, have already invested to create a substantial online presence.

But at the same time, the church is lagging in some regions of the world. Catherine Nyameino, Communication director for the Nairobi-based East Africa Union Mission, said it's often a challenge to obtain funding approval for even basic technology needs, such as a new camera.

"We have pockets of hope in some areas of the world where work via technology is happening, but it needs to be more widespread," said Nigel Coke, Communication director for the Adventist Church in Jamaica. "Hopefully this forum can be the one that brings it about," he said.

Costa, the church's Communication leader, said the church would examine the possibility of holding more local forums in addition to the annual conference.

This year's site was chosen for its central location in the Americas. Jamaica is also home to roughly 250,000 Adventist Church members.

The next four annual meetings are scheduled for 2012 in Hong Kong, 2013 in Athens, 2014 in Bangalore, India, and 2015 in Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

The forum also marked the presentation of the 2011 Adventist netAwards, which recognize contributions to the denomination's online ministry. This year's recipients were:

-Jose Romero, Information technology director for the church in Inter-America, for his contribution to fostering the use of technology and Internet in the territory.

-Andrew Daryl Gungadoo, global resource engineer for Adventist World Radio in England, for leveraging technology to empower AWR's global operations.

-Kenneth H. Suanzanang, former Communication director in Myanmar, for using technology to address spiritual needs in the Burmese language.

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SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
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Church Chat: London-area church finds Web technology helps members invite friends

Neves on 'inspiring' vs. 'convincing' content to reach big, secular city

5 Jun 2011, Montego Bay, Jamaica
Ansel Oliver

The tourist couple from Sweden seemed at home when they walked into the Wimbledon Seventh-day Adventist Church in England halfway through a recent service, even though it was their first time visiting. Pastor Sam Neves stopped his sermon to welcome and invite them to take the last two open seats, on the front row of the 160-seat sanctuary. He later found out they attend online and considered the congregation their own.

That result is rooted in a church board action 3 years ago, following Neves' bold request of 15,000 English pounds (roughly US$20,000 then) for a media ministry -- the exact number of the existing church budget at the time.

The board was equally divided, he said, but three meetings later it granted approval.

Now the technology is allowing members to more easily invite their un-churched friends to share experiences with their church family. Once a month, the church holds a secular-friendly service, and members share online links to videos and other resources for friends to "check out."

An online church presence isn't unique in the denomination, but Neves says the move is rare for a small church and underscores how technology is able to help connect people seeking God. The ministry also includes media-savvy members, who otherwise might not attend regularly, he says.

Neves, 29, is originally from Brazil and earned a master's degree in theology at Newbold College in England. He shared his story at last week's Global Internet Evangelism Network forum, an annual Web technology conference of the Adventist Church.

Before addressing the audience, he spoke with ANN about why messages should inspire, not just convince. He also shared what he's learned about Adventist evangelism and how he would have launched an online ministry differently.

Interview excerpts:

Adventist News Network: Why did you feel it was important to lobby your board for an online ministry?

Sam Neves: We wanted to go beyond the walls of our small church. Getting out into the community is sometimes just shooting yourself in the foot. We're in a central hub of a location, but my members live all over the place. My impact is not at the church, it's in those different locations. Yes we still keep the church open and feed the homeless, but the real impact won't occur here because members don't live there. So we wanted to bring what we have here to the environment where they are.

ANN: What's the focus of your service designed for secular people?

Neves: The key word to elders is to keep this service "entertaining." That's a dirty word in some circles, and some of my members aren't ready for that. But secular people like to be entertained -- they go to live shows and stand-up comedy, and they're no strangers to the stage. That service needs to be entertaining and inspiring and challenging because secular people want that. They expect to be challenged in regards to their indifference to the suffering that goes on in their world. So instead of "entertaining" I now tell my church that service needs to be "engaging" and I've had no problems since.

ANN: What have you learned in establishing this ministry?

Neves: This environment is a magnet for young professionals who are media specialists but have a stale faith because they have no outlet to produce media in a godly environment. Our Leandro Silva, he's a TV producer for Sky Channel 219, and now instead of on the margins of the church, he's being integrated. An app developer, Jader Feijo, when I met him, he was borderline leaving the church, but now he's happy producing media for the church.

ANN: Anything else you've learned?

Neves: We learned that evangelism works. Adventists find their guilt is released when their friends join their [church] community online and watch from home.
ANN: Guilt?

Neves: When I go from church to church we push evangelism, "bring your friends to Jesus," but in the western world, we don't really do that. We're not comfortable and some can feel guilty for that. Seems to be much easier for [the members'] street credit to invite [their friends] online.

ANN: Looking back, what might you have done differently?

Neves: I would have invested less initially and would have invested progressively as the right people joined the team and their technical ability increased. We spent about 13,000 pounds in equipment and setup.

ANN: Future plans?

Neves: It's not enough to do this once a week, so we're trying to start a Web channel. We don't have a lot of nice equipment, but we've found viewers will tolerate a cheap Web camera as long as it's live. We'll launch July 1, a Friday night, with an alternative service.

ANN: Alternative to what?

Neves: We've found that people at home are more engaged if they were mentioned [by name] and could ask questions. So Friday night we'll have that format. The sermon, I mean, the message will be 13 minutes and we'll spend 25 minutes on questions relating to that topic. We've also found the content has to be good.

ANN: How would you define "good" content?

Neves: "Inpiring." Not necessarily "convincing." Historically, Adventism has tried to convince. If we're going to have an impact in the secular world, we've got to learn to inspire.

ANN: How so?

Neves: Jesus, he had the truth, not because of the statements he said, but because of his life. It was the true life. This is why no secular person has a problem with Jesus. The true life is inspiring all by itself.

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Just 02 days, 19 hours, 03 minutes, and 23 seconds until graduation!

Graduation Weekend June 10-12, 2011

Welcome to Commencement at Walla Walla University.

Use the links below for information concerning Graduation Weekend. They will help you navigate around campus, and guide you to weekend accommodations, area restaurants, and other features that will help you enjoy your time in the Walla Walla Valley.

Graduation in Absentia
FAQs
Faculty, Staff, Emeriti
Family and Guests
Graduates
Calendar of Weekend Events
Future Graduation Dates
Graduation Photos
Graduation Program

Watch Graduation Events Live

Click here to view the following graduation services that will be streamed live:

9:30 a.m.  FirstServe Baccalaureate - Sabbath, June 11

11:45 a.m.  Second Service Baccalaureate - Sabbath, June 11

Commencement will be streamed live on Blue Mountain TV website and broadcast on local channels 13, 21, 36 and cable 13.

8:30 a.m.  Commencement - Sunday, June 12

Page maintained by Deirdre Benwell
Last update on June 9, 2011
In North America, Adventist leadership to provide direction for region’s media ministries

'Don’t be satisfied with what you did yesterday,’ Jackson says; a call to embrace new media

6 Jun 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
George Johnson/ANN staff

Top Seventh-day Adventist Church leadership in North America committed last month to prioritizing the church’s media ministries in the region.

"[Our church] offers a message of hope to a world in need. You and I have been given the privilege of delivering that message," Dan Jackson, president for the church in North America, said at the region’s first media summit.

Jackson challenged Adventist communicators to honestly evaluate whether the church is reacting to a changing media landscape. "Are we looking at all the tools that are available to us?" he said, later pledging the full support and direction of regional leadership in embracing new media.

The May 22 to 23 summit drew church leaders, lay people and media professionals to Ontario, California, to brainstorm ways church media can better connect with its audience. Among presenters were filmmaker Phil Cooke and social media guru Brian Solis.

Awareness of the church in North America does not match the considerable money spent on past media ministries and requires re-evaluation, Jackson said.

"Don't be satisfied with what you did yesterday," he said, later acknowledging that the need to expand the church’s media ministries is not an indictment of past or current efforts. Rather, church leaders should take their cue from forerunners who were "on the scene" from the "very earliest development of technology," Jackson said.

"I commend all our broadcasts,” he added.

The North American Division currently operates seven media ministries: Breath of Life, Esperanza TV, Faith For Today, It Is Written, La Voz de la Esperanza, LifeTalk Radio and Voice of Prophecy.

"I admire Pastor Jackson for taking ownership in this new direction that the division is taking," said Paula Sanders Morris, a summit attendee from Georgia.

Besides discussing traditional media platforms such as television and radio, attendees considered the role of social media in church ministry.

"In the past, our church has been afraid of [social media] because when you put your information out there, it isn't being moderated," said Gordon Harty, a California-based software engineer for the North America Division. "But... if we aren't out there, we don't exist. We can either stay where we are and remain irrelevant or move forward, take the risk and stay relevant," Harty said.

Delwin Finch, pastor for Web ministries at Forest Lake Adventist Church in Apopka, Florida, said he attended the summit to hear the church's take on social media. Finch and his team enlist social media tools to enhance church services, including texting prayer requests during services, he said.

Church administration in North America is expected to review suggestions made during brainstorming sessions at the summit. A newly formed committee will study how best to implement a new media strategy for the region, leaders said.

"We have a well-defined territory and a well-defined task," Jackson said. "We're not talking about inventing something new here. We're asking 'how do we move into the future?'

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