IAD News

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Posted: 19 May 2011 09:00 PM PDT
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Inter-American Division  >  Communication Department

Libna Stevens  

May 20, 2011

As the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Inter-America has seen rapid growth during the past 10 years, top church leaders now plan to turn their attention to the spiritual needs of its members.

May 20, 2011 - Miami, Florida, United States...Libna Stevens/IAD

As the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Inter-America has seen rapid growth during the past 10 years, top church leaders now plan to turn their attention to the spiritual needs of its members. During this week's executive committee mid-year meetings held in Miami, Florida, leaders voted to focus for the next five years on discipleship training programs, church and institutional development, education, and community outreach.

"We must strive to focus on the spiritual revival of our members, retain them as members and train them as disciples, focus on education in all aspects and continue with the development of the church," said Pastor Israel Leito, president of the Inter-American Division (IAD).

"During the past ten years strategic planning in the Inter-American Division has undoubtedly seen great growth in response to the mission statement we established in the year 2000," said Filiberto Verdugo, treasurer of the church in Inter-America as he repeated that statement: "To glorify God, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, lead every convert to experience a personal and transforming relationship with Christ, and establish the believer to become a disciple in sharing the Everlasting Gospel with everyone.

For Juan Alberto Diaz, president of the Adventist University in Colombia and first time rotating member of the executive committee, the new five-year strategic plan is a must for the territory.

"I feel this should be a part of the blood of the church," Diaz said. "If every church member, leader, and teacher is able to take ownership of this vision, the strength of the church will be such that the Lord will come soon." He emphasized that this vision must be communicated to every church member in the territory.

Initiatives and programs voted during Inter-America's Mid-year meetings included:

Vision One Million
An evangelism master plan for 2011-2015 that envisions to recruit, train and challenge one million disciples to fulfill the gospel commission of Matthew 28. The initiative seeks to select and train church members through a series of training programs to become passionate disciples, actively involved in small groups and other diversified outreach ministries.

Vision One Mission will target regular church members and former members, and upper class and business people, as well as cross-cultural individuals, through various integrated programs from departments and ministries of the church across churches, missions, conferences and unions in Inter-America.

"We will be training the most ever Seventh-day Adventists during this period," said Pastor Balvin Braham, field secretary and associate director of Ministerial Association for the church in Inter-America. "We want to train one million passionate disciples this year and have them bring one visitor to church in March of 2012," he added.
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![Image](http://www.interamerica.org/users/index.php?type=news&id=1828&lan...)

ANN file photo by Josef Kissinger

Adventist Church leader James Nix says there's no reason for people to predict the date of Christ's Second Coming. A great thing came out of a mistaken prediction in 1844 -- the Adventist Church -- but it would be a mistake to make predictions again, he says.

20 May 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States...ANN staff

...The biblical books of Leviticus, Matthew and Acts warn against predicting the future, but that hasn't stopped another Christian group from predicting the end of the world -- this time a rapture of God's people on May 21, followed by total world destruction in October.

For Seventh-day Adventists, members of a Protestant denomination that formed after an incorrect prediction of the end of the world in 1844, the media attention garnered by Family Radio Worldwide founder Harold Camping and thousands of his followers is an opportunity to refocus on the assurance of the biblical promise of Christ's Second Coming. More so, it's also a chance to accept God's timing, Adventist Church leaders and scholars in North America say.

"God can chose to come this Saturday if he chooses to, that's fine with me, but for a human to predict that and not know for certain if that's the case is foolishness," said Stanley Patterson, associate professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

"If [Camping's followers] understood correctly God's word, they would already know that this man is in violation of what God says," Patterson said.

He and others point to Matthew 24:36, which quotes Jesus saying, "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father."

Patterson said speculating about God's will isn't the job of humans, and doing so capitalizes on the fear people have about the future. Setting a date may give some people hope, he said, but the tragedy is that it's a false hope.

"God has accepted responsibility for the day and the hour and not us," Patterson said. "If our hope becomes so strong that we stop regarding His word, that's a horrible irony. Ultimately, God is going to take care of the things he said he would care for."

Alvin Kibble, a vice president of the Adventist Church's North American Division, says he credits Camping's "Divine invitation," but warns that he sounds similar to what followers of preacher William Miller might have heard in the 1840s.

Miller, then a Baptist layman in New York, and his followers thought the Book of Daniel showed that Christ would return on October 22, 1844. When Christ didn't return, one group of followers restudied the Bible, including its prophetic statements in Revelation regarding the Three Angels' messages. That group is now the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a global denomination of nearly 17 million. Setting dates of future events are not part of the church's teachings.

In recent months, many of Camping's followers have quit their jobs and invested their savings in the campaign of billboards, online ads and pamphlets to promote the May 21 prediction. But this isn't the first time he has set a date for the end -- he made a similar prediction for 1994.
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Inter-America's Executive Committee meetings concluded its Mid-year meetings after a series of initiatives and programs were approved May 17-18, 2011. Hundreds of church leaders gathered at the Seventh-day Adventist Church headquarters for the business meetings held in Miami, Florida.

For a news update on actions taken, visit www.interamerica.org soon.

Image by Libna Stevens/IAD

Executive Committee and special invited guests pose for a group photo after Mid-year Committee meetings conclude at the Inter-American Division, Miami, Florida, United States, May 18, 2011 [Photo: Libna Stevens/IAD]