IAD News

Euro-Africa religious liberty director dies in swimming accident

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ASi-Inter-America elects new president and officers during convention

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ANN staff

Karel Nowak, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Euro-Africa Division, died while swimming in the ocean off the coast of Australia this morning.

Nowak, 60, was snorkeling with colleagues off the coast of Cairn, Queensland. A rescue helicopter brought him to Cairns Base Hospital, where he was pronounced dead, said Corrado Cozzi, Communication director for the Euro-Africa Division, based in Berne, Switzerland.

Nowak was to attend next week's International Religious Liberty Association's 13th Meeting of Experts, held this year at the University of Sydney School of Law. It begins August 21.

"This is a loss for the religious liberty family," said John Graz, IRLA secretary-general. "Karel was excellent in his work and we looked at him as one of the best defenders of religious freedom."

As PARL director in Euro-Africa, Nowak represented the denomination as a religious liberty advocate both at local and continent-wide meetings, including European Parliament in Brussels and at the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in Geneva.

"I am convinced that all churches and religious communities should have the same rights and responsibilities toward the society represented by the state," Nowak told ANN in 2003 following a meeting with leaders of the Czech Republic.

Nowak was born December 10, 1951 in Velopoli, Moravia, Czech Republic. He originally trained as a tinsmith but later studied theology and graduated from Andrews University in the U.S. state of Michigan with a Master's of Divinity degree, Cozzi said.

Nowak pastored a church in the southern Moravia town of Znojmo from 1973 to 1978, and later directed the Czechoslovakia Publishing Department of the Adventist Church before serving as president of the Czechoslovakia Union from 1989 to 2004. He served as PARL director at the division beginning in 2005.

He is survived by his wife, Dana, and their three children.
The Adventist Laypersons Services and Industries (ASI) Inter-American Division (IAD) elected Dr. Marston Thomas as its new president. Dr. Thomas, who was serving as immediate vice president was elected president during the staging of the 11th Convention of ASI-IAD held at the Sunset Jamaica Grande Hotel in St. Ann, Jamaica.

"I am delighted to be asked to serve as president of the ASI in Inter-America," said Dr. Thomas. "This will be a tremendous responsibility, but with God all things are possible. A good team has been put together and I believe with our various gifts and strong faith in God, we will be able to give outstanding leadership to this important organization of our Church."

Dr. Thomas, who is the current president of ASI-Jamaica Union Conference, will serve for the next two-year term. He succeeds Juan Rosa, a native of the Dominican Republic.

Other officers elected were:
- Secretary - Pastor Leon Wellington, IAD vice president
- Treasurer - Ivelisse Herrera

These will be supported by vice presidents:
- Ricardo Casado - Dominican Republic (Spanish territory)
- Rolando Garcia - Guatemala (Spanish territory)
- Victor Johnson - Barbados (English territory)
- Jean Holder - Guadeloupe (French territory)

Rohan Riley of the Cayman Islands and Lyndon Antwine of Tobago will serve as public relations officer and project officer respectively. Pastors Melchor Ferreyra and Samuel Telemaque, both Personal Ministries representatives of the IAD are board members, along with all the ASI secretary/treasurer of the Unions and the immediate past president Mr. Juan Rosa.

"The convention in Jamaica has been a successful one due to the strong support of the local chapter," said Pastor Leon Wellington, secretary of ASI-IAD. "I am very happy to welcome our new president and his team and look forward to his leadership in expanding the impact and outreach of ASI in our region."

With only ten active union chapters of ASI in the Division territory, Thomas added, "One of the goals of the team for the next two years will be to have active ASI presence in all 21 unions of IAD."

The convention which started on Wednesday, Aug. 17 will end on Aug. 20.

ASI is the business and professional affiliate of the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide. The ethos of ASI-Inter-American Division is to assist in the development of the whole person by Sharing Christ in the Marketplace.