Inter-America: Church to attack difficult-to-reach populations with the Gospel

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October 24, 2011 - Miami, Florida, United States...Libna Stevens/IAD

Seventh-day Adventist leaders from throughout the Inter-American Division (IAD) want to bring the gospel to the unreached areas of its vast territory. This was the main focus during the opening ceremony of the first-ever territory-wide Adventist Mission Summit held last night.

The ceremony, which took place at the IAD church headquarters in Miami, Florida, United States, set the tone for the next three days of meetings as top leaders, hungry to plant churches in isolated populations as well as the large modern cities, will create new strategies to accomplish new goals.

"We know you have been struggling in your union to reach the unreached in your unions, but we want to come together to find ways of helping you," said Pastor Israel Leito, president of the church in Inter-America, as he addressed dozens of regional Adventist Mission coordinators and church presidents.

The unreached in Inter-America represent some 100 people groups such as the Hindus in the Caribbean, the Mayans in Guatemala, the Aztecs in Mexico, the Arabs and Amerindians in Venezuela and more. Among these groups, there are some 700 languages represented in about 1,000 areas, church leaders said.

"No more running away from the difficult, we will look for the most difficult places in Inter-America and attack those places with the truth," vowed Pastor Leito as he challenged leaders to establish action plans to reach those in need of salvation.

The summit will feature a number of speakers from the Adventist Mission Office of the Adventist World Church who will share the new structures and policies, explain the mission context, teach urbanization and church planting, focus on funding for the IAD's Global Mission project, how to witness to specific people groups, outline mission marketing strategies, and more.

"We want to make a turn for the better in fulfilling the mission of the church," added Pastor Leito as he reflected on the how much more needs to be done even in Inter-America, which has one of the largest Adventist memberships in the world.

"It is time to move with the changing world and define our mission to face the..."
CT editor: Clear, transparent communication is key

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David Neff, editor of Christianity Today, said if the Adventist Church does not control its communication, someone else will. "It will get done some other way," Neff said.

To communicate effectively and benefit from reader interaction and feedback, church communicators must adapt to changes in media and communication platforms, he said.

Neff delivered his remarks during the keynote address of the Society of Adventist Communicators annual convention on Friday, October 21. Nearly 200 participants are meeting this year in Lombard, Illinois, for networking and training in public relations' best practices.

Neff was picked to headline the event because of his knowledge of current trends in communication, said George Johnson, Communication director for the Adventist Church in North America. The society typically selects speakers in the region of its annual convention. "We knew coming to the Chicago area we could draw on the knowledge of David and what he had to offer," Johnson said.

Christianity Today, based in nearby Chicago suburb of Carol Stream, was founded by Evangelical Protestant minister Billy Graham in 1956. It has a circulation of 130,000 and a readership of 275,000 including its digital offerings, according to its website.

Neff called communication the "lifeblood" of an organization. "Pay attention to your readers, what they need, what they think they need and how they read," he said. "Communicate vigorously, clearly and transparently. That investment will pay off. Don't cut back."

Neff's keynote address, "Google and Gutenberg," traced the evolution of communication platforms, beginning with the very first "early adaptors" who traded their scrolls for books in the 13th Century. Christians today can learn from how those in the past became clear channels for sharing Christ, he said.

"Revolutions in communication always mean new possibilities," Neff said. "New adaptation is necessary. Under God's providence, your creative adaptation can and will bear good fruit."

That flexibility is especially crucial as today's technology continues to present new media and platforms, Neff said. When he took the helm at Christianity today in 1985, Neff said he felt the Internet was "ephemeral and perhaps amusing," but would never replace the permanence of print media. The magazine was America Online's first religious content provider. Now, 50 percent of organization's content exists exclusively online, generating media buzz ahead of the print edition.

While new media platforms mean an organization's content can go viral "incredibly fast," it also jeopardizes the organization's brand, Neff said.