IAD News

Inter-America: Church leaders officially begin the new year with prayer thanksgiving

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Church leaders and staff at the Inter-American Division (IAD) headquarters officially began the year today praying and praising God for the progress and growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church throughout the vast territory so far and seeking God's wisdom to meet the challenges ahead in 2012.

More than 80 administrators, directors and staff members gathered for a special worship service at the Bender Archbold Auditorium in Miami, Florida, and recommitted to sharing the gospel through initiatives, evangelistic programs, events and activities for the coming weeks and months to reach the 3.5 million membership in the IAD.

Pastor Israel Leito, president of the church in Inter-America, was delighted to report along with his fellow administrators on the achievements and growth brought on by the committed pastors, laypersons, children and young people throughout the IAD in 2011.

Pastor Leito was happy to announce the young speaker of the day and children participating during worship as well as reflections to take place during the week.

Maria Padilla Loupiac, 12, who just completed her first year in secondary school and is an active pathfinder member in the Covanic Adventist Church in Managua, Nicaragua, spoke to church employees about how God can transform ordinary, insignificant things or people into valuable instruments for His service.

Padilla, who represents more than 7,000 child preachers throughout the IAD territory and more than one million children as well, challenged IAD leaders and staff to pay close attention to the needs of children in the church.

"We need you to listen to us," said Padilla. "Remember that you were once insignificant children and are significant now. You have a heavy load leading the church so we ask you to give us a little bit of time, instruct us, guide us so we too can become significant just like you and like those who were so significant in the Bible. Pray for us."

The worship program also featured special music by Ebony Leito, 14, granddaughter of Pastor Leito, who is visiting with her family from Costa Rica.

A prayer session brought leaders and staff to their knees to pray for strength and wisdom in serving the church, and a special blessing upon the children in the church all around the world.

IAD's top three administrators reported on the finances, baptisms and evangelism efforts achieved in 2011 and spoke on the upcoming events and initiatives for 2012.

Pastor Filiberto Verduzco, treasurer of the church in Inter-America, reported on the financial status of the IAD and showed a comprehensive study of the finances of the church in 2011 and the previous years as well as projection of tithe behavior and retirement projections for the years to come.

In his report, Verduzco also shared the investment plans to allow unions to build more churches and improve schools and institutions.

"The year 2011 has been a year where one month is good then another month is not so good," said Verduzco. "Even with 53% of our income which comes from weak currencies, we have
remained strong in counteracting the force of these soft currencies thanks to the committed members who are faithful givers to the mission of the church."

That faithful membership includes the 3,517,239 members accounted as of September 2011, an annual growth of 6% said Dr. Elie Henry, executive secretary of the church during his report.

Dr. Henry said so far 162,910 baptisms were reported and that 10 of the 21 unions of the IAD are union conferences and 11 have union mission status.

"By God's grace we will continue committed to finishing the work of baptizing souls in our territory," said Henry after showcasing the membership in each of the unions against the vast population still unreached in Inter-America.

Pastor Leito concluded by highlighting the upcoming initiatives, and events planned for 2012, such as the first congress for children's ministries leaders, a health summit, the third phase of the revival and reformation initiative which will feature Vision One Million, among others.

Upcoming projects include improving the connectivity between the Division and its unions, conferences, missions, institutions and schools through a telephone and video conferencing system that allows for more contact with the territory.

"This means that we can travel less, have our video conference meetings, and save a lot of money," said Pastor Leito. "It's a long process but we are looking at the financial savings to increase work efficiency."

The Inter-American Division headquarters oversees the work of the Seventh-day Adventist church in 21 regions of the territory, which boasts thousands of churches, hundreds of schools and universities as well as dozens of hospitals and clinics.

To learn more about the church in Inter-America, visit us at www.interamerica.org

To view a photo gallery of Jan. 9 activities, click here