Inter-America: Thousands of evangelism campaigns held in build-up to Vision One Million

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In Hungary, amended religion law recognizes Seventh-day Adventist Church

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A difficult saga for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Hungary took a new turn this week when the nation's lawmakers voted to restore the denomination's official church status.
Thousands of evangelistic campaigns took place earlier this month throughout Seventh-day Adventist churches and gathering centers across Inter-America as part of unified efforts to reach communities with the message of the gospel.

According to Pastor Melchor Ferreyra, personal ministries director for the church in Inter-America and coordinator of the intense evangelistic series, more than 97,300 evangelistic campaigns took place, a number which closely represents the more than 100,000 small groups organized throughout the 21 church territories in the Inter-American Division (IAD).

The unique evangelistic campaigns brought top administrators and leaders from the IAD headquarters to travel to designated countries for a week of evening and Sabbath meetings in churches, auditoriums, and community centers. Church leaders and evangelists from each union travelled to their sister union to join the efforts already began by small group leaders, laypersons and church members.

Pastor Ferreyra spoke to hundreds of people gathered at the Puebla Central Adventist Church in Mexico where more than 150 visitors interested in knowing more of the gospel gathered every night.

During the day, Pastor Ferreyra met with small group leaders to encourage and motivate for further growth in the two districts with only 2,000 Seventh-day Adventists in a population of approximately 3 million.

"Our small group leaders were so on fire in Puebla that 22 small group leaders were chosen as pioneers to work towards establishing 22 new churches," said Pastor Ferreyra. He added that lay preachers and bible instructors were also teamed up for the task.

In Guatemala, more than 1,400 campaigns were held with nearly 21,000 people attending. Church leaders reported that some 1,149 new members joined the church the two weeks it was held throughout the Central American country.

In El Salvador, more than 800 evangelistic campaigns were being held reported Pastor Hector Sanchez, ministerial association secretary for the church in Inter-America. Pastor Sanchez held the week's series in the Cojutepeque Central Adventist Church, a small city close to San Salvador, the capital city. He spoke to dozens of church members and some 80 visitors each night.

On the island of Barbados, a number of evangelistic series took place as well. Belkis Archbold, health ministries director for the church in Inter-America, spoke at the Black Rock Adventist...
Church in Barbados where more than 150 people attended each evening from Feb. 11-18. The series was focused on health topics.

"The Adventist Church there [Barbados] prepared a wonderful series centered on health while other evangelistic series took place in churches across the island," said Archbold. In addition, health screenings took place every evening for anyone wanting to check their blood pressure, cholesterol level, glucose level, body mass index, and more. "It was the kind of community outreach which drew members and visitors alike to listen to the health message so helpful for our daily living."

In Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, at the Quisqueya Adventist Church, Pastor Leon Wellington, vice president of the church in Inter-America spoke on Jesus being the solution to all problems to more than 40 visitors every night.

Although the number of baptisms are still not completely accounted for, Pastor Ferreyra said it's not about the numbers but getting new members involved in the church and small groups, inviting friends and neighbors, and becoming active disciples in the fulfilling of the mission of the church.

The unified evangelistic activities are part of the church's [Vision One Million](http://visiononemillion.interamerica.org/), an initiative designed to be part of the testifying phase of [That the World May Know](http://praying4revival.org) revival program focused on making active disciples and witnesses of the gospel message. Already, the first two phases, [Constant In Prayer](http://estamosorando.org) and [Heeding the Word](http://praying4revival.org), emphasized a prayerful life and daily study of the Bible. The comprehensive initiative follows the appeal of the Adventist world church to facilitate spiritual revival and reformation, and discipleship and evangelism around the globe.

According to Pastor Ferreyra, the coordinated efforts have already made a difference.

"This year is like no other," he said. "Because under the context of revival and reformation we have dedicated time for prayer, focus on the Bible and now with testifying. There cannot be effective preaching without revival and the step-by-step process is seeing results."

That revival and reformation initiative which has taken place during a 12-month period has been key in creating an environment where church members can have a daily life of prayer, study of the Bible and testify of the good news of the gospel, organizers said. It is that comprehensive initiative which has escalated to a Vision One Million where thousands of visitors are expected to be part of a special program via satellite on Saturday, March 31, live from Guatemala City, Guatemala.

For more information on Inter-America's Spiritual Revival and Reformation and Vision One Million initiative and live program, visit [www.interamerica.org](http://www.interamerica.org) or the following links:

**Resources:**
Revival and Reformation webpage: [http://praying4revival.org](http://praying4revival.org)
In Spanish: [http://estamosorando.org](http://estamosorando.org)
French: [http://praying4revival.org](http://praying4revival.org)

**Facebook**
Spanish: [http://www.facebook.com/estamosorando](http://www.facebook.com/estamosorando)
Pastor Melchor Ferreyra, personal ministries director for Inter-America, said this year's evangelistic efforts is different than years before because of the intense territory-wide focus on spiritual revival. More than 97,000 evangelistic series took place.
A difficult saga for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Hungary took a new turn this week when the nation's lawmakers voted to restore the denomination's official church status.

Hungary's parliament amended the country's controversial "Law on Churches" February 27 to expand the list of officially recognized churches from 14 to a total of 32. Among other faith groups added to the law were the Methodist Church, the Pentecostal Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Hungarian Islamic Council.

Tamás Ócsai, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Hungary, said the vote concludes months of uncertainty for both church leaders and members. Under the Law on Churches, first passed in July last year, 14 denominations retained their traditional legal status while some 300 minority religious groups, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church, were "de-registered" and invited to reapply for church status. The Hungarian government said the law is part of its broader efforts to shore up the country's struggling economy, and is aimed at preventing sham religious groups from claiming rights and privileges extended to churches.

"The past six months have been challenging," said Ócsai, speaking just minutes after parliament voted on the amendment. "But throughout it all, we haven't felt alone. We've experienced a tremendous sense of support from our worldwide church family who've been praying, along with us, that God's purpose will prevail."

Bertil Wiklander, president of the Adventist Church's Trans-European Division, welcomed the news, saying the vote allows the church in Hungary to look to the future with renewed purpose and energy. "The Hungarian Seventh-day Adventist Church has a long tradition of community service through its houses of worship, education programs, and welfare and public health initiatives," he said. "We're very pleased the government of Hungary has recognized this rich heritage, and that our church's many fine ministries for the public good can continue."

Wiklander also commended church leaders in Hungary for their "balanced, persistent approach in dealing with a complex political and legal situation."

"Today, we join our brothers and sisters in Hungary in giving thanks to God for leading them through what has been a tremendously difficult time," he said.

Raafat Kamal, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for the Trans-European Division, called passage of the amendment "an immense relief for all those who've been working tirelessly for this outcome." But he also noted that the Law on Churches has stirred considerable international concern since it was passed last year, with some analysts saying it overtly politicizes the religious landscape in Hungary.

In response to criticisms, the Hungarian government has emphasized that even religious groups without church status can continue to meet, worship, and evangelize -- rights which are protected under Hungary's constitution.

John Graz, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for the Adventist world church, said...
Seventh-day Adventists in Hungary and around the world have reason to give thanks.

"My hope," he added, "is that the government of Hungary will continue to reassess the way it deals with religious minorities. Religious freedom is best served when a government makes no legal distinction between religions, and extends the same protections and privileges to all."

The Adventist Church in Hungary was first officially recognized by the government in 1957, and today has more than 100 congregations and 5,000 members. It also operates the Adventist Theological Seminary in Pécel, near Budapest, which serves 66 students.