Wilson, South American leaders put footprint on evangelism outreach

Posted: 20 May 2012 09:00 PM PDT

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May, 17, 2012 São Paulo, Brazil…Mark Kellner/Adventist Review

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First, however, the sole of Wilson’s foot was dabbed with rubber-stamp pad ink. Then, joined by division and union leaders here, each similarly “inked,” he stepped down on a map of South America. Each leader repeated the process.

This visual demonstration had a scriptural basis, declared SAD President Erton Köhler: Just as God promised to Joshua and the children of Israel the land wherever Moses’s successor trod (Joshua 1:3), Adventists were claiming the division for Jesus. Each of the 17 unions had its own map, all bearing the footprint of a leader.

Backing up the dramatic display was an even more dramatic commitment: the South American Division expects to raise US$50 million to fund outreach in dozens of locations in 2013. Buenos Aires, the heart of a 13-million population metropolitan area, will be the chief priority, but every other union has identified a big city as an outreach target.

The Argentinian capital is of special interest, for the city is one where only 9.1 percent of the population consider themselves "evangelicals," while 18 percent aren't interested in any religion at all. Ten challenges have been outlined by the Argentine Union, including the establishment of a clinic, a vegetarian restaurant, Adventist schools and churches in the federal capital, or central city. "Mission Caleb," a youth outreach program, hopes to enlist 3,000 young people, and the church plans to distribute 300,000 DVDs titled "The Last Hope."

These efforts, along with outreach to former Adventists, a special project at Radio Novo Tempo (New Times), and 167 small evangelism campaigns, culminating in a satellite series by Pastor Luís Gonçalves in September 2013, are expected to lead at least 3,000 people to baptism in the city, along with the establishment of four new congregations.

Similar goals are planned for many other cities, including Porto Alegre, Rio de Janeiro and Manaus in Brazil; Asunción in Paraguay; Cochabamba and La Paz in Bolivia; Santiago and Valparaiso in Chile; Montevideo, Uruguay; Quito and Guayaquil in Ecuador; and Lima and Trujillo in Peru, among others.

In an impassioned message to division leaders, Wilson recalled Jesus looking out over Jerusalem and weeping - not for the buildings, but for its people.

Wilson asked, "Are you weeping for the cities of the South American Division? [Jesus] wasn't weeping for the city itself, He was weeping for the people of the city. Because you see, the city is made up of thousands and thousands of people."

During a day of stirring reports about evangelistic outreach and literature distribution - South American church members placed 25 million copies of "The Great Hope" in the hands of residents in nine countries on March 24 - Wilson recalled his own effort that day in São Paulo, and said he's advertising the success in many places.

http://www.interamerica.org/users/index.php?type=news&id=2077&lan...
"Let me tell you, the world is amazed at what South America has done," Wilson declared.

He added, "But these big cities, many of them have no idea about Jesus. So the General Conference and the world divisions have focused on mission to the cities, bringing hope to the cities. The hope of Jesus’ soon coming."

At the same time, Wilson said, evangelism must be grounded in our own personal connection to the One we’re seeking to introduce to others.

"All of these plans, slogans and visuals ... will mean nothing if you and I do not know personally that person [Jesus], the One who saved us. The One who will come to take us home. The main reason we do this for all of the cities of the world is to introduce them to Him."