Inter-America: Church leadership pauses for week of spiritual emphasis

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Seventh-day Adventist church leaders, staff members and their families at the Inter-American Division (IAD) headquarter office closed their week of spiritual emphasis reflecting on the Book of Hebrews and committing to pressing on to finish the race toward heaven. The special week brought the more than 80 church employees to pray, praise and worship together during the annual event held in Miami, Florida, this year from May 29 to June 2, 2012.

Dr. Feliz Cortez, academic dean of graduate studies in the School of Theology at Montemorelos University, was the keynote speaker. Dr. Cortez led church leaders to reflect on Hebrews 12 as they continue to fulfill the mission of the church.

"The Apostle Paul reminds us that the way of life is not a stroll in the park, nor a picnic, it's a race," said Dr. Cortez during the worship service on June 2. "The Christian life is not a party, it's a race that you must finish."

"To make it to the finish line," emphasized Dr. Cortez, "three things must be present.. inspiration, perspiration, and patience," continued Cortez as he reflected on the week's theme The Radiance of His Glory from the Book of Hebrews.

It's about running a marathon not a 100-meter dash, he said. He encouraged the leadership to strive to get rid of things that hinder and slow down the Christian race.

"Fix your eyes on Jesus to get to the finish line," he emphasized as he spoke to a leadership immersed in tending and guiding the 3.5 million membership in Inter-America.

The week of spiritual emphasis included Bible readings, special music, and prayer sessions throughout each day as well as a communion service Friday evening, June 1.

The week of spiritual emphasis at the IAD office is a tradition that has continued for decades, said Pastor Balvin Braham, associate director of the ministerial association for the church in Inter-America.

"As leaders of this great Inter-American Division, we must pause each year for a week for spiritual nourishment together," said Braham. "We must pray and worship collectively and care for each other spiritually as we continue serving God."

Dr. Felix Cortez has a doctorate in New Testament Studies from Andrews University and a master's degree in Modern Literature from the Universidad Iberoamericana. He is married to Alma Alvarez and they have two children.

To view a photo gallery of the week of spiritual emphasis at the IAD Headquarters, go to [http://www.flickr.com/photos/interamerica/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/interamerica/).
Magda Salinas sings special music during the Sabbath School program as part of the week of spiritual emphasis week held at the Inter-American Division, in Miami, Florida, June 2, 2012.