The Theology of Ordination Study Committee agreed yesterday, in a vote of 86 to 8, to approve a consensus statement on an Adventist® theology of ordination. According to the statement, “Seventh-day Adventists understand ordination, in a biblical sense, as the action of the church in publicly recognizing those whom the Lord has called and equipped for local and global church ministry.” Unlike the beliefs of some other Christian faiths, however, Seventh-day Adventist ordination “neither conveys special qualities to the persons ordained nor introduces a kingly hierarchy within the faith community.”

More

A rumor circulating that Pope Francis has a brother who is a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is untrue. Please disregard a widely distributed YouTube sermon in which Hugo Gambetta makes these claims. Church leaders from South America, who are familiar with the situation, have confirmed that Gambetta is a former Seventh-day Adventist minister.

The Adventist Food Service Association established the new, Millie Kurtz Hickman Scholarship during their annual conference held this July at Campion Academy, Loveland, Colo. The scholarship is for any young person desiring to pursue a career in food service. The organization is anxious to not only raise monies for the scholarships, but to recruit students. The amounts of the scholarships will depend on needs. For more information, contact Gary Patterson. More

Gone but not Forgotten: Jeff Brown, pastor of the Apison, Tenn. Church, died suddenly on Wednesday, July 17, while leading a ShareHim evangelistic outreach in Panama. He was returning from a hike to a local waterfalls and enjoying the beautiful scenery when he collapsed and never regained consciousness. More

Last weekend I had the privilege of being a presenter at the Central California Soquel Camp Meeting. A few highlights:

• The report of the I-Share campaign which includes dozens of young people (I think about 100) who spend the entire summer...
going from door-to-door selling and distributing books and literature. The “Glow Tract” project is extremely effective in Central California Conference where there is a heavy impetus to train and empower our young people. Over the past several years over 30 million Glow Tracts have been distributed by young people throughout the Pacific Union.

- At the conclusion of my time with the youth I was asked if I had any counsel to leave behind with the young people. My response was simple: “God is trying to speak to you. Pay attention to what He is saying.” Following the interview and presentation I had several young people come to me in order to tell me that they were listening for God’s voice and that He was leading them. I rejoice when I seen the sincerity and commitment of our young people.

**Adventists in the News**

Family staycations - Keeping the kids busy and amused

Civil servants and officers in uniform attend annual service

Dairy for Life: The “White Gold” Rush

Jennifer Scott accepts invitation to be senior pastor at Keene Adventist Church

Dade, Meet Wildwood Hospital: New VP Plans Great Community Outreach

**Announcements**

This Sabbath remember to include a special prayer session in church for Pastor Monteiro, unjustly imprisoned in Togo for 500 days. There is no evidence against him and yet he is still in prison. A PowerPoint presentation, online petition, and video are available at www.pray4togo.com in English, Spanish and Portuguese. Here are four informative articles from Adventist News Network. Keep praying until it helps!

The Virtual Festival of the Laity is FREE and will be online, September 11-14. Plan now to set aside those days to “attend” the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Seminars in Spanish and English. Registration is necessary, but there are no fees. In addition, there are PowerPoint presentations on multiple subjects which can be downloaded at www.nadadultministries.org. MORE

**Resources**

Spiritual Gifts will be the August “Focus of the Month” for NAD. Now is a good time to start planning ways to build interest and to discover your church members’ spiritual gifts. There are links to spiritual gifts resources and inventories at
Some churches have eliminated their nominating committees and activated every member with the use of the Spiritual Gifts Inventory. Mentor your members (Don’t forget the youth!) to become productive branches of the Vine and watch member participation and church membership grow.

"Scar Tissue"
Pastor Vincent Dehm
Garden of Prayer Church in Baltimore, Md.

Rock-throwing at the Family Discipleship Conference – There was something for all ages, a special track for children, ages three and up, and something for adults. The highlight of the weekend was a spiritual lesson for all when they were asked to write on a rock any sins or difficulties that might be keeping them from a full relationship with Jesus. They had to carry it with them through five different activities, such as one simulating the feeding of the 5,000, fishing, and washing each other’s feet. Finally, they threw the rock into the lake just as God promises to cast all our sins into the depths of the sea and to carry our burdens.

Dec. 5, Prayer Call

2014:
Jan. 9-12, NAD Prayer Conference

Jan. 12-15, NAD Ministries Convention

Jan. 24 - Feb. 2, NAD Health Summit

Feb. 7-9, NAD Campus Ministries Convention

Feb. 10-11, the One project gathering

Feb 19-23, Just Claim It 4

June 17-20, Nonprofit Leadership Certification Program-I

June 24-27, PSI Conference on Philanthropy

NAD News: That Which Was Lost May Be Found; Pathfinder Bible Experience North American Division Finals; SONscreen Announces Winners from 2013 Festival, pp. 11-13

NAD Update: Beyond Bullying,
NAD NewsPoints- Theology of Ordination Committee consensus, False rumor about pope's brother, Food Service scholarship, Pray4Togo, Jackson's Journeys

pp. 14-15

NAD Perspective: Parenting Teens in a Digital World, p. 17
NAD Feature: Outreach to the Whole Person, pp. 30-37

Daily Prayer Guide

July 28-Aug. 3: Please pray for the Nevada-Utah Conference and its 49 churches with 8,544 members.

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George Johnson Jr., communication director | Dan Weber, associate communication director
Lynetta Murdoch, sr. editorial assistant. Email: newspoints@nad.adventist.org
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Agreeing on a theology of ordination is preparatory to the TOSC’s other task, discussing the ordination of women to the gospel ministry.

By a vote of 86 to 8 – a ratio of almost 11 to 1 – delegates at the Seventh-day Adventist® Church’s Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) agreed yesterday to approve a consensus statement on an Adventist theology of ordination. The action was an early endorsement of the goal of TOSC leaders to move unitedly through the challenging issues surrounding the church’s discussion of ordination.

According to the statement, “Seventh-day Adventists understand ordination, in a biblical sense, as the action of the church in publicly recognizing those whom the Lord has called and equipped for local and global church ministry.” Biblical examples of ordained persons include elders/supervising elders and deacons, the document says, as well as “elders who were itinerant and supervised greater territory with multiple congregations.”

Explaining the role of an ordained person, the statement continues: “In the act of ordination the church confers representative authority upon individuals for the specific work of ministry to which they are appointed. These may include representing the church; proclaiming the gospel; administering the Lord’s Supper and baptism; planting and organizing churches; guiding and nurturing members; opposing false teachings; and providing general service to the congregation.”

Unlike the beliefs of some other Christian faiths, however, Seventh-day Adventist ordination “neither conveys special qualities to the persons ordained nor introduces a kingly hierarchy within the faith community.”

The statement concludes by noting “the ultimate model of Christian ministry is the life and work of our Lord, who came not to be served but to serve.”
The approval of the document came on the second day of the second 2013 gathering of TOSC members, who met at a private, non-church conference center near the Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport. Delegates included church pastors, lay members, scholars and officers from throughout the Seventh-day Adventist global community, with Artur Stele, a general vice president of the world church and director of the General Conference Biblical Research Institute, as chairman. Geoffrey Mbwana, another general vice president, is vice chair.

“This is the first time the church has taken a serious study to develop a theology of ordination,” Mbwana said shortly after the vote. “It’s critical that before we discuss any issue of ordination, we actually understand a theology of ordination. Today, I think a milestone is beginning to happen: that a consensus statement has been accepted to be recommended to the General Conference, the Annual Council and then to the [GC] Session to be adopted as a statement of a theology of ordination.”

Agreeing on a theology of ordination is preparatory to the TOSC’s other task, discussing the ordination of women to the gospel ministry. The subject has been debated among Seventh-day Adventists for years, with the worldwide General Conference Sessions of 1990 and 1995 declining to permit such ordinations. The TOSC is charged with producing material for discussion and making recommendations that will be acted upon at the church’s July 2015 world session, due to be held in San Antonio, Texas.

According to Bill Knott, Adventist Review editor and a member of the TOSC, “If the church can reach consensus on a common theology of ordination, it offers hope that it may also find a solution that honors the strongly held convictions on both sides of this issue.”

Committee meetings continue through Wednesday, July 24.

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Jul 23, 2013 Linthicum Heights, Maryland, United States

Mark A. Kellner, Adventist Review
Adventist News Network
North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists® : 7-22-13 Adventist Food Service Association Establishes New Scholarship

To help young persons pursuing a career in food service

The Adventist Food Service Association established the Millie Kurtz Hickman Scholarship during their annual conference held this July at Campion Academy, Loveland, Colorado. The scholarship is for any young person desiring to pursue a career in food service. The history of the scholarship was presented by the AFSA treasurer, Gary Patterson, and is named for the woman who began the organization following Millie Kurtz’s service at the General Conference Session in Utrecht, the Netherlands. Unfortunately she was unable to attend the event because of the recent death of her spouse, Al.

The organization is anxious to not only raise monies for the scholarships, but to recruit students. The amounts of the scholarships will depend on needs. For further information on these scholarships, you can contact Gary Patterson. Next year’s conference will be held at Shenandoah Valley Academy in New Market, Virginia. This year’s meeting was hosted by Dawn Fagan, director of food service at Campion Academy, and her assistants.

As part of the yearly conference the AFSA had the opportunity to visit the Celestial Seasonings factory, the Madhava Sweeteners facilities, and tour the Culinary Institute of Arts. They benefited from presentations on the “new” Kuehls and “Keeping Yourself Healthy,” and by Food Services of America. The group also was able to discuss students’ special dietary needs and how to keep a servant attitude without being “abused.” On a less strenuous note, they were able to spend some time in the Rocky Mountain National Park.

------------- Ardis Stenbakken, reporting
Conference Mourns Loss of Pastor Jeff Brown

gccsda.com/news/30743

Image attributed to: Larry Walker
Learn about the celebration of life service
We are deeply saddened to announce that Jeff Brown, pastor of the Apison (Tenn.) Church, died unexpectedly on Wednesday, July 17, 2013, while leading a ShareHim evangelistic outreach in Panama.

The group of teen speakers and adult sponsors from the Apison Church were returning from a half-day outing, having hiked to a local waterfall. On the way back, the group stopped to rest and share a few snacks. Pastor Brown was in his element, mentoring young people in evangelism and now enjoying the natural beauty of Central America.

He commented, "Isn't this beautiful!" then suddenly collapsed. The group immediately started CPR and sent for help, continuing for over an hour until the rescue team arrived. He never regained consciousness.

The US Embassy is assisting with repatriation, but has advised that could take several weeks. Funeral arrangements, when finalized, will be posted here.

Jeff and his wife, Joy, have two adult children: Beth, married to Bradley Lasley, of Chattanooga, Tenn., and Zach, temporarily in Alaska.

Our hearts unite in prayer upholding this family. We renew our commitment to sharing the same Good News that was the heartbeat of Jeff's life and ministry. Indeed, come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Condolences can be mailed to:

Joy Brown

PO Box 1551

Collegedale, TN  37315-1551
Family staycations - Keeping the kids busy and amused | The Press Democrat

There's no greater anticipation for kids than the first day of summer vacation. For parents, there may be no greater anticipation than the first day of school. Somewhere in between is roughly three months of free time that is perfect for traveling, summer camps and lounging by the pool. To make the most of it, explore your own home town, acting as a tourist on a staycation in Sonoma County.

Here are some of the events you can look forward to, as well as a few places to visit before you pack up the pool toys and sharpen your pencils to send the kids back to school.

Every Friday from 2-4 p.m., the UC Davis Bodega Marine Laboratory offers drop-in tours to the public for groups of less than 10 people. A volunteer docent leads groups of all ages, teaching marine science while displaying local fish, anemones and other marine life in aquariums and tidepools. It's a tricky way to incorporate learning during the study-free months of summertime. During a visit, your family can discover new things about sea creatures and their habitats, as well as get a chance for an up-close interaction with safe-to-touch sea life.
The Bodega Marine Laboratory is located at 2099 Westside Road, Bodega Bay. Info: 875-2211, bml.ucdavis.edu.

The library is the perfect place for kids of all ages to hang out, particularly in these dog days of summer. Each Sonoma County location hosts something different almost every day of the week. Tweens in grades 4-6 can join a book club at the Healdsburg location. Beginning readers can read to a dog in just about every town's library. The Petaluma Library hosts Family Storytime, and Rincon Valley has a fun Family Night planned on Aug. 21. Even the youngest members of the family can have fun at the Wee Read or Wiggle Time events in Sebastapol. Info: www.sonoma.lib.ca.us.

Keep the kids unplugged this summer by taking them to the bowling alley. All summer long, AMF Bowling in Petaluma is offering kids two free games every day of the summer. Shoe rental isn't included, but that's a small price to pay for an afternoon of cheap fun away from the house. Visit freebowling.amf.com to sign up and start bowling today. AMF Bowling is located at 1100 Petaluma Blvd. S., Petaluma. Info: amf.com/boulevardlanesca.

Since 1989, a large flock of Vaux's Swifts, a type of small migratory bird, travels home from northern South America and roosts in the chimney of Rio Lindo Adventist Academy in Healdsburg. This avian phenomenon begins as early as the first week of August, with birds trickling in for the evening. But by mid-September, the number of birds swarming the private school each night can reach a count of 10,000 or more, taking on the orchestrated shape of a dark, moving cloud. The public is invited to pull up a lawn chair around sundown and observe this magnificent event. But campus school rules, including a ban on alcohol or cigarettes, still apply. Rio Lindo Adventist Academy is located at 3200 Rio Lindo Ave., Healdsburg. Info: 431-5100, riolindo.org.

At least once a month, the Robert Ferguson Observatory in Sugarloaf Ridge State Park is open to the public, allowing visitors to explore the wonders of the sky through the observatory's large telescopes. During the day, they offer safe viewing of the sun through their solar telescopes. But once nightfall occurs, that's when the Star Party begins. Multiple telescopes are set up outside the observatory, as well as the three main observatory telescopes, offering an expansive scene of the night sky. The next date for observing the sun and stars at the observatory is Saturday, Aug. 10. Daytime observing is free, and the evening Star Party is $3 for adults and free for kids under 18. A parking fee of $8 applies. Info: www.rfo.org.

The Charles Schulz Museum is a family favorite in Sonoma County, offering a glimpse into the life and work of beloved cartoonist Charles Schulz and keeping his characters alive through past and modern comics, ongoing events and workshops. Through Aug. 16, the museum is offering day classes for kids that include building Snoopy a doghouse out of graham crackers, cool summer fun with ice cream and ice skating, and hands-on art lessons. On the last Monday of each month, kids ages 1-5 are invited for Museum Mondays, afternoons of stories, games, active play and more at a cost of $5 per child. And on Thursday, Aug. 8 from 5-8 p.m., the Charles Schulz Museum is not only offering free admission, but also serving free ice cream cake from Coldstone Creamery. The museum is located at 2301 Hardies Lane, Santa Rosa. Info: 579-4452, schulzmuseum.org.

(Crissi Langwell writes about families and entertainment. You can reach her at crissi.langwell@pressdemocrat.com.)

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(Crissi Langwell writes about families and entertainment. You can reach her at crissi.langwell@pressdemocrat.com.)
As Bill Wavrin sees it, while there are always those who fall on hard times, there are also those who can lend a helping hand. A family dairy farmer in Mabton, Wash. since 1990, Wavrin felt compelled to do what he could for people in need in his community. And, when he spoke with fellow farmers, he found they shared his sentiment.

By December 2012, 31 Yakima Valley and Tri-Cities food banks discovered that they had hit “white gold,” Wavrin and five other dairy farmers decided to donate $60,000 to provide for 25,000 gallons of milk throughout 2013 to communities plagued by food insecurity. Known as “Dairy for Life,” the initiative is Wavrin’s passion, and he is working hard to bring more farmers on board and extend the program for several years.

Aside from Wavrin and his brother Sid, who co-own Sunny Dene Ranch, the initiative’s members currently include: Jake and Genny DeRuyter of DeRuyter Brothers Dairy, Dan and Carolyn DeGroot of Skyridge Farms, Tom and Heather deVries of deVries Family Dairy, the Dolsen Families of Cow Palace, the LLC Aquilini Family, Henry and Lori Oord, and Jon and Lori Wheeler of Sunnyside Dairy. All reside in the Mid-Colombia Basin region.

Rod Wieber, Chief Resource Officer at Second Harvest (the milk distributor for the program), describes the milk donation as “white gold, because it’s something the food banks rarely see. And to have it on a recurring basis is a huge boon.”

A nonprofit with a network of 250 food banks and meal centers in eastern Washington and northern Idaho, Second Harvest is using the funds from the farmers to purchase 400 gallons a week of reduced-fat (2 percent) milk from Darigold, a farmer-owned co-op that processes fluid milk, in which all six farmers are members.

Although the current donation of 25,000 gallons over 12 months is significant, Wavrin thinks local farmers can do more. Donations from each farmer in the program reflect the size of the dairy farm, and the participating farms each boast an above average herd size for the state of Washington. Wavrin’s farms (Wavrin and his brother own three farms together) have between 3,000 to 4,000 cows, depending on the time of year.
Wavrin believes that larger farms have more latitude to make sizable donations while still feeding their own families. When Wavrin recently attempted to formalize the program within the co-op, he felt resistance from some smaller farms.

"The idea is, 'If I can't feed myself, how can I feed others?' Maybe it will always be biased toward larger farms, because you still have something left over to be socially responsible with," Wavrin says. "Rural America is generous, but quietly so. I want it to be a group effort, because if we could pull together and get this program established, we could get a lot of milk to a broader geographical base of young families in need."

Bringing in more farmers to increase donations also would allow food banks like the one run by Helaina Meyers in Sunnyside to distribute milk more equally to their 625 families who are food insecure—a number that is growing by two-to-12 families a week.

Through Dairy for Life, the Seventh Day Adventist food bank receives 90 gallons of milk a month, and the director admits she is hard pressed to divide up the highly-prized commodity. "I have to prioritize large families with kids," she says. "I need to take care of the children first."

Meyers says she and her client families were more than thrilled to hear about the donation, since the food bank has rarely been able to offer fresh milk. The towns served by Meyers' food bank, Sunnyside and Outlook, sit in what is considered to be one of the state's poorest areas, Yakima Valley, which garners few donations from local stores.

**A struggle for storage**

So far, storage of the donated milk hasn't been an issue for the Seventh Day Adventist food bank, which utilizes a 9 x 12 walk-in cooler provided by the church. When Second Harvest informed food banks about the forthcoming donation, everyone jumped at the opportunity to provide their constituents with the prized product—every food bank except one.

The reason? Lack of storage space for such a large volume of a perishable item. To prevent this kind of situation, Wieber believes that food banks need to create the capacity to store highly-perishable items like fresh produce and dairy, which provide especially important nutrients for food-insecure families.

When Wieber joined Second Harvest in November 2006, just 35 percent of the organization's inventory was perishable. Today, that number has risen to 65 percent, thanks to an increase in donations by farmers who help provide fresh produce. Items like boxed macaroni and cheese and canned soup now come mainly from Second Harvest's food drives. The State of Washington's agricultural yield is above average, which allows organizations like Second Harvest to successfully reach out to local farmers for donations.

"Clients take whatever is available, but more and more, our food inventory has turned to highly-perishable product. So in turn, food banks and smaller pantries have had to change to accommodate perishable items. They had to change their mindset and start building that infrastructure and capacity and invest in larger fridges and coolers," says Wieber.

In fact, until October 2012, Second Harvest relied upon a 5,000 square-foot facility with an 80 square-foot cooler—an increasingly small space for a distribution center that now feeds 48,000 people a week. Finally, the organization realized that they needed to keep up with the change in
volume of perishable products. They purchased land in Pasco, Wash., where volunteers helped build a 14,000 square foot facility containing 2,000 square feet of refrigeration and 2,000 square feet of freezer space.

For many food banks, it will take time and money to build up the proper infrastructure, and more refrigeration space means a bigger electricity bill.

“Larger food banks can lean on their community. But we will see more of this type of perishable donation. This is the way of the future,” Wieber says.

“Dairy’s nutrients such as calcium, protein, potassium and more are critical for a healthy diet, yet dairy foods only make up about 5% of the foods distributed nationwide by food banks. And for those who aren’t able to access it, well, we think they should have access regardless,” Wavrin declares.

And so it will be, if Wavrin and his fellow dairy farmers have anything to do about it.

Join the effort to keep 50 million Americans safe from hunger. For information on how you can get involved in your local food bank efforts, go to http://feedingamerica.org/get-involved.aspx.
Jennifer Scott accepts invitation to be senior pastor at Keene Adventist Church

By Paul Gnadt Keene Star

Pastor Jennifer Scott has accepted the position as senior pastor at the Keene Adventist Church, according to Texas Adventist Conference Executive Secretary Gary Brady, who announced Scott’s decision from the pulpit Saturday morning at the church.

Scott was offered the position July 17 by Texas Adventist Conference president Carlos Craig after the conference personnel committee supported a recommendation by the 25-member Keene Church Senior Pastor Search Committee to offer the position to Scott.

“We’re excited about coming to Keene,” Scott told the Keene Star. “People are warm and welcoming and the opportunity is great for ministry. I am eager to get started.”

Scott, currently the senior pastor at the Shelton, Wash., Adventist Church, interviewed for the position July 11 and spoke July 13 at both services at the Keene Adventist Church.

A come-and-go reception held for her later that afternoon attracted a large crowd to the Keene Senior Center.

The search committee met the evening of July 16 in the board room at Southwestern Adventist University and decided it wanted to offer Scott the job.

Her final sermon in Shelton will be Aug. 3, Scott said.

“Praise the Lord,” Search Committee Chair Steve Stafford said. “She will do a good job. She’s ready to get to work and to get to know everyone.”

Scott, her husband, Robert “Bob,” daughter Camryn, 13, and son, Caeden, 10, will travel to Keene in mid-August to search for housing and get assignments at Keene Adventist Elementary School, she said.

The family will return to Washington to wrap up last-minute details and will arrive in Keene to stay about mid September, she said.

The search committee had been meeting since April to find a successor to Mic Thurber, who left after 10 years as senior pastor of the 3,000-member church to become ministerial director for the Mid America Union in Lincoln, Neb.

In addition to Stafford, members of the search committee are Craig and Grady from the conference office; Keene Adventist Church pastoral staff members Geraldo Alonso, Heather Crews, Phil Robertson, Jerrod Songy and Jim Teel; and Keene church members Eric Anderson, Gwen Beeson, Leticia Cortes, Marjorie Frakes, Mickey Johnson, Kenny Jones, Diane Ketchum, Karl Konrad, Russ Laughlin, Linc Liberto, Lillian Lopez, Sipho Ndebele, Mary Ortiz, Marie Redwine, Robert Smith, Chris Tharp and Dean Turk.

“I did a lot of listening during my visit to Keene and I'll continue to do that,” Scott said. “I'm a team player.”
The Shelton Adventist Church is part of the Shelton Valley Christian Campus, a 25-acre site about 50 miles southwest of Seattle. The campus includes the Shelton Valley Christian School and Shelton Valley Christian Child Development Center that has exploded to an enrollment of 256 children in the last four years.

Scott's name was at the top of a list of about 50 potential candidates who were asked to submit resumes, Stafford said.

"Some did, some didn't," he said.

Scott is a 1991 graduate of Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University) with two degrees, and earned a master's degree in theology from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., in 1997.

She has served as an associate pastor at Loma Linda University Church in Loma Linda, Calif., and Green Lake, Wash. She has a website at www.jenniferscott.net.

Scott grew up in Maryland where her mother's side of the family were members of the Adventist Church.

"Pray for us during this transition," Scott said.
Dade, Meet Wildwood Hospital: New VP Plans Great Community Outreach
7/17/2013

By: Robin Ford Wallace, Reporter

“Dade County has a hospital that Dade County doesn’t know,” said Zeno Charles-Marcel, M.D., the new vice president of medical affairs at Wildwood Hospital and Lifestyle Center.

Dr. Charles-Marcel – most people find the double-barreled surname, not to mention its French pronunciation, a little daunting, he says, and call him Dr. Zeno – is a Trinidad-born, Howard University-trained internist and diabetes specialist. The former medical director of Pennsylvania’s Reading Rehabilitation Hospital, and a 30-year medical professor at Loma Linda University in California, Charles-Marcel arrived at Wildwood Hospital only last November and is just now getting acquainted with Dade County. What has surprised him is how little Dade County is acquainted with the hospital.

“We have people who come to Wildwood Hospital and Lifestyle Center from all over the world,” said Charles-Marcel. “Here we have people that we send out to different parts of the world, to help them in Uzbekistan and in different parts of Africa, all over Asia and all over South America and the Caribbean. I ask, what about Dade County? This is home.”

As many Dade residents are aware, the Wildwood facility, right off the Wildwood exit of I-24 at Highway 299, is associated with a Seventh-day Adventist center where international students train for medical missionary work. The complex also contains a whole foods grocery, bookstore and separate herb shop, all open to the public, and a lifestyle center renowned for its 11- and 25-day inpatient programs, where vegetarian diet and natural medicine are used to treat everything from obesity and hypertension to cancer.

“But I bet you didn’t know that we used to have an obstetric wing,” said Charles-Marcel, “I bet you didn’t know that we used to do surgery here.”

That, he said, may shortly happen again. Wildwood, which already has a general-purpose, multi-physician outpatient clinic, where Charles-Marcel says patients may make appointments for anything they would consult any other medical practice about, has plans in the works to open an urgent care facility as soon as 2014 (see related article), and perhaps revisit other of its general hospital functions.

Meanwhile, though, the internist wants to use community outreach to start “an epidemic of health” in Dade County. He has spoken with North Dade’s district commissioner, Mitchell Smith, and hopes soon to address the county commission about programs on health, lifestyle and food preparation – “Food preparation as opposed to cooking, because not everything do you have to cook” – in Dade community centers.

“We’re looking at what the community needs, and we’re going to design a way to meet the needs of the community,” said Charles-Marcel. “Any hospital, if it’s not serving the needs of the community, is not serving its purpose.”

Wildwood Hospital was founded in the World War II era as a Seventh-day Adventist facility, and Charles-Marcel himself became an Adventist in 1980. But he says his hospital’s whole-food-and-exercise approach to health works for everyone and scoffs at the notion it is a matter of dogma. “I’m coming at it from an internist’s point of view,” he said. “To live in a healthy way is not a religious issue at all. If you buy a new car, the dealership may tell you to change the oil every 3,000 miles. Would you see that as being a religious thing with your car?”

It was in 1994, while Charles-Marcel was the diabetes consultant as well as medical director at Reading Rehab, that he became convinced lifestyle was the right approach to this devastating disease. One patient at 52 was losing his eyesight and kidney function to diabetes and had already had both legs amputated.

“They did what we call the salami,” said Charles-Marcel. “They took off a toe and then that didn’t heal, then they took off the forefoot, then ankle, below-knee amputation on one leg, above-knee on the other.”
Reading did state-of-the-art rehabilitation work, said the doctor, so that the patient was soon walking on artificial limbs and undergoing dialysis automatically as he slept. But the man had so many appointments each day for fitting or medicating or poking or prodding that the only time Charles-Marcel had been able to catch him in his hospital room was after midnight.

“That morning, in the wee hours of the morning, I thought maybe we as a society were not doing a good enough job of helping to prevent this problem,” he said. “This doesn’t make sense, because we know how to prevent this and we know how to reverse it, if only we were seeing him early enough.”

Charles-Marcel later went to do medical missionary work in south Texas and Mexico, but before he left Reading he had started the ball rolling for a lifestyle center there. Before then, he said, lifestyle centers had been an essentially Seventh-day Adventist concept; now secular authorities began to see the logic in preventing disease through lifestyle as opposed to treating it later.

“From an internist’s point of view, why should I spend most of my time patching people up when they would do much better, and would have a much more enjoyable life, if what I could help them do is to avoid the problem in the first place?” he said.

Charles-Marcel also has the ambition to show seniors not how to live with disease but how to live without it, but he warns prevention shouldn’t start at 65. “One patient told me, ‘Doc, if I had known that I would live this long, I would have taken better care of myself,’” he said.

As a first step toward bringing that kind of health approach to Dade, Charles-Marcel has instituted what he calls a “community audit” here, sending students to question residents at convenience stores and homes, and generally observe what features the county has to promote health and what obstacles to prevent it.

“If, for instance, in a neighborhood there are no sidewalks, you will find that less people will be walking down the street,” he said. “If, in a community, there are no parks and recreational areas, you will find that people have to resort to doing things at home. If in their homes and their yards they don’t have trampolines and basketball hoops, then the kids won’t be likely to be out in the yard playing.”

Dade’s community audit is still in progress, and Charles-Marcel promises to make the results available when complete. Meanwhile, though, he worries from his own informal observations that more children aren’t outside recreating during this summer vacation time. “If the kids are not physically active, playing outside, if they’re not doing that, it’s only a matter of time before they end up with disease,” he said. “That’s the reality.”

His prescription: “Get some fresh air as opposed to sitting down playing a computer game,” he said. “Where are the guys playing basketball when it’s not because you’re on the varsity team? Those things rapidly become spectator sports. We have 11 or 12 guys out there playing and everybody else is sitting down watching.”

Wildwood Hospital plans to become more a part of daily Dade County life, says the doctor, and as such to promote health knowledge and healthful activities in the area. Until then, here’s Charles-Marcel’s message to the public:

“I don’t want to highlight the things people shouldn’t do. I want to highlight the things that people are doing that are already helpful and the obstacles that might exist to their doing better,” he said. “What Dade County needs to know is that Dade County could be a healthier place and that people don’t have to get sick.”
Pastor António Monteiro has remained in prison for more than a year now, accused of a crime his church officials say he didn’t commit. Monteiro, the Family Ministries director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Sahel Union Mission, based in Lomé, Togo, was in his office one day when a man came to ask for a job and money. That man, Kpatcha Simliya, would later accuse Monteiro of being the mastermind behind a blood trafficking network to gather blood for use in religious ceremonies. More than a dozen young women had recently been found dead in the suburbs. The public wanted justice.

Pastor António Monteiro has remained in prison for nearly 500 days without a trial. He is being held at the Lomé Civil Prison in Togo. [photos courtesy Monteiro family]

Despite no evidence of his involvement, Monteiro was imprisoned on March 15, 2012, and to date has not received a trial. Five attempted appeals by his lawyer, the Adventist world church and several foreign diplomats have failed to see him released. Government officials have made promises to church leaders and lawyers, but have not brought him freedom.

The president of Togo Faure Gnassingbé last year declined to receive Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson when he made a pastoral visit to the country.

For church leaders and other following Monteiro’s case, many feel there must be more to the story. Did someone need a scapegoat? Do judges in Lomé really have final say, or are they ordered by the government to make decisions?

Indeed, in a written statement obtained by ANN, Monteiro says that on the day he was arraigned, the judge repeatedly told him in front of his attorney, “Pastor, I know that you are innocent. Your file is empty. But I can’t release you, since this doesn’t depend on me.”

Monteiro wondered to himself, “So on whom does this depend?”

Now, more than 16 months later, new details are emerging about the case, which has left lawyers, diplomats and church officials confounded over how to secure Monteiro’s release from a government that is violating its own constitution by detaining him without a legal basis.

According to police reports, his accuser, Simliya, previously confessed to murdering young women for the use of their blood and luring young women into the woods on unlikely promises. Simliya also served time in prison after a rape conviction and has a documented history of mental instability.

Meanwhile, a police search of Monteiro’s home and office turned up no evidence.

When Monteiro was put in prison, newspapers proclaimed that the right criminal was caught. Some published his photo alongside pictures of vials of blood.

“Pastor Monteiro is innocent, period,” said John Graz, director of the Adventist world church’s department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty. “The outrageous accusation against Monteiro is that he, as an Adventist pastor, conspired to have these women killed so that various body parts could be used in conjunction with a religious ceremony. It’s an absolutely unbelievable and bizarre charge.”

“This is a complete travesty of justice and one which would not be tolerated in any law-abiding society,” Graz said.

Church officials have continued to work both publically and behind the scenes to get their employee out of prison. The Adventist world
church has held international prayer vigils for Monteiro, sponsored letter-writing campaigns to government officials and diplomats, and led a signature drive for a petition calling for his release.

But Monteiro still remains in prison.

July 27 will mark 500 days since his arrest.

This series of four articles is based on interviews with sources involved in the situation, a statement by Monteiro, emails, letters, newspaper reports, police records and court documents.

A spokesman for Togo’s Ministry of Justice declined to comment for this series. Simliya is in prison on various charges, including attempt to commit homicide, and unavailable to comment.

**Monteiro’s mission**

One day in early 2011, Monteiro received a receptionist’s call that would cause his life to later take a turn. He was in his office at the Sahel Union Mission headquarters, a three-story building in Togo’s capital city of Lomé.

Monteiro had worked there since 2009 after receiving an email from Guy Roger, the union’s president, asking him to come serve as the union’s director of Sabbath School and Personal Ministries department.

At the time, Monteiro was the pastor for 25 churches and companies on Fogo Island in Cape Verde. The Portuguese-speaking country is a 10-island nation located 350 miles off the coast of West Africa. He was born there in 1955.

António and Madalena married in 1984, the year after he was ordained a Seventh-day Adventist minister in Cape Verde.

After high school, Monteiro left home to attend an Adventist seminary in Cameroon. He returned to his home country in 1983 to begin work as a pastor. He married Madalena dos Anjos in 1984, and the couple moved every few years as church administrators gave him bigger responsibilities and larger districts to shepherd. Four children were born to the pastoral couple over the years.

During his ministry, Monteiro would participate in three evangelism campaigns in Boston, Massachusetts, United States, and others in the West African countries of Guinéa Bissau and Benin.

The email from Roger in 2009 posed a fork in the road: either stay in the familiarity and comfort of home or go into an unknown place to serve as a missionary.

Monteiro decided to accept the request, honored to have the chance to support the spiritual development of citizens of Togo and in the 10 other countries in the denomination’s Sahel Union. It would be a challenge, he knew, the region being home to many religious practices, including one of the world’s largest bases of Voodoo.

António and Madalena are the parents of four children.

Concerns aside, he was eager to more widely share Christianity, a religion he felt teaches of a loving God. His own Adventist faith and community – now comprised of 17 million members worldwide – had instilled in him the importance of healthful living and education, not only for members but also for people in the community interested in improving their own lives.

Monteiro came to Togo and served at Sahel Union’s request. In 2011, he was also assigned as director of the union’s Adventist Mission ministry and Family Ministries department.

That day in early 2011, a receptionist asked if he could receive someone wanting to talk to a pastor. Monteiro requested the man come into
his office. He then offered a seat to Simliya, the man who went by several names and months later would accuse him of crimes that would lead to his imprisonment.

António Monteiro with his youngest son Alessandro in a bumper car ride at a carnival in Lomé circa 2010.

Simliya told Monteiro he didn’t have a job, money for transportation and sometimes not enough food.

“Are you Adventist?” Monteiro asked.

Simliya said he was, and that he was baptized by Pastor Eric Mensanvi. Roger, the union president, would later confirm that Simliya was baptized in prison while serving time for a 2006 rape conviction.

Monteiro didn’t know the man’s history. He invited Simliya to a church meeting and introduced him to elders of the congregation and went home.

Several weeks later, Simliya came to the union headquarters again to say hello. Monteiro asked him, “So how are you doing?”

Simliya offered him the same story of not having a job, money or food.

“It’s true, life can be difficult,” Monteiro told him, “but God will provide.”

In the coming weeks, Simliya would drop by in the same manner several more times, one day informing Monteiro that he had been in prison.

“I didn’t try to find out what had happened,” Monteiro later recalled. “I counseled him, ‘Now that you are free, focus and work to start a new life. What do you do for work?’”

“I’m a taxi-driver,” Simliya said.

“Do you have your driver’s license?”

“Yes.”

“May I see it?”

“No, I don’t have it with me. I will bring it next time,” Simliya said.

Next time, which was a few days later, Simliya said his taxi license had been stolen.

“Look for the copy,” Monteiro told him.

Simlyia brought up a new subject. He said Bruno Amah, an Adventist Church member, had offered to help him purchase a car for approximately 800,000 CFA francs (about US$1,600), Monteiro recalled.

“He [Simliya] asked me to talk to this brother to help him. I didn’t know [Amah] personally, but I had talked to him on the phone about assistance” requested by a theology student.

There in the office, Simliya called Amah on this cell phone and handed it over to Monteiro. Over the phone, Amah confirmed that he knew Simliya. Monteiro told him of the request. Amah responded, “If I can, I’ll help him,” Monteiro recalled.

Weeks later, Simliya called Monteiro asking if there was news from Amah. There was none.
Months went by, from August to March of 2012, before Monteiro heard from Simliya again. On Tuesday, March 13, 2012, Simliya came to the union headquarters, but Monteiro told the receptionist, “No, I’m very busy.” Still, he briefly talked over the phone to Simliya, who stood in the lobby using the receptionist’s phone. Monteiro thanked him for coming by, but informed him that he was busy that day.

**Detainment begins**

Two days later, on March 15, police burst into Monteiro’s home around 8:30 p.m. and arrested him in front of his family. Police told him he was involved in a crime.

“This is a mistake,” Monteiro said.

An officer replied, “Aren’t you Mr. Monteiro?”

“Yes,” he replied, “but involved in a crime? No,” he said.

They took him to the police station where he met Simliya. Monteiro was asked if he knew the man. He replied that he did and told police the brief history.

Three days later, Monteiro was told by an officer, “You entrusted him [Simliya] with a mission.”

Monteiro asked, “What mission? I have one mission that I’ve been fulfilling for 40 years. I’m a pastor and my mission is to preach the gospel.”

A police commander said, “You ordered human blood.”

Police kept Monteiro detained at an anti-gang facility in a police station for 14 days in a 6- by 4-meter holding cell without a window. He was stripped of his clothing most of that time.

On March 28, he was brought into court. Investigations of his home, office and church had turned up no evidence. His lawyer asked for the case to be dismissed. The judge denied the request. Bail was denied.

He’s been in prison ever since.

“It’s hard to know what’s really going on behind all this,” said Graz, the denomination’s public affairs director.

—click [HERE](#) to see the second article in this series.

**West-Central Africa**

A membership of about 865,000 in a population of about 350 million.

**Countries**

Pastor António Monteiro and fellow church members have been in prison for nearly 500 days based solely on the accusation of one man. But according to a court-ordered psychiatric exam, that man, Kpatcha Simliya, would later recant his accusation, saying he was beaten by police and forced to give names of people he supposedly knew were co-conspirators in a blood trafficking network.

Pastor António Monteiro, shown here during a church service in 2009, is in prison in Lomé, Togo. After nearly 500 days, he has still not had a trial. There is no evidence against him. [photo courtesy Monteiro family]

That has left Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders, lawyers and diplomats wondering why Monteiro and other Adventists accused of running a purported trafficking ring are still being held in prison without a trial.

Article 15 of the Togolese Constitution states, “No person shall be arbitrarily detained or confined. Anyone detained without legal basis shall have the right to seek judicial intervention. The appropriate judicial authority shall immediately render an opinion regarding the legality and/or regularity of the confinement.”

Last month, an editorial in the local newspaper, La Symphonie, called for a “fair and equitable process” of detainees. “Dozens of people accused in these different cases rot in jails for a long time,” the editorial stated.

Five people are being arbitrarily detained in connection with the case, according to church leaders: Monteiro, who since 2009 has served as a department director at the Adventist Church’s Sahel Union Mission; church member Bruno Amah, an employee of Togo Cellulaire; church member Beteynam Raphael Kpiki Sama; Simliya; and Idrissou Moumouni, a Muslim, who voluntarily went to police testifying that Simliya was a liar.

The arrests and detentions unfolded following a string of homicides in May of 2011.

Depending on different newspaper and police accounts, more than a dozen bodies of women between the ages of 12 and 36 had been found in the northern Lomé suburb of Agoué. The bodies had stab wounds and some sexual organs had been removed. Blood and animal parts are often used in ceremonies of Voodoo, which is widely practiced in Togo.

When no arrests were made, the public demanded justice for the killings, church leaders said.

Simliya was later shown on television surrounded by police guards, telling the story of the series of murders he said that he organized and naming accomplices who collected blood and organs. But much of the story proved unlikely, including the number of victims and the methods used, according to Simliya’s medical examiner.

“Any informed and reasonable man would have doubts regarding his incredible outpouring or the feasibility of his crimes or supposed crimes,” a September 9, 2012, court-ordered medical exam stated.

Simliya’s original testimony raised many questions. The judge overseeing Monteiro’s case requested that a psychiatric exam of Simliya be given by Dr. Tchangai Tchatcha. In his report, Tchatcha described Simliya’s personality as “unbalanced” or “psychopathic,” and having “tendencies towards pathological lying.”

Of Simliya’s testimony, Tchatcha stated in his written medical evaluation, “The sequence of ideas appeared to be illogical and he often changed his statement and had even made conflicting statements.”

“He is manipulative and above all a liar, all those we have met confirmed this opinion,” Dr. Tchatcha wrote.
Guy Roger, president of the Sahel Union Mission said of Simliya: “He has widely used his ‘brotherly status’ in order to obtain help from the Seventh-day Adventist communities in the area he frequented according to his needs.”

Simliya was born in 1984 in Kara, according to police reports. Dr. Tchatcha said Simliya’s personality was the result of a “troubled childhood.” The identity of his father was repeatedly questioned by his mother who sent him “around living with different relatives as if he was a package,” Tchatcha wrote.

Tchatcha also stated that Simliya was arrested in the third grade for petty theft, and he was once beaten until he was “almost dead,” accused of being demon possessed.

He spent four years in prison, from 2006 to 2010, serving time for a rape conviction.

As late as March of last year, police documented Simliya trying to lure young female vendors into the woods with the unlikely promise that someone was waiting to buy all of their remaining merchandise.

Upon his release from prison on June 25 of 2010, two names appear as his sponsors who wanted to help him – Bruno Amah and Pastor Essossinam Komlan Sagao.

According to a March 22, 2012, police report, Simliya had asked Sagao for help in obtaining a job at the port. Sagao said he didn’t know of any such jobs, but offered him work washing cars. Simliya’s work was poor, and he quit after a week, Sagao said, according to the report.

Simliya claims to have been abused by police while in custody and asked for names of people he knew in Lomé. He proffered several names of those who had recently tried to help him, including Monteiro, Amah and Sagao.

But after telling police the names of the men, Simliya later told Tchatcha in an interview in the prison infirmary, “I went to see the judge to confess that I had lied and he told me that if I would have changed my statements, I would have gotten a life sentence,” according to Tchatcha’s medical evaluation.

A police investigator once asked Montiero why he would associate with someone like Simliya.

According to a March 22, 2012, police report, Quartermaster Chief Marshal Gaté N’Zonou asked, “Why do you deal with such a man when your age and social level cannot be compared? Why do you deal with a wretched [person]?”

“This is my profile, a person who considers everybody without other distinctions,” Monteiro replied. “It is in order to show love toward that person and to help that person get away from sin.”

—click HERE to see the third article in this series.

**West-Central Africa**

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**Countries**

The night António Monteiro was arrested, his boss, Sahel Union Mission President Guy Roger, took some colleagues to police headquarters to find out why. To their surprise, they were arrested, their keys were confiscated and their cars were impounded. No reason was given.

They were released two hours later, and Roger the next morning sought a lawyer’s help. Monteiro had been charged with murder, conspiracy and criminal association.

“We’ve been living in a real nightmare,” Roger wrote in an email to Yovo Sika Adjete, the Sahel Union’s legal advisor. “We were told only that he [Monteiro] had been arrested following an investigation and that our short custody was also part of this investigation.

“I appeal to you to try to discover the reasons for the detention,” Roger wrote.

So began the attempts to get Monteiro out of prison. The process has now continued for nearly 500 days.

Pastor António Monteiro is being detained in this prison in Lomé, Togo. In nearly 500 days, he has not had a trial, nor has any evidence been brought against him.

Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders and national ambassadors have employed diplomatic efforts in Togo, throughout Europe and at the United Nations in New York. Local lawyers have attempted numerous legal appeals. Yet Monteiro, who came to Togo from Cape Verde to serve as a Christian missionary, remains in prison. Three other Adventist Church members are in prison with him, as well as a third person who volunteered information to the police that might help free them.

The next day, on March 16, 2012, Roger learned that Adventist Church member Bruno Amah had also been arrested in connection with the case. Both Monteiro and Amah had tried to previously assist a man named Simliya, who suffered a history of mental instability, according to a court medical exam.

In the coming days, Roger would alert colleagues at the Adventist Church’s West-Central Africa Division in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and at the denomination’s world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States. He also wrote to Cape Verde’s closest embassy, in Dakar, Senegal.

Roger declared two days of fasting and prayer in the union starting Thursday, March 22.

For several months, the Adventist Church chose to keep legal appeals and diplomatic efforts out of the public media.

“At the time, we chose that tactic out of respect for the government’s process and safety of church members in the country,” said John Graz, the denomination’s director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty.

Monteiro’s lawyer, Yawa Sika Yovo, said she asked a judge on March 28, 2012, to dismiss the case. Her request was met with silence, she said.

She, along with Amah’s lawyer, Afoh Katakiti, went to the Ministry of Justice on June 21. The minister, she said, promised to view the dossier. Nothing happened, and they took the case to the Lomé Court of Appeals.

By July 6 of that year, the court handed down a decision, which said in part, “There is no basis on documents proving his innocence. He must still be detained.”
Yovo worked on further appeals to no avail. Outraged, on August 7, nearly five months since Monteiro and Amah’s arrests, she wrote to Togo President Faure Gnassingbé: “This scandalous decision is a grave injustice and inadmissible, as our clients are innocent since there is no proof showing that they’re guilty.”

Earlier that summer, Ganoune Diop, the Adventist Church’s United Nations liaison, met with Togo’s UN Ambassador Menan Kodjo on July 25. Kodjo said he would look into the case, Diop said. In a follow-up letter to Kodjo, Diop thanked him for his work on the matter, and emphasized that the Adventist world church wanted to respect the government’s procedures: “It is not in our interest to put before the international community of experts the judicial system of the country your Excellency ably represents.”

In September, the presidents of Togo and Cape Verde talked about the case on the sidelines of a UN General Assembly meeting, according to a July 9, 2013, posting on the Facebook page of the president of Cape Verde.

“I tried to interest him to the problem,” stated Cape Verde President Jorge Carlos Fonseca regarding his meeting with Togo President Faure Gnassingbé. “I told him that I did not want to interfere in the matter of Togolese justice, but that the Cape Verdean public is interested in the problem. So I told him that we would like that all that follows to be in an environment in which the security of defense was assured.”

On September 5 of 2012, a duo from the church’s headquarters flew to Togo. Graz, the public affairs director, and Associate General Counsel Todd McFarland met with Yovo and visited Monteiro and Amah in prison. They also read the newly released court-ordered medical report from Dr. Tchangai Tchatcha, who stated that Monteiro’s accuser had a history of mental instability and had only given the police names of supposed co-conspirators after being beaten while in custody. The report offered a glimmer of hope.

“I thought for sure he would have been out by the time Ted Wilson was scheduled to come visit,” McFarland later said, referring to the Adventist world church president, who would visit Monteiro in prison on November 12.

The church also worked through a representative of the International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty in Europe, who met with Togolese officials at the United Nations Office at Geneva, Switzerland, and with other officials at the European Union in Brussels, Belgium.

Still, nothing happened, despite diplomatic efforts throughout the summer and into the early autumn.

The Adventist Church then decided to go public with the matter. ANN released its first story about the situation on September 27.

On November 20, a working group for the case was formed at the world headquarters. The same day, Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson called for an international day of prayer on December 1.

“These are falsely accused, innocent church members and we are pleading with the Lord for his intervention so that they can be reunited with their families and continue their work,” Wilson said.

On November 29, Roger, the Sahel Union Mission president, held a press conference in Lomé, amplifying the worldwide day of prayer campaign.

The men are “deprived of their liberty and detained in the civil prison in Lomé without proof of guilt, without any evidence or indication of their close or distant relationship with this case,” Roger told a group of reporters. “The Adventist Church cannot remain silent in what seems to be a gross miscarriage of justice.”

On December 1, tens of thousands of Adventist churches worldwide took time during Sabbath worship services to pray for Monteiro and others in prison. Some, including the Montemorelos University Church in Mexico, prayed for more than an hour during Sabbath worship.

By then, more than 7 million Twitter users had been reached with the campaign’s hashtag #Pray4togo and some 15,000 people had signed an online petition at Change.org.

The church sponsored a Christmas card campaign in a show of support. Monteiro received more than 1,000 cards, church leaders said.

At the beginning of the New Year, a development occurred that appeared to offer the promise of a January 29 trial date. It was later rescinded.

Diop, the church’s UN liaison, went to Togo in February and met with Togo’s prime minister. During a morning meeting, Diop said Prime Minister Kwesi Ahoomey-Zunu called the minister of justice and asked if he could receive Diop later that day. At 5 p.m., Diop was received by Minister of Justice Kokou Tozoun. “He gave us his word that this case was going to be settled before the end of March,” Diop
recalled.

“I told the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister that we’re not trying to bend the Togolese judicial system or ask for a favor,” Diop recalled. “We were trying to ask that this case be resolved because it was a case of arbitrary detention.”

On April 18, the Adventist Church released video footage of Monteiro’s family, urging more people to sign the online petition.

In March, church leaders announced that a fifth legal appeal for Monteiro’s release had been denied.

—click HERE to see the fourth article in this series.

**West-Central Africa**

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**Countries**

FOURTH IN A SERIES: In prison, Monteiro wants peace for church, Togo government

 Jul 18, 2013 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

ANN staff

The Lomé Civil Prison is hot and overcrowded. It’s open air, like a crowded bazaar, but without shops. Prisoners sleep 80 in a cell, side-by-side, their bodies bumping against each other all night with each toss and turn. If they pay money, they can sleep in a cell with only 26 other inmates.

Once in a while, Pastor António Monteiro has the luxury of sleeping on a mattress.

“I don’t know if many people could stay one day in there,” says John Graz, the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty department. He has visited Monteiro in prison.

“It’s crowded, it’s dirty, the hygiene is almost zero,” Graz says. “I don’t even want to think about what the toilet situation must be in there.”

In May, the blog “Citizens Movement for Truth” published photos following heavy rains that showed the prison flooded. Prisoners waded in ankle-deep water.

This has been Monteiro’s home for nearly 500 days. He and fellow Adventists Bruno Amah, Beteynam Raphael Kpiki Sama and Kpatcha Simliya have lived in this environment as they wait to be given a trial date or to be released.

In prison, Pastor António Monteiro, left, participates in a feet-washing ceremony, which is a tradition of the Lord’s Supper and one of the sacraments of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He has been detained in prison in Lomé, Togo, for nearly 500 days without a trial.

Monteiro thinks the ordeal will one day be over – “in God’s time,” he says. For now, he says he’s concerned for the health of the prisoners – 1,000 are packed into a facility designed for 600.

A June 18 editorial in the local newspaper La Symphonie, stated, “If we believe the information on the continued degradation of the health of most of these prisoners, there is a strong fear that, one by one, they will die.”

The wives of Monteiro and Amah visit once a day to bring food. They pay $2 each time to come into the prison.

Members in the country have prayed along with the world church for the men’s release, but there is little else they can do.

Seventh-day Adventist work began in Togo in 1956 with an Adventist literature salesman, Georges Vaysse, according to the Adventist Encyclopedia. In 1964, a missionary from the Ivory Coast was sent to work with the fledgling group of Adventist believers.

Today there are nearly 6,000 Adventist Church members among the population of about 7.1 million. About 30 percent of the population is Christian, 20 percent are Muslim, and about 50 percent hold indigenous beliefs.

Many of those indigenous beliefs include animists and those who practice Voodoo, which often include the use of animal parts and blood in ceremonies.

Monteiro is in prison on charges of murder and conspiracy in operating a blood-trafficking ring. Diplomats, ambassadors and Adventist Church leaders remain puzzled over how police and government officials could mistake Adventists for those who use blood in religious ceremonies.
“These practices are unknown in our church,” said Guy Roger, president of the Sahel Union Mission and Monterio’s boss.

Church leaders say there is a lack of understanding in Togo about the Adventist Church and its practices.

According to a March 22, 2012, police report, Quartermaster Chief Marshal Gaté N’Zonou asked Monteiro why his accuser, who has a documented history of mental instability, said blood was used in Adventist ceremonies.

“Being an Adventist, just like you, Mr. Simliya confirms that in your church blood has the secret of giving people riches and grandeur. What do you say?” N’Zonou asked Monteiro.

“I do not know anything about that, as our church is founded on the Bible,” Monteiro said.”

John Graz, the denomination’s public affairs director, said the accusation is “bizarre.” For him, a takeaway lesson is for the Adventist Church to ramp up its public affairs and media relations work worldwide.

In some parts of the world the Adventist Church is small in numbers and is incorrectly identified as a sect or cult, Graz said. “Unfortunately, not much has been done to change that perception in many places. The priorities of church leaders, therefore, must adjust for this.

“We have a responsibility,” Graz said. That’s one of the lessons to come out of this – to bolster our public affairs and communication efforts around the world. We need to know leaders of governments and other religious faiths, and we need a regular presence in the media. Cultivating isolation has never been a good strategy for minorities.”

Indeed, some church leaders feel the Togolese government arbitrarily picked people to blame for the May 2011 murders of several young women.

Gibert Wari, president of the denomination’s West-Central Africa Division, was quoted in a September 27, 2012, ANN story, saying, “At first we could see that the government thought they were just dealing with a small church in the corner, but now with this level of support and mobilization, they see that the Adventist Church is a worldwide church.”

Officials from Cape Verde – Monteiro’s home country – recently posted online their plans for continued diplomatic efforts to secure Monteiro’s release. Cape Verde President Jorge Carlos Fonseca is sending an ambassador to Togo specifically for this case, according to the July 9, 2013, posting.

The world church on July 27 will again hold a worldwide day of prayer for Monteiro’s release. Tens of thousands of congregations are planning to participate in a show of support on what will mark day 500 of his detainment.

However the situation turns out, Adventist leaders in Togo say members are eager to continue serving the community, sponsoring mentoring events for youth and helping those in need through charity work.

“We would want reconciliation with the Togolese government after Monteiro is released from prison,” Roger said. “But for now, we just want him out.”

—for more information, visit pray4togo.com.

**West-Central Africa**

A membership of about 865,000 in a population of about 350 million.

**Countries**

Pastor J. Alfred Johnson II  
*Director of Adult Ministries*  
*North American Division*

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