It was an epochal experience in Havana, Cuba, on March 10, 2009! Two-hundred and forty literature evangelists were part of the group of more than 400 excited delegates in the meeting hall of Hotel Habana Libre. It was an historic moment, in more than one way for it was the first Publishing Congress of this magnitude to be held within the Inter-American Division. Secondly, it was the first time for many of the attendees to ever visit Cuba. It was an emotionally overwhelming experience to meet together and interact face to face with our Cuban brothers and sisters in Christ.

Representatives from every level of the church administration were present. Inter-American Division President, Pastor Israel Leito, was joined by our world Publishing Ministries Directors, Pastor Howard F. Faigao and his Associate, Pastor Wilmar Hirle.

On opening night, Cuban delegates electrified the audience with their outstanding musical presentations. It was a wonderful feast of
musical praise through their superb talents. Our souls were blest and thoroughly satisfied. The congress continued on in high gear, with Pastor Mirto Presentacion from the Inter-American Division as coordinator and leader. His dynamic spirit and enthusiastic leadership were both seen and felt throughout the entire congress as each event unfolded with smooth transition and orderly dispatch. He introduced the theme song entitled “Together,” and its power sparked feelings of joy and profound Christian unity within the hearts of all present.

The weekday seminars of instruction periods were presented by Pastor Howard F. Faigao, and God used him mightily in presenting the Sabbath morning challenge at the Divine Worship hour. His messages gave the literature evangelists reason to see their work as vital and fundamental to the gospel ministry. It was noted that from literature evangelism many have moved on to become pastoral ministers of the gospel, as well as church administrators. And, in numerous cases, literature ministry is the very service to which some have returned. The seminar presentations by pastors Faigao and Hirle brought a profound sense of dignity to bear upon the work of the literature evangelist. There is no doubt that the literature evangelists left the congress with a renewed sense of worth in their special calling. Lifted to a higher level of understanding of their sacred work, they returned with elevated courage to their respective territories.

The congress was enriched throughout by the inspiring presentations of Elders Israel Leito, Kern Tobias, David Javier, and Sergio Balboa. Rich instruction was proffered by Pastors Hector Sanchez, Jose Rodriguez, Bernardo Rodriguez, Carlyle Bayne, and Jorge Pamplona. Pastor Edwin Gonzalez, from GEMA, spoke regarding the success of our Publishing House, and he shared a special gift for all present.

The big moment for the literature evangelists themselves came when their champions were called to the platform to share their personal experiences from the field. The Division Sales Champion, Elva Corina Morales of Mexico, a seemingly timid young lady, gave a moving account of her personal journey from becoming a literature evangelist right up to the present. Her story of tragedy, perseverance, compassion, and divine pageantry of the people dressed in the colorful costumes of their individual countries made for great excitement. In fact, there was an air of jubilation surrounding the various delegations marched past in their beautiful attire. The large screen enhanced the visual effects of the good reports that were presented with pictures on DVDs.

Progress reports, as presented by the various unions, were much appreciated, and the...
guidance—despite the odds against her—all served to highlight the goodness of the Lord’s enabling strength, by which she was able to sell US$83,690 worth of God’s books in 2008. Theresa De Jesus Rojas was the Division Soul-Winning Champion, with 125 souls baptized in 2008 as a result of her efforts. We were thrilled by the story of Maria Magdalene Lopez, who has a hearing impairment, yet led 48 of her clients to receive Bible studies from her, which yielded 52 baptisms in one month.

The congress ended on a note of renewed courage. Our delegates had brought love gifts for our friends in Cuba, and they were graciously received by the Union President, Pastor Daniel Fontaine, who served as our host pastor. He had worked tirelessly on the organization and logistics required to host an event of this size at that venue. We thanked him and all of our Cuban believers for their hard work and great hospitality. He, in turn, thanked us for the missionary help given by the delegates to the Cuban Adventist Church. Truly, God was with us, and we felt His presence throughout this wonderful congress.

To God be all praise!

1,600 Delegates Attend First South American Division Literature Evangelist Congress

Their big smiles and colorful clothing indigenous to their home countries quickly revealed the origin of many of the incoming Literature Evangelists. Although arriving at different times from distant places, the 1,600 literature evangelists from across South America caused quite a stir in the tourist town of Águas de Lindóia. It is located in the interior of the Brazilian state of São Paulo.

On the previous day, the planning committee, led by Elder Almir Marroni, South American Division Publishing Ministries Director, had distributed 3,500 gift books to local authorities and to various hotels within the city. So, what was happening now? It was March 4, 2009, the first day of the South

Over 1,600 Delegates Attended the SAD LE Congress
American Division’s three-day Division-wide Literature Evangelist Convention!

The opening meeting was attended by Mr. Dill Casella, Secretary of Tourism. He addressed the crowd expressing deep appreciation for the gift of the books for their people, and said: “It has been quite some time since I have been in a location with such a wonderful atmosphere as you are representing here. The role that you fulfill is that of bringing hope and comfort to suffering people, and this has great value in today’s world!”

“This event marks a historical moment in our Division,” intoned Pastor Marroni in his opening remarks. “We want to underscore the sacred activity of the literature evangelist as a ministry ordained by the Lord, so that all may recognize this fully and dedicate themselves as God’s servants. This work, faithfully done, is blessed by God,” he emphasized.

A very special guest of the convention was Elder Howard F. Faigao, director of the Adventist Church’s worldwide Publishing Ministries. Elder Faigao affirmed that, “While there have been other large Literature Evangelist conventions held in several divisions throughout the world, it is very important that we attend this one because this is the division that now has the largest, most exemplary publishing program in the world field, and we want to be able to share with others what happens here.” Accompanying the convention were Elder Wilmar Hirle, the worldwide Associate Publishing Ministries Director, Elder Pardon Mwansa, Vice President of the General Conference, and the officers of the South American Division.

This unprecedented multi-union event motivated even the most isolated literature evangelists to make the longest trip of their lives. For example, from Chile came Manuel Aguila who sells books in Port Williams, the southern-most city in the world. There, snow is a constant companion. In that small village, the temperature is never higher than 39 degrees Fahrenheit (4 degrees Centigrade). Manuel said, “Just to reach Punta Arenas, it took three days by boat. From there I took a bus and then an airplane to reach this convention. Where I live, the people are scattered. They are isolated and experience much depression. When I present them our message of health and hope, they become very happy, and they want to know more of God’s plan of salvation.”

Not only from the extreme cold, they also came from the tropics, like Ecuador. Patrício Guanaluisa lives in a village near Puyo, with Amazon Forest scenery. He traveled from there to Guayaquil, then to Santiago, Chile, and from there to Buenos Aires, Argentina, and finally from Argentina to São Paulo, Brazil. “This is the first time that I have traveled by plane,” he said, “and everyone had told me that plane travel was beautiful, but the sensation was even greater than I had imagined! Arriving here is a dream come true.” But for Cláudio Barbosa, from Bacabal in the northeastern state of Maranhão, Brazil, the trip was even longer. “To arrive at this convention site, my journey did not begin only two days ago, but it began in 1979, when I accepted God’s call to this ministry. It is for this reason that I am here today, and I think that the only thing better than the unity here today, will be when every one of us is together in heaven!”

With deep gratitude, Elder Erton Kohler, President of the Adventist Church in South America, affirmed that this event is the payment of an old debt with literature evangelism. “With this convention, we want to make it clear that the church sees the literature evangelist as one of our most important missionaries. We are committed, through other programs, to improve the quality of life in the ministry of our literature evangelists, so they may enjoy ever increasing success,” he explained.
As each union presented its report, tears flowed as stories were related of men and women who face the challenges of distance, culture, political barriers, and other hardships, so that they can place God’s books from home to home. They are living witnesses comprised of entire families who dedicate themselves to the publishing work to hasten the return of Jesus.

During the 72 hours of convention time, the literature evangelists shared wonderful experiences gained from meeting their contacts in the field. They also learned new and valuable working strategies from the daily workshops. Guests, such as the Brazilian King’s Heralds and the singing group Novo Tom (New Tone), in addition to providers of typically Peruvian music, rendered the musical selections and were part of a special surprise on the last day. That’s when a CD with songs about publishing ministries was given to each literature evangelist present. “This musical keepsake was produced by competent and inspired individuals such as the maestro Lineu Soares, who taped the orchestration in the Aire Born Studios in the United States. It will become daily inspiration for workers whose success calls for starting each day with a joyful heart,” suggested Pastor Marroni.

On Sabbath afternoon, the delegates distributed more than 8,500 books *Signs of Hope* to people in the region of Águas de Lindóia, thus completing a total of 12,000 units in a kit that also contained an invitation for the Holy Week meeting series in the churches of the municipality. In a matter of minutes, the 672 Literature Evangelist pairs completed the mission. “It is a very simple activity. A book is a present that everyone accepts and any individual from any region is happy to receive one. I am very happy with this distribution because I know we are preaching the gospel,” affirmed Elder José Carlos de Lima, Manager of the Brazil Publishing House.

The Brazilian Publishing House and the South American Spanish Publishing House, joined together in making materials available through a product fair that had the presence of *Nuevo Tiempo* (“New Time”) from Peru, and also *Novo Tempo* and Superbom (Brazil Food Factory).

If anyone had any doubts about his mission upon arriving at the convention, they surely left convinced of their calling. Such was the case of Fernando Rocha, a literature evangelist from Rio de Janeiro. “For me, being a literature evangelist is being that individual who goes right to the frontlines for God and His church,” he declared. A fellow literature evangelist from Córdoba in Argentina, Elda Lojan, testified, “It is a life of service and my life is set apart for God. Just knowing that the individual with whom we are talking could one day be in heaven because of my visit evokes an indescribable emotion within my heart.”
Recent history was made in Lusaka, Zambia, when the first-ever Academy of Publishing Leaders classes commenced at Amaka Lodge. Twenty-five publishing leaders from Zambia and Zimbabwe gathered to receive specialized leadership training.

The training conducted January 13-15, 2009, was called at the initiative of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division’s Publishing Ministries Department and sponsored by the Zambia and Zimbabwe Unions.

The training course was pioneered by the Publishing Ministries Department of the General Conference. The topic of study in the first module was Sales Management III. The focus was upon departmental organization, planning, and development.

The course consists of four modules, the satisfactory completion of which may qualify a participant for a professional diploma in publishing leadership. It follows the structured leadership training criteria, as set forth by the General Conference Publishing Ministries Department.

Leaders participating in this course sat for their written examinations at the end of the classes. They unanimously described the value of the course in such terms as highly useful, long overdue, and one said “it was as though the scales had dropped from his eyes” to help him see clearly the principles of leadership presented.

The Zimbabwean and Zambian delegates were led by their respective union publishing directors, Pastors Paul Moyo and M. Mtshiya. All of the leaders who attended pledged themselves to finish the entire course, including the study of all modules and the taking of all quizzes, exercises, and tests involved.

The meeting was a blessing to all and, without exception, they testified that they will go back to their fields determined not only to work hard, but work smarter. They heartily adopted the challenge for publishing directors, reminding them that the role of publishing leaders is not that of becoming “Office Generals, but Field Captains.”

We are thankful to the General Conference for such equipping and empowering training sessions.

Super Moesi
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