In the September 2011 issue:

**Religion in the News**

Noah’s ark in Hong Kong

A theme park with the name “Noah’s Ark” opened in Hong Kong this past May. It includes a life-sized replica of the famous boat that is based on the description and dimensions reported in Genesis 6:14–16. The hull is 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. It was financed by Hong Kong’s billionaire Thomas Kwok, who, with his two brothers Walter and Raymond, inherited one of the world’s largest real estate companies when their father died in 1990. Several replicas of Noah’s ark have been built around the world in recent years, including one in the Netherlands, one in Florenceville, New Brunswick, and one that was built by Greenpeace on Turkey’s Mount Ararat.—*The Wall Street Journal*

European Sunday Alliance

On June 20, 2011, a network of 65 trade unions, civil organizations, and religious communities established the European Sunday Alliance to promote fair and balanced conditions for workers. It was formed in response to a European conference on the awareness of a work-free Sunday that met in Brussels on March 24, 2010. European Seventh-day Adventist religious liberty leaders “support the notion that people need a day of rest to achieve a life/work balance to maintain the health and safety of workers,” said Raafat Kamal, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for the church in northern Europe. However, he stressed that “we want to be sure that those who don’t have Sunday as a designated religious day of rest will be respected and tolerated.”*Adventist News Network*

Muslim global growth

Between 1990 and 2010, the world’s Muslim population grew by an annual rate of 2.2 percent. Growth between now and 2030 is projected to slow to an annual rate of 1.5 percent. The present world Muslim population is 1.62 billion. The part of the world with the largest Muslim population today is the Asia-Pacific region with 1.0 billion Muslims. This is followed by the Middle East and North Africa (322 million); sub-Saharan Africa (243 million); Europe (44.1 million); and the Americas (5.26 million). Muslims currently represent nearly 25 percent of the world’s population; Christians, 33 percent.—*Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*

Secular education in Alberta

A controversy over religious versus public education is going on in Morinville, Alberta. The Catholic Church operates the only school in town—which is also the “public school.” A number of families have objected to the arrangement. The Alberta School Act allows children in this situation to be excused from religious instruction, but in Catholic schools, as in many Protestant schools, religion permeates all classes. The Catholic school board,
which is legally obligated to provide a secular education to those who want it, has offered parents who object to the religious education the option of their children being bused to a nearby public school. However, the parents object, among other things because their children’s ride to school would be longer. Alberta’s education minister Dave Hancock is working to negotiate a solution that is acceptable to everyone.—The Globe and Mail

Iranian Christian faces execution

An Iranian court has ordered that Christian Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani be executed by hanging for changinhis religion from Islam to Christianity and encouraging other Muslims to do the same. Nadarkhani leads a 400-member house church movement in Iran’s northwestern city of Rasht. His lawyer appealed the verdict to Iran’s Supreme Court, partly because Nadarkhani claims he never was a Muslim and therefore could not be found guilty of abandoning Islam. The Supreme Court overturned the death sentence and returned it to the court in Rasht. It also urged Nadarkhani to “repent.” If he maintains his Christian convictions, he could still face a lengthy prison sentence for evangelizing Muslims.—Compass Direct News

Christian martyrs

According to Italian sociologist Massimo Introvigne, every five minutes, somewhere in the world, a Christian is killed because of his or her faith. The yearly total of Christian martyrs is 105,000, the majority of whom live in Muslim and Communist lands. Catholic Cardinal Péter Erdo of Budapest said that “Europe should be preparing for a new wave of [Muslim] emigration, this time of Christians fleeing persecution.”—CatholicCulture.org

• New Books

Title: Where Are We Going?
by Jan Paulsen

Do we know where we are going and why? Are we focused on the task at hand, or have distractions drawn us away from the priorities to which Christ has called us?

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• How we as individual members and churches should relate to Adventist immigrants and refugees
• The “us” and “them” of Adventists and other Christian believers
• How God views other religions, and what that means for us
• How we can preserve unity when we disagree among ourselves
• What we need to do to find and train the leaders our church needs
• What lies ahead

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