

SOUTHERN
ASIA PACIFIC

outlook

FIRST QUARTER 2012



CHURCH IN **THAILAND** HOLDS **FAMILY MINISTRIES CONVENTION**

outlook

FIRST QUARTER 2012

Southern Asia-Pacific Division

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THE COVER

Representatives from Vietnam attend the SSD Family Ministries Convention in Thailand

Cover Photo by
Clarito Mabituin

PAKISTAN— OUR COUNTRY,

AS I WRITE this piece, I have yet to visit Pakistan for the first time in order to get a feel for the life and work in this newly attached field to the headquarters of the southern Asia-Pacific region (SSD).

At the onset of 2012, SSD took over the administrative supervision of church work in Pakistan from the Trans European Division (TED) as voted at the annual council of the Seventh-day Adventist world church in October last year.

With its estimated population of 187 million people as of 2011, Pakistan is the world's sixth most populous country in the world and the second highly urbanized nation in southern Asia with about 36 percent of the people living in cities (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia).

Of the 187 million people, about 182 million are Muslims with Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and other minority religious groups making up the remaining percentages.

In a land with such a huge population, the Adventist church has a humble but resilient presence. "Adventist work started here in 1901 with the coming in of literature evangelists," says Ashraf Yaqub, editor of the Qasid Publishing House. From this beginning, today there are 14,225 baptized members

OUR FIELD!

worshipping in 309 churches and companies with 32 ordained ministers. A total of 897 employees tends this body of believers who comprises a relatively small number of the overall population. However, the literacy rate of 60 percent has a big potential for outreach through literature, the Internet, radio and television ministries.

According to Samuel Nazir, communication director of Pakistan Union, “a television ministry has been envisioned and is in development” in order to reach the rural and urban communities of this vast field. With AWR’s music CD distribution and Hope Channel’s rebroadcast through cable networks, a day is coming when many are reached with the message of hope of the soon-coming of Jesus Christ.

As we introduce you to our new sister country of Pakistan in this issue, may you be inspired by its Adventist history, the challenges of fellow Adventists there and its opportunities for spreading the message of Jesus’ sacrifice for all.

PAKISTAN UNION

A Message from the President: YOUNIS NOOR BHATTI



School girls at the Pakistan Adventist Seminary and College prepare to greet the visiting SSD officials. (Photo by Saw Samuel)

WE THANK GOD for His blessings and care for the church work in Pakistan. There are many challenges but at the same time, there are many blessings. We now have many opportunities to hold evangelistic meetings in different cities. Most of the population lives in village areas but there are a large number of big cities like Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Hyderabad, Gujranwala, Quetta and Peshawar where our church work is growing.

Pakistan is considered a developing country. The main sources of income are agriculture and industries. Our people are very hardworking and hospitable.

Pakistan Union consists of two Sections: North and South. Within these sections, we have 13 schools and one college, Pakistan Adventist Seminary and College. We are also blessed to have a dental clinic, Karachi Adventist Hospital, and an ADRA office. Currently, our church membership is about 15,000.

We do have freedom of worship so our members are able to worship together on Sabbaths, and we are allowed to conduct evangelism in the Christian communities. In previous years our church membership growth has been about 20% annually with much of it happening in the cities. In the future, we plan to hold more evangelistic meetings and grow as a strong, developed church in large cities like Karachi and Lahore.

We are grateful for the support of our previous division, the Trans-European Division (TED). This support has enabled us to renovate churches and houses for our pastors.

We are excited about the privilege of joining the Southern Asia Pacific Division (SSD). We hope many things will take place with new ideals and views. SSD is very positive in its plans and aims for Pakistan, and we are hopeful about the future church work. We were blessed and encouraged by the February 29 to March 3, 2012 visits of Treasurer Sergie Ferrer, Secretary Saw Samuel, and Associate Treasurer/Associate Secretary Kevin K Costello. We believe our church work will grow stronger and develop under the SSD leadership.

PAKISTAN UNION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Church Information, History, Challenges and Opportunities

Statistics:

Churches:	122
Companies:	187
Baptized Church Members:	14225
Ordained Ministers:	32
Total Employees:	897
Institutions	4

History:

IN 1901, COLPORTEURS visited the area now called Pakistan, among the first of which was Anna Knight, an African-American missionary. In 1913, A. Wellman met an independent Christian minister S. Samuel from Gujranwala. After accepting the Adventist faith, Pastor Samuel invited the Seventh-day Adventists to open the work in Punjab.

Leaders traveled in the province of Punjab, and interests were developed through these visits.

In 1914, F.H. Loasby and Mann began an itinerant outreach and medical work in the villages west of Lahore. At night, these missionaries slept under their ox cart to protect themselves and the oxen from thieves. In 1916, Mann purchased 10 acres of Land in Chuharkana, about 35 miles west of Lahore for a medical training center, where men could be trained to operate village dispensaries. Pakistan Adventist Seminary and College were established at the same place.

Soon 12 young men were trained to do evangelism work in village areas. Six were sent out as village workers. Sabbath schools and companies were formed in surrounding villages. In 1917, the first baptisms took place in the Punjab. In the same year additional land was purchased at Chichoki Mallian for a new station of medical work.

In 1921 or 1922 the medical training center which was operated as a hospital in Chuharkana was discontinued and its building was converted into a school for boys. In 1929, a school for girls was opened at Chickoki Millian.

In 1947, a small clinic was opened in Karachi by a woman physician, G. Joy Ubbink, which by the end of 1951 had developed into the Karachi Seventh-day Adventist Hospital. Later, the name was changed to Karachi Adventist Hospital. From the beginning, it was a modern 72 bed hospital, which later expanded to 120 beds with a School of Nursing as well. Today it is a well-known hospital in Karachi. It serves the Muslim and Christian communities alike; they also have a charity clinic for poor and needy.

Outreach work in English was conducted in Pakistan by several men. Later, English churches were established in Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi.

In November 1972, the Pakistan union was reorganized with the administration of two of its largest institutions being taken over by the Southern Asia Division. The institutions were Karachi Adventist Hospital and Pakistan Adventist Seminary.

In 1974 the ministerial training Institute began in Lahore. This school was to train the young men to work in the villages. Outreach efforts in the 1960s and the early 1970s expanded the growth of the work in the interior of Sind. Churches were organized in Mirpurkhas, Hyderabad and Sukkur. A new church building was built in Multan.

In 1973, the union administration began to build a Publishing House in Pakistan

continued from previous page

that would print material in the vernacular language and English. The Qasid Publishing House was completed in 1974.

After 1974, the focus went from expansion to maintenance. In the 1990s the outreach focus shifted and moved to the big cities with large outreach meetings and a need for follow-up work to be done in the cities.

Challenges and Opportunities

Pakistan is a Muslim country where 97% belong to the Islamic faith. Reaching various groups is a big challenge as converting people carries the death penalty. Christians are given freedom to build churches, give Bible studies and even arrange for evangelistic meetings for Christians and other religious groups, as long as no attempts are made to reach Muslims. Despite these challenges, there are people who want to study the Bible. The challenge is to find a way of meeting this need. Perhaps one of the best ways to accomplish this is to develop lessons through the Voice of Prophecy Correspondence School and through specialized training for pastors in how to reach out to all people groups.



photos by Kevin Costello



PAKISTAN UNION

Pakistan Adventist Seminary and College

by ZUBAID KHAN

PAKISTAN ADVENTIST SEMINARY and College is located about 60 kilometers west of Lahore on the Sargodha Road at Farooqabad Mandi. Pakistan Adventist Seminary developed from a small Seventh-day Adventist boys' school founded on the present property in 1923. In 1937, it became a coeducational institution with the integration of the Seventh-day Adventist girls' school from Chichoki Mallian. Steady growth followed as students came from all parts of the Punjab and Northwest India.

After the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, a new period began, necessitating the development of a program on the tertiary level. In 1957, Pakistan Adventist Seminary was authorized by the Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists (SAD) to begin a two-year Junior (Intermediate) Seminary Program. After several years, authorization came to develop a Senior (Higher) Seminary, and the first graduates received their degrees in 1970. The institution now incorporates the Lower Seminary (years 1-8), Middle Seminary (years 9-10), and Higher Seminary (years 11-15). The Seminary is an institution administered by the Pakistan Union, which has been a part of the territory of the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists (TED) since 1985.

The college offers degrees in Business with emphasis on information technology, marketing, management, and accountancy as well as degrees in Religion, Education and Bachelor of Science. A good number of graduates and alumni have landed jobs in Dubai, England, USA/Canada, South Africa and Thailand.

The college has strong relationships with the local community and government. The college also owns a 15-acre farm that contracts local workers to produce rice, tomatoes and watermelon. A community learning center for K-12 Muslim students is also provided by the college.

NORTH PHILIPPINE UNION

Church produces local TV shows for Metro Manila

by NPUC COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

THE LONG WAIT is over. Hope Channel PH Luzon is now on the air in Metro Manila, Philippines featuring three hours of locally produced daily programming.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in northern Philippines (NPUC) began broadcasting the distinct Adventist message into every home in the heart of the archipelago on December 25, 2011 at noon. The historic event featured an opening speech from Pastor Nephthali Manez, NPUC president, and a greeting from Pastor Ted Wilson, president of the world church (GC).

From a renovated studio at the union headquarters, the shows are broadcasted through Gateway UHF TV Broadcasting, Incorporated. Relevant and contemporary, these unique programs cover a wide range of topics such as family talks, insights for the youth, health, Bible studies, and a preaching series. The media team is committed to making each episode carry the message of hope in the thickly populated metropolis.

Conceived more than a decade ago, the dream of sharing the gospel through television has been a journey of faith for its developers and one which called upon interested church members to share this vision. This project relies heavily upon the teamwork and the dedicated involvement of its supporters. NPUC church members contributed liberally to assist with production costs. In addition, many members offer their time and talents as volunteers. "It's amazing how God in His own time and providence orchestrated everything to make this production possible despite the meager funding to start with and limited technical skills of media volunteers," said Joe Orbe Jr, communication Director of NPUC.

Currently, efforts are being made to improve the quality of transmission so that cable providers can rebroadcast the programs. Cable network service is the preferred medium in this fast-growing asian city so the rebroadcast option will open additional avenues to reach new viewers.

Hope Channel PHL Luzon can be viewed on channel 45 for Metro Manila. Future plans include a stronger signal for cable networks to rebroadcast in other regions. Currently, programs air daily 6:00-7:00 a.m. and 8:00-10:00 p.m., except Saturdays.

SOUTH PHILIPPINE UNION

Church inaugurates radio station

FOR MORE THAN two years, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Philippines has attempted to get its message of hope on air by seeking government permits to operate radio and television network nationwide. Only recently have results been seen as the National Telecommunication Commission (NTC) started releasing Provisional Authorities (PAs) to the church. In September of last year, two PAs were issued to the Church: an AM radio in Butuan City and FM radio in Iligan City.

DXHR, Hope Radio Philippines on 1323khz, was inaugurated on January 11 at its broadcast center in Butuan City, located at the headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in northeastern Mindanao (NeMM).

"I am glad to inform our listening public that a new religious network is born in the Philippines, and the first to broadcast hope amidst hopelessness in this part of the archipelago since more than 30 years ago when DXCR, Mountain View College's radio station, was established," said Dr. Jonathan C. Catolico, Hope Channel coordinator for the Church in the southern Asia-Pacific region (SSD). "Very soon, our FM station in Iligan will join the loop and then FM Mati in Davao Oriental, and on and on!" Catolico optimistically announced.

Church inaugurates radio station, to next page



Pastor Leonardo Asoy, Adventist church president in south Philippines, unveils the new broadcast studio during the inauguration of DXHR Hope Radio Philippines in Butuan City (photo by Jonathan Catolico)

DXHR, with its 10kw power, is heard within and beyond the-100 kilometer radius reaching northern Mindanao; Agusan del Sur, and close to the boundaries of Davao provinces; Surigao del Sur and Surigao del Norte; and the Visayas, in Leyte and Bohol provinces.

The program broadcasted live from noon to the late hours of that day while a motorcade and caravan plied the main roads of Butuan City. Government dignitaries, church and institution leaders, and members from Northern and Northeastern Mindanao, Davao, Mindanao Adventist Medical Center in Iligan City, and sister radio station DXCR in Malaybalay, Bukidnon attended the event.

"Its daily program of 17 hours has been designed to proclaim God's everlasting message in different formats. You will see the integration of this thrust even in news reports and public service sections of our broadcast," said Pastor Gershon Arellano, station manager.

During the meeting with the NEMM officers, Dr. Catolico reiterated the apolitical stance of the broadcast facility. "Our station, as a church's evangelistic arm, will refrain from airing programs that gear on politics and issues that stir up controversies. We will seek to abide with these policies all the time," said Dr. Catolico.

Regarding the television project, Pastor Leonardo R Asoy, president of the Adventist Church in southern Philippines (SPUC) and chairman of the board of Hope Channel Philippines, told the attendees, "We are not only engaging radio into this ministry, ...television is also getting our best efforts and attention in reaching every home with God's message, and we encourage every church member to support this initiative prayerfully but also financially."

"Yes, we need everyone's help to

start our television stations in Metro Manila, Cebu, Davao, Bacolod, and other metropolitan cities in the Philippines," echoed Pastor Nelson Paulo, Hope Channel Philippines Program director.

Why are we here? And how are we different from others? How should we support our broadcasts? "Our radio and TV stations are not designed to compete with other religious stations in the country and definitely not with commercial stations. We are here to preach the everlasting gospel according to the Bible; and our church members and others who believe in our advocacies will keep our broadcast on air. And by God's grace, we will reach every home with the message of the soon-return of Jesus Christ to this earth," answered Dr. Catolico.



MYANMAR UNION

Adventist Health Expo gains public support

DESPITE HESITATION FROM the local authorities, the health ministries of the Adventist church headquarters in Myanmar (MYUM) in cooperation with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), successfully launched the first Adventist Health Expo in the township of Labutta in Delta, Myanmar. The January 9-12 event drew more than 1,500 health-oriented participants.

People flocked the town hall to hear lectures and to receive free medical examinations and consultations. However, the medical team could serve only an average of 150 people in a day due to the limited medical equipment and number of volunteers.

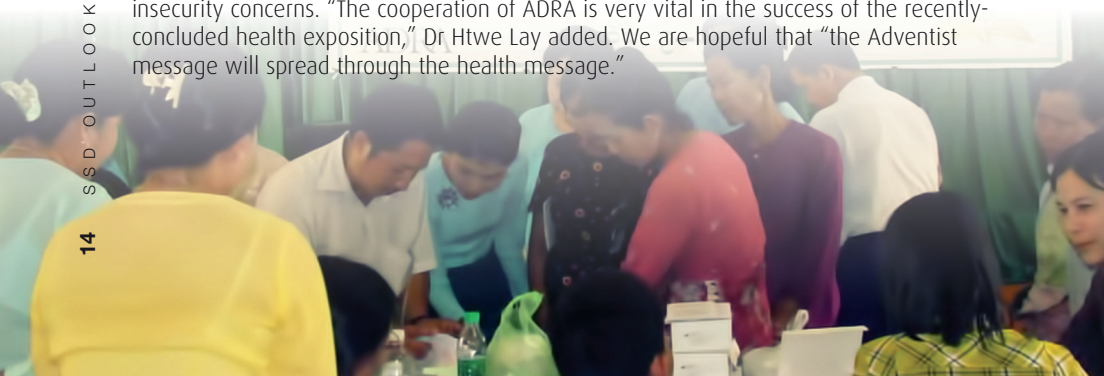
The lectures were largely based on the health principles outlined in the NEWSTART and CELEBRATIONS series. NEWSTART is a lifestyle program that incorporates healthy living principles to maintain or restore one's health. It stands for Nutrition, Exercise, Water, Sunlight, Temperance, Air, Rest, and Trust in God. CELEBRATIONS is an acronym for Choice, Exercise, Liquids, Environment, Belief, Rest, Air, Temperance, Integrity, Optimism, Nutrition, and Social Support.

One hundred sixty-eight health screenings were conducted. Sixty percent were diagnosed with hypertension; most of them did not know they had it neither understood what it was until it was explained in the lectures. Diabetes and hepatitis B ranked next with 3% each.

"After undergoing the medical examination and hearing the lectures on the first day, they started to understand the program," said Dr Htwe Lay, MYUM Health Ministries director. The local authorities provided assistance in the daily activities. "Not only did they fully support the health program until the end, they also requested us to conduct more of this in other neighboring areas in the future," Lay concluded.

Labutta Township consists of 684 villages clustered into 115 village and tracts was among the hardest-hit areas of Cyclone Nargis in 2008. Most villages are located on the seaside and highly engaged in fishing and farming. In Ayeyarwaddy Division, popularly known as the Delta region, Labutta is a well-known source of salt production. Buddhism is the main religion here as it is throughout Myanmar.

ADRA Myanmar has been implementing rehabilitation and development projects in Labutta since 2008, addressing health, livelihoods, water hygiene and sanitation, and food insecurity concerns. "The cooperation of ADRA is very vital in the success of the recently-concluded health exposition," Dr Htwe Lay added. We are hopeful that "the Adventist message will spread through the health message."



MYANMAR UNION

First country-wide missionary convention

THE ADVENTIST CHURCH in Myanmar (MYUM) held its country-wide convention known as the Worldwide Mission Project (WMP) on January 16-22, in Yangon. It was attended by more than 100 participants from the Myanmar Union field.

This program was introduced in 2006 to support evangelism by sending pioneers to un-entered areas in Myanmar with assistance from the project.

The opening ceremony was held on January 16 with an inspiring message from Pastor Memory Tun, MYUM president. MYUM Ministerial Secretary and head of WMP, Pastor Shine Tha, presented a report on the impact of this project.

It was an interesting success story about many missionaries and showed their challenges, successes and achievements in their respective pioneer fields. The report gave a better understanding about the unique operation of the Adventist church in Myanmar and around the world. As a result, the church leaders in the country who attended could now set attainable goals based on the report.

The convention offered missionary enrichment through lectures from various departments of the Church, small-group ministry training from resource persons, sharing from the mission field abroad, introduction of new evangelism approaches in Myanmar, and spiritual uplifting prayer sessions.

"I am really blessed to be a part of this missionary convention. It helped me grow spiritually as I took part in prayer and participated in the program," a participant was heard commenting.



More than 100 missionaries from the Myanmar Union Mission (MYUM) field attended the Worldwide Mission Project (WMP) on January 16-22 in Yangon.

PASC: A Light House

By Acsah Zubaid Khan

Pakistan Adventist Seminary and College (PASC)
A place for more than a faithful few.
Where leaders, educators, ministers are trained
And where dreams come true.

The city around is a pot full of collective beliefs
Yet not a soul with permanent relief.
But everyone at PASC can kneel
And the love of Jesus Christ they truly feel.

My family left our campus grounds
For this new home we've found.
Never to replace our life at P-A-S-C
But a new place for a faithful witness to be.

To P-A-S-C we will definitely return, our home so sweet
When our studies at AIIAS and AUP are complete.
Back again to sing and worship and pray and learn
With friends and family until Jesus' joyful return.

Week of Prayer speaker challenges church workers

by GAY TUBALLES-DELES

A FAVORITE TRADITION of the officers, directors and support staff of the southern Asia-Pacific regional headquarters (SSD) is to start the New Year with a week of prayer.

On January 2, Pastor Robert Costa introduced the week of prayer with the theme of “Christ (as) my Lord” to over 80 employees at SSD. Subsequent meetings focused on Christ’s lordship in life, failures, body, thoughts, possessions, impossibilities, forgiveness, love, and the future. Throughout the week Costa emphasized Revival and Reformation as the Adventist church’s theme and challenge for the members. With two sessions each day starting with a morning devotional program and a mid-day worship, SSD workers gained inspiration from the many stories Costa told from his wide experience in evangelism and travels.

The Friday morning devotional featured one story, which captivated the group’s attention. Costa shared the details of the Adventist connection to the 33 Chilean miners buried for 69 days underground near Copiapo, Chile beginning on August 5, last year. The story became worldwide news and attracted numerous reporters and rescue operations. At the conclusion of his story, Costa showed a small Bible the size of a man’s palm. It was among the many Bibles given by Pastor Carlos Parra Diaz,

an Adventist minister who happened to be at the site. Diaz collected the small Bibles which were sent through a tunnel to reach the miners 700 meters underground. Diaz was the unofficial chaplain of Camp Hope and worked untiringly to encourage the miners’ families. At the conclusion of the story, Costa unveiled to the awe-struck audience one of the two Chilean flags signed by the 33 miners and given to Diaz.

The Friday evening communion service of the employees and their families was a highlight of the week and brought a renewed sense of connectedness to the group. Sabbath featured a Sabbath School program by the children of SSD employees, and a memorable church service followed by fellowship and a delicious lunch.

Pastor Costa is the Spanish Speaker-Director of the telecast *It Is Written*, which is broadcast via satellite, cable and local channels in more than 11,000 stations and reaches 138 countries. He also serves as a Ministerial Associate of the General Conference and is responsible for coordinating the world evangelism for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

MOUNTAIN VIEW COLLEGE

MVC hosts Student Literature Evangelists' convention

MOUNTAIN VIEW COLLEGE (MVC) in the southern Philippines has organized the largest Student Association of Literature Evangelists (SALE) in the entire southern Asia-Pacific (SSD) region of the church and possibly even the world with approximately 10,000 students participating in 2012.

The Association convened for a special SALE event on February 17-18 with guests Vivencio R Bermudez, SSD Publishing director; Ramesis Rivamonte, Philippine Publishing House VP for Marketing; and Prodenser Dapiton, Literature Ministry Seminary dean, from the church headquarters in the central Philippines. In addition, Daniel Trazo and Emmanuel Sales offered special presentations of interest to the LEs. During the event, top student literature evangelists and leaders were recognized and received awards.

Attendees included PPH Marketing personnel, publishing directors from all over the country, administrators and students from the different local mission conferences of the church, and faculty and staff from the college. During the program, they were encouraged to follow the theme of "Bringing Hope into Every Home." In keeping with the theme, Bermudez reminded them that "entering the door of service will develop a dynamic relation with God."

He also noted that the Student Literature Ministry had three main objectives: soul-winning, training, and financing. SALE attempts to meet these goals as it sends out 25 groups of approximately 400 students in the literature ministry every summer to reach areas in the central Philippines.

In addition to specialized LE training, SALE students have strong support from MVC including transportation, so they can confidently witness to people with whom they interact.

More than one million pesos in the form of bonus earnings have been awarded by the publishing department to these hardworking students to pursue their studies, aside from the commission they received for every sale of literature.



ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES

AUP Choral director receives national award

by GAY TUBALLES-DELES

RAMON LIJAUCO JR., director of the Adventist University of the Philippines' Ambassadors, received the *Ani ng Dangal* Award 2012 for Music at Malacañang Palace, the Philippine President's official residence, February 28.

According to the National Commission for Culture and Arts (NCCA), *Ani ng Dangal* is an annual event to conclude the national arts month and to celebrate the accomplishments of Filipino artists who won top international honors and brought recognition to the country during the past year.

Recognition is given to artists in the seven art disciplines: music, dance, cinema, literary arts, visual arts, dramatic arts and architecture.

NCAA chairman Professor Felipe de Leon Jr. presented the award to Lijaucou as director of the choir that gave honor and recognition to the country, having won the distinction as Choir of the World, held in the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod, July 2011. The AUP Ambassadors represented the Philippines at this internationally renowned competition.



Choir conductor Ramon "Bojo" Lijaucou Jr (sixth from right) joins the ranks of Filipino artists awarded the *Ani ng Dangal* Award 2012 at the Heroes Hall, Malacañang Palace, February 28. (photo by Tristan Caliston Ignacio on Facebook)

God will Change A Life

This story is about an 11-year-old boy named Daid (David). He is in grade 4 in one of our Adventist schools. His mother joined the Adventist church in 2007, and she is very faithful and dedicated mother.

When this young boy was one-year-old, the father converted to the Muslim religion and tried to convert his wife, but she wanted to live as a Christian. When Daid was three years old, his father admitted him to the Islamic center to learn and read the Quran. After two years of this, the boy came back and told his mother, "I love Jesus, and I want to study at a Christian school, so I can be a pastor to serve Jesus." He came to this point because his mother has been telling him about Jesus, over and over.

His mother made the difficult decision to leave her husband, so they could be free to live as Christians. She then enrolled her son in an Adventist school. Now he is a regular member of a Sabbath school class; each Sabbath he asks the church pastor to pray for his father, because he has faith that God will change his father's life and that his father one day may know the truth about God.

After his primary education, he wants to go to an Adventist Seminary to be a pastor. We pray that our Lord Jesus Christ will open a way for this faithful boy to become a good servant for Him.

KHALIDA ABBAS is the director of Children's Ministries/Women's Ministries of Pakistan Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Appreciation dinner for Philippine National Police Chief



At a testimonial dinner, Jonathan Catalico, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for the church in the southern Asia-pacific region (SSD), awards a plaque of appreciation to Philippine National Police Chief Nicanor Bartolome and his wife Noemia.

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST Church hosted a historic event on January 29 as leaders and pastors from the three regional fields in the Philippines held an appreciation dinner for General A. Nicanor Bartolome, chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP), and his family at Camp Crame in Quezon City.

With the theme, "For God and Country: For Such a Time as This" and attended by more than 150 pastors, workers and wives, and leaders representing the Church, this was the first of such an event in the history of the Church in the Philippines. The program was designed to show the Church's full support for the men in

uniform in their quest for a disciplined, community-oriented force in combating elements that run contrary to morals, peace and safety, and community well-being.

General Bartolome and his family were joined by his top-ranking officers consisting of the elite members of the PNP. It was on this occasion that the church outlined its programs aimed at partnering with the police hierarchy in uplifting the morale of the police force in matters of healthy lifestyle, moral invigoration, community service, and the like.

Appreciation dinner..., to page 23

SOUTH PHILIPPINE UNION CONFERENCE

Church says “Thank You” to government executives

by ADVENTIST NEWS DISPATCH

GOOD GOVERNANCE HAS often become a yardstick employed by constituents in choosing to return leaders to local or national offices. This was evident in the three areas, a province, town, and city, where the church held events in early February to express appreciation to government executives. Termed “Salamat Po Governor/Mayor” (Thank You Governor/Mayor), these events honored leaders with a history of delivering excellent services to their constituents regardless of culture, tribe, religious beliefs and ideologies.

In coordination with the Adventist Church in the southern Asia-Pacific region (SSD), the Church in the southern Philippines (SPUC) initiated testimonial programs for government executives in the province of Zamboanga del Sur, town of Panaon in Zamboanga del Norte, and in Asia’s Latin City of Zamboanga. Arrangements were made by the local church headquarters in Western Mindanao (WMC) for Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga del Norte and the Zambaonga Peninsula (ZPM) for the City of Zamboanga.

On February 2, the first of the three events was held in Pagadian City where the headquarters of the Province of Zamboanga del Sur is located. Here, the Honorable Antonio H. Ceriles, Honorable Aurora E. Ceriles, and their son Ace William have been providing leadership to the



Church leaders pose with Mayor Celso Lobregat together with fellow executives at “Salamat Po Mayor” program held for them.

province as governor, congresswoman, and mayor, respectively.

On February 6, in Panaon, Zamboanga del Norte, Former Vice Governor Francisco Paylaga, Jr. who currently serves as a local governance consultant, Mayor Meriam L Paylaga, and Vice Mayor Rosanne Paylaga-Lim were also honored for what they have done to their constituents. Like the Ceriles,

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The three-hour event, in addition to the testimonial dinner, featured a devotional message by Dr. Nestor Rilloma, president of Northern Luzon Adventist College, and musical renditions from the renowned Choir of the World champion, the Adventist University of the Philippines Ambassadors.

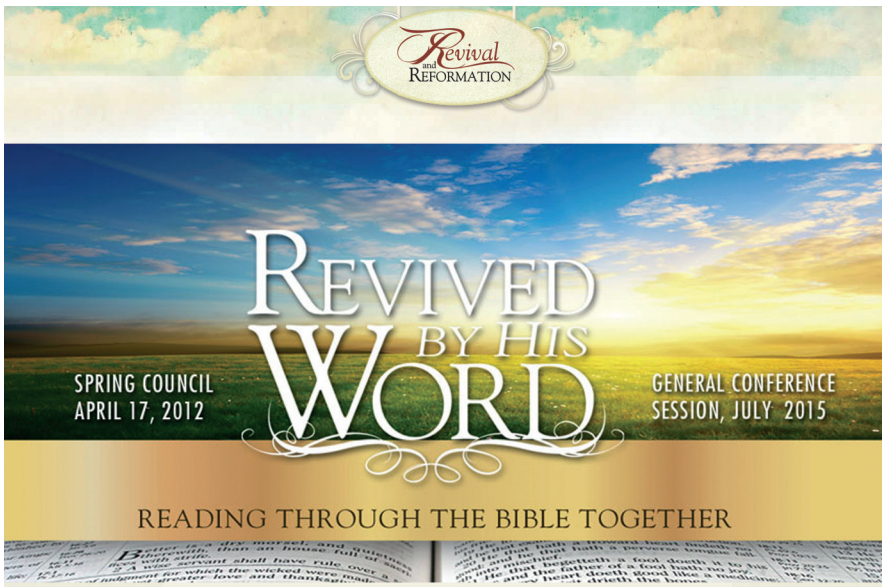
At the ceremony, Dr. Jonathan C. Catolico, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) director of the Church in the southern Asia-Pacific region (SSD), presented a plaque of appreciation to General Bartolome and his wife, Dr. Noemia D. Bartolome, who is a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Afterward, the General expressed his positive response to and support of the Church's programs to be offered for his men.

Pastor Nephtali Manez, president of the church in northern Philippines (NPUC), and Pastor Romeo Mangiliman, president for central Luzon (CLC), also delivered their messages of support for the PNP. This was followed by the signing of the commitment banner and special prayer for the Bartolome family.

The event, as envisioned by the organizers, was inspired by a biblical mandate: "I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2:1-2). According to observers, this program was an appropriate response to the mandate.

In a text message later received from Dr. Bartolome, she noted that the PNP Command was "very much honored by the event. It was an overwhelming celebration participated by the delegations from missions and unions." She reiterated: "I am very proud to be a member of the Church."

The PARL leadership in the Philippines expressed its appreciation to the organizers of the event. "Chaplain Rodolfo R. Bautista Jr. and his team made the evening a beginning of a stronger partnership with the police authorities of the country in an effort to make the PNP more responsive to the safety needs of the community," concluded Dr. Catolico.





Governor Antonio and Congresswoman Aurora Ceriles of Zamboanga del Sur poses with the leaders and members of the Adventist Church in Western Mindanao during the February 2 “Salamat Po Governor” event. This event recognized their leadership in providing good governance to their constituents regardless of religion and ideologies, culture and economic status.



Mayor Meriam Paylaga, mayor of Panaon City (4th from right, front row), poses with her husband, former Vice Governor Francisco Paylaga and the leaders of the Adventist Church as well as the executives of barangays and departments of the municipality during the February 6 Thanksgiving program held in their honor.

these town leaders belong to one family, too.

In Asia’s Latin City of Zamboanga, Mayor Celso Lorbrebat expressed his appreciation to the Church during the February 8 program held for him and his fellow executives.

He recounted the story of the ten lepers who were healed by Jesus but only one came back to thank Him for what He had done, hinting that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was the one who expressed appreciation for what the government has done in delivering services to the community.

Dr Jonathan C Catolico, SSD public affairs director, told honorees that the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not ignore the good deeds of government leaders, especially regarding matters that concern religious freedom in their

respective jurisdictions. “This religious freedom does not only concern members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church but all other religious denominations—Christians or non-Christians,” he said.

The chief executives in these three events were joined by their board members, councilors, department heads, and other high officials. In Panaon, the barangay captains of 18 barangays (villages) were also present.

Aimed at acknowledging what government has done in maintaining equal rights to citizens regardless of culture, religion, and ideologies, these meetings were highly appreciated by the honorees. This also paved the way for church leaders and members to assist the government in conducting programs that upgrade the quality of life through healthy lifestyle and various other means.

WEST INDONESIA UNION MISSION

Developing leaders, LEAD Conference's goal in Indonesia

by ROY M. HUTASOIT AND BRUCE SUMENDAP

THE LARGEST LEAD conference in Indonesia to date was held from February 17-20 in Mataram, Lombok Island, West Nusa Tenggara Province. The LEAD Conference and Tell the World seminar attracted over 200 attendees from West Indonesia Union Mission, East Indonesia Union Conference, Timor Leste Attached Field, SSD and the world church headquarters. It was part of a program offered by the Church in the southern Asia-Pacific (SSD) to develop leaders who are mature, committed and well-equipped.

This type of leader helps members develop their God-given abilities and prepares people for the second coming of the Savior, thus enabling the Church to have a vibrant presence in the world. One of the foundations of the program is the focus on personal development and spiritual growth of leaders. "If we are expecting the people to be revived by His Word and by the Holy Spirit, it is important for every gospel worker to be revived through diligent study of the Bible and constantly seeking the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to empower them to serve," reminded SSD President Alberto C. Gulfan, Jr., during the opening ceremony.

In his devotional message, Pastor Gulfan emphasized that revival among the church is greatly influenced by the spiritual lifestyle of its church leaders—which is the reason why events such as

these are important. Another benefit of the conference and seminar was the sharing of experiences and testimonies among fellow leaders from the different mission and institutions.

The urgent need for practical application of revival by His Word was felt deeply among the conference attendees. SSD Vice-President Johnny Lubis stressed the need to "reflect the light of Christ to the world today." A similar theme was echoed in the presentation of Pastor Kevin Costello, SSD associate treasurer/associate secretary, who spoke on church administration.

It is interesting to see how revival touches financial aspects of church leadership as described by World Church Associate Treasurer George Egwakhe and his division counterpart, Pastor Moldy Mambu. Both discussed the need for integrity and accountability in finance practices.

"Spiritual revival in the church involves building trust among church members on how money is being managed in church administration. Leaders need to understand accounting processes as well as accountability processes," says Egwakhe. In line with that, SSD Treasurer Sergie Ferrer expressed hopes for a greater level of transparency and trust in managing church funds.

Mango House, Mama Ada and Me

by JANELLE BRAUER

I FIRST MET Mama Ada when we sat in line together for hours, waiting to go through the eight or so stations necessary to obtain a driver's license. As Americans living in the Philippines, we found we had much in common. I was pleased to hear that she ran an orphanage in Silang, Cavite (north Philippines) called Mango House. She invited me to visit, but I could not find it for almost a year.

During that year I heard about a group from the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS) that was regularly visiting an orphanage in Silang. It turned out to be Mango House! I contacted them and began meeting with them to drive volunteers to Mango House twice a month. During the visits, they provided a program of songs, stories and activities that would help the children to know Jesus better. One Christmas, the volunteers hosted a special program at AIAS for the children, complete with songs, stories, movies, games and food. The children had such a good time.

During these visits, I came to know Mama Ada better. After her husband died, Ada decided that she wanted to do something worthwhile with her life. She visited the Philippines and had seen homeless children on the streets. She decided she wanted to give some of these children a chance to survive, thrive and get to know Jesus. And this is how Mango House came into existence.

Mango House has 15 children from



Children from the Mango House orphanage in Silang, Cavite, Philippines enjoy a holiday at the Manila Zoo.

about 6 to 12 years of age that have lived together with Ada and her staff for four or five years. The stories of why and how these children came to Mango House are heart wrenching. Some of them were very sick, seemingly near death and non responsive. Some of them are from broken homes and when a new partner came, he or she didn't want the children from the previous marriage so the children were sent to the orphanage. Each child has a story of loss,

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The four-day event was also filled with spiritual enrichment through the presence of Pastor Joseph Kidder, who holds a doctor of ministry and is presently a professor at the Andrews University Theology department. A native of Iraq, Pastor Kidder combined his fascinating testimony with biblical principles to give the participants an unforgettable and faith-

building experience.

At the end of the conference, SSD Executive Secretary Saw Samuel and Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Director Hermogenes Villanueva challenged the attendees to carry the message of spiritual revival and evangelism to their church members as they prepare for Christ's soon appearing.

Mango House..., from previous page

abandonment or rejection that will follow them throughout their lives. Ada and her staff do all that they can, with the grace of God, to fill the huge holes in the hearts of these children. The AIIAS volunteers and I consider it a privilege to be able to love these children and spend time with them. We hope and pray that our time with the Mango House children will help them to know how valuable they are as human beings and how important they are to Jesus.

Ada mentioned on one of our visits that the children had seen pictures of many animals, but they had only seen the local pets and wildlife. I was amazed that they had never been to a zoo. Lightning struck in my brain! It was almost Christmas! I knew I wanted to somehow arrange for a trip to the zoo as a Christmas present to the children and staff. With the help of volunteers and some charity from the Manila Zoo, we transported 15 Mango House children and five staff to the zoo during the Christmas holidays. It was a wonderful trip! The children were so excited to see the animals and play at the zoo playground. What a privilege to see the joy on their faces and hear their excited chatter. I will always cherish that memory.

The volunteers from AIIAS and I have grown to love these children. For her part, Ada truly appreciates the consistent relationship that the AIIAS volunteers have built for the children for the last three years. She says that the AIIAS group is the only group that has come repeatedly and consistently to interact with the children. God has blessed all of us - Ada, the Mango house children, the AIIAS volunteers and me - with a sweet and rewarding fellowship in Christ.

Mission Pilot Shot

...God is the ruler yet!

SOMETIMES IN THE midst of great trials we can see the hand of God most clearly, and that is what sustains us. Such is the case of Adventist mission pilot Dwayne Harris when he was shot on March 7 while helping neighbors during an attempted robbery near his home in the northern Philippines. He spent the morning preparing for the next day's delivery of five shipping containers for a new hanger construction project. During lunch preparations, a neighbor rushed to his home and asked him to call the police because robbers were at a nearby home. After being assured by the police that officers were on their way, Harris left his home to offer further help to the victims. Unbeknownst to him, they had been tied up in the house at gunpoint and the robbers were still inside.

As a nurse, Wendy knew that time was crucial, so she sent text messages to friends in the hospital to prepare for Harris' arrival. When the doctors had first heard the news, they stopped and prayed for him. Upon arrival, Harris pointed at his chest, began having trouble breathing and showed signs of shock with paleness and sweating. The medical staff went into action. A large number of key staff were available to help. This would not have normally been the case, but most of the specialists and surgeons had attended a regularly scheduled meeting that morning and were still at the facility. This was one of many providential incidents. Wendy Harris notes, "The ENT specialist for this area just happened to be around and was heading for the meeting when one of the doctors grabbed her in the hall and brought her to the E.R. The pulmonary specialist happened to be on his way into the hospital and was one hour away (he lives four hours away). The ENT surgeon found the bullet had passed just in the right place, so there was no major damage and had come within one centimeter of the spinal cord! By the time she was

finished, the pulmonary specialist and assisting surgeons could continue the surgery on the chest. They found the second bullet had also come within one centimeter of hitting the main vessel in the heart and had only clipped the lungs." Thanks to God's deliverance and the expertise and quick response of the medical team at Cagayan Valley Adventist Hospital, Harris is expected to make a full recovery.

With so many miraculous happenings, God's presence was evident to all involved. Harris' wife Wendy commented that, "I wasn't at all worried during the surgery or surprised at the news that he would recover. I just felt everything was going to be ok. His vital signs stayed stable from the time he arrived in the hospital. That was another thing that kept me calm. We serve a very powerful and great God, and everyone around here agrees that all the pieces of this story are not a coincidence. One thing I have learned through this experience (among many) is the power of intercessory prayer. As the news spread around the world, I was encouraged to know that many people were praying for Dwayne. We continue to feel the prayers as Dwayne's recovery has been so smooth.



These photos were on Facebook within an hour of missionary pilot Dwayne Harris' arrival at Cagayan Valley Adventist Hospital so prayer partners could encourage others to pray for him and stay updated on his status. These pre-surgery x-rays show where the bullets were lodged. (photo by Alvin L Reyes)

We are so grateful to God and all of you; words cannot express. I hope that after this experience, we all will learn to pray more and with more confidence and faith for people in need that God brings into our lives."

The HARRISES serve as missionaries for Philippines Adventist Medical Aviation Service (PAMAS) and are currently stationed in Santiago, Isabela. They provide health education and medical assistance for unreached people groups in the northern Philippines.

Founded in 1959, Cagayan Valley Adventist Hospital (CVAH) serves the medical needs of people throughout the Cagayan Valley and its surrounding regions in the northern Philippines. Recognized internationally for its quality service, the hospital offers emergency services, inpatient care, outpatient procedures, and diagnostics. Its mission is to be an instrument in providing wholistic services to everyone leading them to the Great Physician Jesus Christ.

UPDATE FROM DWAYNE HARRIS

Praise God for your prayers as we how they've aided my healing. We see the battle between good and evil intensifying on every side. Everyone whom we know personally who is impacting this world for Christ is being attacked in various ways. God allows these things at times to increase our faith and trust in Him and to develop a more Christ-like character in us. Praise God, all we have to do is to keep looking up and move forward in faith, surrendering daily, knowing that God is in control of all things. Look up for our redemption draweth nigh.

PS. The robber was beaten and stoned after he shot me. He barely survived but is now in prison with the other robbers. God gave this man a second chance at life as well. Please pray for him that he will surrender his life to Jesus as he has time to sit and contemplate the decisions he has made. We plan on visiting him with the prison ministries group from the local church here.

ADVENTIST INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES

AIAS and the Jabez Prayer

Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, 'Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from pain so that I will be free from pain.' And God granted his request" (1 Chronicles 4:10).

THE ADVENTIST INTERNATIONAL Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS) is celebrating its 26th anniversary of the signing of Presidential Decree No. 2021. On January 31, 1986, the Philippine government, under the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos, officially declared AIAS "as a graduate educational institution of international character," stating that "it shall be classified and treated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports as a foreign school of special character, with an international student body, faculty, management composition and control, funding support, programs, curricular offerings, calendar, fee structure, and academic standards" (Sec. 1).

Since then, AIAS has grown, not only in physical structure, and number of graduates, but in providing advanced degrees to people in places far beyond its campus. Recently, the AIAS Education Department signed a memoranda of understanding (MOU) with the Universidad Adventista de Chile (UnACh) and Philippine International Communicators (PIC) Training and Development Corporation to set up Distance Learning Centers (DLC) in their areas.

The UnACh DLC is offering an MA in Education with an emphasis in Religious Education for Bible teachers and chaplains in Chile. In January of 2012, 13 students began their coursework, and preliminary reports are favorable. According to Dr. Shawna Vyhmeister, the AIAS Education Department Chair, the UnACh DLC is unique in that it's the first extension program in South America as well as one of the first times AIAS has taught a fully translated program. As a result, the students will be able to do all their coursework in their native language of Spanish. Since interest in the program is high among AIAS faculty, the students in Chile will experience a different teacher for nearly every class in the program.

The PIC DLC in Baguio will be offering a Master of Arts in Teaching with an emphasis in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) to interested individuals. The four-year program will be hosted at the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary (PBTS) Campus in Baguio City, with the students only meeting every April and May beginning this year. The DLC began with a providential encounter at a TESOL conference during which Angie Pacleb, the president of TESOL Philippines, found that AIAS was one of the few places in the Philippines to offer a TESOL degree. Dr. Pacleb started visiting AIAS, and the idea of offering the TESOL program in Baguio was born.

The Lord has blessed AIAS greatly in the past 26 years, and He has expanded AIAS' territory outside the campus. Before the launching of the UnACh and Baguio DLCs, AIAS was already operating 10 DLC programs outside the campus. The Seminary offers a Master in Ministry degree at three different areas in the Philippines (Manila, Cebu, Cagayan de Oro) and one in Hong Kong. The School of Graduate Studies offers a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) in Bangladesh and Myanmar; MAT and Master of Public Health (MPH) in the Philippines (Cebu and Cagayan de Oro); Master of Business Administration (MBA) in Qatar (Doha) and Russia; and Master of Science in Administration (MSA) in Ukraine.

When fear of death and love for souls clash

by VICSEL ROSE VALLEGA

ONE AFTERNOON, THE very hour we began our daily program in the church; we heard a series of blasting punches on the wall. The noise came from the house about 10 steps from the church. Inside the church, the singing suddenly stopped and the people began to wonder what was happening. It seemed like there was a group that threatened us. Suddenly, an angry man rushed inside the church and threw a chair outside and a guitar that was used for church services. Up front, we looked at one another in shock.

As members of a team from the Central Philippines Adventist College (CPAC), we had come here to hold public meetings but had never expected something like this. The people were terrified and told us to return to the house where we were staying. Fearful but determined, we quickly grasped each other's shaking hands and formed prayer groups. Some of the team members did not even close their eyes while I was praying just to be on guard in case the angry man and his friends may try to attack us. Other team members were praying with tears in their eyes.

The man's shout echoed through the church, "You CPACian, why did you come here? To preach?... You're all sinners... come over and let's see what you can do... You go home and don't come back!" He kept on uttering words but our fear drowned them that we could no longer understand. Then we noticed another person carrying a bolo. Some began to tremble for fear that the mad man might grab the bolo and attack us.

In spite of all this, the brethren quietly requested us to continue our service. We all came back to the front with great fear but in our hearts was the cry for God's help to protect the church from the likelihood of bloodshed. The song service resumed. The louder we sang; the more the shouts were like blasting punches on the wall. Our hearts kept on sobbing for God's mercy and grace while the health lecture and sermon went on.

I told myself that I am ready to lay down my life before the lives of my students were endangered. I prayed to God to save us. I didn't want this to be the last day of my life but how better to spend it while serving the Lord, I thought. I struggled hard and fought with God to grant us protection because we were there doing His work. I and Jason Libato, the preacher, maintained our calm, but we were affected by the stress and worry over the situation. The program ended shortly with no other trouble – thanks to God. We composed ourselves in front of the brethren and continued our house-to-house evening worship.

This experience taught us to stand brave and stay true for God's sake though it may get to the point when fear of seemingly evitable death and love for lost souls clash. In the end, we must choose to risk our lives for God's lost children. We came back to CPAC bearing the victory of what we had gone through and the happiness of seeing our brethren who went astray coming to Christ's feet to be revived and reformed.

VICSEL ROSE VALLEGA, English Instructor of CPAC and a sponsor assigned in Brgy. Taganghin, Tapaz

“Loving your spouse is the best gift you can give your child.”

CHURCH IN THAILAND HOLDS FAMILY MINISTRIES CONVENTION



Photos by Clarito Mabituin



“LOVING YOUR SPOUSE is the best gift you can give your child.” This was one of the key concepts presented at the Family Ministries (FM) convention at Indra Regent Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand, March 9-13, where family ministries' directors of the church from all over the southern Asia-Pacific region (SSD) convened for marriage enrichment programs and training in the Family Ministries Certification curriculum.

With a theme of “Revival, Reformation & Beyond: Families Reaching Up,” the seminar encouraged the 355 attendees to put Christ as the foundation of the family and emphasized the importance of family worship as a crucial value-forming habit for children’s growth and development.

International speakers included Willie and Elaine Oliver, FM directors for the world church; Consuelo and Pamela Consuegra, FM directors for North America; Pardon Mwansa, world church vice-president and Alberto Gulfan Jr., SSD president.

SSD FM Director Miriam Andres who coordinated the event believes that “a fruitful and committed married life will bring the entire church closer to God as fathers, mothers and children work together harmoniously.” Thus, there is a great need for marriage enrichment programs and family ministries training such as the ones featured at this convention.

A guest expressed appreciation for the event by sharing, “I’m grateful for the inspiration I got from the seminar. It is true that with God as the center, love builds families. I and my husband are truly blest. The six-month period without my paycheck was worth the time I spent with my spouse.”

The event featured a parade of nations, couples' renewal of commitment ceremony, a couples' special evening, and various cultural programs. Former FM directors were also recognized for the contributions, they gave to the ministry – Norlin Cadapan for the church in north Philippines, Gratian Perera for serving in south-east Asia, Glenda Catane in central Philippines and Françoise Monnier for serving in Bangladesh.



MYANMAR UNION MISSION

Myanmar Adventist holds 7th National Convention

by MYO CHAN

THE SEVENTH-DAY Adventist Church in Myanmar held its 7th National convention at Upper Myanmar Adventist Seminary (UMAS), Kalay Myo, Sagaing Region, March 28-31. More than 3,000 people, representing approximately 10% of church members in Myanmar, attended the convention.

"This spiritual celebration was heartwarming. The sermons, presentations, witnessing and discussions, which were focused on revival and reformation enriched every delegate," said attendees.

Pastor Alberto C Gulfan Jr., president, of the Adventist church in the Southern Asia-Pacific region (SSD); Pastor Saw Samuel, executive secretary, a Burmese himself; and Jacinth Adap, associate treasurer, were the distinguished guests for the event.

The last national convention was held in 2006 so the members were eager to gather for this occasion. In spite of the difficult travel conditions to Kalay Myo, a surprising number of delegates came to receive spiritual enrichment from this convention.

"I walked for five days to come to this meeting, and ...it was worth it," a delegate from Southern Chin state commented as he explained about his travel experiences.

The sermons, presented by church leaders, created an atmosphere of reflection and re-dedication. In addition, inspiring moments such as the ordination of 13 ministers and baptism of 28 people energized the attendees and encouraged them to find a way in which they can serve God and tell others about Jesus and their promised heavenly home.

"We are glad to see our fellow believers from different parts of Myanmar and also from abroad. This really is an idea for me of how heaven looks," a local church member expressed in his ethnic language.

The convention ended with an encouraging presentation by Pastor Gulfan in which

Thousands attend funeral of Pastor Simon Soren, WBA president



ON MARCH 13, a crowd of approximately two thousand people gathered to remember the life of Pastor Simon Soren, president of the West Bangladesh

Mission (WBA). The funeral service was conducted at the Seventh-day Adventist Maranatha Seminary (SAMS) in the district of Joypurhat, Bangladesh.

Mr. Dipok Mumu, vice-principal of SAMS, welcomed the audience and special guests. Pastor Milton Das, BAUM education director, offered the opening prayer. Mr. Nitish K Drong, West Bangladesh Mission executive secretary, narrated Pastor Soren's life sketch. Timothy Roy, BAUM executive secretary, Mrs. Sweetie Ritchil, BAUM treasurer, and Dr Myun Ju Lee, Bangladesh Adventist Seminary and College (BASC) president, shared their memories of Pastor Soren and his commitment to God and the Adventist church. Pastor Daniel C. Boidya, president of East Bangladesh Mission (EBM), gave a tribute on behalf of his group and two other groups, South Bangladesh Mission (SBM) and North Bangladesh Mission (NBM). Mr. Michael Hembrom spoke on behalf of SAMS. Mr. Lal Soren, younger brother of Simon Soren, gave a touching tribute to him on behalf of their family. Mr. Benjamin Raksham offered the benediction. This portion of the service closed with special music sung by the officers and departmental directors of BAUM. At the graveside, Pastor Bibek Halder gave the final funeral sermonette.

In addition to relatives, friends,

colleagues and fellow believers, hundreds of teachers and students from a local government high school also attended to pay their respects to the man who reached out to those of different faiths and backgrounds.

Pastor Soren earned a Bachelor of Arts in Religion degree from the Bangladesh Adventist Seminary and College (BASC) in 1996 and a Master of Education degree in 2003 from the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in the Philippines. He spent the majority of his career on the WBM field, serving as a teacher and evangelist, later as the executive secretary and finally as the president. In addition, he served at BASC as a sponsorship supervisor while completing his studies and at SAMS as a work coordinator. He also spent two years in the South Bangladesh Mission as the executive secretary.

Pastor Soren passed away on the afternoon on March 12 in the Rajshahi Medical Hospital at the age of 49. He was on kidney dialysis periodically since early 2011 for a congenital kidney disease. He is survived by his wife, a son, a daughter, two brothers, four sisters, his parents and numerous other relatives and friends.

Pastor Eric Monnier: BAUM president and lifelong missionary



PASTOR ERIC MONNIER, president of the Bangladesh Adventist Union Mission (BAUM), passed away in Collonges-sous-Salève, France on Sunday, January 22, from a six-month battle with cancer.

Born in Paris, France on July 26, 1952,

he reminded them to have a true worship of God and remain faithful until the second coming of Jesus. The delegates responded by dedicating themselves to maintain their faith and living a committed Christian life as they looked for Jesus' return.

"I hope this will be our last convention here in Myanmar and that our next would be in heaven," said Pastor Memory Tun, president of Myanmar Adventist Church.

Kalay Myo is situated 700 miles away from the capital of Yangon and near Tamu, the border town of India. The majority Chin ethnic groups are living in the area. The Adventist message was introduced in the area a 100 years ago and there are about 35% of church members in country are Chin.

he lived an adventuresome life. He attended elementary school in Martinique and Haiti while his high school years were spent in Brazil and France. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degrees in Theology, Business Administration and Education from Campus Adventiste du Salève (Adventist University of France - Collonges) in Collonges, France. He later earned a Master of Arts degree in Religious Education from Andrews University in Michigan, U.S.A.

His career spanned 35 years and two continents as he and his wife Francois devoted their lives to mission work. In their early twenties and having just begun their second year of marriage, they arrived at the Central Amazon Mission in the South American Division in October 1976. They spent a total of 30 years in SAD with Elder Monnier working as a departmental director for the Lower Amazon and Central Amazon Missions and later as president of the Central Amazon Mission, Maranhao Mission and Bolivia Union.

In 2007, the Monniers were invited to work in Bangladesh where Elder Monnier served as the president and Francois became known for her tireless work with the Orphans of Bangladesh program. Their selfless attitudes were readily apparent to those with whom they worked. BAUM Treasurer Sweetie Ritcheil commented that "if you want to

know who Pastor Monnier was, you'll find it explained in Matthew 5:39-42. Both, he and his wife always tried to give, give, give. Much of the furniture for the office and even computers came from their generosity. I have never seen such an attitude of 'what can I do for others rather than 'what can I receive'."

Pastor Alberto C. Gulfan, Jr., SSD president, echoed those thoughts as he emphasized that Pastor Monnier "lived a Christ-like life. He died in the strongest faith in the assurance of Christ's second coming--a message which he so boldly and courageously shared in the countries where he served as a missionary."

Described by his BAUM colleagues as "a man of principle yet tried to give others second chances when they made mistakes," Pastor Eric Monnier will be remembered as a man of laughter, selflessness, compassion and mission.

A BAUM memorial service was held in Bangladesh on January 22 to honor his work there. A funeral service was held on January 26 in the Saleve Adventist Campus Church in Collonges, France.

He is survived by his wife Francois Massard Monnier, daughter Valerie, son Gabriel, sister Elisabeth Van Bignoot, brother Yves, mother Yvonne and beloved relatives. [Teresa Costello]

THE ERASER

IT'S OLD, SCUFFED and with well-worn edges. Obviously, it served its purpose well. Who knows how many mistakes were erased, how many errors transformed? For years, it was within easy reach in the recesses of a well-loved handbag. Now it sits on my shelf, so I can glance at it from time to time and remember. With each glance, I picture my mother, her aged fingers grasping the eraser in one hand while she carefully placed her flowing script across the page with another. She loved to write letters to family members and friends; she poured out her life on those pages and shared it with all. Yet she wanted the eraser close by so she could quickly erase a misplaced letter or rephrase a sentence so it wouldn't affect the entire page.

Through the years God has brought this image to my mind again and again. And I think I know why now. It's connected to a beautiful promise in 2 Corinthians 3:3: "Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart." New King James Version (NKJV)

Now what is an epistle? It's a letter¹. It's more than humbling to think that we are Christ's letters to the world – that He poured out His life on the pages of history so that our lives would be a testimony to draw others to Him. It's also intimidating. We must be accountable for our actions but must we be perfect, fearful of making even an unintentional mistake, fearful of somehow misrepresenting what and Who we know, so fearful that we end up not sharing what we know? Again, I'm drawn to the memory of my mother and her letters. This truth I know: She anticipated the errors, knowing they were part of being human. So it was in her life and with her children. Through our many foibles and missteps, she was there, ready with forgiveness, acceptance and inspiration to do better.

My mother chose not to keep her children's glaring mistakes at the forefront of her memory, not to allow them to become a permanent part of who we were in her mind. Instead, those mistakes were erased by her love and encouragement. Isn't it interesting then to realize that Jesus does the same? From Exodus 31², we know that God wrote the Ten Commandments or The Law in stone with His finger. It is eternal, permanent, unchanging and blessedly so in this highly changeable time in which we live.

Compare this to John 8:1-11. We stand at the edge of the scene with the broken, shamed woman scrambling to cover herself while her sin is known to all. In contrast, we see the Pharisees and scribes secure in the status that covers their secret sins. And in between these known and unknown sins stands Jesus. He knows. He knows about both the obvious and the secret. He acknowledges both – to the woman He tells her she is forgiven and because of grace, she can live a different life of accountability from then on; to the men, He says not a word but merely writes with his own finger in the dust. “But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.” John 8:6 NKJV

Let’s stop a moment to catch that. He wrote with His finger. Sound familiar? It links us back to Exodus 31, doesn’t it? And what does He write? It’s a record of each of those men’s sins. It’s a bold move to be sure and one that definitely catches their attention. But here is the fascinating part. He writes in dust- in something that isn’t permanent like stone, in something that will be whisked away by the wind. And thus accountability (He knows our sins) and grace (He offers to wipe them away) are offered to the men as well...if they will take it.

And what of us? Will we take it? Will we see our sin with His eyes, accept the cleansing of His forgiveness, and allow the mighty rushing wind of the Holy Spirit to remove the reminders of what we once were as we turn our faces to a new life?

Whether we were five or 35, my mother knew us but looked beyond. She saw our better selves, our potential, who we were becoming and who we could become. She saw this even when we couldn’t see past our mistakes and failures. She gave us that all-encompassing glimpse of ourselves. And so it is with God.

Every time my gaze lingers on that small, nondescript, crumbling eraser; I don’t see a history of mistakes and correction attempts. Instead, I see something much larger and more long-lasting. I see love.

So let us live as God’s letters of love, painstakingly crafted and full of Good News, to all we meet. “The LORD appeared to us...saying: I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness. I will build you up again, and you...will be rebuilt” (*Jeremiah 31: 3-4 New King James Version*).

¹ “Epistle: A composition in the form of a letter.” Merriam-Webster Dictionary.
 Taken from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/epistle>.

² “When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.” Exodus 31: 18 NKJV

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