

southern asia-pacific division

outlook

SECOND
QUARTER
2009



**Congress—
a respite for
burdened souls**

outlook

SECOND QUARTER 2009

Southern Asia-Pacific Division

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Written on His palm

AT MY DOORSTEPS

One dark afternoon my wife and I drove a pick-up truck from the church headquarters in Cagayan de Oro City to the new college in Davao del Sur. I was doing concurrent work as president of South Philippine Adventist College (SPAC) while serving as education director for the Adventist Church in southern Philippines (SPUC).

As president of the newly created college, I was concerned at opening up new programs and bringing in equipment for its technical courses. With three used truck engines on our vehicle, we negotiated the 400-kilometer drive to the college.

As we entered the last town in Bukidnon province through Central Mindanao, rain began to pour – light at first but heavy when we passed the border of Bukidnon and Cotabato provinces. That time, the presence of rebels in the area was obvious because about a couple of kilometers away stood a military outpost.

Rain and darkness conspired to make visibility poor. At the middle of a winding road downhill, our engine motor stopped. After restarting it a lot of times the battery went empty! Helpless in this rebel-infested territory, we asked the Lord's help. Just as we ended up our prayer, an incoming motorcycle fell on a ditch about 10 meters before us. Apparently, the driver did not see the hole on the road being covered with rain water. But had he not fallen on that ditch he could have hit our vehicle!

Recovering from that initial shock and disguising his embarrassment, he asked us what happened. I sensed that he was heavily drunk, so how could he do much help? But to my delight, he immediately pointed out the problem—an airlock. He went back to his motorcycle which was still on the ditch and scrambled for his tool box to see what he could use. Drunk as he was, his tool dropped to nowhere and ended up the work. After spending a short time knowing him, I learned that he was a student at SPAC some years back and his family was a close friend of mine. At that moment, we noticed a motor vehicle approaching us from behind. He knew by the sound of the engine that these were military men patrolling the area. He stopped the driver asking him to tow our truck to their camp because it was not safe for us to spend the night in the area. There I sensed that he was God's answer to our prayer. Why a drunk man? If he wasn't in that condition he could have not fallen into the ditch and missed us. God used him at the moment we needed help.

As we were being towed I started the engine with the gears on and the motor revved and started! The military men loosened our truck and we went our way. As we passed a predominantly Muslim-inhabited town, I sensed a diesel-smelling air. I saw that our fuel gauge signaled that our tank was getting empty, but I didn't want to stop for fear of getting stalled again in a still unsecured area. We were yet about fifty kilometers away to the next town along the main highway leading up to Davao City.

"Lord," I talked to Him again, "You sent us one to take us out from that scary area; I know You can find us a place to fill up our tank before we completely run out of gas." The fuel gauge went passed empty and yet we were still running.

We reached town to find that all three gas stations were closed one hour before midnight.

"Shall we sleep here?" my wife asked.

"Maybe we can still swing to the other town and who knows a filling station is open 24 hours!" I allayed her fears.

And so we went, but at a brightly lit street not too far from several houses, our truck finally came to a stop. Just as we folded our arms to say our prayers again for allowing us to go that far, a man came from behind us carrying a 5-gallon container. He greeted us. As I lifted my head I immediately recognized him to be one of our 'working boys' a few years back at Matutum View Academy, where we had our first assignment as denominational employees.

"Charlie!" I called him out.

"Sir!" he blurted with great surprise. "What brought you here?"

"We ran out of gas and I guess we will settle here for the night, but can you help us find a more secure place?" I hesitatingly responded.

"I can help you sir. Here, I brought this gas out of our store thinking it was dangerous to keep it there."

And he emptied his container. I started the engine but it got air-locked again. Charlie opened the hood and found out that the air breather was not securely fastened causing the gas to pump out and emptied our tank. Switching on his flashlight he saw the missing tool lodged in a cave-like part of the engine. He used it to tighten the bolt after pumping out the air. I started the engine and it came to life again. This time we were on our way -- about a hundred kilometers more to our destination.

Past midnight, I thanked God for Charlie. I thanked Him for that drunken man six hours earlier. We arrived at SPAC close to waking hours the next morning, tired but with hearts praising Him who provided for our needs. Indeed, we praised God who kept guiding the leaders and teachers at South Philippine Adventist College, making this institution an instrument for nurturing excellence in our students the Christian way.

Need I entertain doubts of Him providing my needs? Believe me I was there -- and am still here -- never missing His answer placed right at my doorsteps.

Israeli Ambassador visits Myanmar church headquarters

His Excellency Yaron Mayer, Israeli Ambassador to Myanmar, paid a courtesy call and visit to the Adventist church headquarters in Myanmar (MYUM), June 11. He was accompanied by Ms Michal Strahilevitz, special consultant; and Ms Morine Po, project secretary at the office of the Ambassador. The Ambassador was received by Maung Maung Myo Chan, MYUM director for Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL).

Ambassador Mayer reiterated his government's desire to work with the Adventist church in implementing the "Eye Project," a community service program funded by the Israeli Embassy.

In that meeting, Maung Maung Myo Chan, also disaster response coordinator for the church, explained how the church was implementing other community services which were being administered in cooperation with the Metta development Foundation. This program particularly provides relief and rehabilitation activi-

ties for the victims of Cyclone Nargis that claimed more than 150,000 lives in Myanmar in May 2008.

The decision for the Adventist Church to implement Israel's "eye project" was influenced by the strong program of the church in community services. Such project will be done in Myaungmya, where a strong network of community programs and activities is being done by the church.

Myo Chan was assisted by Dr Htwe Lay, health ministries director of the church, at this very important meeting. [AND Staff]



photos courtesy of myanmar union mission

A HISTORIC NEW BROADCAST: AWR Begins Airing to Laos

On July 16, Adventist World Radio will begin airing programs in the Lao language to listeners in the country of Laos.

“This is a historic occasion,” says AWR president Ben Schoun, “as this will be the first Adventist media broadcast to the people of Laos in their own language.” Laos is a small country with a population of about 6 million ¹.

Ethnic Lao, the principal lowland inhabitants and politically and culturally dominant group, make up the bulk of the Lao Loum population. Most people live in the valleys of the Mekong River and its tributaries. Vientiane prefecture, which includes Vientiane, the capital and largest city of the country, has about 700,000 residents.

Laos is a communist country with very stringent regulations on religious liberty. Public evangelism is restricted. There have been instances of the Laotian government attempting to make Christians renounce their faith and have several times closed down Christian churches ². Often, the government officials are also known to detain clergy because of their religious activities ³.

In August 2008, the AWR studio at Mission College in Thailand took up the challenge to produce Laotian radio programs to broadcast from the AWR shortwave station in Guam.

With the help and guidance of Pastor Surachet Insom, AWR Thailand coordinator, Pastor Brian Wilson, of the Southeast Asia Union translation center, took the initiative of working toward this goal along with a few Laotian students studying at the college. Recently, the team found a key church member in Laos, Brother Boala, to produce these programs.

AWR begins... to page 09

photos courtesy of awr/asia/pacific





Trust services *introduced in* South-east Asia

God has appointed mankind stewards. The material things that they own, great or small, are blessings God has abundantly poured on them to enjoy, preserve and by any chance, share.

The Adventist church in the southern Asia-Pacific region (SSD) endeavors to strengthen this program on stewardship and trust services, providing opportunities for church members to entrust personal property to the church to further its gospel commission.

In Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, Wendell Mandolang, SSD Trust Services (TS) director; Edmund Liah, executive secretary and TS director for south-east Asia (SAUM); and Atty. Wilfredo Sumagaysay, associate director for the world church (GC), conducted seminars to pastors and church members, June 10-13, in Chiang Mai, Thailand; June 15-16, Phnom Penh, Cambodia; and June 17-18, in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

While the team saw first-hand the fascination of people coming to know more of the Trust Services program of the church, Vietnam, this time, bears more interesting stories.

At Ho Chi Minh City, Pastor Mandolang noticed two ladies listening intently to the presentations. The ladies who were sisters come from an affluent family and are members of the

Trust services... to page 09

Adventist church. The ladies were introduced to the guest lecturers by Tran Quoc Khoi, Trust Service director for the church in Vietnam.

The growth of the Adventist church membership in Vietnam, especially after the government has given recognition to the church to operate in the country, has become an inspiration to the world field. By the second quarter of 2009, seven churches and more than 120 house churches were established.

“A certain family who owns a small lot and a house opened their home for a group of worshippers. This family later decided to donate their property to the church in order not to bother worship services and looked for a place to rent as their home,” said Pastor Mandolang during his report at SSD headquarters.

“One particular need was of a 10,000 square property to build a Bible Seminary to train young workers. While a piece of property was seen costing 200,000 US dollars, no money was available to pay its cost. And the pastors could do nothing but pray,” continued Mandolang.

“At the end of our two-day seminar, Pastor Tran came to us sharing the good news that the two ladies—Dinh Thi Thanh Tan and her sister who have been attending their seminars decided to donate their 1-hectare piece of land located in Long Khanh area, about 1.5 hours drive south of Ho Chi Minh, where the Adventist mission headquarters is located. We praise God for this development,” concluded Mandolang.

AWR will broadcast the Lao programs from Guam, which can be heard every Thursday and Saturday, between 8:30 and 9:00 PM, local time. Listeners can tune their shortwave radios to 11880 KHz on 25-meter band. In addition, AWR also plans to reach the hearts of approximately 700,000 people in Vientiane through FM radio programs from the Thai province of Nongkai.

“We praise our Great God for His providence throughout the radio work,” says AWR Asia/Pacific program director Anniston Matthews. “He loves every Laotian, and desires to reach out to all people of this country.”

Matthews adds, “The studio needs your help by contributing stories, features, and music for producing quality radio programs. Everyone can contribute by sending your articles to AWR Thailand at awrthai@hotmail.com. For those who have music talents and can produce ethnic Lao Christian music, you may e-mail us your content.”

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- 1) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Laos
 - 2) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Laos
 - 3) <http://www.asianews.it/view.php?=-en&art=5015>

99 take stand for the Lord and still counting



The Health Expo and Hope in Times of Crises evangelistic seminar ended June 13, with 99 people accepting Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Hundreds more were inspired and blessed as they attended the nightly meetings and witnessed the baptism that was held at Villa Julia Resort located in Silang town, just a short distance from the headquarters of the church in the southern Asia-Pacific region (SSD).

The Expo reached out to the community and brought in more than 300 people to the nightly meetings that lasted three weeks despite occasional downpour. During the nightly meetings, May 24-June 13, health and gospel presentations stirred the attendees as they came to the convention hall at Unida Christian Church.

This 21-night event was a joint effort of the health ministries department under Pastor Abraham Carpena, director; and the SSD leadership with Pastor Alberto Gulfan Jr, president. Pastor Carpena conducted most of the health lectures and Pastor Gulfan presented the gospel message during the first week and the health presentation at the last few days of the event.

Pastor Gerry Karst, vice president for the World Church, continued the biblical presentations starting on the second week with the Emmanuel Quartet joining him a few days later.

Working for the Adventist World Radio (AWR), the members of the quartet were on a mission tour from America. They are Philip White, Joey Davis, Tim Reutebuch, and Ryan Pierce.

For the health expo, a team was organized to facilitate the CELEBRATIONS booths. The booths' caretakers were doctors, nurses, health promoters, student volunteers, young professionals, masseuses, physical fitness coach, teachers and missionaries.

The booths started buzzing from 5:00-7:00 in the evening and closed just before the health and biblical presentations started. Music supplied by singers gave life to the program. The Visionaries led by Judy and Jun Briza from Angeles City, Pampanga, volunteered as song leaders for the three-week event.

During the early morning of the first day of the event cars, scooters and bicycles decorated with balloons paraded the streets of Silang town and signalled its opening that enabled the populace to learn of various health topics and demonstrations and evangelism series designed to help people cope with crisis in today's world. Besides the caravan, church members distributed invitations and literature.

Three Adventist churches pooled their members to participate in this big event. These three churches were the Silang Adventist Church, Tubuan 1 Adventist Church and Biga Adventist church.

At the opening night, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held to start the health expo. Mrs Helen B Gulfan, SSD women ministries director, led in this ceremony. She was assisted by Dr Liza Capopos, program head of the Provincial Health Office and Healthy Lifestyle Promotion of the Province of Cavite.

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Government shows interest on church's role in nation building

Upon invitation of the Director General of the Water Resources Utilization Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation of Myanmar, Maung Maung Myo Chan, communication and Public Affairs director for the Church in Myanmar (MYUM); and Saw Teddy of ADRA Myanmar Country office, visited Naypyidaw, the new administrative capital of Myanmar, on May 12-15. The visit included a tour of the Dry Zone Greening Projects.

The Adventist leaders met with the personnel from the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation. On the same occasion, Myo Chan and Saw Teddy visited the dry zone greening projects in Meikhtila district, where the government has been implementing special development project related to dry zone greening plan.

The ministry officials expressed their high regard of the Adventist development program and invited them to participate in future nation-building.

“We are greatly elated by the ministry’s interest in involving our church with community projects. This way we can forge better relationship with the community and government,” said Maung Maung Myo Chan.

“I hope that the fruitful coordination and cooperation between the government and the Adventist church will continue to grow in Myanmar,” concluded the Ministry’s Director General. [AND staff]

99 take stand..., from page 11

Health screening to determine blood sugar, cholesterol, and some other tests were scheduled on the third and fourth mornings at the SSD headquarters.

On Saturday, June 13, after the baptism rites, the new members were welcomed with songs of praise provided by guest singers and the Adventist University of the Philippines along with the Emmanuel Quartet. They were also accepted for church membership at the church of their choice within Silang the following Sabbath (Saturday).

Nanay Raquel Asuncion, daughter of a pioneer missionary in Silang, threw a victory party for the steering committee and the teams, greatly encouraging pastor Alberto Soltero, district leader and coordinator of the 3-week event.

As of press time, preparation was being made for 20 others who were getting ready for baptism as a result of the follow-up work by the lay pastors. [Romhelyn Gay Tuballes-Deles]



Church *acquires* TV/Radio franchise *in the* Philippines

One of the latest feats in the history of the church in the Philippines was to acquire a license to operate television and radio stations in the country. For some years this had been the dream of church leaders to go on air by way of obtaining a franchise for nationwide broadcasts.

That historic event was sealed on May 21, after several months of negotiation, when the officers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in southern Philippines (SPUC) signed the memorandum of agreement with Conal and Digital Holdings. This legal document transfers the right of the former owner to the Adventist Church to operate a television and radio network in the Philippines. Henceforth, Hope Channel will operate its stations in the Philippines under this franchise.

Church acquires... to page 14

The acquisition of the franchise started the process of applying for frequencies in towns and cities all over the country. “We thank the Lord for allowing us to come this far and we will surely depend on His guidance, direction and help to enable us to obtain frequencies so we can go on air soon,” said Dr Jonathan C Catolico, communication director for the church in the southern Asia-Pacific region (SSD).

The representatives of the church have started working with the government’s national telecommunication commission to process applications for frequencies. An initial number of 20 ultra high frequency stations have been targeted to cover a wide geographical area of the country. “While the process may take considerable amount of time and money, the church is happy that a license has been granted and anytime soon our broadcasts will go nationwide,” added Catolico.

The Hope Channel studio facility in Cagayan de Oro City will serve as the headquarters of Hope Channel in the Philippines. Other production studios in northern and central Philippines will beef up production for national and international broadcasts.

“Our church needs to employ a more modern way of communicating God’s message and we do this through radio, television, mobile phones and other methodologies. We thank our world church headquarters for the approval of the project. We will encourage our church members to invest their money and efforts to establish stations—TV or radio—in their localities,” challenged Pastor Wendell Serrano, SPUC president, who signed the transfer agreement on behalf of the Adventist Church in the Philippines.

Under special fund of the world church, the establishment of the Adventist broadcasting network in the Philippines, along with the setting up of Hope Channel production facilities in the three regions of the country, and program production for local and international broadcasts will hasten the completion of the Lord’s work in this part of the world,” remarked church leaders.

Pastor Alberto Gulfan, SSD president, in voicing out the progress of the television ministry in the region’s territory told the delegates at mid-year meeting “that God’s leading allowed us to widen our missionary influence by the use of television and other more modern means of communication. And obtaining a franchise will help us go towards that direction.” [AND Staff]



LEs benefit from awareness seminar in Myanmar

The publishing department in Myanmar has been blessed with up-to-date information and methodologies in proclaiming the good news of salvation through the printed page. This has been the objectives of the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Myanmar (MYUM) to equip the literature evangelists (LE) in this predominantly Buddhist country.

To reach these objectives, MYUM organized a publishing awareness seminar, June 4-6, at its headquarters in Yangon. This was attended by 27 delegates from all over Myanmar. Pastor Florante P. Ty, president of Philippines Publishing House and a long-time publishing director, was the presenter who dynamically challenged the LEs to perform their tasks as God's ordained ministers of the printed page.

"We hope to place a literature evangelist in every church," said Pastor Ty. "We enjoy our church members to become LEs so that

we can finish God's work sooner."

Commenting on Pastor Ty's challenge, participants were heard to say, "While this challenge is great, we will try our very best to get as much participation from our church members to get involved in this ministry."

"We hope to have seminars like this more often in Myanmar to promote and encourage our LEs to take to heart their role in the proclamation of the gospel," concluded Pastor Thang Lian Khai, MYUM publishing ministry director. [Myo Chan]



Church *inaugurates* Edifice of Faith

For more than a decade, faith has become a potent tool in the making of a new multi-million Adventist Church in Catarman, Samar in Central Philippines. As church members convened on May 9 to inaugurate their beautiful church—the Edifice of Faith—several church and government leaders joined them to praise God for keeping their faith through difficult times as funds came in trickles through these years.

“We walk our faith believing that what the Lord started in us He will bring it into completion,” said Jeane Tejano Pelayo, master of ceremony of the event and one of the church members.

“Even before we started constructing this church we had been facing financial struggles and challenges but we didn’t shelve our plans despite years of making it a reality,” recounted former Congressman Harlin Castillo Abayon, when asked of his personal testimony and involvement in the project.

Prior to the church celebration at Sabbath School and inaugural worship, a cutting of ribbon was done with the participation of Atty. Abayon; incumbent Congresswoman Daryl Grace Abayon; Dr Jonathan Catolico, communication director for the Adventist Church in the southern Asia-Pacific region (SSD); church elders; and government dignitaries.

“This edifice is evident that faith works through people who know no limit to God’s beneficence,” said Dr Catolico in his inaugural

address. “And we are here to praise God for a four-fold celebration: A brand-new Sabbath, a brand-new church, a brand-new congresswoman who has recently taken her oath at the Philippine Congress, and an unwavering faith that propels church members to begin a more aggressive but gentle stance in expanding the Lord’s kingdom here in Catarman,” Catolico added.

During the celebration, a special recognition was given to the benefactors of the project and sponsors of the program, including those who travelled from Luzon, other places of the Visayas and Mindanao. The three officers of the Church in Northeastern Mindanao also came to the event.

The Paranaque Choir, the Chosen Few Quartet, and several others made the celebration joyful with their beautiful musical renditions.

In the afternoon of the Sabbath, a special dedication of the church officers and members was done. [AND Staff]

Youths lead youths to Christ



God wants the youths to live a joyful life as He desires to partner with them in expanding His kingdom on earth.

Fired up by this thought, 12 young people provided the messages in the Week of Prayer, April 18-25, at Kellogg Mookerjee Memorial Seminary in Bangladesh, while five others led out in the program they called Journey to the Cross.

“These 12 boys and girls were preaching for the first time in their lives but they were delivering their messages devoid of fear and hesi-

Youths lead... to page 18

tation,” said the organizers. “And God blessed them and the school community for their powerful sermons!”

Their theme song, “Things are different now—something happened to me when I gave my heart to Jesus,” left hearts touched and revived for the Lord.

The Journey to the Cross (JTTC), a program adapted from the Adventist University of Philippines (AUP) that takes youth to experience what Ellen White envisioned in her book, *Desire of Ages* (page 83), saying: “It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.”

This interactive journey on Jesus’ final days and His resurrection brought 460 young people and adults to experience life-changing events in their lives. “Now I love Jesus more than ever, I want to be baptized,” joyfully confessed Deepa Baroi, a young girl at Standard 10.

“Even though I am a baptized member, only now have I learned to know Jesus better. Indeed, I found new life in Him,” said Anik Bala, a young boy at Standard 8 class.

A heart-rending testimony was given by Sharon Quia, who said: “I used to curse Jesus. I stopped praying because the doctor said that one of my eyes will not be able see again. But this spiritual experience has made me a changed person. Now I learned that Jesus has suffered much more than the loss of my eye because He gave His life that I may have eternal life! I thank Him for my remaining eye by which I can see.”

An elder sojourner, Mrs. Bulbul Harder, said that her Journey to the Cross “brought me to realize that I will make prayer stations in my home so that many would come to know what Jesus has done for them.” [Milton Das]



The people of the municipality of Santa Fe, Cebu Province in Central Philippines are peace-loving, friendly, and approachable people. The town, a bastion of Catholicism, however, possesses prejudice and unfriendliness to invading religious groups other than Catholics.

This belief keeps the people at bay from whatever possible doctrinal infiltration serving as fortress to clinging on to their forefathers' religion.

Consoled by God's reassuring and never faltering promises of Him answering every call and opening up great and hidden things still unknown (Jeremiah 33:3), a team from the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS) church went to Santa Fe, May 10-23, to find people for Him.

The team, headed by Pastor Reuel Almocera, came to this island to preach the truth that may seem counter to the town's belief. Dr Almocera, who presented the nightly doctrinal series, was assisted by his wife Evelyn, a medical doctor who gave the health lectures; while the home and family lecture series were conducted by Mr Ely Tibay, a retired publishing leader.

Evelyn Luceno and two ladies—Unice Maratas, a Filipina and Kim Bora, a Korean—from the 1000 Missionary Movement in Silang, Cavite took care of the children's program.

While the entire team well managed the affairs of the nightly event, it was not without problems.

On May 19, a swarm of flying insects pestered those in attendance and nearly suffocated them. The

following night, the electrical connection leading to the venue was cut off and the sockets were destroyed, apparently by gang members that ply the area causing an unexpected delay in the start of the evening meeting. On May 21, the event's penultimate night was worst because heavy rain soaked everybody. Such situation necessitated changing the venue to the Adventist Church for the last night of the series.

At the end of the meetings, 39 people accepted their Lord through baptism at the Budyong Beach Resort.

Dr Muzz Abdulmajid, retired evangelist and Adventist-Muslim Relations director of the Adventist Church's southern Asia-Pacific region (SSD), came to Santa Fe direct from his travel in the United States, and baptized, among other people, a lawyer who earlier missed baptism for some compelling reasons. Atty. Disquitado was baptized on May 30 to the delight and joys of the church members. [Ely G Tibay]

AIAS Church Evangelistic Team *Invasión* Santa Fe



Congress a respite burd



S – e for ened souls





Tired and worn out, thousands came to Mountain View College (MVC) in the center of a region that has been battered with fear as armed conflicts for years between rebel forces and government soldiers dominated their day-to-day life.

They came to experience peace from the challenges that often beset their community. And they believe that coming to MVC for a big congress would offer respite to their burdened souls. A 79-year-old woman voiced out this longing when she said, "I wish this event would have been in heaven! I am tired but I am confident that this will be my last congress here on earth, I long to be home with Jesus!"

As big congresses get more frequent at Mountain View College, in Valencia City, in southern Philippines, the number of attendees gets bigger, too. This was proven true at the



last Sabbath School, Personal Ministries, and Small Group Leaders' Congress held on April 12-18 when the final tally of attendees came close to 130,000 church members and officers which almost doubled the 2007 Youth Congress' attendees.

The official delegates and observers represented 16 of the 18 countries within the southern Asia-Pacific region of the Adventist Church (SSD). While the registered delegates came close to 25 thousand, there were five-fold more of observers and church worshippers toward the end of the week and during the Sabbath (Saturday) services, April 18.

While most of the attendees were attracted by the spiritual festivities of devotional messages, songs, and presentations, many were at this congress to display their wares that they believe would help church believers enhance their ministries: DVDs, CDs, souvenir shirts, food, and a lot more.

The seminars and workshops conducted by the departments of the church attracted the delegates so much. "This was first to be done in big congresses like this," said Pastor Leonardo L Asoy, SS/PM/SGL director for SSD and general coordinator for the Congress. "The participants at each of these departmental seminars were introduced to various ways of 'Telling the World' God's wondrous love."

Asked of their impressions of the Congress, 16 people were randomly interviewed. Of the 16, four appear here besides the old woman's corporate voice of people who sought peace and joy amidst trouble in their places:

"I do not want this to be my first and last attendance at congress.

I still haven't grasped the significance of this congress, maybe next time

I will be more mature to understand the things that go on here," said a 12-year old girl. A 27-year old man contributed: "This is the second time I attended a Congress like this. I was revitalized. I was awakened. "This is not only a feast on God's word—it is the best of the meetings I attended. I learned a lot in terms of my responsibility to lead out in the outreach programs of our church," said a 49-year old church leader, while a 65-year-old pastor, when asked why he had to attend the congress when he had a lot of these during his active service, responded, "I am retired from denominational work but I never get tired of doing God's work. I want Jesus to come soon but I am quite concerned that there are still others who are complacent about it. May this Congress rekindle our desire to finished God's work that He will return sooner!

At the start of the event, as thousands entered the gates of MVC and pitched their



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tents, many asked if the college had placed security as its priority of activities. Over the Congress' Radio, Pastor Rogelio F Nomus, student affairs dean, allayed fears and guaranteed that "security and safety of the delegates inside the campus has taken top priority and we will see to it that everything will run according to logistics and physical plans." Indeed, at the end of the Congress, except for minor incidents, everything went smooth. As one visitor observed, "This is the only congress with thousands in attendance I saw to have no untoward happenings. It must be because the Adventists practice what they believe!"

Delegation from the Philippines which came from north, central, and south regions consisted about 90 percent of the total congress' registered attendance. However, the official Filipino delegates were outnumbered five times as much by their non-registered counterparts who came primarily to enjoy the site and beauty of MVC and to establish new friendship and reconnect with old acquaintances. Another 65-year-old church member, Eugenio Tejada, from Davao City, "I believe this Congress would be the last... because Christ will come soon," said in the Visayan dialect.

The foreign delegation came from the churches in Bangladesh, East and West Indonesia, Guam and Micronesia, Myanmar, the territories of Southeast Asia, and Sri Lanka.

At the opening ceremony, April 13, the delegates paraded from the administration building en route in front of Alumni Church going to the grandstand. Donning their official colored T-shirts, delegates smilingly



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showed vitality and pride as they waved their institutional flags and banners despite the scorching heat of afternoon sun.

Philippine Ambassador to New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa, the Honorable Bienvenido V Tejano, himself an ordained Seventh-day Adventist pastor, inspired the delegates by his message of Christian servanthood. The official declaration of the Congress' opening was led by Pastor Leonardo Asoy. It was followed by the releasing of balloons and festive sounds of fireworks.

The first day culminated with the keynote message, "Tell the World—The Marching Order" given by Pastor Joshua Mok, SSD executive secretary. An overwhelmed observer quips: "If only everyone here would really commit to 'Tell the World' the Good News, then Jesus' coming will be hastened."

During the course of the event, a lot of people continued to voice out their impressions more particularly on the huge number of attendees. "This is my first time to see such a big crowd of Adventists. And I felt very proud and amazed on how big our church is at SSD since we are located in a very small island with a small membership," said Pastor David Ebenezer, SS/PM and Youth director of Adventist Church in Sri Lanka.

"I am very impressed about the attendance and enthusiasm of our fellow Adventists for attending a week-long program," Pastor Ronny Wenas, executive secretary of Jakarta Conference, said. "I felt an overwhelming happiness and excitement to see a huge crowd of God's people," said Ismael Caroro, district pastor of Southern Metro Manila.

Church leaders from the world headquarters who gave inspiring messages and lectures included Pastor Mark Finley, general vice-president; Dr Jonathan Kuntaraf, world director for Sabbath School and Personal Ministries; Dr Kathleen Kuntaraf, associate director, Health Ministries; Dr Linda Koh, director, Children's Ministries; and May Ellen Colon, director for Adventist Community Services. [AND Staff]



Non-church member believes in tithing

While the leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Central Luzon (CLC) were away for the leadership, education and development (LEAD) seminar in Lipa City, a former US navy man came to CLC and remitted a tenth (tithe) of his income to the treasury, March 19.

The man who asked not to be named in this report explained that he was convinced that the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are truths from God. Naring Manlungat, administrative secretary to the CLC president, quoted him as saying that he has been listening to the radio programs expounded by the Adventists where "I find difference of your doctrines from those of other faiths, hence, I chose to give my tithe to you."

Jovy Cajobe, receiving cashier for the CLC accounting office, receipted the sizeable amount that the man entrusted to the church for its use.

Before coming to CLC, the man indicated he was at Balibago Seventh-day Adventist Church where he first remitted his tithe through its church treasurer.

"I feel good upon knowing that there are non-church members who believe in the practice of tithing," said Manlungat. "And I am reminded that we church members should be more serious in our relationship with God, especially in returning our tithes to Him." [Armon P. Tolentino]

Health Expo

offers hope
in times of
crises

While many people want a better life, such quality does not come easily. The Seventh-day

Adventist Church, taking the commission to help people enjoy life, has lined up various events and activities. The "Hope in Times of Crises" held at the Dusit Thani Hotel in the business hub of Metro Manila, in Makati, on May 3-8 and 10-15, was one envisioned for such purpose.

Hundreds came to the health exposition displays, presentations and lectures. They came with much longing to enjoy a healthy lifestyle.

After an hour or so of introduction to different booths every night, visitors were feted to health lectures by church world health leaders, Drs. Allan Handysides and Kathleen Kuntaraf, while the inspirational messages from God's word were presented by Pastor Ted N C Wilson, vice president for the world Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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While the health expo was primarily intended for the elite in the city of Makati, several persons and groups from surrounding cities and urban centers came to listen to the nightly presentations that centered on CELEBRATIONS, an acronym that stands for Choices, Exercise, Liquid, Environment, Belief, Rest, Air, Temperance, Integrity, Optimism, Nutrition, and Social Support.

Healthy Lifestyle booths were propped on all corners of the ballroom, and those who came early availed of free body check-up, health lectures and consultations. Volunteers attended to every need of the visitors and media practitioners including well-known TV personalities like Korina Sanchez, who made a 10- minute video clip on the advantage of vegetarian diet to longevity on her weekend Rated K program.

Cory Quirino, another well-known TV per-

sonality, who deals mostly on healthy lifestyle on her television programs, spent a day at the booths to record clips for her TV shows. Rated K on Sunday, May 17, featured the Adventist lifestyle providing proof of longevity resulting from vegetarian diet and healthy lifestyle.

Nightly live interviews were also held for Internet viewers. As indicated, there were more than 8,000 visitors to the site who listened to the nightly presentations.

During the last night of the event, the Andrews University ensemble from the United States which was in the country for a music festival filled the ballroom of the hotel with heavenly music.

The Sabbath services culminating the 12-day Hope in Times for Crises event were held at the Cuneta Astrodome in Pasay City. At this event, 147 accepted the Adventist lifestyle through the rites of baptism. [Romhelyn Gay Deles]

GCAS Associate Director moves to Russia

Ruel Arce Baculanta, GCAS (General Conference Auditing Services) associate director for the Adventist church in the southern Asia-Pacific region with headquarters in the Philippines, has accepted a call from Euro-Asia regional headquarters in Moscow, Russia. He will be serving on the same capacity at this new territory.

Joining him in this endeavor is his wife, Amy, a medical doctor; and second son, Kyle.

Kevin, their eldest son, will continue his studies in accountancy at the Adventist University of the Philippines.

Their church family in the Southern Asia-Pacific Division will miss the faithful services of the Baculantas but pray that God will bless and inspire them as they take their post in another territory. [Romhelyn Gay Deles/AND]

Adventist starts first vegetarian restaurant chain in Philippines

An Adventist church member has started the first vegetarian, fine-dining restaurant chain in the Philippines at 213 Tuyugan Street, Del Pilar, San Fernando, Pampanga, adding life to the growing national media attention given to the Seventh-day Adventist diet.

Bong Guevara, leader of the Guevarra Entrepreneurs Center located in Central Luzon, Philippines, spearheaded the opening of Nature's Bounty Vege Cafe which he believes could be a tool to educate people on right diet

other than just serving them food—especially those in urban centers.

“We are not commissioned to feed the world, but we are instructed to educate people,” Guevarra quoting one of his favorite writers, Ellen G. White.

Explaining more about his conviction, Guevarra, also the publishing ministry director for the Adventist Church in Central Luzon (CLC), said that the concept of the restaurant focuses on ‘eating right’ and ‘cooking smart.’

“Nature's Bounty Vege Cafe will serve vegetarian dishes and sell health foods,” Guevarra said. “We will also conduct seminars, lectures, cooking demonstrations and workshops on health topics.”

“WE ARE NOT
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BUT WE ARE
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PEOPLE.”

The educational concept of the project attracted franchisers that even before the inauguration of this facility four would-be branches were expected to open in the urban centers of Dasmariñas, Cavite; Binangonan, Rizal; Sta. Rosa, Laguna; and Tagaytay City.

“The facilities are of high quality that men of wealth and those who have responsible positions in the country might be influenced [by the Adventist lifestyle] so that they may lend their powers and

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means to help others,” said Guevarra.

As a family dream, the restaurant started with a desire to achieve health reformation following the concept espoused by the Adventist Church during its pioneering years. As early as 1900 in San Francisco, California, the Adventist Church established what were called hygienic restaurants which consisted of food stores and treatment rooms.

“Much public interest on Adventist diet has heightened due to media exposures and Nature Bounty Vege Cafe will shape the future of healthful foods for Filipinos,” said Pastor Carmelito U. Galang, Jr, CLC president.

“And by God’s grace, there will be branches all over the country to educate everyone,” continued Galang.

Amelia Soriano, director of CLC Adventist Layman Services and Industries (ASI), indicated that ASI members will certainly buy the idea of a national network of restaurants as they see the potential ministry of this business.

Richard Mendoza, CLC health director, said that the establishment of the cafe was a big achievement that put into reality a vision to reduce human sufferings caused by wrong diet.

“As stewards of the blessings of God, we hope to receive the full benefit of this facility for the progress of God’s work and for the benefit of mankind,” concluded Guevarra.

[Armon Perez Tolentino /CLC News]



Adventist schools are mega city witnessing centers


Seventh-day Adventist schools worldwide have become evangelistic centers that bring young people to the Lord while in their tender years. The schools in Myanmar similarly fulfil this mission.

Enrollment has ended in this country of the golden pagodas, and parents have enlisted their children at Adventist seminaries in the mega cities of Yangon, Mandalay, Taungyi, Pathein, and Pyin Oo Lwin.

Primarily established for Adventist children, Adventist schools have been chosen by non-Adventists too as the best schools to send their children. Looking at the benefits of learning many skills using English as a medium of instruction has influenced such decisions. And a very good knowledge of the English language is beneficial to people who are in search of international placements.

Beyond spiritual development of the

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MYUM conducts medical missionary refresher course

The health ministry department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Myanmar (MYUM) conducted a medical missionary refresher course in Yangon on June 14-19. Organizers said it a great blessing for the church in Myanmar that the gospel came to the country through the medical missionary work.

Fourteen medical missionaries from five mission fields attended the course and actively participated in the workshop.

Implemented by the health ministry department since 2008, this program serves to enhance the skill of medical professionals involved in church work.

"We are doing the best we can and with God's blessing this work will touch the hearts of our non-believer friends," said the participants. [Myo Chan]

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young people, the Education department of the Adventist church in Myanmar (MYUM) also endeavors to develop their physical, mental, and social faculties.

For its part, the Yangon Adventist Seminary (YAS), which was established in 1975 primarily for the Adventist workers' children, has now become a center of learning for children of both Adventists and non-Adventists. "This academic year 2009-2010, 75 percent of the 334 students enrolled at YAS are non-Adventists," reported Ler Moo Aye, YAS treasurer. "And we take to heart our role of integrating faith and learning in our academic community."

Foreseeing the influx of students in the near future, the school administrators look at the need of "providing more classrooms so as not to prevent the communities' children from coming to our schools."

It is of note that YAS has upgraded its computer laboratory in order to enhance the skills of students in the information technology courses. [Myo Chan/AND]

BLOWING IT LOUD

Nobbed Whelk (scientific name *Hemifusus ternatanus*), is one of the largest marine creatures that belong to the shell family. Once meat is removed and dried, the shell produces an alarming sound earning its local name, “Budyong.”

Nothing befits one of the popular beach resorts situated across the northern tip of Cebu province more than “Budyong Beach Resort.” The philosophy behind naming this resort to Budyong was simply the owners’ desire to sound the message of God’s love to people who come to this facility. Domingo and Norma Zaspas, resort owners, wanted to live up to Budyong’s capability to produce a sound as its name suggests.

Domingo, Dongdong to his friends and relatives, has become “Good Samaritan” to many residents of the entire municipality of Santa Fe, where the couple’s resort is located. This is because townfolk find easy access to him and to his wife for food, financial aids for medicines and even for funerals.

Budyong Beach Resort is immaculately clean as it adheres to the saying, “Cleanliness is next to godliness.” Undeniably, it does not only pride itself as the cleanest but also the quietest place to relax, recreate, and refresh.

With strong political backings and machineries, he was persuaded to run for the town’s

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legislature which he handily won over his closest rival garnering votes more than the number obtained by the mayor of the town. Such an achievement propelled him to take his constituents' demand to run for mayor at the next election season.

Contrary to what he and his people expected, he lost the race. When interviewed at his home in Santa Fe, Dongdong attributed his defeat to:

1. He could have been a victim of cheating, and
2. Some voters were hesitant to vote for him for fear that when he gets the power he might proselytize his constituents.

A lot of times he was prodded to stop witnessing for his Lord so he could politically advance to victory, Dongdong would rather shun enjoying the coveted plum as a popular political kingpin than sounding the 'budyong' to announce the coming kingdom of God, which has been his delight more than anything else.

As such, he always finds time talking with his workers about the love of God. How happy he was when 11 of his employees were baptized into the faith that he loves. One of those baptized was Lino Bacalso, who for a decade or so was a sacristan in the Catholic convent.

Confused and unsatisfied of the priests' answers to his doctrinal queries, Bacalso, likened to a lost sheep, wandered and panted for unadulterated gems of truth. At this state, he met Dongdong and Bible studies ensued. Yes, what a sigh of relief for Lino when he untangled himself from a shackle of uncertainty.

Another, Saturnino 'Turing' Batobalonos, an ex-convict, was also baptized. He was imprisoned for murder but after his case was reviewed, it was decided by the court that his involvement in the killing was purely self-defense. Such verdict reduced Turing's imprisonment to only a few months.

Both Lino and Turing now work at Budyong Beach Resort; Lino, a painter, and Turing, one of the security guards for the Zaspas.

Praise God for the fruitful, untiring effort put forth by the humble witness of Dongdong. Truly, the spark of hope beaming upon his face evidently declares his and his wife's godly day-to-day encounters with the people of Santa Fe, in Cebu province. [Ely G Tibay]





Training prepares participants in children's nurture

The Children's Ministries (ChM) Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Myanmar (MYUM) in cooperation with the world church's (GC) ChM, conducted a Level II leadership certification training on May 6-28 at the church headquarters in Yangon.

Dr Linda Koh, ChM director for the world church, served as the main presenter for the certification training. She discussed topics necessary in the preservation of the children's faith and interest in the church and its programs.

A total 58 participants from the mission fields and MYUM headquarters attended the workshop.

"This is indeed a very interesting area in God's work that we leaders in the church should give enough time and space in our activities," said some participants. "The church leaders were very much excited in doing creative activities to keep the children feel important and precious as young members of the church," other participants observed.

The seminar ended with all trainees pledging to do their best in the ministry of child care and nurture. [Myo Chan]

“Noah’s Ark” afloat anew

Exactly one year after Cyclone Nargis took more than 150 thousand lives and devastated homes and properties of 2.4 million people in the delta region of Myanmar, the Aung Gone Seventh-day Adventist Church, one of the five churches destroyed, is again standing as a lighthouse in this thickly populated region of the country.

The big waves of May 2-3, 2008 sent more than 300 people from their homes to a small nearby church which they later called the Noah’s Ark, where they sought cover from the deadly storm. All of them were spared from death despite evidences of the storm’s fury on the physical structure that made the Aung Gone Church unusable for some months.

The dedication ceremony of the reconstructed Aung Gone Church on Sabbath, May 2, was a scene of mixed emotions—sorrow and jubilation. Sorrow for thousands of people who lost their lives, including scores of church members on the same day a year back, and joyful because these church members have regained their composure, inspiring them to

rededicate this rebuilt church.

Community members also organized the anniversary and memorial services for the Cyclone Nargis victims. These services were attended by Pastor Muller Kyaw, president of the Church in Myanmar, and his party from the church headquarters.

“It is interesting to note that my father was here among the 300 saved on this church when the cyclone came rushing that destroyed thousands of lives and properties,” said Saw See Lar, church pastor. “And my father was 106 years old at that time!”

“We praise the Lord for His mercies that enabled us to live and see Aung Gone Church stands again,” said church members. [Myo Chan]



Healthy buffet lunch in church lobby

The lobby of Petaling Jaya (PJ) English church was abuzz with excitement as the 60-over crowd hovered around a wide array of healthy food ranging from local to western delicacies.

The menu consisted of entrees of vegetarian chicken chop with mushroom sauce; potato au gratin; rice stack which consisted of layered brown rice; sautéed red beans, romaine lettuce, tomatoes and topped with cheese; tomato rice, chapatti dipped over spinach curry and potato masala on the side; corn soup and bruschetta for starters and for dessert was a delectable apple flat cake and tropical salad. These delicacies were prepared without harming any animals!

“This is a good way of presenting the Adventist lifestyle to our friends, especially to those who do not know about us yet,” said Mrs. Marcia Rajakumar, the woman behind the event and health leader of PJ Church.

“The food is nice and healthy, and also cheap—you can eat as much as you want!” exclaimed one visitor.

“What a good way to fellowship with fellow Adventists and non-church

members alike,” said one participant.

The food was cooked by church members with the help of the Adventist Community Health Centre team headed by Ms Jane Yap. The event served as an avenue of fellowship among members of the church. Amid the laughter, fun and light atmosphere, everyone cooperated with zest and dedication.

The event is done bi-monthly at the same location. [Jane Yap/AND]



The Religious Study Center in Myanmar held a workshop designed to enhance the skills of church members in reaching out to non-church members in this predominantly Buddhist country.

Held at Yangon Adventist Central Church, May 29-31, 35 volunteers representing five mission fields in Myanmar attended this workshop.

Facilitated by Pastor Victor Shwe of the MYUM Religious Study Center, the workshop had Scott Griswold and Michael Allan Kier, director and associate director, respectively, of the Buddhist Study Center based in Thailand, as the main presenters.

Griswold and Keirs presented topics and discussion issues related to reaching out to non-church members particularly the non-Christians. They also visited the RSC home cell, where an on-going action of reaching out to young people with the good news of salvation is evident. Thus far, this ministry has drawn five youth to accept baptism in 2008.

“It is not only exciting but interesting to spread the good news to non-believers who never had experienced fellowshipping with Christians in the past,” said Dr Conally Hla, a professor of religion at Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary and a workshop participant. “Now we find it a joy to see many of them embracing the truth.” [Myo Chan]

Study Center holds workshop



Church organizes media for outreach

Media ministry plays a vital role in spreading the mission of the church. The Communication Department for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Myanmar (MYUM) took this as a challenge and designed a program to enhance the skills of its field directors, institutional media practitioners, and Adventist World Radio (AWR) team members.

On May 21, 23, and 24, 12 church leaders participated in a video and documentation seminar and workshop hosted by MYUM engaging the services of Ko Yoe, an international award-winning movie director.

At the end of the training, the participants formed themselves into a media production team to start a video magazine project in order to effectively communicate the gospel to the unreached people of Myanmar.

“This is the first step to involving ourselves through the media ministry in this getting highly sophisticated society,” said Maung Maung Myo Chan, MYUM communication director. [AND staff]



WRITTEN ON HIS PALM

*“Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever”
(Psalm 136:1).*

*“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”
(1 Thessalonians 5:18).*

Expecting that I would be on the list of accepted applicants for a job, I went to the new company manager to ask for it. To my consternation, she told me my name was not there.

Today, as I reflect on that experience, I can only start to think that if it were God who told me that my name was not in the book, it would have been tragic. I was glad that it was just that fallible human who said it to me.

I praise God for His grace that is sufficient to keep me in heaven's roll.

What keeps me from believing that I am on His list? Guess? No! Jesus gave His life for me. He redeemed me with His blood and His robe of righteousness keeps me within reach of eternal life. He has written my name on His palm!

The economic recession we are now experiencing would have exacerbated my anguish had it not been for the faith that kept me strong and drawn closer to God. I always believe that if a door is closed some doors of opportunities still await me at His time and will. My friends who continually pray for me buoy my spirit up and keep me strong. As one preacher puts it, “God has no reason to say ‘no’ to the prayers of the faithful.”

Indeed, God never forsakes His children (Hebrews 13:5, Joshua 1:5, Deuteronomy 31:6). He responds to our every need. God's arms are never shortened (Number 11:23) as we patiently present our petition to Him.

Human beings may say we are being counted out, but God constantly welcomes us to ‘hop on’ to his loving arms.

YAN SIEW GHIANG, Balestier Seventh-day Adventist Church
Balestier Road, Singapore

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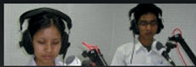
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