

Official press release from the
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Seventh-day Adventist® Church



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Five years of outreach, growth mark Adventist Church's half decade

Silver Spring, MD – The Seventh-day Adventist Church has grown to some 16.3 million members, up from 14 million five years ago. During that time, the church has offered ministry, community outreach, education, a commitment to healthful living and promotion of religious freedom. In light of the upcoming world church business meeting to be held this summer in Atlanta, the following is a year-by-year review of selected major church news.

2010

-More than 70,000 Adventists around the world are expected to meet in Atlanta, Georgia, United States for the Adventist World Session, a quinquennial business meeting and celebration of the world church family.

-Church President Jan Paulsen holds the 27th Let's Talk series with youth. The televised, unscripted conversations with youth, women and pastors have opened dialogue between the church's top leader and various members on six continents.

-The church plans a partnership with the World Health Organization to help implement global health goals in local communities.

-Four new union administrative structures highlight church growth in the church's Inter-American region, home to nearly 3.3 million members. Affected areas include the West Indies, Honduras, El Salvador, Colombia, Venezuela and the Caribbean nation of Jamaica, where about 1 out of 10 people is an Adventist.

-The documentary film *The Adventists* debuts on American public television, telling the story of the denomination's birth, its focus on modern medicine and its commitment to healthy, joyful living. Highlights include Florida Hospital's whole person care and innovative medical technology, as well as renown Loma Linda surgeon Dr. Leonard Bailey, who has saved hundreds of infants through heart transplants.

-The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) assists Chilean emergency officials after an 8.8-magnitude earthquake struck in March.

-Construction begins on an Adventist church in the United Arab Emirates, the first Adventist church in the Gulf region.

-More-

-Haiti is rocked by a 7.0-magnitude earthquake, which kills some 230,000 people, including hundreds of church members. Adventist schools and a hospital are damaged. ADRA ramps up major operation. Church President Jan Paulsen urges members there to "not lose hope."

2009

-Adventist religious liberty leaders monitor a United Nations resolution that would limit religious defamation, or restrict criticism of other religions. The risks of regulating speech outweigh benefits, church leaders say.

-The church's Inter-American region selects three young adults to serve on its Executive Committee, the only region to offer such experiential training.

-In South Korea, the church's Sahmyook Language Institute marks 40 years of service. The institute is a highly rated English language-learning center for professionals.

-Supporting ministry Maranatha Volunteers International marks 40 years of volunteer construction projects worldwide. The California-based organization has worked with more than 60,000 volunteers to complete church and school building projects in 63 countries.

-The Adventist world church holds a Creation Emphasis Sabbath to affirm the 6th of the church's 28 Fundamental Beliefs and counter other worldviews on origins.

The Adventist Church launched the EndItNow campaign for worldwide promotion. Above, Adventist Church members carry a banner during the Galway St. Patrick's Day parade in Ireland on March 23. [photo courtesy Irish Mission]

enditnow ireland 246.jpg

-The church and ADRA launch EndItNow, a worldwide initiative to combat violence against women. A petition with signatures of church and community members will be sent to the United Nations.

-The Adventist Church approves possible partnerships with allied organizations for implementing health projects in communities. The approval follows a July conference, which brought together church officials and World Health Organization representatives to explore partnership possibilities for implementing public health initiatives.

-An ADRA staff member is killed in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the 22nd attack on humanitarian workers within a year.

-Griggs University, the church's distance learning institution, graduates its first MBA students in Vietnam. Class members travel to the church's world headquarters for a graduation ceremony. The 100-year-old institution often enters areas with little church presence.

-An Adventist college opens in Northern Brazil, a move to match explosive membership growth in the region. More than 40,000 people join the church in the region, which will eventually subdivide into two union administrative structures.

-A survey of local congregations worldwide reveals the denomination still needs improvement in promoting its annual Abuse Prevention Emphasis Sabbath, held the fourth Saturday of every August. Launched in 2001, the emphasis day aims to raise awareness of domestic violence and sexual abuse, which occur in Christian homes at

rates similar to that of the general population.

-In Kenya, the new Adventist University of Africa graduates its first class of ministry graduate students.

-A world festival of religious freedom in Peru draws 40,000 supporters, including the president of the Supreme Court and the nation's defense secretary. Similar regional festivals have been held worldwide.

-After a flare-up of the H1N1 virus, schools and churches in Mexico temporarily halt operations, following a government mandate to avoid large gatherings. While several members become briefly infected, the predicted "pandemic" never develops.

-President Jan Paulsen visits China, encountering a "vibrant faith," among the nearly 400,000 members. Though they're not ordained as such, more than half of Adventist pastors in China are female.

-Hope Channel debuts on DirecTV, the largest satellite television provider in the United States. The move is a major step in North America as the church's television network is increasingly disseminated through media markets worldwide.

-In Jamaica, the leader of the church becomes the leader of the nation. Former West Indies Union president Patrick Allen is sworn in as Jamaica's Governor-General.

2008

-In response to the global economic downturn, church leaders implement financial restraints at the world headquarters, including delaying pay increases, travel reductions and reducing overseas appropriations. Paul Ratsara, president of the church's Southern-Africa Indian Ocean region, is tested for AIDS in a public awareness campaign. [ANN file photo by Rajmund Dabrowski] ratsara246.jpg

-Leaders in church's Southern African-Indian Ocean region are tested for AIDS in a public move to raise awareness of the spread of the virus. Simply knowing one's own status is a practical step in dealing with the pandemic, they say.

-Vietnam officially recognizes the Adventist Church, granting it legal status to operate in the Southeast Asian nation. An October constituency meeting is the first since 1975.

-SDA Language Institute receives a 2008 Best Brand award from the Korean Consumers' Union, following a survey of 1.5 million citizens. The institute serves some 50,000 students in 50 locations across the country.

-A 12 by 18 inch Bible written in 66 languages begins its worldwide journey from the Philippines to the 2010 Adventist World Session in Atlanta. The initiative, Follow The Bible, is designed to invite Adventist to commit to Bible study. A recent survey found that only about half of church members regularly study the Bible.

-In Romania, hundreds gather for a congress reaching out to the Roma, a people group formerly referred to as Gypsies. Meeting organizers hope to create a sense of unity in the scattered ethnic group. There are more than 3,000 Roma church members across Europe.

-Web-based communication software platform netAdventist launches, marking the latest development in the

denomination's use of technology. Created by supporting ministry TAGnet, the software combines local websites with live streams of information and resources from the global church.

-Valley View University (VUU) President Seth Abang Laryea receives one of Ghana's highest national awards given to private citizens, the Order of Volta, in recognition of his contributions to college-level education. President of Ghana, John Agyekum Kuffour, presents Laryea with the award during a July ceremony.

-In Southern Mexico, church officials notice a congregation may exhibit a friendlier atmosphere when women are placed in leadership roles. Though they're not ordained as such, women are increasingly serving as church elders, helping to break the barrier that the culture's shyness can often create.

U.S. President George W. Bush, right, shakes hands with Dr. Benjamin Carson after presenting him the 2008 Presidential Medal of Freedom. [photo: David Bohrer/The White House]
carson bush 246.jpg

-In Washington, D.C., church member Dr. Ben Carson, arguably the world's most famous surgeon, receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom from U.S. President George W. Bush. Carson gained notoriety in 1987 for the first successful separation of twins conjoined at the head. He also mentors youth through an emphasis on learning.

-In South Africa, church leaders call for an end to xenophobic attacks, which have killed dozens and displaced thousands. Adventist churches open their doors to serve as shelters for those displaced.

-Author Dan Buettner features Adventists in his book *The Blue Zone*, which highlights four people groups who live significantly longer than the surrounding population. Buettner introduces TV talk show host Oprah Winfrey to two church members: a 104-year-old who volunteers for seven organizations and a surgeon who still assists with operations at age 93.

-Leaders in the church's Northern Asia-Pacific region hold their mid-year Executive Committee meeting in the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea, the first such meeting there since the country closed its borders in 1953.

-More than 40 ADRA workers are dispatched to offer disaster relief in central China, following a 7.9-magnitude earthquake that killed nearly 70,000 people.

-Following Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, ADRA is able to offer assistance due to its longstanding work in the southeastern Asian nation. The government initially refuses most other foreign aid. The cyclone reportedly kills 138,000 people.

-Church leaders in Kenya call on pastors and members to serve as agents of reconciliation following post election ethnic violence, which killed more than 800 people and displaced some 200,000.

2007

-Brazil's Christmas Mutirao, an annual Christmas food drive, brings in 3,200 tons of food for those in need. The annual event is sponsored by ADRA, national corporations and non-profit organizations.

-The supporting organization Association of Adventist Women marks 25 years of promoting women in church leadership roles. About 70 percent of church membership is female.

-Morocco grants ADRA official status to work as a humanitarian agency in the North African nation.

Irene Morgan Kirkaldy died in 2007. Her civil rights case won at the U.S. Supreme Court in 1946. [photo courtesy Kirkaldy family]
Kirkaldybnwwweb.jpg

-Adventists mourn the passing of church member and civil rights pioneer Irene Morgan Kirkaldy, an African American who in 1944 refused to give up her seat on a bus. A New York Post editorial calls for historical accounts to have her name replace other well-known bus-riders; her case predates others and won at the Supreme Court in 1946.

-The church in Colombia organizes the first national blood drive, collecting more than 2,000 units of blood in 15 major cities. The event is also co-sponsored by the National Health Institute and the Red Cross.

-United States Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts urges continued support for religious freedom legislation. Kerry delivers his remarks at the North American Religious Liberty Association's annual dinner on Capitol Hill.

-The church begins sending a container of medical supplies into North Korea several times a year.

-In Rwanda, President Paul Kagame urges ADRA to continue being an "agent of change," in a speech to ADRA's Leadership Council. ADRA's work in the African nation, which experienced genocide in 1994, has been partnership-based, as opposed to short-term and projects.

2006

-The Adventist Church in Denmark wins Best Church-Related website from a leading Christian newspaper. Judges choose adventist.dk over 270 other nominations because of its graphics and aesthetics.

-Thousands gather in Jamaica to celebrate 100 years of the Adventist Church in the West Indies. Membership now stands at about 243,000, up from 3,110 in 1906.

-Mongolia celebrates its 1,000th Adventist Church member. Church President Jan Paulsen visits to mark the occasion, which also features the opening of a language school.

-The church's South American Division elects 38-year-old Erton Kohler as its president, the youngest person to ever hold the position. World church leaders say the move reflects the energy of the region, where a majority of membership is under 35 years old.

-The Adventist world church grew by more than 1 million members for the fourth year in a row. Statistics now indicate there is one Adventist for every 444 people on the planet.

-The Australian trademark agency votes Weet-Bix, the iconic cereal born from the Adventist Church's health message, as the country's favorite trademark.

-Church executive Secretary Matthew Bediako is awarded the Order of the Volta from the president of Ghana, John Agyekum Kufuo. Originally from the Western African nation, Bediako, the church's second highest officer, accepts the award on behalf of the church for its work in health, education, development and disaster relief.

-At the annual Religious Liberty dinner on Capitol Hill, United States Senator John McCain of Arizona commends Adventists for their religious liberty work. "Your work on behalf of religious freedom and human rights is vital, it is transforming, and it is inspiring. And for it, the world owes you a deep debt of gratitude," he says during the

event's keynote address.

-The Office of Adventist Mission releases its first Adventist Mission DVD, a resource documenting mission projects worldwide.

-Five Adventist female leaders join thousands at the United Nations' 50th Commission on the Status of Women, calling for improvements in the treatment of women worldwide. Topics include issues of abuse, health and leadership opportunities.

2005

-The church's Loma Linda University and Medical Center in California marks 100 years of service. Adventists purchased the property of a defunct hotel, developing the Loma Linda Sanitarium, which admitted its first patients in October of 1905.

-The denomination publishes a new book on its Fundamental Beliefs, adding a 28th belief, Growing in Christ.

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