

ANNUAL COUNCIL - 2005

SECRETARY'S REPORT

by Matthew A Bediako

WELCOME!

I would like to take this opportunity once more to welcome all the General Conference Committee members and spouses to the 2005 Annual Council.

A special welcome goes to the newly appointed members of the Executive Committee.

For those who are attending the Annual Council for the first time, we have planned an Orientation Session for you this evening at 5:30 pm in the cafeteria. Food and drinks will be provided.

We would like to have your mailing and email addresses so we will be able to send your invitation letter and other materials to you ahead of time. Please take this information to my office before you leave next week.

In many countries, you now have to apply for a US visa online and it is very difficult to get interview dates. So you will need to plan to make application two to three months before the date of your departure.

QUINQUENNIUM THEME

The over arching theme for this quinquennium is "*Journey of Hope*." Themes for the following Annual Councils and Week of Prayer Readings are as follows:

2006	<i>Journey of Hope</i>
2007	<i>Words of Hope</i>
2008	<i>Signs of Hope</i>
2009	<i>Mission of Hope</i>
2010	<i>People of Hope</i>

We were all blessed by the Lord at the recent General Conference Session in St Louis. On behalf of my fellow officers, I want to thank you for your prayers and hard work in making the Session a success. There was much improvement in attendance during the business session this time. Of course, the attraction of the exhibition booths remains a challenge.

WORLD MEMBERSHIP

The church membership at the end of the year 2004 was 13,661,015. From July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005 alone, 1,094,138 souls were baptized into the remnant church. This gave us an increase of 90,127 baptisms over the same period in 2004. Unfortunately, our net membership increase was 595,063. This means that we lost 499,063 members.

I must mention that a major factor of this is due to membership audits conducted in some of the divisions.

When you receive the statistical report, you will find that apart from the Southern Asia Division, the percentage of membership loss is very high.

The Inter-American Division continues to lead the rest of the divisions in membership with 2,608,122 followed by South America with 2,492,178, and East-Central Africa with 2,120,609.

The North American and Southern Asia Divisions passed one million in membership during this period under review.

INTER-DIVISION PERSONNEL

In the agenda book, you will see the details of missionary movements. The good news is that missionaries are going to and from all divisions. That means, all divisions are contributing to the missionary workforce.

DIVISION REPORTS

INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION

The Mid-Central American Union and El Salvador Conference launched a major evangelistic program, "Hope for San Salvador," this year.

In all, 200 evangelists conducted 200 campaigns for three weeks. The Lord blessed these meetings and 178 new churches were established, and 3,500 souls were baptized.

In spite of the political crisis and natural disasters in Haiti, our members give the highest percentage of mission offerings in relation to tithe in the Inter-American Division. The spirit of giving for missions is an example to the rest of the division.

The Columbia and North Central American Unions have begun the new quinquennium with a goal of entering 150 new territories.

SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION

It is noted that the impact of the Year of Evangelism, 2004, continues to be felt in the division. In the second quarter alone, the Western Highlands Mission in Papua New Guinea reported over 7,000 baptisms. This number is equivalent to almost half the baptisms of the whole division in 2004.

As a result of an action taken at the 2005 General Conference Session, the South Pacific Division, at its recent Session, voted to discontinue the practice of holding division sessions. This action brings the SPD fully into line with the global Church organizational structures and with the practices of the world Church. This action, together with other actions for restructuring are aimed to deploy the resources of the Church in fulfilling the mission of the Church, rather than unnecessary deployment in super structures and/or administration.

WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION

The West-Central Africa Division reports 13,574 baptisms for the past two quarters. The youth used the long holiday period (June-September) to launch the Elijah Project throughout the division. With partial reports from only two unions, 770 souls have been baptized.

TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION

Sudan - The report from the division indicates that despite unrest and uncertainties in Sudan, positive things are happening in the churches. Church growth and an intensive church building program is taking place in the South. Women's Ministries has conducted several evangelistic campaigns resulting in several baptisms and many more preparing for baptism.

Albania - The church in Albania has recently introduced the Sabbath School Study guide on its newly-opened official web page. The website is being expanded to include articles from the church's evangelistic magazine. These articles will cover areas of current affairs, religion, Bible study, health, and relationships.

British Union - The British Union has launched a big evangelistic outreach with the goal of reaching more than one million people in a week.

Every member has been challenged to distribute at least 50 Voice of Prophecy invitation cards in their neighborhood, streets, and public transport.

Middle East Union – In a historical meeting, the Executive Committee of the Union voted to move the union headquarters from Cyprus to Lebanon as soon as practical in 2006.

The Union supervises church and humanitarian activities within the 14 countries of the region, with 14,500 members. The headquarters was moved from Lebanon to Cyprus in 1984 during the long-running Lebanese civil war.

EURO-ASIA DIVISION

Armenia is a very old country with a very interesting inheritance. Armenia was the first county in the world to officially accept Christianity as the religion for their people. Seventeen hundred years have transpired since that time. On September 24 of this year, the Church celebrated 100 years of the Seventh-day Adventist message in Armenia. Today we have a vibrant church in that country, with many youth who are proud to be Seventh-day Adventists.

EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION

Elijah Project – Over 10,000 baptisms have so far been realized through this most exciting project. Thanks for the picture rolls and the *Guide* manual. The youth are so happy using that material.

Women's Ministries – Very inspiring reports are flowing from all our unions about revival and evangelistic campaigns conducted by the division women. One thousand four hundred thirty baptisms have been reported by ECD's Women's Ministries since the General Conference Session in St Louis.

Church Building Reconstruction – In Rwanda, Congo, and Burundi, many church buildings, ravaged by the prolonged wars, have now been reconstructed through monies given by the General Conference to the ECD. Nurture of our members has taken great leaps now that members are no longer worshipping under trees and other unusual places.

Kings Heralds – For two weeks now, Uhuru Park, Nairobi Kenya, has been a beehive of emotions as the Kings Heralds have been conducting an emotional

campaign and witnessing through their ministry of music. Over 2,000 people from the Greater Nairobi area have been attending every night. A baptism class of about 700 people is in the making.

Adventist University of Africa (AUA) – The ground-breaking ceremony for the Adventist University of Africa took place in Nairobi in the month of September 2005.

ADVENTIST WORLD RADIO

From its first broadcast, AWR's programs have been touching hearts and changing lives. More than three decades later, every listener is still precious, and every story illustrates the transforming power of the gospel and the vital importance of AWR's mission.

Over the last reporting period of a year and a half, AWR has made a concerted effort to focus its resources on the hardest-to-reach areas of the world. This has led to exciting new initiatives and some major shifts in organization.

Operations in the Americas region were reorganized in September, 2004, and merged with the Adventist Media Center in Brazil. AWR's highly-popular live call-in program, "Open Clinic," was transferred from Costa Rica to an AWR studio in Puerto Rico. At the end of 2004, the English Language Service in the United Kingdom, in operation since 1994, was converted from a centralized to a regional model. The production of English language programs will be continued in Africa and Asia by local producers.

In early 2005, AWR celebrated the completion of a four-year modernization project at its shortwave station on the Pacific island of Guam. The upgrades include five new transmitters and a corresponding computerized monitoring and control system, an erosion control project, building renovations, and a large new generator. These improvements are helping to ensure that the station can provide the most reliable broadcast service possible to millions of listeners in Asia.

An FM station in Kigali, Rwanda, was opened in early 2005. The station, funded by a gift from a trust in the Pacific Northwest, is already bringing comfort to listeners. During the memorial week in remembrance of the country's terrible genocide, the program announcer asked listeners to call in with requests for prayer for specific friends and neighbors. They would say, "Please encourage Mr ___, who lost his family members." These people were greatly touched by the knowledge that many people were praying for them.

This year AWR tested a new outreach that attracted enthusiastic support from friends of AWR. Gifts have been received to purchase 500 AM/FM/SW radios for listeners in remote areas of the Philippines, Madagascar, and Cambodia, as well as for the nomadic Masai people in Africa. Many listeners are very poor, and must decide between buying food or batteries, so these radios can be powered by solar panels or hand cranks. The Northern Asia-Pacific Division is challenging churches in Korea to raise funds to buy radios for Mongolia and help develop a listening base there.

In Ethiopia, an entire congregation of Baptists joined the Adventist Church as a result of AWR's shortwave broadcasts. For two years, the pastor and members had their specific questions about the Sabbath and other doctrines answered in on-air programs. The Central Ethiopia Field held a series of meetings that culminated in the baptism of 185 people, and a new church is planned for these believers.

Another dramatic response to AWR's programs is taking place in Sudan. Despite the chaotic political system and lack of postal system, more than 4,000 students have enrolled in the local Bible school in neighboring Uganda since broadcasts began in 2004.

A new studio in Izmir, Turkey, is producing programs for distribution through the Hotbird direct-to-home satellite. Since the producers are working in a Muslim country, they must be discreet about program content, so they are concentrating on health and family-life topics and comments on current events, while including some spiritual material.

For countless listeners, an AWR program is the first time they have heard about God's love. Through this ministry, God's family is growing and lives are being saved for eternity.

ADVENTIST DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF AGENCY

ADRA partners with communities, organizations and governments to improve the quality of life for millions of less fortunate people around the world through five core portfolio activities: Food Security, Economic Development, Primary Health, Emergency Management, and Basic Education.

ADRA has a presence in 125 countries.

In 2004, ADRA helped nearly 24 million beneficiaries worldwide.

More than 90 percent of private donations is used for direct humanitarian services.

ADRA has over 4,500 employees worldwide.

An ADRA bakery in North Korea is producing high-nutrient, whole-wheat cookies that benefit 32,000 children. Daily, 300,000 cookies are produced and a weekly supply is transported by ox cart to 450 local kindergartners.

In 2004, ADRA distributed medicine and material aid valued at more than \$50 million around the world.

Through August of 2005, ADRA has already distributed medicine and material aid valued at nearly \$40 million.

ADRA has sent seven containers of clothes and pharmaceuticals valued at nearly \$5 million to the Democratic Republic of the Congo which has over 200,000 internally displaced people in addition to refugees from the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

ADRA provided immediate relief to thousands who survived the Asia tsunami in December of 2004. ADRA continues to respond to the needs of survivors in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India, Thailand, and Somalia, allocating more than \$39 million in relief and development to date.

ADRA has also programmed \$10 million in aid for nearly 400,000 tsunami survivors in Indonesia, and is teaching residents how to prepare for future disasters and is providing basic education, health care, and livelihood recovery assistance.

ADRA responded to the need in Sudan's Darfur region where civil conflict, according to the United Nations, has affected over 2.6 million people who, as the result of violence have been killed, raped, and forced out of their homes.

ADRA is working in the camps for internally displaced people to improve health and sanitary conditions by providing safe potable water through the drilling, rehabilitation, and installation of hand pump wells that will benefit 80,000 displaced people in Darfur.

In order to prevent the further outbreak of disease in Darfur, ADRA has trained local health workers who can raise awareness and teach the displaced community to practice healthy hygiene techniques.

In Liberia, ADRA's global network has worked to rehabilitate war-ravaged schools. In addition to the reconstruction of the physical structure, ADRA will provide schools with furniture, supplies, athletic equipment, training and health education. ADRA has already sent 22 containers of school supplies, hygiene kits and food.

In 2005, ADRA responded with an initial distribution of 800 metric tons of food to alleviate the food shortage crisis in Niger. The United Nations reported in mid-July that some 2.5 million people were at risk of food shortage, including about 800,000 children, many who were severely malnourished.

Recognizing that education is the key to breaking the poverty cycle, ADRA has launched education initiatives for children, vocational training for orphans and other vulnerable children, and literacy training for adults denied an education in their youth. These programs unlock a world of opportunity, a future with hope for success.

ADRA continues to provide aid for thousands of people whose lives were devastated by Hurricane Katrina along the Gulf Coast of the United States. To date, ADRA has committed \$1 million in emergency aid for survivors that will be distributed through its implementing partners. ADRA has also created a Katrina Emergency Management Coordination Team that is assessing needs, distributing aid, and providing emergency management support and consultation to local organizations in the affected areas. In addition, ADRA has been active in supplying emergency supplies, personal care items, food, and new clothing for survivors in the Gulf Coast region.

ADRA has also implemented an estimated \$400,000 of relief aid through local partners such as Adventist Community Services (ACS), the Panama City Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Through ACS, ADRA is distributing more than \$1 million worth of clothing, food, water, and emergency supplies for hurricane survivors in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama.

ACS, in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), has also set up, and is managing, a multi-agency warehouse in New Iberia, Louisiana. The warehouse is serving more than 200 shelters in 26 parishes, providing more than 60,000 persons with hygiene products, food, and clothing. This project is valued at approximately \$72,000.

The Panama City Church in Florida is operating a mobile kitchen that will provide more than 100 meals a day. They are also providing temporary shelter for families in need, distributing food to more than 400 individuals, purchasing and transporting food and other emergency supplies into the affected region, and restoring homes in the disaster zone to provide residents with a place of refuge. This project is valued at \$50,580.

The South Central Conference, which operates out of Mississippi and Alabama, is supplying volunteers to distribute supplies at warehouses in Alabama and Mississippi, managing seven distribution centers in the affected areas, and providing personal care supplies, lunches, and more.

Andrews University and Oakwood College students have gone there to serve as well.

CONCLUSION

I believe that the greatest days of accomplishment are before us. We shall see an increasing acceleration of the work in the days to come. As a people, we have never been in such a favorable position to witness for the truth. Our name, Seventh-day Adventist, has gained a larger measure of respect than ever. The publicity that has been given to the Church's world-wide activity has led many to inquire about what Adventists stand for. There has been a new willingness to listen to the Three-Angels' message. It is, for us, a time of opportunity.

Let us go and tell the world!

INTRODUCTIONS

After the 2000 General Conference Session and division year-end meetings, about 80% of the Secretariat staff were new to their positions. Fortunately, this time we have only four new staff members. And I would like you to meet them.

- * At the General Conference level, we welcome Dr Rosa Banks.
- * In the Southern Asia Division office, we have Pastor John Rathinaraj.
- * In the Northern Asia-Pacific Division, Elder Akeri Suzuki,
- * And Solomon Maphosa in the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division.