

EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION NEWS AND INSPIRATION

CONNECT

Total Member
Involvement
Issue



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SEPT
2016**

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Let's Get Involved



When Jesus began His earthly ministry, before He performed any miracles or preached any sermons, He called others to get involved. He could have ministered alone, but instead He graciously invited 12 disciples to join Him in the ministry of preaching the gospel, healing the hurting, and reaching the lost. After the resurrection, the disciples followed in His example of involving others as they trained and equipped more and more believers to join them in sharing the hope. Today we too have been called to get involved. God is calling us not simply to come to church and warm the seats, He wants us to become actively involved in the reaching of the least, the lost and the last.

As you read this issue of **CONNECT**, we hope the stories from around our Division inspire you to get involved. I challenge you to ask yourself: **What can I do to make a difference? How can I get more involved in ministry? What is Jesus calling you to do in your church and your community? Together, we can make a huge difference for the Kingdom. So come on, don't just stand there! Let's get involved!**

Philip Baptiste
CONNECT Editor

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Total Member Involvement

UNTIE THE DONKEY



As Jesus was approaching the close of His ministry on earth, He gave his disciples some very interesting instructions. He said to go to a particular place in the village and when you see a Donkey tied up, untie it, take it and bring it to me. If anyone asks you what you are doing, just tell them the Master has need of it. So, the disciples took the donkey, and that donkey became involved in ministry. Can you imagine? A donkey was awarded the humble privilege of carrying on his back, Jesus—the son of God and the savior of the world.

The interesting thing about this donkey is that it was tied up. Donkeys are meant to be working and to ease the burden of those nearby, but this donkey was tied up. Meaning it was just standing by and not

reaching its full potential for ministry. Jesus, from afar off, saw that this donkey needed to be used in Christian service, so He told the disciples to untie the donkey. Release it and let it do what it was created to do.

I have a question for you to ponder. How many times have we perhaps acted like that donkey? How often have we been standing by with our gifts and talents tied up instead of using them for ministry? How often have we listened to appeals in church to get involved or to give more while we stand idly by with our hands folded and our talents and resources tied up.

How much more could we accomplish if we untied our donkeys and released them to be used by the Master? We have no idea how much God

is waiting to bless us. But, how many of us have missed our blessings because we prefer to be bench warmers rather than get involved in the work of the ministry?

The Adventist Church has launched a global initiative called Total Member Involvement. I'm excited about this incredible concept. Total Member Involvement is an invitation for every single Adventist member to untie their donkeys and release their full potential in ministry and service for Him. Jesus initially extended this invitation over 2,000 years ago. He told them, "The harvest is huge, but the workers are few. So ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest field" (Luke 10:2). Jesus reminds us that we have a great harvest, but we are

desperately in need of more workers. This is a call for Total Member Involvement. If every member could move from being a spectator to being a worker, think of what an incredible difference we could make for God's kingdom.

In May 2016, over 100 thousand people were baptized as a result of the Rwanda Total Member Involvement Evangelist Campaign. Led by Ted Wilson our Adventist world church president, we organized and conducted over 2,300 simultaneous evangelism campaigns all over Rwanda. Our success was because of Total Member Involvement. A 12-year-old boy preached and led hundreds to Christ. Lay people taught young people how to get involved, grandparents did their part, business professionals led meetings, and doctors and medical professionals held health clinics. Everyone contributed, and the result was the largest public campaign baptism in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This is what can happen when we all get involved. So, let's untie our donkeys of potential. Let us surrender our spiritual gifts and talents into the hands of the Master so together we can reap a rich harvest for Him. Total Member Involvement! This is our time! This is our moment! Let's get involved and reach the world for Jesus!

Dr. Blasious Ruguri is President of the East-Central Division.

TOTAL MEMBER INVOLVEMENT YOUTH IDEAS

Super Fun ideas for Youth



Have you ever suggested a fun social idea to your youth only to have them say “Ugh not that again?” It’s happened to me! Trust me—I’ve been there before. So, I decided to share a few ideas with you to help make your youth program a little more unpredictable.

Let me start by sharing with you a simple philosophy for Youth Ministry based on Luke 2:52. The New Century Version says it like this “Jesus became wiser and grew physically. People liked Him, and he pleased God.”

This passage was written

right after Jesus had been in the temple at the age of 12. It is the link from Jesus’ childhood to His adulthood. In just one simple verse we see how Jesus moved and developed through the teen years all the way into complete maturity.

In this passage Jesus was growing, just like our youth are, and the Bible describes Jesus having a four-fold development. He grew wiser, that’s mental development; He grew physically, that’s physical development; people liked, Him that’s social development; and ultimately He pleased God, the result

of Spiritual development.

As Adventist youth leaders, our desire is to help youth grow and develop like Jesus. So here’s a simple idea, when planning for youth try to create Social, Spiritual, and Service opportunities for them to worship and connect to God and their community in a fun, cool and practical way. Gather your youth and invite them to come up with as many ideas as they can for all three areas.

Let them know you are committed to helping them grow like Jesus grew and that means they will not

only socialize and have fun together, but they will serve their community and others around them, and strive to grow spiritually together. Then for each of your social activities you do, see how you can incorporate a service element and maybe even a short, meaningful spiritual experience as well.

It is important to allow your youth to be a part of the planning and brainstorming for your activities. So, here’s an idea—after having a delightful Sabbath meal, get a white board and divide it into three categories. 1. Social, 2. Spiritual, 3. Service. Invite your youth to brainstorm and come up with as many ideas as they can for things they want to do as a group that will help them grow, in all three areas. Then have them vote on the top five ideas they want to try under each category, and commit to doing at least three ideas a month. You can assign youth to help coordinate each activity and get them involved in making their ideas become a reality.

Philip Baptiste is editor for CONNECT.

Now here are

five practical ideas

for Youth Total Member Involvement

1 Have a Friday night youth program with fun activities.

Assign a person to bring icebreakers. Serve a nice supper starting at around 6:30 pm, after supper do several icebreakers and group games. Then have a 5-7 min short talk on service and how youth can make a difference in the community. You can find opportunities for young people to be involved by contacting your local Adventist community service center. Have a sign-up sheet available for young people to sign up to get involved volunteering 2 to 3 hours per week in at least one service opportunity available in their communities. End with prayer by asking youth to share their “forecasts” (Let students share how their emotional weather looks like for the upcoming week and why.) Then have them divide up into groups and pray for each other.

2 After Church have your youth minister to the community.

This could include feeding the homeless, visiting a nursing home or going to an orphanage. After about 2 or 3 hours of fun and interactive service in the community, bring your youth to the church for supper and sharing. Have them share stories of their outreach experiences and include a time of corporate prayer for the community. Then after sunset do a game night. Have board games available for those who like that, and have a kids zone for the smaller kids to play and enjoy. Don't forget to have snacks and food. It's a great idea to implement in your church every month, for example, the 1st Sabbath of the month.

3 Have a Friday night “Create Your Own Cool” evening for your youth.

It involves utilizing different rooms in your local church or school. In various places have different activities going all at the same time. For example in the sanctuary have a music Vespers with singing. In the fellowship hall, play videos from www.adventist.org or the GC youth ministries website. In another room have someone leading a Bible study. In another room have tables set up with construction paper and clay where kids can draw pictures, paint and make things with clay that describe their picture of God's love for them. In another room have a light supper and food. So have these five options going all at the same time, and allow youth to go back and forth choosing and creating their worship experience opportunities in 20 min segments. Close the evening with a short final general session.

4 Sunday or Saturday night, have an interactive game night.

Have board games available as well and have plenty of food and snacks. Invite some needy children from the community to join you. End the evening by sharing “forecasts” and prayer.

5 Have an ice-cream social.

After they are finished eating, do a few icebreakers to get them connecting and sharing. Then hand out copies of the local newspaper. Have students get into groups and come up with five ideas from the newspaper of things they can do to serve, show love and meet the needs of the community. Allow each group to share their ideas and then have the entire group pick the top 3 ideas that they would like to start doing to make a difference in their community. Close by sharing “forecasts” and having a corporate prayer for the community.

Record 98,280 Baptized

AS EVANGELISTIC MEETINGS END IN RWANDA



Photos: Andrew McChesney

A Belgian citizen visiting relatives in a corner of Rwanda.

A 19-year-old woman who will lose her job.

A police officer assigned to protect Seventh-day Adventist Church president Ted N.C. Wilson.

These are among the record-breaking 98,280 people who accepted Christ in baptism during a two-week evangelistic series that wrapped up this weekend, church leaders said Sunday.

Additional baptisms connected to the meetings at 2,227 sites across the African country are expected to take place over the next few weeks, bringing the total to more than 100,000 and making the May 13-28 event the largest of its kind in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

“You are an example for the entire world. We praise God

for that,” Wilson told a crowd of 6,000 people at a final Sabbath worship service in the resort city of Gisenyi. Among those in attendance were 1,971 people baptized in nearby Lake Kivu in the morning.

Local church leaders credited the Holy Spirit and Total Member Involvement for the unprecedented number of baptisms.

“When each member is involved, there will be a big harvest,” said Sophonie Setako, president of the Adventist Church’s North-West Rwanda Field, which includes Gisenyi and had 10,778 baptisms. “By visiting people and assisting people in need, we have gained many members.”

Total Member Involvement is the name of a world church initiative that encourages each of the church’s 19.1 million members worldwide to find ways to share Jesus

with friends and communities. The previous record was 30,000 baptisms after a two-week evangelistic series in Zimbabwe in May 2015.

In Rwanda, the church’s 720,000 members took Total Member Involvement to heart. Many studied the Bible with neighbors and went door-to-door, inviting people to the evangelistic meetings. Members also donated money for food, cows, and health insurance policies aimed at improving the lives of impoverished people in their communities. Medical clinics at three locations provided free services to nearly 6,000 people over the course of a week.

“A Change Has Taken Place”

Thousands of people packed the sandy shore of Lake Kivu to witness Sabbath’s baptisms. The elderly and disabled were baptized first, followed by pregnant women and long lines of men and women. Eight pastors baptized 1,971 people in about 2 ½ hours.

People emerging from the lake couldn’t have been happier. Wide smiles filled many faces as they exited the water and made their way to white tents, where they changed out of their water-soaked baptismal robes.

“A change has taken place in me,” said Steve Nsabimana, 16, a Belgian citizen who was on vacation, visiting relatives near Gisenyi, when the evangelistic

meetings began.

Nsabimana said curiosity brought him to the meetings, and the message about the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation convinced him to give his heart to Jesus through baptism. He will return to Belgium as a Seventh-day Adventist.

“After baptism, I feel like all my sins have been forgiven,” he said with a smile.

Obed Twagirasu, 51, a former Adventist with a toothless grin, told how he had felt impressed to seek re-baptism while listening to Nancy Wilson, wife of the Adventist Church president, who was preaching her first evangelistic series, speak about how each person would receive his or her just reward at Jesus’ Second Coming.

“I needed to be baptized so I could renew my relationship with God,” Twagirasu said. “I am very happy to be entering the family of God.”

“An Unforgettable Experience”

Nancy Wilson, who spoke to about 3,000 people every evening on a hilly field outside Gisenyi, had tears in her eyes as she watched 411 people from her meeting site get baptized on Sabbath. Several women joyfully waved and blew kisses at her as they came out of the water.

“This was an unforgettable experience,” Nancy Wilson said.

In all, 539 people were baptized from her meeting site over the past two Sabbaths.

Ted N.C. Wilson, who led meetings attended by 6,000 people nightly in the yard of a church compound in Gisenyi, saw a total of 1,016 baptisms.

One of them was Clementine Nyiragasigwa, a slight 19-year-old woman not more than 4 foot, 10 inches (147 centimeters) tall. Speaking in an interview as she exited Lake Kivu, she said that she had felt impressed to get baptized after hearing a presentation about the statue in Daniel 2.

Nyiragasigwa, never before baptized, had been working for another Christian denomination when she started attending the meetings. When she announced to co-workers that she wanted to get baptized into the Adventist Church, they had pressured her to change her mind.

“But I decided to leave my job and get baptized,” she said.

Also baptized on Sabbath was Schadrack Rutabayiro, a police officer responsible for escorting Wilson to the meetings from his hotel every day. Rutabayiro, whose mother is Adventist, had resisted her pleadings to commit to Christ for more than a decade, he said. But then he heard Wilson speak about the Second Coming and an Adventist physician talk about the importance of a good health. Fesaha Tsegaye, health ministries director for the East-Central African Division, which includes Rwanda, gave a health presentation before Wilson spoke every evening.

“Water and daily exercise were a question mark for

me,” Rutabayiro said. “Dr. Tsegaye’s message touched my heart, and I realized that I needed to be baptized and change my life.”

TMI Not So Bold or New

The newly baptized members were not the only people expressing joy on Sabbath. Pastors and other church leaders joined a crowd of at least 6,000 people for the celebratory event on the shore of Lake Kivu.

“It was very, very amazing,” said Mutuye Nkundakozero, executive secretary for North-West Rwanda Field, who was among the eight pastors who participated in the baptisms. He, like many church members, wore a red tie with a blue logo reading “TMI,” or Total Member Involvement. Nearly everyone present wore blue TMI scarves.

Duane McKey, a key organizer of the Rwanda meetings and the Adventist world church leader responsible for Total Member Involvement, smiled broadly as he and his wife, Kathy, watched the baptisms in the shade of large blue TMI umbrellas. But he said Total Membership Involvement, which was unveiled at the General Conference Session in July 2015, was not as bold or new an initiative as some people say.

“It’s not bold or new,” McKey said. “Jesus said more than 2,000 years ago in the Great Commission of Matthew 28 to go and preach, teach, and baptize. The interesting and exciting thing is we’ve just finished more than 2,000 meetings that commemorate something Jesus said more

than 2000 years ago.”

A Rwandan hallmark of Total Membership Involvement — inviting friends to church — was evident even at Lake Kivu on Sabbath morning. Watching the proceedings was a Roman Catholic priest, attending his first Adventist gathering at the invitation of an Adventist friend, the head of a local university. The priest, speaking in an interview, expressed astonishment at seeing people baptized by immersion for the first time. He said he looked forward to hearing the Sabbath sermon afterward.

Need for New Churches

Looking ahead, Hesron R. Byilingiro, president of the Adventist Church in Rwanda, said the church faces a dilemma in finding places for new members to worship. After this weekend, local church membership has topped 815,000 in the country of 11.8 million people.

“That is really a challenge,” Byilingiro said in an interview on Lake Kivu. “By the help of God, this is going to be done.”

McKey, who overheard Byilingiro’s comment, told him that some help was already on its way. He said a small church in the U.S. state of Texas, the Hico Seventh-

day Adventist Church, had raised \$1,400 for another church project in Africa, but technical issues had prevented the funds from reaching its intended destination last year. So Hico’s dozen members sent the money to Rwanda via the General Conference, the administrative body of the Adventist world church.

“The money is going to be used for a new church that will be built for the new members in a village outside Gisenyi,” McKey said.

But new church buildings were far from the minds of many on Sabbath.

Umutoni Feza, 25, who was raised in an Adventist family but had not attended church for years, smiled bashfully when asked why she had decided to get baptized. She said she had realized at the evangelistic meetings that she needed Jesus in her life.

“I am very happy,” she said. “I was born once, and now I have been born again.”

This story first appeared on May 29, 2016 in the Adventist Review and is reprinted with permission.

Andrew McChesney is news editor for *Adventist Review*.



NEW VICE CHANCELLOR PLEDGES ADVANCEMENT, EXCELLENCE AND ADVENTURE FOR THE ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA

Philip Baptiste



Delbert Baker during his installation service as vice chancellor of Adventist University of Africa.

Earlier this year, The Adventist University of Africa (AUA) in Kenya celebrated the inauguration of Delbert Baker as its new vice chancellor. The two-day celebration was attended by Church and governmental officials along with a host of other leaders and dignitaries from Adventist institutions, the local community and the Seventh-day Adventist world church headquarters.

The consecration service featured a keynote address by Paul Ratsara, president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The installation service was led out by Ella Simmons, general vice president of the Adventist world church and chair of the AUA Council, along with

Blasious Ruguri, president of the Adventist Church's East-Central Africa Division and chancellor of AUA.

The event culminated with special celebratory speeches from Seventh-day Adventist world church president, Ted Wilson, Adventist world church general vice president, Geoffrey Mbwana, Oakwood University president, Leslie Pollard, family ministries director for the Adventist Church, Willie Oliver, education director for the Adventist Church, Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, and a host of others.

Baker was introduced by his son, Benjamin Baker, who serves as the associate director of the Office of Archives and Statistics and Research of the Adventist Church.

In his remarks, the new vice chancellor challenged

the university family to join him in pursuing “unstoppable advancement, academic excellence and adventures under the Almighty.”

During the ceremony, the chancellor of AUA, Blasious Ruguri, said: “We are delighted to welcome Dr. Baker to the Vice-Chancellorship of one of the greatest Adventist universities in the world. He has an outstanding reputation as both a denominational and academic leader in the Adventist Church. We look forward to working with him to help take AUA Onward and Upward.”

Baker has a Ph.D. in Organizational Communication. He is also a Certified Executive Leadership Coach and a Certified Trainer in Emotional Intelligence. He has authored more than 15 books, including, *From Exile to Prime Minister: The Life and Leadership of Samson Kisekka*; *Make Us One: Celebrating Spiritual Unity in the Midst of Cultural Diversity*; and *The Unknown Prophet: The Life and Times of William Ellis Foy*.

Prior to coming to AUA, Baker served as general vice president for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (2010-2015), the 10th president of Oakwood University (1996-2010), special assistant to the president and director of diversity at Loma Linda University (1992-1996), associate director of the Ellen G. White Estate (1992), editor of *Message Magazine* (1985-1992)

and as a pastor in the Allegheny West Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (1975-1985).

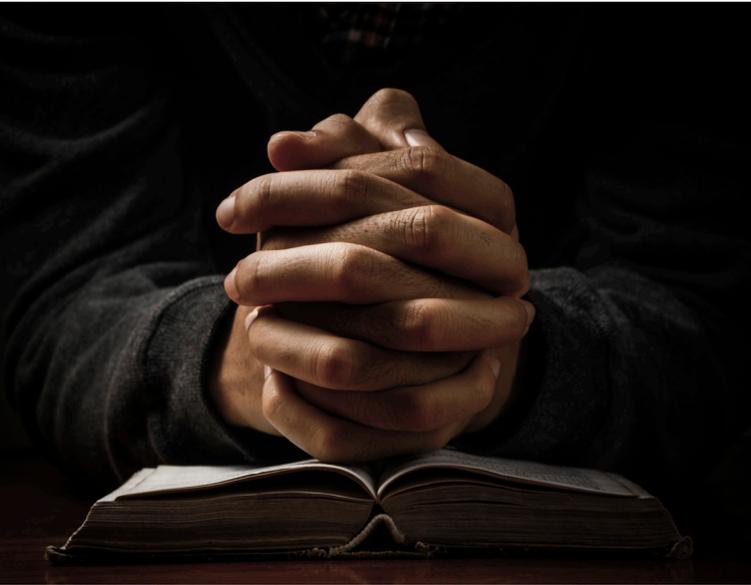
Throughout the years, Baker has been dedicated to the work of the church, community building, evangelism and the development of students and leaders with a focus on excellence.

In 1975, Baker married Susan (Lee). Their marriage has formed the foundation of their collective ministry. Susan holds a doctorate in science (Loma Linda University, 1999) and has had a notable career in physical therapy, administration and education. The Bakers have three adult sons: David, DPT, physical therapist; Benjamin, PHD, historian; and Jonathan, MS, human resource professional. They have three grandchildren: Isabella, Zachary and Jackson; and two additional grandchildren who are scheduled to arrive later this year.

Though based in Kenya, AUA is directly affiliated with the Adventist Church's world headquarters and offers Adventist graduate-level education throughout Africa. Doctoral programs are taught on its main campus, and other programs—such as theology and business—are taught by revolving faculty on Adventist campuses throughout the continent.

Philip Baptiste is editor for CONNECT.

ADVENTIST IN BURUNDI UTILIZE PRAYER AND SERVICE TO SHARE THE HOPE



Adventist leaders and members from the Burundi Union Mission have been engaging in prayer and service to reach their communities with the good news of Jesus. Union leaders along with departmental directors, have been traveling across the country giving seminars and mobilizing the members for mission service and evangelism. Eric Steven Nsengiyumva, communication director of the Adventist Church in Burundi, said, “People are catching on fire, and the work is moving forward like never

before. Through evangelism, outreach, youth involvement, and strategic planning, the Church in Burundi is truly making disciples for Jesus. We are entering unreached areas and holding several combined evangelist efforts to share the gospel with our friends and neighbors.” Church leaders say that united prayer combined with unselfish service has been the key sharing the hope in the country of Burundi.

Philip Baptiste is editor for CONNECT.

ADVENTIST IN EAST-CONGO ARE MOBILIZED FOR MISSION

Adventist leaders and officers from the East Congo Union Mission (ECUM) were mobilized for mission by engaging in prayer and forgiveness during their annual week of spiritual emphasis.

Participants reported that they had an upper room experience during the week of prayer lead out by ECUM President Robert Muhune. Drawing lessons from the biblical story of Jacob, the president encouraged leaders to follow in the patriarchs example of perseverance, humility, confession and reconciliation.

An unexpected blessing

occurred when a leader rose with tears in his eyes confessing that he had spoken ill of the Mission President and asked for his forgiveness. The President quickly forgave him and what followed was a spirit of reconciliation and unity that ignited the team for mission.

The week closed with more than 300 members and workers distributing over 4,000 copies of the book of *Our Great Hope* to the surrounding community.

Pastor Martin is the Communication Director of the East-Congo Union Mission



CONGO

ADVENTIST COMMUNICATORS IN ETHIOPIA ARE EQUIPPED FOR MISSION

Philip Baptiste



Adventist Communicators, radio station personnel, and IT directors gathered at the headquarters of the Ethiopia Union earlier this year for a two-day training conference coordinated by the East-Central Africa Division (ECD). Communication Director Prince Bahati and Special Assistant to the President Philip Baptiste facilitated the training as participants received tools to enhance their communication and be more equipped for mission. Bahati and Baptiste conducted workshops on Tips for Writing News Stories,

Radio and TV Ministry, Crisis Management, Social Media, Copyright Issues, Media and more. Participants said the event was the first of its kind in the nation and that they came away with invaluable resources to help take their ministries to the next level. The ECD communication department along with the other departments at the Division are conducting advisories in the various unions to build collaboration and enhance ministry effectiveness.

CONNECT Staff

EVANGELISM MEETINGS IN ETHIOPIA YIELD 176 BAPTISMS



Over three thousand people attended a two-week evangelism series in the town of Aleta Wondo (369 km away from Addis Ababa) earlier this year.

Two churches organized the evangelism effort. The Kotebe Church in Addis Ababa, and the Tabor Church in the Southern field. Total Member Involvement was key to the successful meetings. Every member got involved in reaching out to their friends and neighbors with the love of Jesus.

Guest speaker, Pastor Bekele Gebre conducted a week of prayer before the start of the meetings to build

momentum and excitement.

When the meetings began, thousands of people gathered to worship and hear inspiring messages of hope at the Aleta Wondo Stadium. On average, 3,000 people attended the program daily.

Alongside the meetings, church leaders planned a health expo and family life services to enrich lives and share the Adventist message of hope and wholeness. At the end of the meetings over 176 individuals were baptized.

Mihret Dagne is communication director of the Ethiopia Union Mission



ECD TEACHERS CONVENTION EQUIPS FOR EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMICS AND SPIRITUALITY!

Samuel Misiani



Hundreds of teachers gathered at the Kamagambo Adventist College to attend the East-Central Africa Division Teacher's Conference last April. Dr. Fred Matiang'i, Cabinet Secretary of Education for the government of Kenya

along with Dr. Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, education director for the Adventist Church, opened the conference and challenged participants to strive for excellence.

Attendees were reminded of their high calling to not only

equip students for excellence academically but to educate for eternity. Teachers were urged to emulate the examples of Jesus Christ whenever they set their feet into classrooms. Educators expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the Conference. Everything was perfect—from the sumptuous vegetarian meals to the practical workshop and breakout sessions.

Teachers committed to implementing the actual ideas they gleaned from the conference and vowed to make their various schools and colleges hubs for soul winning. Another highlight of the conference was the rich variety of music. Participants shared

that “the music from different choirs was just but an anticipation of the heavenly music to come when the redeemed of all the ages shall join the angels in praising the King of Kings and the Lord of lords.”

Dr. Andrew Muteru, education director for the Adventist Church in East-Central Africa, said that organizers were extremely pleased with the attendance and interaction of participants during the convention and have already started planning the next ECD Teachers Convention.

Samuel Misiani is the communication director for the West Kenya Union Conference.

BARATON UNIVERSITY WELCOMES HEARING IMPAIRED PASTORS INTO THEOLOGY PROGRAM



Samuel Misiani

The University of Eastern Africa Baraton in Western Kenya recently conducted an induction ceremony for 27

theology students including three new deaf students. These students are getting ready to join the pastoral

ministry program this year. The deaf students are going to pastor and minister to the Deaf community in Kenya.

They are among the special frontier pastors who were inducted into the University.

According to Dr. Ray Kesis, the pastor of Baraton University Church, this was the largest number of special frontier pastors—pastors from mainly unentered areas and hardship areas such as Turkana, Samburu and Maasai. They had previously been working as lay pastors but now they have a theological degree which will boost their ministry. This team is going to be a huge plus for the work in Kenya.

BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS RAISE \$50,000 TO FUND THE CREATION OF AN ADVENTIST MEDICAL SCHOOL IN EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA

Diane Kibuuka



Lisa Beardsley-Hardy and Blasious Ruguri with business professionals during the fundraising event that took place May 15 on the campus of the Adventist University of Central Africa (AUCA).

More than 500 Adventist business professionals raised approximately \$50,000 (USD) to help fund the construction of the East-Central Africa Division (ECD) Medical School in Kigali, Rwanda in order to address the nation's tremendous need for expanded health services. The fundraising event took place May 15

on the campus of the Adventist University of Central Africa (AUCA).

According to Church leaders, there is one doctor for every 17,000 people in Africa's east-central region. Through the medical school, the Adventist Church will equip future doctors and medical professionals to be able to

help the countless individuals who lack access to quality healthcare.

Completing the school, which is slated to be the denomination's seventh medical school, will consist of a four-phase project. Phase one, which is expected to be completed by September 2017, includes constructing student residences, a state-of-the-art science lab, a teaching hospital, cafeteria and a housing complex for guests.

The Adventist Church also operates medical schools at Adventist universities in Montemorelos, Nuevo León, Mexico; Liberator San Martín, Entre Rios, Argentina; Ñaña, Lima, Peru; Silang, Cavite, Philippines; and its flagship school in Loma Linda, California, United States.

The fundraiser took place three days after Ted Wilson, president of the Seventh-day

Adventist Church, laid the foundational stone.

The fundraising event was a collaborative effort between the East-Central Africa Division and the education department of the Seventh-day Adventist world church. Keynote speakers included education director for the Adventist Church, Lisa Beardsley-Hardy; Adventist architect and philanthropist Zuki Mxoli; education director for the East-Central Africa Division, Andrew Mutero; and president of the Adventist Church's East-Central Africa Division, Blasious Ruguri.

For more information on the ECD Medical School, visit ecdadventist.org

Articles by Philip Baptiste, editor for CONNECT.

ADVENTIST LEADERS IN RWANDA COMMEMORATE THE 22ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE TUTSI MASS GENOCIDE



Philip Baptiste

More than 700,000 Adventists across the African country of Rwanda commemorated the 22nd anniversary of the genocide earlier this year as they prayed, sang inspirational songs and listened to testimonies.

Prince Bahati, Communication Director of the Adventist Church in East-Central Africa, says, "Even after 22 years, people are still remembering their

loved ones. Many of them did not have the opportunity even to have a funeral service or a proper burial for their relatives who's lives were lost. The annual observance is a time for them to remember and give value to the life and legacy of their beloved."

Hesron Byilingiro, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda, said, "The Adventist Church extends our hands of comfort and love to the families

of over one million men, women, and children who were victims of this horrible tragedy."

During the month-long commemoration, Seventh-day Adventist churches in Rwanda will hold prayer vigils, musical programs and grief counseling workshops to help bring healing to survivors and the countless individuals who carry the memory of the genocide.

ADVENTISTS STAY STRONG DESPITE THE ECONOMIC CRISIS FACING SOUTH SUDAN



Adventists in South Sudan are experiencing enormous challenges as they try to make ends meet due to the sudden devaluation of

the Sudanese dollar. Over the past several months, pastors and church members have watched their salaries which were once able to take care of their monthly needs, slowly be reduced to almost nothing.

According to Clement Arkangelo, President of the Adventist church in South Sudan, “A pastor’s salary now can only buy three watermelons in the marketplace. Many people have been going with hardly any food just so that their children could be able

to have something to eat.”

The South Sudan Union is doing its best to help church members through this tragedy.” Donations have come in from various church entities and concerned individuals. However, since the nation is still in a state of economic turmoil, the assistance has only been able to go so far. In spite of this tragedy, the church is remaining strong and active.

Members report that they are sharing food and making sure everyone has at least one

meal to eat per day. Individuals that have received financial assistance from overseas have generously shared the resources with their entire church community. Despite the difficulty, members are still standing strong in their faith and trusting that God will provide. Church leaders are soliciting prayers for strength and courage to face this seemingly impossible challenge.

Philip Baptiste is the editor for CONNECT.

South Sudan’s Vice President Affirms the Adventist Church for its Message of Peace!



Dr. Riek Machar Teny, Vice-president of the Republic of South Sudan recently affirmed the Adventist church for its message of peace while

attending a joint worship service held at the Juba Central SDA Church on May 28, 2016.

Dr. Machar during his

speech after worship said: “I have come to share the message that peace has come to South Sudan.” He explained the different components of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement for Conflict Resolution in South Sudan, stressing that the time has come for reconciliation and healing in the East African nation.

Dr. Machar, who has been visiting all churches of different denominations in Juba lately, commented that he appreciated the way the Seventh-day Adventist Church welcomed him. Saying, “I observed that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is well organized and that it preaches messages of peace, I will come again to listen to more messages.”

He further stated that he had never known the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but he knows that its core message is based on Revelation 14:6-12. While he had met an Adventist 40 years ago in Khartoum, Sudan, he said, “Today is my first time to step into Seventh-day Adventist Church ground.”

Over 3,000 people attended the worship. Among the worshipers, were the leaders from South Sudan Attached Territory of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Government leaders, the Greater Equatoria Field and several local churches.

John Taban is the communication director for the Adventist Church in South Sudan.

ADVENTIST ENTREPRENEURS COMMIT TO GROWTH AND SHARING AT THE ANNUAL ATAPE RETREAT



Over the last Esther holiday, Pr. Geoffrey Mbwana, the Vice President of the Adventist Church, attended the Annual Retreat of The Association of Tanzania Adventist Professional and Entrepreneurship (ATAPE). During the Retreat, the Vice President inspired the attendees to grow in

Christ and share their faith. Proclaiming the urgency of announcing the second coming of Jesus. Attendees were encouraged by the theme “Arise and Shine; Jesus is Coming”, as Pastor Mbwana invited participants to embrace the initiatives of the Adventist Church which point to the second coming

of Jesus Christ. “We are living in the earth’s final history,” said Geoffrey Mbwana “tell the world about the soon coming of Jesus Christ.” The Retreat was attended by more than 600 members and was held at the Mkapa Hall in Mbeya City, Tanzania from March 24 -27, 2016.

ATAPE members con-

verge annually during Esther holiday to learn, discuss and share ideas for the development of the church and the personal growth of church members by sharing the blessings that God has bestowed upon with others.

Sifael Lusiu, Southern Tanzania Union Mission

ECD YOUTH LEADERS MOBILIZED FOR SERVICE IN ARUSHA



Over 1,000 youth leaders gathered in Arusha, Tanzania earlier this year to be equipped and trained for youth ministry excellence in

the Adventist church’s East-Central Africa Region. Pastors, youth ministry consultants along with local conference, union and division leaders

gathered together to vision and plan for the next five years.

Special guests included Blasious Ruguri, president of the Adventist church in East-Central Africa, Gilbert Cangy, youth director of the Adventist church who came with his two associates, Jonatan Tejel, and Pako Mokwgane. Additionally, Stephan Sigg, youth director of the Adventist churches Inter-European Region along with Bailey Gillespie, associate dean at La Sierra University facilitated workshops and practical youth ministry training.

The goal of the event was

to create awareness of the importance of youth ministries at the local churches and to train pastors, elders and youth leaders to effectively mobilize youth for ministry. Pastor Magulio Mwakalonge, youth and chaplaincy ministries director for the East-Central Africa Division (ECD) said, “The event was the first of its kind in our division and participants were energized and equipped like never before. By God’s grace, we are now ready to empower Youth Total Involvement in ECD.”

YOUTH IN KIREKA LAUNCH NEW MINISTRY TO THE ELDERLY



The youth of the Kireka district recently showed an act of kindness to over 200 elderly persons at Kinawataka and Kiganda zones, a slum area, east of Kampala City in the country of Uganda.

Over six sacks of sugar, 200 bars of soap and several other items such as salt and matchboxes were given away. The over 200 senior citizens each received a new pair of shoes and a brand new outfit to wear.

Officiating at the function was the district pastor, Pr. Ntulo, who preached to the senior citizens about the

message of the good Samaritan citing the event of the day as living the good Samaritan message. He urged them to realize that besides the few items they were given, Christ has the most precious thing to give, and that is salvation.

He urged them to accept Christ's gift of salvation. Many attendees expressed an interest in coming for Sabbath worship to hear more about the God, who cared enough about them to tend to their physical needs.

Local leaders also attended the event. The district youth

leader Nantongo Elizabeth urged those blessed with resources and energy to always give to the needy as Christ taught. One of the beneficiaries, Apio Hellen, 60 years and widowed said this was a great relief to her for a few days amidst her struggles to look after five orphaned grandchildren. She thanked the Adventist Church for this groundbreaking initiative.

Last year, the Kireka Adventist youth sprayed over 300 houses infested with bedbugs in the same area relieving several families of

the infestation.

This year's event was supposed to coincide with global youth day but was conducted later due to delay in the mobilization of resources. For the Kireka Adventist Youth, this outreach is only the beginning. Organizers are planning to develop a continuous outreach ministry to the people in the slums of the Kireka District.

Immanuel Osoro Ogwal is the communication director for the Uganda Union.

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