



Adventist News Network

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World Church: Five Years of Growth, Service, Mission Mark Adventist's Half-Decade

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States [ANN Staff] ... During the past five years the Seventh-day Adventist Church has grown from 11.3 million baptized members at the end of 2000 to approximately 14 million baptized members today. Following is a year-by-year review of selected major church news and achievements, as recorded by the Adventist News Network, official news agency of the movement:

2005

- More than 70,000 Seventh-day Adventists from around the world are expected to gather in St. Louis, Missouri, United States, for the General Conference Session, a quinquennial business meeting and celebration of Adventism.
- Pastor Jan Paulsen, world president, hosted a live television broadcast dialogue with college students in Germany, called "Let's Talk Europe." It was aired around the world on church-owned satellite outlets, and is expected to be followed by a similar broadcast in Australia. The first broadcast was in 2003, followed by another in 2004.
- The seven-month jail sentence of U.S. Marine Joel David Klimkewicz was suspended April 6, pending appeal of his court-martial conviction of failing to obey a lawful order. Klimkewicz, who joined the Adventist Church while in the armed services, had asked to become a non-combatant. However the Marine Corps declined his request, which led to his trial and conviction for refusing to carry a weapon. Military observers consider these actions highly unusual for such a case.
- Four computer science students from Adventist-owned Northern Caribbean University in Mandeville, Jamaica, won a regional software design competition sponsored by Microsoft Corp., which will fly the students to Yokohama, Japan for the final event.

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2 ANN–5 Years of Growth

- United States Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York spoke at the North American Religious Liberty Association’s annual dinner on Capitol Hill, praising Adventists as a “vital force” for freedom of conscience.
- The Seventh-day Adventist Church celebrated its centenary in Zambia and the Philippines. The Philippines government released a postage stamp commemorating the Church’s centenary
- Partnering with Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI), the church’s world headquarters is spearheading a global youth witnessing initiative that, so far, has 600,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 30 involved in leading evangelism programs.
- Three major offering collections, the last of which will be collected at the Session this summer, will help fund gospel outreach programs for 55 of the world’s largest cities. While the Adventist church has a strong presence in rural areas and islands, membership is low in cities that now house more and more of the world’s population.
- During his second official visit to Rwanda, world church president Jan Paulsen, visited the Kigali Memorial Center, which contains the remains of 250,000 genocide victims. “We must see that something like this never happens again. Our children deserve better!” he said.
- Adventists all around the world have been actively involved in supporting victims of the South Asia tsunami and helping them rebuild their lives. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency, the church’s humanitarian arm are in many of the countries affected providing food, rebuilding homes and schools and helping locals regain their way of making a living. The Adventist church has also had fundraisers, most notably one televised on the church’s Hope Channel in February, to help victims.

2004

- The church reaches 13.6 million members with an average of 2,756 are baptized daily. More than 1 million people joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2004. The 22,000 baptisms in India, and 181,000 in East Africa this year, are included in that number. Peru is one of the fastest-growing areas for the church worldwide with an average of 50,000 people joining each year.
- The Adventist Church formally reaffirmed its historic belief in a literal six-day creation.
- The church also re-affirmed its stance on traditional marriage, which Adventists believe to be between a man and a woman. The traditional definition of Christian marriage is under challenge with a concept of “same sex unions” in some nations around the world, with the potential to threaten both freedom of conscience and freedom of expression.

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3 ANN–5 Years of Growth

- 2004 marked 100 years since the church’s world headquarters moved to the Washington, D.C. area.
- Tragedy struck the church in the final month of 2004, beginning with the plane crash deaths of four district leaders and ending with a large number of deaths resulting from the massive tsunami in the Indian Ocean.
- In Turkmenistan, the Adventist Church, whose worship center was razed five years ago by government authorities, was the first to receive government registration, which officially recognizes the 60 Adventist believers in that country.
- In India, Adventist leaders celebrated the overturn of the anti-conversion ordinance, which made it a crime to either force someone to change their religion or offer “incentives” to do so. While Christians, Muslims and some minority religions agreed that forcible conversion is ethically wrong, they said the ordinance could result in accusations of “inducements” that were never offered.
- A Global Internet Evangelism Forum was held at the world headquarters, uniting Adventist Web masters and other professionals in the cause of using technology to spread the Gospel.
- With the theme of “Bringing God Home” Adventist Television Network launched its sixth channel, the Hope Channel. Subscribers can view programs on the Hope Channel such as: Freedom in Focus, issues of church and state and mission documentaries at home using a satellite dish.

2003

- Sow 1 Billion—an ambitious world church initiative to print and distribute 1,000 million invitations to study the Bible, was launched.
- Adventists joined in Kenya’s “Total War on AIDS” initiative in March. With 26.6 million people infected with HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, the disease is affecting the Adventist Church in that region.
- Rear Admiral Barry Black, an Adventist chaplain for the United States Navy, was selected as the chaplain for the United States Senate and took up his new post in August. He is the first military chaplain, the first African-American and the first Seventh-day Adventist pastor in this position.
- The 150th anniversary of the church’s Sabbath School program was celebrated in September in Rochester, New York. Today millions of people around the world each week use the Sabbath School lessons prepared and published by the Adventist Church.

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- In February the church opened its first publishing house in Israel, “Chaim Veshalom,” or “Life and Peace.” The church has ministered in Israel for 107 years and has 2,000 members.
- The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, or world church headquarters, celebrated 140 years since its establishment in 1863.

2002

- A 160-percent response to a plan to recruit, train, and equip 1 million Adventist lay people for evangelism was recorded in the first half of the year as part of the “Go One Million” initiative.
- The church in Africa has been reorganized to form a third administrative region, and the boundaries of the two existing divisions have been readjusted.
- A first-ever youth-led evangelism series was held in the Inter-American Division, where more than 60,000 youth were baptized after a two-week satellite broadcast from Mexico City, Mexico, in November. Led by young people from ages 11 through 32, “Live Without Fear” represented all countries in the Inter-American region of the church.
- In August, the church in South America saw membership pass the 2-million mark.
- The Adventist Development and Relief Agency responds to the looming disaster from mass starvation that threatens 34 million people in the countries of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique and Swaziland.
- Ellen G. White, one of the founders of the church, was born 175 years ago on Nov. 26, 1827.
- The Seventh-day Adventist Church reaffirmed its commitment to peace by releasing a statement calling for peace in April. The statement condemned terrorism and all religiously motivated violence and promoted four biblically based “pillars of peace:” dialogue, justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation. .
- Church scientists, theologians and leaders began a series of conversations spanning three years on Faith and Science. The International Faith and Science Conference held in Utah was designed as a dialogue on questions of science and theology that impact Adventist understanding of the biblical account of the origin of earth and life.

2001

- An estimated 100,000 people gathered at a stadium in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, July 6 for an Adventist satellite evangelistic series broadcast live around the world. Some traveled for days from remote regions of the country to attend the two-week event.

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5 ANN—5 Years of Growth

- In Cuba, an evangelistic outreach series in February drew 15,000 people a night, marking the first time in 42 years that a Protestant evangelistic program had been held in a public venue in Cuba.
- Bold Batsukh was ordained Aug. 4, becoming the first Mongolian to enter the Adventist Church ministry. Ten years earlier, there were no Adventists in Mongolia.
- In May, a medical team at Loma Linda University Children’s Hospital implanted the world’s smallest pacemaker—just 12.8 grams—in a two-month-old baby.
- A new medical research center to be run by Loma Linda University, California, was opened at the Kabul University Medical School in Afghanistan on July 4.
- Results of a 12-year health study of 34,000 Adventists in California, United States, were released in July. Results showed that lifestyle habits practiced by many Adventists contribute to a longer-than-average life expectancy.
- Three Strategic Issues -- “Growth, Unity, and Quality of Life” were adopted as the three strategic values of the Adventist world church in April. These values are intended to permeate the day-to-day functioning of the Adventist Church, impacting how decisions are made, how finances are used, and how leaders—from church pastors to world region presidents—go about setting priorities and making plans.

2000

- A mid-year quinquennial World Session brought a record 70,000 participants to the SkyDome convocation in Toronto, Canada. Meeting delegates elected new world leadership for the next five-year term and participants celebrated church growth worldwide.

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