



By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

REACH the WORLD IT'S PERSONAL

The church's new strategic plan calls on every member to share Jesus.

A small prayer group that a Seventh-day Adventist couple began in western Kenya in 2011 has grown to 400 people and witnessed the baptism of 16 pastors from other denominations during the world church's recent 100 Days of Prayer initiative.

The couple, entrepreneurs Philip Rono and his wife, Calvin Chep-chumba Rono, are convinced that the baptisms on June 18, 2015, were a direct result of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit during the 100 Days of Prayer, a daily prayer program that ran

from March 25 to July 3, 2015, the start of the General Conference session in San Antonio, Texas, United States.

"The 100 Days of Prayer became a big miracle that took everyone by surprise," Philip Rono said by phone. "It has always been our tradition to invite those of other faiths, but this time the number was big, and we were surprised with how the Lord moved them."

The Ronos' passion for sharing Jesus is just what Adventist Church leaders hope to see repeated among every one of the church's 18.5 million members over the next five years. A

main focus of the church's new Reach the World strategic plan, which will be implemented from 2015 to 2020, is to find a way for every Adventist to get involved in evangelism.

The strategic plan, based on the results of a two-year survey of more than 41,000 current and former church members, aims to provide vision and direction in carrying out the church's mission of preparing people for the return of Jesus. It urges General Conference department directors and world division leaders to create programs that nurture church

members' relationship with God and provide them with ways to evangelize.

Current programs include 777, during which church members pray at 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., seven days a week; 10 Days of Prayer every January; 100 Days of Prayer; and Believe His Prophets, a daily online Bible reading with twice-a-week passages from the writings of church cofounder Ellen G. White. Those are all overseen by the General Conference's Ministerial Association.

Other church initiatives include Mission to the Cities, comprehensive health ministry, and Revival and Reformation.

Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson said those programs will be used to encourage every member to get involved in evangelism. "It is essential for our full proclamation of the three angels' messages and the falling of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit," Wilson said. "Everyone must be involved in sharing Christ and this precious Advent message within the context that they feel comfortable as the Holy Spirit leads them."

He said church leaders and church members should work hand in hand for mission outreach, noting that Ellen White wrote, "The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers"*

The drive to get every member involved—"total member involvement," as Wilson calls it—is to become a major focal point for the entire church over the next five years. Wilson is placing the General Conference's Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Department, led by newly elected director Duane McKey, directly under his office to serve as adviser, and all departments will be involved in this integrated evangelism outreach.



Prayer groups in Eldoret, Kenya, have swelled from a few dozen to a few hundred as people focused on prayer and revival.

How 16 Pastors Got Baptized

Philip and Chepchumba Rono's prayer group in Eldoret, Kenya, offers a glimpse of the total member involvement envisaged by church leaders thousands of miles away at world church headquarters in Maryland, United States.

The Kenyan couple started a small prayer group of five people under the world church's Revival and Reformation program in 2011. Members of the group prayed for two to four hours every Monday and, as the church unveiled 777 and 10 Days of Prayer, encouraged one another to observe those daily initiatives on their own.

Attendance soared after the couple placed an even greater emphasis on prayer and organized a second group in a larger, Adventist-owned building in Eldoret in February 2014. The second prayer group grew in 2014 from 50 to 150, then to a crowd of 200 people who attended 10 Days of Prayer in early January 2015. It swelled to 300 people when 100 Days of Prayer started in late March, and to more than 400 people in May.

The new group initially agreed to



For four years Chepchumba Rono, and her husband, Philip, used initiatives that were part of the church's Revival and Reformation initiative to conduct community Bible meetings.

meet two days a month for Revival and Reformation meetings.

"Then we saw that this was not adequate, and we began to meet three days a month, usually on Thursdays, Fridays, and Sabbaths," Philip Rono said. "On Sabbaths people prayed in the afternoon, went home for a couple hours, and then returned at 7:00 p.m. for all-night prayers."

Attendees followed the daily 10

“The plan urges General Conference department directors and world division leaders to create programs that nurture church members’ relationship with God and provide them with ways to evangelize.”



All-night prayer meetings conducted by Philip Rono and others resulted in 16 pastors requesting to be baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Days of Prayer and 100 Days of Prayer programs in their homes.

In May, during the 100 Days initiative, two members of the group invited 12 pastors from other denominations to attend the all-night prayer sessions.

“They were so impressed by the reception and the lessons presented, and they felt that they needed to know more about Seventh-day Adventists,” Rono said.

A three-day seminar was organized immediately, and 50 pastors were invited to attend it in Eldoret. At the end of the seminar a group of pastors

asked if another three-day meeting could be held in their hometown so that their church members could attend. After that meeting, 16 pastors requested baptism.

In August members of two of the churches whose pastors became Adventist decided to rename their church as Adventist. A member of the prayer group donated US\$12,400 toward the purchase of the properties, and the local Adventist conference pledged to pay the difference.

A series of fall meetings have been scheduled to reach the baptized pastors’ former congregations. In addi-

tion, another group of pastors from a nearby region have asked for private seminars to learn about Adventism.

Rono said the revival in western Kenya was the result of prayer. “We need to take prayer very, very seriously, especially during this period of revival and reformation,” he said. “Meeting every week makes a big difference. We have witnessed many miracles.”

Rono and his wife are now setting up a “center of influence”—a wellness center with treatment rooms, a library, a chapel for daily prayers at 1:00 p.m., and a restaurant in downtown Eldoret—as they latch onto another world church program, Mission to the Cities. The couple toured several wellness centers in the United States this summer looking for ideas and advice.

What Divisions Are Doing

Blasius Ruguri, president of the Adventist Church’s East-Central Africa Division, which includes Kenya, said prayer was vital for the fulfillment of the church’s Reach the World goals.

In his division, he said, “prayer life by all members in every church will be maintained to keep the fire burning in every heart.”

Ruguri also said his division has found that child evangelism is extremely effective in reaching people, and that people respond more readily when women are involved in mission initiatives.

World church leaders are encouraging each region of the world church—indeed, every member—to find methods that work best for them.

The South American Division has found that Revived by His Word and its successor, Believe His Prophets, have gained considerable traction among its members.

“We are motivating our people to dedicate the first hour every day to be in the presence of the Lord, participating in #RBHW, #BHP, studying the

Indonesia care groups use contextualized resources during their weekly IEL meetings.



ABE CARPENA/SSD

Sabbath school lesson, and praying,” said division president Erton Köhler.

#RBHW and #BHP are the social media hashtags for the daily Bible study plans, and Adventist Twitter users in the South American Division are among the most active worldwide in using them.

“The only way to be renewed is personal time with God at the best time of the day, when the mind is open to read, understand, and be close to God,” Köhler said.

Paul Ratsara, president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, said his region’s biggest challenge related to the availability of resources. “It is my dream that sufficient Bibles and Spirit of Prophecy books will be available for all of our members,” Ratsara said. “We need to make sure that every member intensifies their reading plans.”

He said he greatly appreciated Revived by His Word, and now Believe His Prophets, and he intended to promote the reading plan vigorously. “As

the availability of smartphones and Internet penetration increases, more and more of our members will have access to the huge blessing of these daily readings,” he said.

Access to the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy is also a challenge in the South Pacific Division, whose president intends to put a strong emphasis on discipleship. “The written Bible is very accessible to most of the people in the South Pacific in English and French, two of the main languages, and in all the languages of the Pacific Islands,” president Glenn Townend said. “But not everybody, let alone Seventh-day Adventists, can read.”

He said three entities—It is Written Oceania, the Papua New Guinea Union, and the Solomon Islands Mission—have worked on putting the Bible and some of Ellen White’s books into audio forms on solar-powered “Godpods.”

“Also, leaders will teach and model creative biblical ways to pray, and



ABE CARPENA/SSD

Hope Channel will have programs on spiritual habits that connect people with their God,” Townend said. “The Bible reading plan will certainly be encouraged. Discipleship does not happen without a close connection to Jesus through spiritual habits.”

In the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, president Leonardo R. Asoy faces a formidable challenge with a number of unreached groups as well as millions of people from three of the world’s major religions, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. He said the division would continue to use initiatives such as Mission to the Cities and One Year in Mission to reach those communities, but it would put a stronger focus on nurturing and retention.

“New members, particularly those coming from non-Christian religions, need mentoring, a sense of belonging, training in personal evangelism, and discipleship, so they can become joyful, active Christians who share Jesus through their life examples,” he said.

Asoy expressed particular enthusiasm for a new local program called Integrated Evangelism Lifestyle, which was championed by his predecessor, Alberto Gulfan, Jr., and he said would advance Reach the World’s objectives.

“It uses Christ’s method of evangelism and encourages members in personal revival and reformation,” he said.

Under the program, members commit to two months of prayer, focused Bible study, and preparation. After this time, members invite their family, friends, and neighbors to join them in weekly care groups in their homes or other informal settings. The focus is on building relationships. During these weekly gatherings, they

discuss topics of general interest, such as health, family, happiness, and community involvement, and offer faith-based perspectives. They also choose projects to do as a group to improve their communities.

While the family unit is the basic starting point, with one family inviting another family to join the group, care groups also consist of individuals with common backgrounds, such as young professionals, single parents, and seniors.

"The focus is not on evangelism as an event. Instead, the Integrated Evangelism Lifestyle program offers evangelism as a process through long-term personal contact and the nurturing of individuals," Asoy said. "It will take time, but we look forward to seeing how the Lord will lead." ■

*Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 9, p. 117.

READ MORE:

Read the Reach the World strategic plan at www.adventistarchives.org/reach-the-world.pdf.

The 2011-2013 survey behind the strategic plan can be accessed at documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/Other/ACRep2013.pdf.

Read *Adventist Review's* synopsis of the strategy at www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story2921-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-adventist-churcxs-new-strategy.



Andrew McChesney is news editor for *Adventist World*.



Twenty-one goals divided into three categories.

REACH UP TO GOD

1. To involve Adventist members in daily Bible study
2. To engage all members in doctrinal study, essential for spiritual maturity
3. To make all members better acquainted with Ellen White's counsel and prophetic ministry
4. To increase the engagement of church members in biblically authentic spiritual practices
5. To foster, among pastors, teachers, members, and students in denominational institutions, greater appreciation for and insight from a study of Scripture that uses the historical-grammatical method and historicist approach to interpretation, including the understanding of prophecy
6. To encourage church members to adopt regular patterns of worship

REACH IN WITH GOD

7. To enhance unity and community among church members
8. To nurture believers in lives of discipleship and to involve them in service
9. To increase the engagement of young people in the life of the church
10. To affirm the administrative role of pastors in organizational leadership
11. To improve leadership practices in order to enhance the credibility of, and trust in, the church organization, its operations, and mission initiatives

REACH OUT WITH GOD

12. To enhance Adventist outreach and presence across the 10/40 window
13. To enhance Adventist outreach and presence in large urban areas worldwide
14. To make planting new groups of believers a priority in all parts of the world
15. To substantially reorient our understanding and methods of mission
16. To engage all church members, pastors, and leaders in full partnership
17. To increase the involvement of young people in the mission of the church
18. To encourage local churches to take the initiative in communicating the three angels' messages and carrying out the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
19. To raise the profile of mission to non-Christian religions and belief systems
20. To strengthen the world church's global resources for mission
21. To optimize communication plans and methodologies so as to empower the work and witness of the church