

SOUTHERN ASIA - PACIFIC DIVISION

OUTLOOK

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January - March 2008

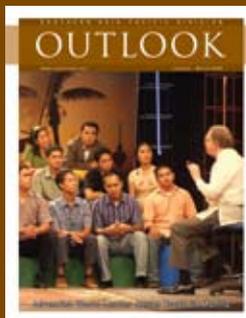


Adventist World Leader Meets Youth in Manila



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Setting the Trend

I RECEIVED an invitation late last year to be baccalaureate speaker of the high school graduating class of South Philippine Adventist College this month of March. I requested the officers to send me their class philosophy sooner so I would have enough time to prepare for my message.

Months went by I didn't realize the event was only a couple of weeks to go. I called the college president requesting information about the class' philosophy so I could write down my thoughts to address these young people. I was intrigued by their chosen philosophy. It does not only appear paradoxical, it was a revelation of young people's assessment of the present societal culture. It was a downright opposition to the existing worldly lifestyle of greed and avarice.

"Descending into Greatness" What a philosophy for a Class!

I asked one of the student leaders what influenced them to come up with this philosophy. The answer was revealing—"The youth of today are tired of 'upward mobility' that is fueled by greed." I pressed a bit further to comprehend what this kid was saying. I understood that they were fed up by the display of corruption at every level of governance as exposed by whistle blowers over what appear anomalous transactions by public leaders. But what relation has this to their philosophy? Isn't greatness synonymous with upward mobility? And why descend to greatness if upward mobility is the norm? Could there be downward mobility to greatness?

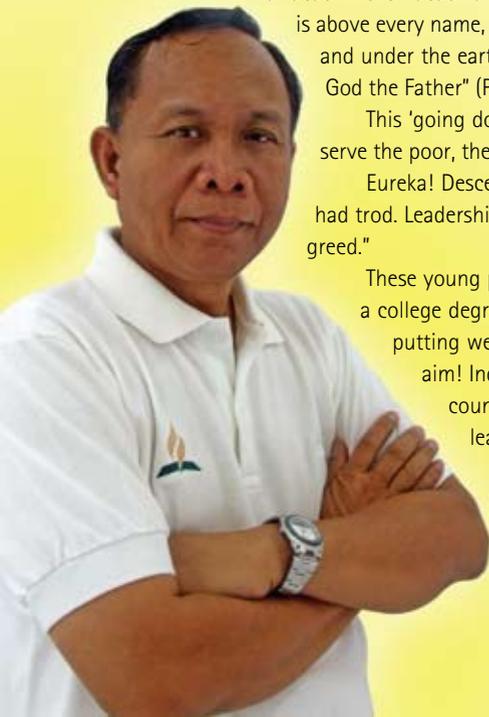
I searched the Scriptures to find support to this adopted philosophy. And I have discovered this passage:

"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:5-11).

This 'going down to go up' was modeled by Jesus when He was born human and lived to serve the poor, the needy, the sick and the outcasts.

Eureka! Descending into greatness would then mean following the path of service Jesus had trod. Leadership is service! So is greatness! It is a total riddance of greed or even "moderate greed."

These young people have seen a better direction for their life even before working toward a college degree. They said they would set a new trend—attain greatness through service, putting wealth—time, effort, money and riches to help others enjoy life. What a noble aim! Indeed, this pathway is not easy. I am sure there are many who will chose to counter the flow. But the possibility is not remote for the coming generation of leaders if we who precede them will model it now, set the trend ourselves!




JONATHAN CACHUELA-CATOLICO, PH.D.



Witch Doctor Switches Allegiance

Yangon, Myanmar - A witch doctor has disowned the spirits that controlled his life for many years and switched allegiance to Jesus Christ to become his Lord and Savior.

Pastor Isaiah Hai, a field pastor for the Mong-hsat tribe, recently reported to his colleagues at the Seventh-day Adventist church headquarters in Myanmar (MYUM) that Kyar Taw Hpar Yar, the witch doctor, was baptized with his seven followers who took their stand to forsake their animistic practices.

“Everything connected with spirit worship (shrines, amulets, wristband, and many others) were burned as soon as they decided to receive Christ as their Savior,” said Pastor Hai.

This ongoing activity that started in December 2007, brought together eight persons engaging in animistic practices at a village in Nan Leh, 12 miles north of Mong-hsat.

In December, a series of evangelistic meetings was conducted at this village with a team headed by Pastor Hai. He was assisted by Han Shwe Aung, a teacher; Than Zaw Oo; Yaw Han; few church members; and students at the village school.

This new baptism brought the total Adventist believers in this village to 15.

“Every one was happy but the witchdoctor was the happiest because he said to his fellow new believers, ‘I’m now free from the clutches of the devil’ and these 15 believers are in urgent need of a house of worship,” Pastor Hai concluded. [MAN/AND]

Sri Lanka Church Conducts Smoking Cessation Training

The Adventist Church in Sri Lanka launched a smoking cessation training for their pastors and lay-leaders, January 21-24.

Held at the headquarters of the church, this training had Abraham B Carpena, health director for the Adventist Church in the southern Asia-Pacific region, leading out in the four-day extensive training seminar, challenging the participants to be available for community programs that help stop the use of tobacco and harmful drugs.

“We are willing to use the knowledge we learned from this seminar to conduct similar programs in the community so we can be of service to them,” pledged the participants.

Pastor Carpena sought the commitment of the leadership of Sri Lanka Adventist Church to translate the materials to Sinhalese and Tamil languages until May to enable the leaders and workers to immediately launch the first program in July this year.

“We believe that these smoking cessation programs will serve as an effective tool to reach the masses in Sri Lanka and help many people who are in the habit of smoking to come out of it,” concluded Pastor Carpena. [George Wambeek]

Adventist Medical Center Opens in Manado, East Indonesia

By Jose F Sarsoza, Jr., editor of the Philippine Publishing House

THE DREAM was conceived and crystallized in the 70s. More than 30 years later that dream became a reality: Today, a three-story 100-bed capacity hospital and medical center stands in Manado, East Indonesia, a testament to the perseverance and patience of the Advent believers in that place whose passion for the progress of God's work is matched by their vision to share the message of salvation to more people through the medical ministry.

Two days after its soft opening on December 3, 2007, Rumah Sakit Advent Manado, or East Indonesia Adventist Medical Center, received its first 10 patients.

Dr. Eddy Antou, the president, beamed as he related the hospital's beginnings: "After I arrived here, I said to myself I'll do my best to ensure this hospital meet the objectives and vision for which it was established. Our people have dreamed for 34 years to build this institution, and my staff and I must work hard to make this dream a full reality."

"And you know," he added, as if anticipating our next question, "ever since our opening we have been 100% full of patients."

Ideally located on a hilltop where "all roads



DR. EDDY ANTOU
President, East Indonesia Adventist Medical Center



EAST INDONESIA ADVENTIST MEDICAL CENTER

pass through here," as one Adventist pastor put it, the hospital, which used to be the home of

East Indonesia Union Conference, is about 200 meters away from the provincial government office.

The doctors, nurses and other staff members that serve this hospital number 120, and 99% are Seventh-day Adventists, according to Dr.

Antou. "We also have one chaplain and training nurse chaplain. Further, there are student nurses from Klabat University who have their clinical training here," he added.

But the workers don't confine themselves only to hospital work. They also spent Sabbath services in different churches to participate in the mission of the church.

The first equipment, Dr. Antou said, the hospital acquired was for use of the Laboratory

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Certification Seminar

“A Great Experience”: Participant

THE CERTIFICATION seminar for women leaders in southern Philippines, January 17-19, had all 229 participants describing it as “a great experience.”

Held at the Naomi’s Botanical Garden in Ozamis City, in western Mindanao, this level II certification seminar had all women ministry directors from the six fields of southern Philippines bringing their delegates in order to qualify for the level III sessions to be done sometime later. The first of the three levels was held in Cagayan de Oro City in 2007.

Ms Helen Gulfan, women’s ministry (WM) director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the southern Asia-Pacific region, voiced out the delegates’ feelings of joy when asked what she thought of the seminar. Gulfan was the main speaker and was assisted by Shirley Aguinaldo, WM director for southern Philippines (SPUC); Mercy Aplicador, director for southern Mindanao (SMM); Myrna Pamunag, southwestern Mindanao (SWAF); Leonor Mongaya, northeastern Mindanao (NEMM); Ester Jimenez, Davao (DM); Shirley Bacus, northern Mindanao (NMC); and Ma. Luisa Dulce Jimenez, western Mindanao (WMC).

Lectures and presentations delved on the seminar’s theme, “Give your best in 2008,” emphasizing women’s responsibility of winning people to Christ and helping them overcome societal challenges that confront each of their families.

Keynoting the seminar, January 17, was Luciano T Nermal Jr., SPUC executive secretary. Speaking on the role of women in New Testament times, Pastor Nermal said, “The women were inhibited greatly

at Jesus times to express openly their gratefulness and sentiments, but Mary Magdalene stepped out to lead and show such act of thankfulness.” Jesus, he concluded, uses men and women “to become symbols of God’s salvation.”

The Sabbath School program was spent for testimonies of women from the field that “touched even the hardest of hearts,” said observers. Attended by close to 500 church members who came from nearby churches, the Timothy Hall of the Garden was packed.

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department. It was made possible through “the generosity of friends, mostly doctors, with the arrangement that the first six months are free and afterward we pay on installment basis. And our Muslim and Buddhist friends are involved in this venture.” Most of these donor friends were classmates of Dr. Antou at the state university medical school in Manado.

Sets of equipment for the ICU, surgical and other units have been procured either through donation or through the aforementioned process.

The hospital has six house staff doctors and 33 consultants, and one of them, Dr. Imelda Mokoagouwa, is the niece of the Governor. People in all walks of life, even the elites in Manado, have visited or have been confined in this hospital. Government officials include the Governor himself and members of the House of Representatives. “They want to feel the service of an Adventist hospital,” exclaimed Dr. Antou.

Dr. Antou, who also holds an MBA in hospital administration and has served in other medical institutions like Bandung and Medan Adventist hospitals and Newstart Wellness Center in Surabaya, has big plans for East Indonesia Adventist Medical Center. Some of them are:

- Expand the hospital to reach 300-bed

capacity and make it a five-star hospital

- Arrange the hospital system and extend it so as to utilize its 2.8- hectare lot
- Build new buildings for renal unit, stroke unit and others. Procure CT scan MRI within this year. “Our consultant doctors are collecting money to buy this unit which is priced at US\$500,000,” Dr. Antou said.
- Have more donors to expand the hospital, so that patients even as far as West Papua can be accommodated.

Given a guided tour by Dr. Antou himself after the interview, our team saw the progress done in so short a time after the hospital’s opening. But much remains to be done. We believe Dr. Antou and his staff members are moving in the direction dreamed of and envisioned by church leaders and members alike 30 or so years ago.

Reaching the third floor, we looked down the valley below dotted with houses and churches of many religious denominations (majority of the people in Manado are Christians). The view from here is magnificent but the thought remains: These houses and churches are people who need to know the message of salvation through the ministry of Rumah Sakit Advent Manado.

At the divine worship service Ms Gulfan talked on “Hope in God’s Promises.” She anchored her message on the life of Jeremiah and the Israelites during their captivity. The Israelites, she said, believed that God had abandoned them. “But as Jeremiah reiterated God’s promise of salvation when Israel returned to God, that same promise is made abundant to each of us,” she emphasized.

The Sabbath afternoon activities were filled with different activities. Again, Mrs. Gulfan, shared her insights on the “Parable of the Pencil.” She said, “A person’s life is like a pencil—useless if not in someone’s hand; and just like the pencil’s lead, what matters more is in the heart of a person.”

Pastor Rudy Jimenez, WMC resident, closed the seminar with a commitment prayer. [Bobby M Asis]

Adventist World Leader *meets* Youth in Manila

ADVENTIST world church president Jan Paulsen met with 35 youth participants, February 7, for his 18th in a series of ‘Let’s Talk’ dialogue with young people worldwide, this time in Manila, Philippines, where he counseled youth on various issues that confront them.

First to be done in Asia, Dr Paulsen engaged the youth in a conversation where he advised them on what needed to be done when certain issues crop up and take them to task. Answering a question on whether Adventists can participate in political exercises, he answered “yes.” He, however, counseled, “Don’t let anything distance you from your commitment to Christ. And when you seek election one day, don’t confuse the agenda of the state with the mission of the church.”

Dr. Paulsen scored a young lady from Myanmar on issue of attending exams on Sabbath. “The church has the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department to help work with governments on concerns like religious discrimination. And I believe governments don’t like to be perceived as depriving their citizens of the right to follow their consciences,” he said.

Still on the issue of Sabbath-keeping, Dr Paulsen came up with wisdom of refraining to compromise the Sabbath for anything. “Difficulties may come but they bring new opportunities to trust God,” he said.

A participant from Cambodia who came with sad experience of losing a family during Pol Pot’s genocidal regime, asked whether God would save people who never were given chance to accept Jesus. Pastor Paulsen’s assurance of God’s generosity made this young man’s heart leap with joy.

The one-hour live broadcast of Let’s Talk Manila had come and gone. “It all went great,” said Rajmund Dabrowski, executive producer of the event and the communication director for the Adventist world church. “Excellently timed, prepared, managed, and directed,” phoned an observer from the southern Philippines soon after 9:00PM on February 7.

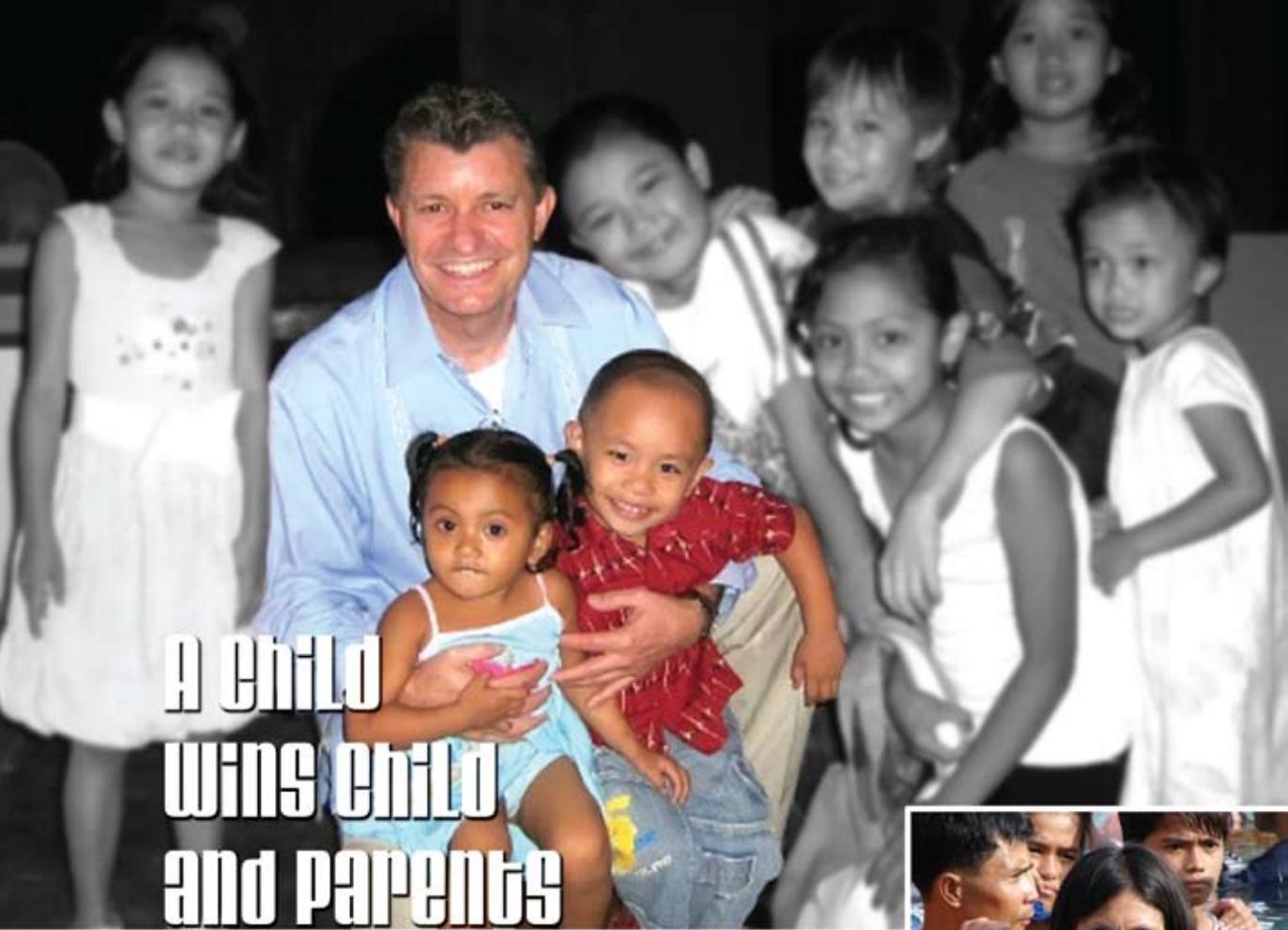
A young lady participant sent a text message saying, “I never felt so relieved of my heart’s burdens than when Dr Paulsen answered my long-kept question.”

On another perspective, a staff member of the station who is not a Seventh-day Adventist member voiced her impression on the young people’s behavior. “They are such a disciplined youth. No foul words on their mouth and they never smoked cigarettes unlike the many young people of their age whom we have served many times in the past,” she said. And at the culmination of the event, these staff members proudly posed for picture with the “well-behaved’ group we ever got in touch with.”

Randel A Ty, a young lawyer hosting the event, in retrospect said, “I have been to courts arguing for my clients but hosting this event was a hundred times scarier. But I thank God for such an opportunity.”

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A Child Wins Child and Parents

S T E P H A N I E L O R I E Z O

FRANZE, a 3-year old boy of Adventist parents and Jennylyn, a 2-year old girl-playmate, were often attending regular children's Sabbath School at the Seventh-day Adventist Church together. Jennylyn's parents were not Seventh-day Adventists. Franze's mother and his grandfather (mother's uncle), a church elder, oftentimes share their blessings to Jennylyn's family as the latter hardly make things meet with a daily income of one hundred pesos earned by driving a tricycle by foot. This kindly gesture has endeared the family of Jennylyn to Franze family.

As Edgar, Franze grandpa, was leaving for the opening night of the Share Him evangelistic meetings at Taculing Ilonggo Seventh-day Adventist Church, Franze invited his playmate to go with them for the children's hour. Jennylyn, in turn, hurriedly told her parents to go with her. At first, the parents were hesitant but the insistence of this little girl prevailed.



At first, the parents were hesitant but the insistence of this little girl prevailed.

The first night's topic on the Image of Daniel Chapter 2 impressed Jennylyn's parents. This prompted a quest for additional Bible study.

As the sound of the motorized tricycle got Jennylyn's attention she would prod her parents to move a little quicker so as not to miss the meetings. This she did every night even when her parents were quite hesitant to go, until it became a welcome activity to the whole family.

A regular Bible study took place between Edgar and the whole family of Jennylyn immediately every after the former's work at Bacolod Adventist Medical Center. This family's interest of accepting the Lord grew intensely as they responded for a special prayer.

During the last week of the evangelistic series, the family, though, wasn't decided to fill up a decision card for baptism. These days were indeed a struggle but three days toward the end of the meetings, the couple took their stand to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior.

"We credit our new-found joy foremost to God and to Jennylyn and Franze who eagerly and persistently pulled us out of our adamant attitude toward church matters but finally took us to such a newer experience with Jesus," said the couple after their baptism. "We could have not been thoroughly introduced to the truth were it not for these little kids."

"God used these little kids with the help of the Holy Spirit to lead this couple to know the truth," said evangelist James Vance, of the Share Him evangelistic meeting at Taculing Ilonggo Adventist Church.

The couple and 30 others were among the 329 people who were baptized on March 29, during the mass baptism held at Central Philippine Adventist College Recreation Center.

"Every heart has a mission, please answer the call," runs the lyric of the song. Be inspired like the kids who answered the call."

Writing Seminar Overwhelms Participants, Pledge to Learn More

Manado, Indonesia – What a good way to learn. Hands-on experience with Internet has opened our mind to unlimited access to so many good things that are needed to improve our lifework; the participants were heard to say as the writing seminar, March 4-6, was about to wind up.

Organized for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in East Indonesia, this writing and e-publication seminar, the second in series conducted for this year by the communication department of the church in the southern Asia-Pacific region (SSD) for local fields, was "received very well" by the participants.

Twenty-five participants completed the seminar that focused on the following: News and Feature Writing, Photojournalism, Graphics Software Application; Electronic Publication and Web-Publishing.

Pastor Novry Kaumpungan, upon sensing the need for office secretaries to avail themselves of this seminar, sought the officers' approval to let them join the officers, directors, and pastors, and this "made the participants happy," said Pastor Bryan Sumendap, a local church pastor and resource person on web-publishing and electronic publication.

Jonathan Catolico, SSD communication director, who lectured on photojournalism, was assisted by Sumendap and Jose F Sarsoza, Jr, vice-president for editorial services of Philippine Publishing House in Manila. He lectured on news and feature writing.

Asked if the seminar contributed to the participants' profession, Pastor Jannie Legoh, communication director for north Minahasa, said, "the lectures kept the interest of the delegates at high level because the presentations helped improve our skills." Another delegate enjoined Legoh by saying that "we need to continue our hands-on seminar on software application and web-publishing so we can fully use our skills to proclaim the gospel."

The two-day seminar culminated with a commitment service led by Pastor Vence Lumowa, ministerial secretary of the church in Indonesia. [Jen Henry Woy]



AWR Listeners: Let 'Ashar Bani' Stay *Special*

Dhaka, Bangladesh – Coming on their own, 65 listeners of the Bangla broadcasts of the Adventist World Radio (AWR) traveled from all over the country to attend the Listener's Conference, February 22, held at an auditorium owned by a non-government organization, 28 kilometers north of Dhaka.

This occasion was arranged by AWR Asia-Pacific regional office during its 15th year celebration of Ashar Bani, Bangla's broadcast. Ashar Bani, which means Voice of Hope, was "indeed giving us hope," said listeners representing the fields of Sylhet, Chatmohor, Shunamgong, Meherpur, Kustia, Gopalganj, and Khulna. Some of the 65 attendees traveled overnight to come to this conference.

Rhoen Catolico, assistant program director for the AWR Asia-Pacific region headquartered in Singapore, represented AWR. He conveyed the messages of Dr Benjamin Schoun, AWR world president, and Pastor Jonathan Wagiran, AWR Asia/Pacific region director.

Also on hand to greet the attendees were Pastor Eric Monnier, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Bangladesh (BAUM), who thanked the listeners for attending the said meeting; and Edward Chambugong, BAUM executive secretary. "I never realized the impact of our Bangla programs to so many people until you have shown this today," said Chambugong.

Milton Das, director of the Voice of Hope studio and director for the Communication Department, welcomed listeners and guests with red roses assisted by his crew of volunteers.

Aimed at establishing stronger relationship between listeners and producers, the conference had people who made it possible to achieve its objectives. Philip Pandey, Bangla program producer, and Provati Baidya, an AWR volunteer, served as masters of ceremony. Robert Sircar, studio technician, presented two video clips of the "Secrets of Living Longer!" These clips showed how the Adventists lived to their

90's and 100's by practicing a healthy lifestyle. Ms Lucena Chambugong, Women's Ministries director for Bangladesh, gave a Power Point presentation on health and temperance.

One highlight of the conference was to solicit impressions of listeners toward the Ashar Bani broadcasts. "We were blessed with the 'Quit Smoking' programs. All of us now 'live a smoke-free' life!" said attendees

"We came to this conference because we want our kids to continue to hear the Ashar Bani broadcasts," said a couple who brought their two children with them. Another listener, a doctor by profession, said, "All our family members like to listen to your programs, and when I am away, my children record the programs so that I can hear them when I come home."

Enthusiastically, one listener said, "AWR is really unique!" And voicing everybody's impression, he added, "Let Ashar Bani remain unique and special." He was joined by a youthful participant who commented that "Ashar Bani is totally different from other broadcasts; its messages lead us to better life—the healthy and wise way."

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The 35 participants represented nine countries consisting of Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Thailand, Pacific Islands, Micronesia, and the Philippines.

Together with Dr Jan Paulsen from the world church's headquarters were Rajmund Dabrowski; Williams Costa, Jr, Let's Talk producer and associate communication director for the world church; and Andrew Hunt, director. Hunt is from Australia and works for Hope Channel. The event was staged at the studio of RPN9, uplinked through the facilities of Mabuhay Satellite and distributed worldwide through Hope Channel International.

Local staff members working hard for the success of the event included Romhelyn Gay Tuballes, Nerio Carranza, Rodolfo Bautista, Jr, Welsie dela Cruz, Kenneth Jo Deles, and Rodel Romero. Pastor Nelson Paulo, communication director for southern Philippines and manager of GCTV25, helped with the preparation of the event.

Let "Ashar Bani" Stay Special..., from page 13

On his wheelchair, a man riding on a bus from Sirajgonj, 65 kilometers northwest of Dhaka, surprised the organizers by saying, "I am proud to be a listener of Ashar Bani. I have established my own listeners club in my locality and every body in this group enjoys your regular programs."

Of the many who took a quiz to verify their comprehensive listening habit to AWR, 13 came out with a remarkable result. They each were awarded with an analogue-digital short-wave radio. Also, Salahuddin Dolar, one of the DX-ers received a certificate of appreciation for his services as one of the DX news presenters of WaveScan. WaveScan is a weekly 30-minute program offered to DX hobbyists and shortwave listeners aired over AWR Guam in Agat, Guam and the T-systems Communications in Wertachtal, Germany.

"We never imagined how comprehensively AWR reached out to so many people in Bangladesh," said the AWR youth volunteers. [Bangladesh VOH Staff]

Grow or Go

John 15:5: I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

I hardly noticed a mango shoot spring up just across from our house. That was many years ago, and as I returned home after years in a boarding school, my sense of direction was disturbed for a while, because right in front of me was a mango tree displaying its sturdy trunk and verdant foliage. The last time I visited home, I enjoyed munching its luscious fruit. That shows a fact: The tree has been growing—first the shoot, then the trunk and leaves and finally the fruit.

If Jesus is the Vine, it's incredible to see branches growing the same number of leaves for years; slim branches as they were five, ten, twenty, or forty years ago. Incredible indeed, but that was what actually happened—to Jim.

Jim had been attending church for more than ten years. Since his conversion in high school, he felt not much had changed in his walk with the Lord. He was the same hot-tempered but weak-willed Jim, easily giving in to his heart's selfish desires.

Sensing something was amiss, Jim did his best to straighten out his life. His effort didn't seem good enough until he realized, from a book he read, Jesus' declaration: "Without Me you can do nothing."

Jim became penitently shocked. Tears welled up in his eyes as he re-examined his life: How can I claim to be a Christian all along while I don't have a real practical connection with Jesus!

Determined to lock his life up in Jesus, Jim turned to the 15th chapter of John for guidance. And he found some helpful thoughts in verse 7:

If you abide in Me. Right then and there, Jim recommitted himself to Jesus, singing the song "... No turning back, no turning back." He decided to make Jesus his Lord, pleasing Him above himself or anyone else.

My words abide in you. Jim started to reorganize his life by making a schedule for regular reading and studying the Bible. In one of his group's Bible studies, he testified on the power of God's word that snatched him away from sin. "Whenever I am faced with a hard situation, I would remember first what God says before I react," he declared. "I learn my personal duties to God from my readings, and I am thankful God soaks my head with His useful promises."

You will ask what you desire. This time Jim's life takes on a different spin. Where, before, Jim would ask God for material favors in his rather scarce prayers, now he asks God for the real wants of his soul. He pleads for spiritual blessings more than earthly goods. He daily asks the Holy Spirit to lead his day. Expressing his desire to bear the fruit of the Spirit, He prays God to help him overcome his temper and make him more and more Christlike. He also prays for opportunities to share to someone the living experience he now has in Christ.

Not only does Jim notice the changes his life takes in Jesus; his wife, Shiela, does too. "I wonder why he's getting more responsible. And he's no longer rude to me and our children," she confides to an old college friend.

An old quote says, "When a tree stops to grow, it starts to die." Grow or die down in stagnation. These are the only choices we have in our Christian walk. Jim, however, has chosen to grow in his relationship with Jesus.

(Michael T Dalida is Copy Editor of Philippine Publishing House)

