

From the G.C. President

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1. TEN THOUSAND PATHFINDERS, from around the world, will descend on Denver, Colorado, on August 1 for the 1994, *Dare to Care International Pathfinder Camporee*. The camporee, hosted by the Rocky Mountain Conference, will take place at Bandimere, where the mountains meet the plains just west of Denver, and the evening program will take place at Red Rocks Amphitheater, a nearby natural outdoor theater. Many more Pathfinders wanted to attend but all 10,000 tickets were sold out five months before the event. Pathfinders will come from 47 states in the USA as well as from Australia, Bermuda, Brazil, Canada, Estonia, Guam, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Paraguay, Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Sweden and Ukraine.

2. RUSSIA'S PROPOSED RELIGIOUS LAWS: Several new restrictive laws on religion have surfaced in recent weeks, prompting a group of Moscow lawyers to develop alternative legislation in time for mid-July parliamentary committee debate. Key members of Moscow's legal and religious communities are hoping these alternative efforts will stave off a recurrence of last year's battle over legislation that would have severely restricted foreign and minority religious groups within Russia.

Over the past few weeks, new religious legislation initiatives included issues of minority religious rights, the return of confiscated church lands and taxes on religious groups. Observers say if passed in their current form, some of these draft laws could prove harmful to religious minorities in Russia.

According to Anatoly Pchelintsev, director of the Christian Legal Center (CLC), one recently proposed draft law greatly restricts the religious activities of foreigners in Russia, grants priority status to the Russian Orthodox Church in the return of lands confiscated by the Soviet government and limits ownership of land by foreign religious groups.

Pchelintsev said the draft would also give the Russian Orthodox Church an arbiter role in religious matters considered by the Russian government, similar to the role played by the Soviet-era Council for Religious Affairs.

At a May 23 meeting of religious organization representatives, Pchelintsev called the draft law "totally unacceptable" and added, "We hope it will not be approved as it violates the rights of citizens and foreigners, as well as international norms of human rights."

3. IRIAN UPDATE: During the past 21 months 30 new groups of believers have been established in Irian Jaya, Indonesia. Sixteen churches have been built or are

nearing completion and 14 other sites are being prepared for construction. Of the 10 air strips scheduled to be built to service these new groups, three have been completed and work on three more is ready to begin, pending government permits.

The 30 new congregations are made up of 527 newly baptized Seventh-day Adventists. One church is already packed with 120 new members. Some of the 60 volunteer lay-evangelists implementing this initiative have had to walk for three weeks from the air strip to reach their assigned village.

Funded by the sacrifice and a faith-venture of one family in North America, some new, extremely visionary plans have been laid which will increase the number of congregations in the country from the 40 there are today to 200 during the next three years!

4. MONGOLIA UPDATE: About 25 people have been worshipping each Sabbath since three Mongolians were baptized in October of 1993. Now, three more have requested baptism. The work has been restricted, due to many difficulties, but God has blessed each step of the way.

After the initial baptism, the new believers organized a Bible study group with six members. Of these, three have requested baptism, two are resolving issues related to Sabbath observance and may be baptized in the next few weeks. The sixth person stopped studying with the group but within the past month started attending again.

Brad Jolly of Adventist Frontier Missions reports that a new Bible study class of 12 has been started and all are attending a summer Bible School scheduled between this month.

ADRA recently signed a country agreement with the Mongolian National Development Board and an ADRA director, funded by Global Mission, will soon take up residence in Ulan Bator. The International Commission for the Prevention of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency, (ICPA), a program of the GC Health Department, will conduct seminars for youth in Mongolia in 1995.

5. IN VILLALBA, PUERTO RICO, there was not a single Adventist inhabitant. Last year Angel Manuel Rodriguez, a layman, was sent with his wife, along with 30 other laymen, to live in Villalba to give Bible studies to those who were interested. Today, one year later, 15 new members have joined the church along with those who relocated to the area. The hall rented by the group for Sabbath meetings is already too small.