Adventist HQ holiday outreach celebrates belief in biblical creation

‘Celebration of Creation’ draws area schoolchildren, community; animatronic dinosaur

Santos is director of new Adventist Urban Study Center
Jewish Friendship center moves to Paris, Hindu study center restarted

Church responds to media inquiries over TV sitcom star’s affiliation
Actor on Two and a Half Men in spotlight

Adventist HQ holiday outreach celebrates belief in biblical creation

Nov. 30, 2012
Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
ANN staff

The auditorium darkened, lightening flashed across a projector screen, thunder roared over the loudspeaker and artificial rain fell on hundreds of school children this morning during a recreation of the biblical flood, eliciting laughter and screams from the students.

The simulation was part of Celebration of Creation, a free community event held this week at Seventh-day Adventist world church headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

The family-friendly event runs November 29 to December 2 and celebrates the biblical account of creation with a series of evening lectures from leading scientists for adults, and daytime workshops and presentations for kids.

Celebration of Creation is part of the Adventist Church’s renewed emphasis on promoting biblical creation. At a church business meeting in 2010, Adventist world church leaders voted to reaffirm the Adventist fundamental belief in a “literal, recent, six-day creation” they say is recorded in the Old Testament book of Genesis. Leaders are also currently in the process of clarifying the
Guide magazine's nature columnist Rich Aguilera amazes onlookers with a dinosaur claw during his presentation at the Celebration of Creation event on Saturday night, December 1. He informed attendees about interpretations of both evolution and creation. [photo: Amber Sarno]

Dr. Ben Carson speaks at the Celebration of Creation outreach event at the Adventist Church world headquarters on Sunday, December 2. In his opening remarks, the author of the book "Gifted Hands" pointed out the fallacies of politically correct speech and encouraged honest dialogue about issues, including origins. [photo: Ansel Oliver]

"Let's see if we can pet him," Aguilera says of a boxer-bull, one of the newest breeds of dog. As he reaches toward the screen, the dog barks unexpectedly and jumps toward the audience. "Well, I

church's doctrinal statement on creation.

But beyond doctrine, church leaders say the study of origins resonates with the human need for belonging.

“All of us need to know where we came from,” said Williams Costa Jr., Communication director for the Adventist world church. “God created us; we belong to Him.”

Celebration of Creation includes a screening of a 20-minute nature film, “The Creation,” shot during filmmaker Henry Strober's four-year journey around the globe. Scenes of nature accompany music and a narration of the Genesis creation story during the film.

Daytime workshops at the event are geared toward elementary-aged children. Kids enjoy posing with an animatronic Stegosaurus dinosaur before finding their seats in the auditorium at world church headquarters.

Singer and dinosaur sculptor Buddy Davis from the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky, shares stories and songs about God’s creative power. Christian cartoonist Dan Lietha leads children in a dinosaur-drawing workshop, and Guide magazine nature columnist Rich Aguilera brings the biblical flood story to life.

Aguilera also uses changes within breeds of dogs to demonstrate a lack of evidence for so-called “transitional” species. As dozens of dog breeds multiply on screen, he asks, “Does anybody see a hippo up here? Does anybody see a tomato? No. All we see is variety. God created variety. Do you guys all look the same?”
guess we shouldn't pet the dog -- at least not that one," Aguilera says amid laughter.

The evening lectures feature four nationally recognized speakers, including pediatric neurosurgeon Dr. Ben Carson, author of the book, "Gifted Hands," and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the United States.

“I feel very fortunate to have had so many experiences with God in my life that I have no doubt of His existence and influence,” Carson said. “He is the source of all wisdom and is available to anyone who seeks Him. It’s hard to imagine my life as a neurosurgeon without the guidance of The Almighty.”

Other keynote speakers are Milton Brown of the Georgetown University Center for Drug Discovery, Dr. E. Albert Reece, dean of the University of Maryland School of Medicine, and Tim Standish from the Adventist Church’s Geoscience Research Institute.

Standish said a close study of nature reveals that organisms thrive through mutual cooperation, not competition, as proffered by evolution. Standish said Charles Darwin’s belief in “survival of the fittest” has had a “profound impact” throughout history, driving Marxism, Fascism and genocides such as the Holocaust.

“Contrast this mindset with the Biblical view of humanity,” Standish said, citing texts indicating that humans are created in the image of God and are equal in His eyes.

“Life would not exist without fundamental cooperation. Everything is a team job,” Standish said during his November 29 keynote. “It’s only when we see the system broken in some way that we see struggle and competition.”

Reece said the natural world reflects the power and vision of an ultimate Creator.

“The enormity, complexity and precision of creation is one of pure amazement, and affirms the work of an awesome God,” he said.

Santos is director of new Adventist Urban Study Center

Dec. 04, 2012
Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
ANN staff

The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Office of Adventist Mission announced several new directors as part of a reshuffling and re-launching of study centers for various cultural groups.

Gerson Santos is now serving as the director of the new Urban Ministry Study Center, based in New York City. Santos is also the executive secretary of the denomination’s Greater New York Conference.

The Urban Ministry center was launched in response to the Adventist world church’s initiative for comprehensive urban evangelism. The center was founded to assist ministry leaders worldwide as they make plans for outreach in major cities in
Gerson Santos is director of the Adventist Church's new Urban Ministry Study Center. [photos courtesy Adventist Mission]

Cliffmond Shameerudeen is the director of the Hindu Study Center.

Gregory Whitsett is director of the Center for East Asian Religions and Traditions.

There are now six Global Mission Study Centers serving the church to equip leaders and members to build bridges of understanding to those from non-Christian religions and traditions. Study Centers director Rick McEdward said the goal of the centers is to create models of ministry, materials, and to mentor Adventists for sharing Christ in a way that is holistic and culturally adapted.

“Adventists have usually been very good at sharing their faith with other Christians, but we need to offer a cordial witness for those who don't yet know Christ,” McEdward said.

McEdward said the World Jewish-Adventist Friendship Center has moved from Jerusalem to Paris. France has the third largest Jewish population behind Israel and the United States, according to the World Jewish Population Study. Richard Elofer, former president of the denomination’s Israel Field, will continue serving as director.

The announcement came this week during a study center directors meeting in Cambodia. The group meets twice a year to plan how the Adventist Church can build bridges to cultures and contexts outside of traditional ministry.

Also, the Hindu Study Center, formerly based in India, was recently restarted in the Caribbean nation of Trinidad, home to a large population of Indian Diaspora. Cliffmond Shameerudeen, a Guyanese of Indian decent, is serving as the coordinator.

The Center for East Asian Religions and Traditions – formerly the Buddhist Study Center – is now headed by Gregory Whitsett. He began his new post in September. The center has been located in Thailand since its inception in 1992. Whitsett and his family have spent more than 10 years in Southeast Asia as missionaries. He replaces Scott Griswold, who served as director for 10 years.

The two other study centers are the Center for Secular and Postmodern Studies, based in São Paulo, Brazil, and the Global Center for Adventist-Muslim Relations, which has branches in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States; Nairobi, Kenya; and London.

For more information on the study centers, visit www.AdventistMission.org.
Church responds to media inquiries over TV sitcom star’s affiliation

Nov. 28, 2012
Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
ANN staff

The Seventh-day Adventist Church emphasized its welcoming of converts in a response to media attention surrounding an American TV situation comedy actor’s comments about his religious affiliation and his personal thoughts about the show.

In a news release yesterday, a spokesman from the denomination’s North American Division said the Adventist Church welcomed actor Angus T. Jones “with open arms.” Jones is the 19-year-old actor on the sitcom Two and a Half Men, a popular show aired on the CBS network. He joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church through baptism in June.

Jones was the focus of media attention this week when a video of him criticizing the content of the show went viral. The video was recorded by Christopher Hudson, an individual whose ministry is not affiliated with the Adventist Church.

George Johnson, a spokesman for the Adventist Church in North America’s, said questions about Hudson should be directed to him and his organization directly.

Click here read the full statement.

The ANN news bulletin is a weekly recap of news and information from the Communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist world church headquarters and is distributed by Adventist News Network.

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November 27, 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: George Johnson, communication director, (301) 680-6057

RE: Official Statement Regarding Angus T. Jones and the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Angus T. Jones, an actor of the CBS sitcom *Two and a Half Men*, became a member of a local Seventh-day Adventist congregation in the San Fernando Valley area in June of 2012. On October 8, Jones was interviewed on a show called *Turning Point*, produced by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in which he discussed his faith journey. The interview will air on Hope Channel (DirecTV channel 368) this Friday, November 30, at 8:00 p.m. ET. Currently, you can view an online version at http://www.theadventistchannel.com/watch/Turning_Point:_Angus_T_Jones/specials/

“We are happy that Angus has joined the Seventh-day Adventist family and has found a place in which he feels comfortable to worship and grow his faith,” said George Johnson, communication director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. “Recently, Angus made some statements concerning his spiritual journey and expressed his views concerning the television program *Two and a Half Men*. These comments are of a personal nature, reflecting his views after having undergone changes during his spiritual journey. We welcome him with open arms to the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church family and are excited about his commitment to God through his recent baptism at his church.”

Many inquiries have come to the Church regarding the Forerunner Chronicles interview. We are unable to offer information because Forerunner Chronicles is not a ministry operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its host is not a pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

About the Seventh-day Adventist Church
The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a Protestant church with approximately 17 million members worldwide in 209 countries, which includes more than 1.1 million members in North America. The Seventh-day Adventist Church encourages people to develop their minds through education, their bodies through healthful living, and their spiritual connection to God through personal study of the Bible. The Church also tries to make a positive impact on the human condition through community service and worldwide development and disaster relief initiatives.