NEWS

Specific Approvals Voted Under the New Policy of No Gender Discrimination in Ordination: Pacific Union Conference has approved 14 women for ordination; Columbia Union will consider its first slate of undifferentiated candidates, September 26....

Manhattan Adventist Church Remembers World Trade Center Tragedy: Members of the Adventist church nearest the Twin Towers in New York paused to solemnize the 11th anniversary of the terrorist attack in a program of public remembrance, this week....

Clinic Marks 40 Years of Dentist-Missionaries on Remote Pacific Island of Saipan: Adventist dental ministry has not only provided care for a population of more than 50,000 in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, its revenues pay most of the tuition for students at the local Adventist church school.

President of Tanzania to Open Wellness Seminar conducted by Adventists in that Country: To help address life-and-death issues of health and better living, the Tanzanian government is turning to the Adventist Church to help plan for better days ahead....

OPINION

Cheap Grace: Columnist Preston Foster believes the phrase "cheap grace" is code used to warn grace enthusiasts against too close an embrace of God's gift. Ultimately, he says, the phrase has little theological meaning....

Unity versus Uniformity: Columnist Don Watson suggests that unity is impossible so long as we demand uniformity—that in fact, uniformity is contrary to the spirit of the gospel and the fundamental attributes of basic Christianity....

The God Double Standard: The US Democratic Party was recently charged with lack of
Godliness because its platform did not once allude to divinity (the omission was quickly remedied). Blogger Stephen Foster believes American politics has gone a step too far and is taking the name of the Lord in vain by capitalizing on religion (or lack thereof) for political gain.

**SUBSCRIBERS BONUS FEATURE**

**Oakwood University Opens Vegetarian/Vegan Bistro to a Welcoming Public:** In the US state of Alabama, which has high rates of obesity and elevated blood pressure, this summer's opening of a vegetarian bistro at Oakwood University has met with an outpouring of news coverage and eager diners. (Available only to Subscribers)

**Wisdom:** Ever stop to ponder that the canonical book of "Esther" does not mention God, but the apocryphal reading does? Debonnaire Kovacs gathers wisdom from some of the books that didn't make it to Prime Time. (Available only to Subscribers)

* A Weekly Letter from atoday.org

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Specific Approvals Voted Under the New Policy of No Gender Discrimination in Ordination

Submitted: Sep 13, 2012
By AT News Team

Several local conferences in North America are preparing to conduct ordination services for women pastors in the next few weeks. The first could be as early as October 6 at the Loma Linda University Church, according to Spectrum, the journal of the largest organization of Seventh-day Adventist academics.

At constituency meetings this past summer both the Pacific Union Conference and the Columbia Union Conference voted by overwhelming majorities of delegates to end the practice of excluding women from ordination to the gospel ministry. On September 7 the Pacific Union executive committee voted routine approval of 16 candidates submitted by local conferences of which 14 are women. September 26 the Columbia Union executive committee will meet and it too has routine requests from local conferences that include women candidates.

At least three local conferences among the eight that make up the Columbia Union will have women who will be recommended for ordination, according to sources that talked to Adventist Today on condition of they not be identified. This executive committee has approved individual candidates for ordination who are women as long ago as a quarter century, but union officers asked the local conferences involved to hold off implementation at the request of the General Conference.

The voted taken by the Pacific Union executive committee was without debate or drama, but “tears and praise did come before the meeting was over” in reaction to the historic moment, according to a spokesman for the union conference was present. Some women who are near retirement have waited their entire careers as Adventist ministers for this to occur. Some younger candidates will be ordained at about the same point in their life that men serving as pastors have usually been ordained over the last 150 years.

“It is ironic that this has taken so long to come,” a veteran church administrator told Adventist Today. “Early Adventists had no problem with women serving as ministers and the most important cofounder of the denomination was a woman. General Conference delegates evidently approved the concept in principle as early as 1881.” Because the General Conference has no control over the Seventh-day Adventist Church in China, the church there has been doing so since the 1980s, about the time that repeated studies of the topic began.

Since the 1990 General Conference Session in Indianapolis the denomination has been at an impasse on the issue, unable to come to a definitive position. Almost all of the Bible scholars in the denomination agree that Scripture does not prohibit ordaining women, yet delegates have repeatedly voted against it. Because the denomination’s Working Policy gives union conferences the authority to approve candidates for ordination, several of these units have decided to move ahead and bring an end to decades of indecision.
Manhattan Adventist Church Remembers World Trade Center Tragedy

Submitted: Sep 11, 2012
By AT News Team
Updated Sept. 13, 2012

The Seventh-day Adventist Church located nearest ground zero for the “9-11” terrorist attack that brought down the World Trade Center and caused the deaths of nearly 3,000 people conducted “A Night of Remembrance” Tuesday evening. “Vocalists, a cellist and other gifted musicians and poets,” ten all together, participated in "an evening of peace … in memory of those who lost their lives,” said Pastor Tony Romeo. Two were actors who work regularly on Broadway.

Located in a historic building in the Greenwich Village neighborhood in lower Manhattan, the church is literally a few yards from streets that were filled with police, fire fighters, and emergency medical personnel on that bright, September morning. It was the worst moment in recent American history and Adventist volunteers opened the church to provide respite and refreshments that day.

“Two candles were lit,” Romeo described the evening. “Songs were song and [there was] a prayer for peace.” The event was simple, quiet and dignified. Following the concert, there was food and the sharing of stories. The general public from the West Village area was invited and more than 125 people showed up. Catholics, Jews, Hindus, people of all faiths participated, including "many people with no faith," the pastor told Adventist Today. "Many suggested they want to join us for worship on Saturday morning ... some of whom said that they had lived in the village for 20 years and never set foot in our church and loved it."

The Manhattan Adventist Church is located at 232 West 11th Street, just one and a half blocks west of Seventh Avenue South. Romeo is a New York City native who worked on Madison Avenue in the advertising industry before becoming a pastor and church planter.
Clinic Marks 40 Years of Dentist-Missionaries on Remote Pacific Island of Saipan

Submitted: Sep 10, 2012
By AT News Team

The Saipan Seventh-day Adventist Clinic is celebrating 40 years of providing dental care to the Pacific island. The founding missionary couple, Dr. Steve and Karyl Fisher, are making a return visit to the island last week as part of the celebration, reports the Saipan Tribune. They started the clinic in 1972 in response to a request from the Legislature of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), a territory of the United States with the same status as Puerto Rico but located half way around the world from the Caribbean.

The clinic is the primary provider of dental care among a population of more than 50,000. It has four full-time and two part-time doctors, as well as allied health staff. It conducts an active wellness program with participation in health fairs and presentations at schools, as well as being part of the Give Kids A Smile program. “We are not driven by profit but rather by what’s best for each patient,” Dr. Kenneth Pierson, clinic director, told the newspaper. “Christian principles … are at the core of their organization [and] distinguish them from other private dental clinics,” a reporter wrote.

“I think community involvement is what we’re here for,” Dr. Fisher reflected on why he and his wife came to Saipan. “I’m always excited at how well the community accepted us and actually contributes to our success,” he remembered. “The core of the community is the children.”

The clinic provides $50,000 a year for scholarships for children to attend the Adventist elementary school on the island. A total of 29 students were provided with 75 percent of tuition in the last year principal Sharon Nguyen told the Marianas Variety newspaper.

The clinic is “considering opening satellite dental clinics on Rota and Tinian” (two of the smaller islands), Variety also reported. Dental teams from the clinic currently travel to these islands at least three times a year under an agreement with the community health centers on the islands.

CNMI is located in the western Pacific about three-quarters of the way from Hawaii to the Philippines. The 15 islands had a population of 53,833 in the 2010 census. The United States gained control of these islands in the war with Spain over Cuba and the Philippines in the late 19th century.

The clinic is one of two operated by the Guam Micronesia Mission of the Adventist Church. Guam is a larger island to the south of CNMI with a population about eight times the size of the Northern Marianas. It also has a separate government. The Adventist Clinic on Guam includes medical and optical services as well as dental care.

The Guam Micronesia Mission became part of the North American Division at the 2010 General Conference Session. It has 20 congregations and about 5,000 members with a penetration ratio of one Adventist to every 93 of the general public. In addition to the two clinics, it operates six schools all together, each of which offers both elementary and secondary education (K-12). It also sponsors an FM radio station on Guam.
President of Tanzania to Open Wellness Seminar conducted by Adventists in that Country

Submitted: Sep 9, 2012
By AT News Team

When the Better Living Symposium is convened by the Seventh-day Adventist Church on September 17 in Dar es Salaam, President Jakaya Kikwete, the head of state for this east African nation, will be the speaker. The event will last a week and two of his cabinet ministers will also make presentations during that time, according to the Tanzania Daily News. This is a public event, not a church activity.

The purpose of the event is to address a wide range of social problems and policy issues that impact public health, stated Pastor Mussa Mika, communication director for the Tanzania Union Mission. There will be presentations on the effects of HIV-AIDS, poverty and its impact on families and society, entrepreneurship and economic empowerment, how to improve the standard of living in the country, how to improve moral standards in society and the continuing effects of traditional witchcraft which hinder development.

Dr. Hussein Mwinyi, minister for health and social welfare, will address the symposium. He is the top public health official for the country. Stephen Wasira, a high-ranking member of the president’s staff, will speak on how to promote peace and non-violence in Africa.

Tanzania has a population of 46 million with a very high percentage of poverty, low levels of education and a significant incidence of HIV-AIDS. The Adventist Develop and Relief Agency (ADRA) has a number of projects in Tanzania. There are more than 2,000 Adventist congregations in the country and more than 400,000 church members, although outside sources indicate that about one million people can be considered Adventist adherents. The Adventist Church operates 11 secondary schools and 18 community clinics in Tanzania.
Grace is the gospel. For some, that seems to be a problem. Some accuse those who promote salvation by grace through faith alone, as promoting “cheap grace.”

Cheap grace is, at best, an ironic term, as grace is, literally, the most expensive gift ever offered (it cost the life of the only Son of God). Cheap grace is, in fact, a derogatory phrase used to warn grace enthusiasts -- and more important, those who are unsure of the critical path to salvation -- against too close an embrace of grace. More to the point, the term is employed to undercut grace itself, intended to make the notion of grace at once dangerous and inadequate.

Cheap grace refers to using grace as license to sin. As we are sinners saved by grace through faith -- and not by any works of the law (Ephesians 2:8-9), “cheap grace” implies that, indeed, there are works that contribute to one’s earning salvation -- which is not grace at all. Indeed, good works are a product of grace (Ephesians 2:10), not a condition for receiving it. Grace begets good behavior (Galatians 5:16), not vice versa.

The idea of cheap grace is also a diversion. I have yet to meet anyone who espouses grace as their license to continue in purposeful sin or premeditated lawlessness (iniquity). Sin enthusiasts don’t pause to find license to sin. Neither have I met anyone who has completely stopped sinning. We all NEED grace.

The most insidious inference of cheap grace is that one would accept Christ as a vehicle to continue in purposeful sin. Mere claiming Christ or accepting Him is not the same thing. If Christ is in you, you are, by definition, different and better (Colossians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19). Dependence on works assumes that the power to live free of sin is man-made, rather than a result of Christ living in you.

The accusation of cheap grace is, really, a back-door justification for living by the law. The law is positioned as the primary guide for living (1 Timothy 1:7-10), ignoring the Spirit, and discounting the fact that Christ came to live on the earth as a man for the express purpose of keeping the law perfectly -- satisfying the requirements of the law, then was crucified as the Lamb of God, taking away the sins of the world -- for all time (Hebrews 10:10-12).

The accusation that grace is a cover for sinful desires serves as a pivot point that allows the supposed keepers of the law to pose as guardians of the faith while minimizing the grace provided by Christ on the cross. It allows them to find comfort their works (or judge the works of others) and their uprightness -- believing that their salvation is at least partially earned. As keepers of the Old Covenant, they reject the fact that New Covenant replaced the Old (2 Corinthians 3:13-15). They see the New Covenant directive of being led by the Spirit (Galatians 5:18) as vague, inadequate, and soft on sin (Romans 6:14). Grace is put on trial.

Those of us who embrace the grace of the New Covenant (Hebrews 10:16-19) and those who hold to the law agree on at least one thing: one of the Covenants is better than the other (Hebrews 8:6-7; Galatians 5:3-4).
The difference is eternal.
Early in our marriage [Back when toothpaste was in those metal tubes] my wife and I had some interesting “conversations” [Not arguments, mind you] about the “proper way” to squeeze the toothpaste. I “properly” squeezed the tube from the bottom in an organized, orderly fashion, always keeping it smooth and full by rolling up the empty bottom portion ... unlike my beloved, who grabbed the tube any old way and squeezed it right in the middle, mutilating the beauty of its smooth appearance.

I discovered, however, that this was not the only thing we did differently. I was loud and outgoing; she was quiet, shy, and quite reserved. She disciplined our children by distracting them from what she felt was inappropriate and refocusing them on something more appropriate, while I confronted them and demanded immediate obedience. I discovered that we were opposites at just about everything, and both of us have had strong opinions that our opinion about the matter was right opinion. But in spite of our differences, we have always been deeply in love – she is my best friend and I value her opinion more than even those who I know agree with me. I’ve discovered most of us married couples have ended up with a spouse who is really opposite in so many ways to what we are. So I began to rethink my ideas of unity.

Suppose in my household, I required not unity, but uniformity: My wife must always agree with me, do things the way I do them; believe what I believe; discipline the way I discipline; squeeze toothpaste the way I squeeze it? Is that unity or uniformity? In fact, wouldn’t it be true, that by requiring uniformity (With no respect to what the other person believes) I destroy unity and any kind of loving relationship? Wouldn’t this kind of coercion destroy our love? My wife would never feel that I respect her opinion unless it agreed with mine. The only freedom she would feel that she had was to do it “my way or the highway.” Unity is not agreement; it is an atmosphere of love and acceptance regardless of the diversity of opinions or practices. That kind of love – that accepts others exactly as they are – is powerful to bring us together. And when God brings us together, His Holy Spirit can open our hearts to the ideas of other Godly men and women and more powerfully impact our lives for change and transformation. Godly unity embraces difference and diversity. If that difference of belief and practice is not allowed, if there is no freedom among us, if uniformity is required, unity cannot exist, transformation and change will not take place, and the world will not see disciples of Jesus.

Jesus did not say, “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you agree with one another,” but “if you love one another!” (John 13:35). Unconditional love that accepts people exactly as they are, with their sins and fallacious ideas, is the basis of Godly unity. That Unity, is what Paul was talking about when He spoke of “reconciliation” (Romans 5:10): “While we [all] were God’s enemies, we [all] were reconciled [past tense] to him through the death of his Son.” Jesus unified us by reconciling us to God. In other words He took away our condemnation. We didn’t all accept HIM at Calvary, but the Divine Trinity in Jesus accepted US! And it is that kind of acceptance, that kind of goodness, that reconciles us and draws us
back to God (Romans 2:3-4). That all are forgiven and accepted as children of God is the basis of our unity. If we do not mirror that same kind of Godly unity, that same reconciliation toward each other, we will divide each other, alienate each other, and (again) the world will not know that we are His disciples!

One of my dearest friends sends me political articles with which I strongly, vehemently disagree. But I love Him – why would I want to require him to agree with me in order to be acceptable and qualify for my friendship. How would I make him feel if I only allowed him to express opinions that we agreed upon. Do I not care about all of who he is? Do I not love all of who he is? Do I only love that which I agree with? Can he not share everything with me without fear of condemnation? Only a love that totally accepts produces unity that truly binds us together. For us to require agreement would be a violation of God’s love who died for us “while we were sinners.” God didn’t agree with our lifestyle or sins, but He loved us anyway exactly as we were (Romans 5:6-10) and THAT drew us to Him – that reconciled us! His acceptance of us is the source of our unity. Isn’t it true that plenty of people may be in agreement but be absolutely devoid of any love for each other? The Pharisees and Sadducees hated each other, but most were in total agreement that Jesus must die. They were definitely unified, but there was nothing Godly about it. In fact it was satanic. We must guard the source of our unity. Let us never forget that the source of our unity with all men is the fact that all of us were accepted by God “While we were sinners.” (Romans 5:8) It’s interesting, in verse 7, Paul says, “Rarely would any of us die for someone else, but, on occasion, a few of us might possibly die for a really good person, but (Verse 8) God commends HIS love to us this way: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us!” (My paraphrase). God’s love saved us WHILE we were in total disagreement with Him – actually enemies. This is our model for unity. Jesus justified sinners (Romans 5:9), redeemed sinners, forgave sinners (Ephesians 1:7), and give us sinners eternal life by dying for us on the cross. Think about it: God has 6.5 billion of us on this planet. We are all different! There is no uniformity! We all look different, talk different, act different, think different, learn different, believe different, and sin different. In fact, God created us free because He only wants love to be something that is given with no coercion. So He dies for us – takes away our condemnation – takes fear out of the equation. Otherwise it would be impossible for us to come to Him out of love and love alone. If God were to require uniformity, fear is reintroduced, love is squelched and unity destroyed!

God loves diversity: He doesn’t require black people to talk or walk or sing like white people, or whites to dance or jump like blacks. He doesn’t require Chinese people to only speak Japanese, African natives to dress like English gentlemen. He loves all colors, all languages, all cultures, both genders, the different ways we eat, think, talk, act, worship and love. God loves diversity. For years, we required everyone to learn exactly the same way: by listening to a teacher explain how to do this or that. Now, we know that everybody learns differently [Think of that!]. Some people have to hear it, or see it, while others have to touch it and experience it. Our personalities are Sanguine, Melancholy, Phlegmatic, Choleric and all kinds of combinations. So are we surprised that we do things differently, believe differently, and love differently?

So what does all this mean when it comes to Adventism – the way we as Adventists operate and do church? Our problem is that we start with Adventism and decide who Jesus is by looking at
what we as Adventists already believe or practice, instead of starting with Jesus and allowing Him to change our life, church, denomination, teachings and practices. Jesus is the cornerstone of our lives, not Adventism. Our doctrines, and policies, and history, and traditions are not the cornerstone – Jesus alone must be our chief Cornerstone. Everything has got to match up with Him. It’s all got to come from Him. We must carefully compare each stone we lay in our lives, businesses, churches, and denominations with Jesus the chief Cornerstone. We must not do it backwards by starting with our church, or using our denomination to explain who Jesus was. Jesus accepted people exactly as they were. He had perfect trust in the power of His heavenly Father to either change them or neutralize them without force or coercion. We all, leaders and laity alike, must do the same thing. This has radical implications: We must trust God and His way of doing things: That His love, grace, and power will either cause change or neutralize those people who we may think are wrong in their belief or practices. Certainly, I believe there are times that wicked, hurtful, ungodly sinners and religious, self-righteous Pharisees who wound and condemn the broken need to be driven from the temple and their power neutralized, because they keep others from experiencing forgiveness and salvation. But ostracizing and condemning wounded, broken people, intimidating those whose opinions on spiritual matters differ from yours, minimizing another person’s life, culture, gender, race, or religion never changed anyone. Jesus constantly included people, brought them into the unity of loving acceptance, the soil of His unconditional love, and in that soil, the seed of His truth grew. They started loving Him. He did not bind them to an institution, a set of proof texts, or distinctive denominational doctrines, but to Himself and a real, intimate, nothing hidden, relationship with His Father. The Truth was a Person. He wanted everyone He met to know the radical love and acceptance of His Father. It was that Truth lived out by Jesus that got Him killed. We MUST watch out and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, which is Hypocrisy!” (Matthew 16:6) Hypocrisy condemned others as apart from God because of their violation, sin, or difference of belief, when the truth was – the Pharisees were miles away from any semblance of a relationship with God. Jesus’s love for all sinners, (That meant prostitutes, thieves, tax collectors, gentiles, Samaritans, women,-and probably homosexuals and Muslims if it were 2012!) attacked the entire doctrine of the church in His day. To allow Jesus to live was to destroy what the church was all about – it’s very essence. There is no doubt; we would still kill Him today. We choose everyday to either allow Jesus’ life in us to reveal the Father or we protect our institutions, traditions, and beliefs.

The Divine Trinity calls us to join them in loving people like Jesus did. He persistently taught people the Truth about Himself and His Father but never forced them to look at His teachings the same way He looked at them – and He was God. He simply kept healing and loving and repeating His stories and lessons of unconditional love for sinners. Then He allowed the Holy Spirit to do His work of conviction and conversion. We are not God, yet we think it our prerogative and duty to protect God’s church by intimidating, and in many cases, forcing others to believe the doctrines, rules, policies and practices (something God would never do) rather than allow people the same freedom that Jesus allowed. We simply think the Holy Spirit cannot do His job without our pressure and intimidation. We are all too often more interested in being distinctive than following Jesus. If we must make a choice between following Jesus or the church we follow the church, because (we are convinced) what the church believes and teaches is who Jesus is. We have made something else our chief cornerstone.
Whether in our homes, our businesses, our churches, or denominational leadership, we must never allow force, intimidation, pressure, or condemnation to characterize our leadership or witness. “By this shall all men know that we are the disciples of Jesus, that we love one another.” This is the essence of unity. For too long, we have been a church of uniformity: We all went to church on the same day, taught the same prophecies, believed in the same doctrines, upheld the same standards, ate the same vegetables, abstained from the same bad habits, and went to the same schools. We have been obsessed with our name, our teachings, and our church. We are all too often arrogant and proud that we are Seventh-day Adventists. How would we like it if we (along with all people from all other Christian churches) were simply known as followers of Jesus, or people who love sinners like Jesus did? We could still keep the Sabbath and even believe the same doctrines, but Jesus would be our Cornerstone. Everything would be about a personal relationship with Him. We would lift Him up. Jesus lifted up sinners, the poor, the sick, the condemned, children, women, and those who were trampled upon by the religious leaders of His day. He wanted them to know they were loved.

That’s unity in Christ. May we do the same.
With regard to the American principle of separation of church and state and the notion that there should be no religious test for holding public office there is a double standard that has become somewhat evident in this year’s Presidential election season.

Last week as the Democrats sought to address the fact that “God,” by name, had been omitted or removed from the party’s platform language, they convened a fiasco. In the campaign for the few undecided voters remaining—in the few swing states which remain in play—this was thought to have left an opening for talking point charges of the Democrats (and by extension their standard bearers) being ‘values-challenged’ compared to their ostensibly more pious Republican opponents.

Newly minted Republican presidential nominee, Mitt Romney, has naturally attempted to take political advantage of the opportunity presented by these events by perhaps accurately suggesting that the Republicans would never have been faced with such an embarrassment because they would never think of taking God out of their platform.

At two campaign stops in the wake of the Democratic Convention, Romney implied that he was on God’s side. In leading a Virginia Beach, VA crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance this past Saturday (September 8, with Pat Robertson on the stage), Romney said, “That pledge says ‘under God,’ and I will not take God out of our platform, I will not take God off our coins, and I will not take God out of my heart.”

At a September 10 Mansfield, OH rally Romney promised that, “I will not take God out of my heart, I will not take God out of the public square and I will not take it out of the platform of my party.”

This is problematic on two fronts. Why should God’s name be used in a partisan political party platform under any circumstances? The Constitution of the United States has been a coherent and functional document without gratuitously invoking the name of the Lord. Can there be a better (or worse) example of using the Lord’s name in vain than by using it for partisan purposes in a practically meaningless political party platform?

Nevertheless, the danger of political populism is now, without doubt, on full display.

The Obama Campaign desperately tried to defuse this political land mine by reporting that the President had personally instructed the Democratic National Committee platform committee to reinsert God’s name into the platform (and that it be reiterated that the DNC position is that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel).

Of course, the Democratic National Committee is charged with winning elections for the
Democratic Party; and will obviously do whatever it deems is in the interest of same. If that includes pandering to an undecided segment of the body politic, it will. By having the President personally intervene, after the fact, in the reinsertion of “God” into the platform, and by ramming it through on a clearly bogus voice vote it has, again, certainly demonstrated as much.

(This is another example of why neither political party nor neither end of the political spectrum can ever be actually trusted.)

The other problem is that, being a Mormon, Governor Romney would, ironically and hypocritically (under “normal circumstances”) rather that there be little/no mention of religion in a national campaign in which he is a candidate.

However now, by personally exploiting this God omission fiasco, he is shrewdly trying to have it both ways. He can claim to be the standard bearer of the party of God against the anti-God party; *while* it would be unfair—and even considered to be unconstitutional—to *question him* about his particular religious beliefs. How convenient?!
Oakwood University Opens Vegetarian/Vegan Bistro to a Welcoming Public

Submitted: Sep 13, 2012
By Debbonnaire Kovacs

When a Seventh-day Adventist university cafeteria serves vegetarian and vegan meals, it’s hardly news. When one opens a restaurant to the public, it’s a little more newsworthy. And when local and state news sources tout the university in question as the “only historically Black university in the country to offer an all-vegetarian menu” . . . now that’s news!

On August 17, Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama opened its newly remodeled cafeteria in Blake Center. Present at the gala ribbon-cutting ceremony were State Representative Laura Hall; Mayor Tommy Battle; and Huntsville Councilman Richard Showers, Sr. Vice president Kevin Mills of Oakwood’s partner, Sodexo Campus Services, was also present, and he was the one to point out that Oakwood is the only HBCU to be vegetarian.

Blake Center and the cafeteria were first dedicated in 1969, so it was more than due for renovation and remodeling, especially with the student body passing the 2000 mark. According to Oakwood’s online newsletter: “The extensive renovations, made possible by Oakwood’s partner, Sodexo Campus Services, included: a complete remodel and expansion of the dining area, increasing seating capacity to approximately 400; the installation of a sprinkler system and ADA upgrades; enhancements in the food preparation and serving areas; new student meeting rooms; new entrances and egresses have been added, and upgraded infrastructure for safety and student convenience. The new décor, which includes the latest in audio/visual additions, facilitates warmth and social interaction. Architectural design was prepared by Goodwin, Mills and Cawood, Inc. Construction was done by Ryzec Bulding Group. Both of these firms, along with all supporting contractors and craftsmen, provided quality work and an outstanding product.”

All of this is certainly good news for OU and its student body, faculty, and staff, but the added bonus that moves it into the realm of feature story material is Zebi.

Zebi, short for “zesty bistro,” is OU’s new campus market, open to the public and already quite popular. According to an article on WAAYTV.com, Alabama has the dubious honor of ranking number two among the 50 states for both obesity and high blood pressure. So when Oakwood remodeled, they weren’t just thinking of themselves, but of their community. There are new and improved food offerings, as well as decaffeinated hot and cold drinks. “So far,” manager Russell Thomas says, “sales are through the roof.”

State news at al.com lists the foods offered and the hours the bistro is open. Clearly, their community believes Oakwood has made a contribution that can change lives. Adventist Today salutes you, Oakwood, and if we’re in the neighborhood, we’ll stop in for a smoothie!
Wisdom

Submitted: Sep 13, 2012
By Debbonnaire Kovacs

Here's something different. Different to me, anyway. I have read the Old Testament apocrypha before (and I can't figure out why we got stuck with the version of Esther that doesn't include God, instead of the lovely Greek Esther) but I don't recall this. It was one of the possibilities you could select on what is known as the Lectionary Page.

It's very reminiscent of parts of Proverbs, in which wisdom and folly are both personified as women. In fact, in Proverbs 8, wisdom is personified as a child growing up beside God and watching (perhaps helping) him create the universe. Some have seen in those verses a "younger" (odd term to use for an eternally pre-existing Being) God the Son, "growing up" beside God. However, it clearly uses feminine pronouns (not that any human pronouns are more or less correct to use for God), and in context, is seen to be the personified Lady Wisdom. I was tempted to use the title "Mother Wisdom," as a contrast with the colloquial "Mother Nature," but decided that was just inviting controversy.

Don't worry, I'm not saying the apocrypha should be equal to the Bible; I believe God oversaw what got put into the canon and what did not. I do believe, however, that wisdom, that invaluable commodity, can be found in quite a few unlikely places--the apocrypha, unexpected books by obscure authors, a song on the radio, the clouds at sunset, the faces of your co-workers... even in the cybersphere of Adventist Today!

Happy Sabbath to all!

Wisdom of Solomon 7:26-8:1
For wisdom is a reflection of eternal light,
a spotless mirror of the working of God,
and an image of his goodness.
Although she is but one, she can do all things,
and while remaining in herself, she renews all things;
in every generation she passes into holy souls
and makes them friends of God, and prophets;
for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom.
She is more beautiful than the sun,
and excels every constellation of the stars.
Compared with the light she is found to be superior,
for it is succeeded by the night,
but against wisdom evil does not prevail.
She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other,
and she orders all things well.