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My Take: We Have a Church Within a Church

by Raj Attiken, November 4, 2014

Seventh-day Adventists have two churches within one. There is the “church” that meets in Conference, Union, Division, and General Conference offices. It has its own staff, its rituals, artifacts, and “temples.” This is a church populated by elected officers, appointed staff, committee members, delegates, and representatives. It has its own committees, councils, boards and business sessions. It occupies itself with discussions, debates, and deliberations on matters it deems essential to its existence.

But, beneath this “church” of politics and policies there is another church. This is the church that is in the neighborhood, on the street, in the village, or the city. It is the church that meets every week to worship, study, fellowship and serve. It is the church that accompanies people through their journey of life – the high points and the low points. It is the church that is present to encourage, support, mentor, and teach. It is the church that mobilizes and equips people for service. It is the church that seeps into the cracks and crevices of its community through incarnational living and missional ministry. It is a church whose spirituality is embodied in its religious community.

There is a growing disconnect today between these two churches. The first thinks and acts as if the other is dependent on its direction, decisions, and declarations. Increasingly, the second goes through life as though the other is non-existent. The first church sees itself somewhat like a franchisor – existing to grant authorization, to produce marketing and program resources, to plan programs and campaigns, and to develop operational guidelines and policies. It does much of this on matters that legitimately belong to the church on the street – matters like recruiting and retaining members, how members should study their Bibles and pray, how they should educate their children, provide for their youth, minister to their communities and a host of issues that the church on the street lives with daily.

The irony of this reality is that the church on the street gives life to the church of the “corporate office.” It funds its existence. It cedes everything from credentialing of clergy and guidelines for membership to ownership of property, oversight of its schools, and much more.

The governing documents of both these “churches” – the Articles, Regulations, Constitutions, and By-Laws – define the relationships and lines of authority between them. However, most of those in the church on the street are oblivious to these governance matters. Emerging generations that value the church primarily value its local expressions, and see little relevance in the church of the corporate office. While they have strong concerns about, and commitments to, improving the state of societal issues – locally and globally – they do not perceive value in supporting the hierarchies of institutions. This is not because they are not adequately informed about the roles and functions of hierarchy; it is that they don’t see its functional value.

In today’s world of speed, flux, and change, no longer is it the fittest that survive – it is the fastest. Churches on the front lines need to be nimble enough to change and adapt fast to meet the changing needs and attitudes of those in their spheres of influence and to maximize on the potential value of new technologies, social media, scientific knowledge, and social trends. Waiting months and years for decisions to be made in corporate offices renders those decisions obsolete even before they are made. Innovation – an essential for the flourishing of any organization –
does not happen in the centers of the organization but in its edges. The most useful and impactful innovations in the church are not likely to happen through committee or board deliberations, but in the front lines and margins where women and men experience life, vocation, and church.

Having experienced both of these “churches” for many years, my take on this matter is that the church on the street will render the corporate church increasingly impotent and irrelevant. And unless leaders are attentive, they will continue to act as if the church of the corporate office is the church, and that its deliberations and actions are relevant and essential to the flourishing of congregations and the expansion of God’s kingdom.

My take also is that in our current culture of mass communication and diminished control, the best course of action for leaders in the corporate church for the future is to scale down dramatically on their program orientation and to invest in creating cultures of empowerment. Unlike in the past, no center of organizational authority and expertise can hold churches together by directing their functions or the flow of knowledge and information. Some of the biggest opportunities available to churches today cannot be met through the application of expertise from some distant denominational office. They can be addressed primarily through changes in priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties of people who make up our congregations. We must cultivate a culture in which congregations rely less on central planning and on the genius of a few at the heads of the organization, and more on their own ability to learn, customize, adapt, and flourish.

We have two churches in one. Both have distinct roles and functions. Unless we get these clear, both will diminish in vitality and effectiveness. That's my take!
Jackson: God Holds the Future of the Adventist Church

From News Release, November 1, 2014

Daniel R. Jackson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America (NAD), said we serve a sovereign God who created the universe, reigns supreme, and is a God of forethought, designs, and plans who will see His church through any issues humans have generated.

Jackson, preaching a sermon entitled “Frowning Providence, Reverence & Faith,” challenged delegates and guests at the 2014 North American Division Year-End Meeting Sabbath program to look at the character of God and see how He utilizes providence to bring about His plan for His people.

Noting that there are some voices that want to convince members that the church is about to be destroyed by apostasy, Jackson said that it is imperative to remember that God is in control. That is significant to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, he noted, as we prepare for 2015 General Conference Session.

“I have come to believe that, in light of all we face, we will either have to trust in the intervening hand of God or ultimately deny our faith,” Jackson said to the more than 500 guests in attendance and those watching live on The Hope Channel. “Either God is at work in the church—sometimes moving openly, sometimes moving almost imperceptibly—or the church is just an organization of human invention controlled by politicians and political hacks.”

Jackson went on to say that the Church has come to give “too much credence to human power, ingenuity, and stealth.” And that many have come to believe that issues that humans “have generated can actually break apart the Church, as though somehow God is inept—or God is unable. No human has the right or authority to put God into a box!”

Jackson illustrated his theme with the story of Pharaoh Thutmose III, the ancient Egyptian leader who held the Israelites in bondage and refused to release them. By defying God’s command relayed through Moses, the ruler was trying to “thwart God’s plan for His movement on earth.”

Jackson said that while God’s character can be difficult for us to comprehend, there should be no doubt that He is a God of forethought—a God of designs and plans. He is not sitting by, wringing His hands as He divines a solution to problems on earth. The life of Jesus is an example of God’s plan for the salvation of His children.

“God’s love compelled Him to give His only begotten Son for the eternal well-being of mankind,” Jackson said. “All men are a part of God’s plan to redeem! Whatever failure we make in our lives.”

Jackson stated that we must remain obedient to God’s heavenly vision. God will not stand by idly and watch mankind
destroy His plans for the world and for His Church so long as we keep our eyes on what matters above all—Jesus.

“There is only one true north for the church and his name is Jesus!” Jackson said to a strong “amen” from the audience. “How blind we become when we reject following the light given to us!”


The sermon also included two important themes for Jackson and the delegates of the NAD Year-End Meetings, young people and transformation evangelism.

On the former he said, “The future of God's work is dependent on our children. They are so precious.” On the latter he let people know that evangelism was alive and well, but perhaps the way in which it was carried out was not too effective.

“You can’t go into a field with a harvester if you haven’t planted any seed,” Jackson said.

Jackson began his sermon with a moving tribute to his wife, Donna Jackson, who was also on the stage. He related events from earlier in the day, when he was looking for his wife and could not find her.

“I almost panicked this morning. I couldn’t find my wife. I was asking some of you, ‘have you seen my wife?’” Jackson said, suddenly becoming choked with emotion. “I just wanted to tell her, ‘I love you.’”

Unable to continue, he stepped back to where Donna was sitting, and hugged her, continuing, “This beautiful woman.”

He then asked everyone who was sitting next to their spouses, or soon to be spouses, and tell them, “I love you.”

Jackson was introduced by G. Alex Bryant, executive secretary of the NAD telling the audience: “I believe that God still has more work for this Division under the leadership of Daniel Richard Jackson in the years to come.”
North American Denomination to Move its Office

From ANN, November 4, 2014

Late Monday afternoon (November 3), following a spirited debate, the governing body of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in North America voted to move its office out of the complex it has shared with the denomination's General Conference (GC) since the 1980s. By a vote of 126 to 65 the North American Division (NAD) executive committee accepted the recommendation of NAD leaders to move to new facilities in the Washington DC metropolitan area and proceed with the relocation process.

Tom Evans, NAD treasurer, had earlier presented a report comparing moving expenses and cost recovery if the NAD headquarters moved to Dallas, Denver, Atlanta or remained in Washington. The report, was prepared by JLL, a consulting firm that specializes in corporate real estate and corporate relocations. The report led to the recommendation that the office remain in the Washington area.

In addition to the financial data, Pastor Dan Jackson, NAD president, listed ten non-financial considerations for the recommendation. These included the access to qualified personnel, airports, churches and schools for employees and their families. The number one reason for the move was self-determination.

“The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America has a need to have its own unique message and strategies that are relevant and work in our territory,” said Jackson. “While the Adventist movement began in North America, we are among the youngest divisions in the church, and it’s time that we grow up and leave our parent’s house.”

The world governing body at a meeting two weeks earlier had voted to support the concept and to provide $3 million to assist with the move. “This should never be treated as an initiative to get them out of the building. Quite the opposite,” said Pastor Ted Wilson, GC president. Robert Lemon, GC treasurer, echoed Wilson's sentiments. He stated that while the GC would welcome the NAD remaining in the building, it fully supports the decision to relocate and establish its own identity.

“This move does not represent any distancing of mission or purpose from that of the General Conference," Lemon said. “The North American Division has always been and continues to be the backbone of support, both financially and missionally for the worldwide work of the Church.”

The denomination's North American organization has discussed setting up an office separate from the GC offices since it was first set up in 1985. In the 1990s study was given to establishing an office in Lincoln, Nebraska, when the Mid-America Union Conference sold its office there.
Until the 1980s, the NAD was simply the "home field" of the GC and the two organizations were the same. As the GC became more and more international in character, a growing need emerged for the Adventist movement in North America to develop its own structure and character. There are three nations in the NAD and Canada and Bermuda each have a national church organization; the union conference in Canada and a local conference in Bermuda. The United States is the country most in need of a national church structure, a role played by the GC for much of the early history of the Adventist faith.

Along with the identification of a publishing house and Oakwood University as NAD institutions in recent months, the establishment of a separate office clearly indicates the maturing of an Adventist denominational structure in the U.S. These developments may open the way for the denomination to deal more effectively with key issues in North America such as an up-to-date media strategy, strengthening the community impact of its congregations, engaging new generations, managing cultural diversity and ending gender discrimination in the ordained clergy.
Breath of Life Television Celebrates 40 Years

By AT News Team, November 6, 2014

As many as 10,000 African American Adventists may show up this weekend in Huntsville, Alabama, for the 40th anniversary of the Breath of Life television ministry. It began in 1973-74 as the brainchild of Pastor Walter Arties, an Adventist then working for the Christian television station KHOF in Glendale, California. It has become a major outreach of the black Adventist community in the United States.

Arties and his wife will be at the event this Sabbath in the campus church at Oakwood University, according to a news release. Other speakers and special guests will include Pastor and Mrs. C.D. Brooks and Pastor and Mrs. Walter Pearson; both Brooks and Pearson have served as directors for the ministry.

The original and current members of the Breath of Life Quartet will perform, along with Myrna Matthews Haynes, the groups original arranger and accompanist. The Greater Atlanta Adventist Academy Choir, the Miami Union Academy Choir, and the Pine Forge Academy Choir from Pennsylvania, will all perform as part of the weekend.

Of course the current director and speaker will be part of the celebration. Dr. Carlton P. Byrd is based in Huntsville.

Currently the weekly television program is being distributed on the Word Network and the Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasters (AIB) on Sundays at 1:30 p.m. Eastern Time. It is also rebroadcast on the Hope Channel, the official television network of the Adventist denomination on Sunday and Saturday mornings and Wednesday evenings. The independent Adventist satellite network, Three Angels’ Broadcasting Network also rebroadcasts the program.

Breath of Life is the only Adventist television ministry in North America that specifically targets the African American population. One of the largest evangelism campaigns organized by the ministry was in the Washington DC metro area in 1978-79 and it resulted in more than 500 converts and the formation of the Breath of Life Church in Fort Washington, Maryland.

There are several other Breath of Life congregations in the denomination, the first formed in 1974 in Memphis, Tennessee, and the most recent organized in 1993 in Nassau, Bahamas, according to the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia.
Adventist Leaders Plead for Civility in Debate

From ANN, November 5, 2014

Facing the fact that strenuous arguments pro and con will occur leading up to the decision on ordination at next summer's General Conference Session, the governing body of the Adventist denomination for North America adopted a resolution this week asking for "respectful, Christ-like dialogue." The statement was voted unanimously by the executive committee of the denomination's North American Division (NAD) during its annual meeting this week.

The resolution resulted from a concern expressed earlier this week. Many committee members, including Pastor Dan Jackson, the NAD president, expressed concern about the tone of the debate that has been raging in various meetings and media. Jackson reminded the leaders that "as Christians we are called to discuss issues with the understanding and compassion modeled by Christ."

Jackson said, "I don't think it's part of our mission to start attacking each other just because we don't agree. I'm not saying for a moment that we don't have the right to disagree, but God has given us the responsibility to share His love."

The document voted unanimously by the committee sets the following guidelines for Adventists who enter into the discussion of the ordination issue:

"(1) We resolve to encourage expressions of disagreement that are honest and open based upon a sincere desire to arrive at truth as expressed in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy; (2) We resolve to first communicate with those with whom we disagree and listen non-judgmentally to their positions so that we can represent those positions accurately before critiquing them; (3) We resolve to avoid the use of sarcasm, cartoons, anecdotes, parody or any other form of insinuation to diminish the reputation or personhood of others; (4) We resolve to refrain from sponsoring or countenancing online or offline dialogue that vilifies or depreciates the good name of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in general or the reputations of its individual members in particular.

"We, therefore, resolve to avoid participating in, or being party to, all forms of unhealthy and demeaning discourse. Our aim is to govern our communication according to the high standards of Christian conduct found in the guidelines this statement so that God may be glorified in all we say and do."

Jackson asked Adventists to seek "higher ground during these challenging times while the discussion about ordination builds up." Privately, other NAD officers worried that a relatively small group of church members in North America, including some pastors, who feel strongly that the position put on the agenda by the GC executive committee two weeks ago is a mistake will generate widespread misunderstanding and anger.
"This is a topic that generates very deep feeling," a retired denominational official told Adventist Today. "For those who want to end gender discrimination it is a matter of fundamental justice and morality. For those who want to keep women out of the clergy it has become something like a Bible doctrine that if violated will send the Adventist Church into apostasy. The fear is that this will become such a schism that the two sides will not be able to live together after a decision is made."

"Things are said in the heat of the moment that can do permanent damage to relationships," a delegate to the 1995 GC Session in Utrecht remembered for Adventist Today. "Some of the things that were said on the floor at that time simply are not true when looked at in cool deliberation and careful Bible study. There were people who went home and decided that the Adventist Church could no longer be their spiritual home. I do not know if we can avoid the same this time, but I am happy to see that the leaders are doing something about it."

*The Adventist News Network (ANN) is the official news service of the denomination. It provided the basic news bulletin on which this story is based. The AT News team did additional reporting and AT edited the final product as it appears here.*
Report from the North American Division 2014 Year-end Meetings

From News Release, November 1, 2014

Silver Spring, Md. — "The ultimate goal for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America (also called the North American Division) is Jesus and His soon return," said Daniel R. Jackson, president of the Division, in his report that kicked off the first full day of the 2014 North American Division Year-end Meetings. His report was addressed to 325 members of the Executive Committee gathered at the Division’s headquarters.

"Jesus is everything! He is the reason for our existence and our focal point," said Pastor Jackson who then reminded everyone that "It is not a crime to preach about Jesus in our churches."

Jackson began by reiterating the mission statement of the Division, "To Reach the North American territory and the world with the distinctive message of Hope and Wholeness." Delegates received the statement with resounding "Amens!"

Jackson pointed out that the North American Division “is a division where the sun never sets. The division where the fun never sets,” Jackson said to laughs from the attendees.

While Jackson’s report began with a hopeful message of the vision to share hope and wholeness across the territory, the Secretary’s report painted a picture of the real challenges that have kept the growth of the Church relatively stagnant in North America.

The Adventist Church in North America added fewer new members in 2013, continuing a gradual decline for the fourth year, while the net growth rate increased minimally according to data presented during the Secretary’s report.

G. Alex Bryant, Executive Secretary for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, cited sobering figures from the Seventh-day Adventist World Church during his report. While the Adventist Church has baptized nearly 32 million people in the last 30 years, more than 11 million of them have left the Church. The church of the North America Division is not immune to this trend.

In a survey of Adventist members who have left the church, 25 percent cited a lack of compassion as the reason for leaving. Another 32 percent cited "not fitting in" and "too much focus on minor issues."

“Former members were more concerned with hypocrisy in the Church than they were about worship style and theology,” Bryant said. “When was the last time we argued about that?”

Recent discussions about the ordination of women to the ministry have caused debates at various levels of the church, Jackson said to delegates. But as Christians, he continued, we are called to discuss issues with the understanding and compassion modeled by Christ.
"I don’t think it’s part of our mission to start attacking each other just because we don’t agree," Jackson said. "I’m not saying for a moment that we don’t have the right to disagree, but God has given us the responsibility to share His love."

Jackson asked that the North American church members seek “higher ground” during these challenging times while the discussion about ordination builds up as the next General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas in July 2015 approaches.

Quickly, Jackson transitioned to the impending move of the North American Division’s headquarters from the Adventist World Headquarters building. He stated that the NAD was beginning plans for a relocation because the division needs to “grow up.”

[The NAD will move] because that’s the natural progression for an organization that has been tied by the apron strings to Mommy and Daddy for too long,” said Jackson. He was referring to the fact that North America, while called a division since 1910, was not “an organizational unit” until much later. Jackson also gave examples of other territories of the world church that have relocated in the last 20 years.

Jackson also highlighted a recently launched campaign called “Pray One Million,” asking church members to pray for one person for one minute each day. Thus, each four-month period leading up to the General Conference Session, members of the Church in North America will have prayed 1 million hours. Watch the video.

“The time has come...that we rise above. That we reach out to higher ground. That, while we have our conversations, we not lose sight of what God really wants us to be focusing on. I want to urge you to participate with me in the Pray One Million Initiative.” said Jackson.

Elden Ramirez, director for Volunteer Ministries, was the highlight of the Secretary’s Report. He shared that 52 percent of missionaries worldwide came from the North American Division and that nearly 52,000 volunteers have been sent from North America in the first three quarters of this year.

“What’s exciting is that there were 10,000 more volunteers than last year. That’s 10,000 more people making a difference in this world,” Ramirez said. “But we’re not done yet. There are still positions that need to be filled, and we are hopeful that, by the end of this year, we will be able to fill every volunteer position around the world.”

One of the high points of the morning business session was when Jackson welcomed the student association president’s from NAD Adventist colleges and universities who were attending the session as new delegates with full voting rights. He urged them to speak up and voice their opinions.

If I paid $1,500 to attend a meeting, I would make sure my voice was heard,” he said with a chuckle.

During his presentation Jackson highlighted several items of interest that would be discussed during the business meetings including:

- Reports on the six Building Blocks of the NAD Strategic Plan
- A statement on human sexuality
- A “Mission to the Cities” update
- A report on the North American Division headquarters relocation
- A conversation on the ordination of women to the ministry in the context of the upcoming General Conference Session vote
- Oakwood University joining the North American Division
- The transition of media ministries in the Division

Jackson concluded by reminding delegates that throughout all of the challenges, we must rely upon the understanding of God's Word.

“Jesus ought to be at the center of every doctrine. Our only hope for the Seventh-day Adventist Church is Jesus,” Jackson said. “Jesus is our Hope yesterday, today and forever!”
On National Heroes Day in Jamaica recently two Adventists were among those honored during a ceremony on the lawn of Kings House. The head of state who presided over the event is also an Adventist, Sir Patrick Allen, the Governor General and former president of the denomination in Jamaica.

Audrey Sewell is the nation's permanent cabinet secretary in the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing. She was awarded the sixth highest honor in the Caribbean nation, the Order of Distinction with the rank of Commander, for her outstanding public service in education, justice, transport, public works and housing. She is a local elder at the North Street Adventist Church in Kingston.

Alfonso Marshall works for the National Works Agency which handles road construction. He was awarded the Badge of Honor for Meritorious Service for his service in road maintenance. He is a local elder at the Trench Town Adventist Church.

Sewell said it was an honor for the country to recognize her service. "I know that there are many outstanding Jamaicans in the past and in my group who have been so awarded, and I deem it much more an honor to join the ranks of those very outstanding Jamaicans who have made contributions to national development." Marshall said, "I feel gratified, humbled and very good in my mind knowing that the government and people of Jamaica have seen it fit to award me."

Pastor Everett Brown, president of the denomination in Jamaica, said "I am always very happy when members of our church excel in service to our nation. Audrey Sewell and Alfonso Marshall are members who have for years served our church and the communities in which our church operates, with distinction. It is only fitting that their Christian values through their work with the government has impacted the nation. I commend and congratulate them on behalf of the membership ... in Jamaica."

Pastor Lowell Cooper, a vice president of the denomination's General Conference, commended the work of Adventists in government. "There is a subtle temptation for the followers of Jesus to retreat from the world," he said. "But society and its structures can be transformed by the influence of people who bring spiritual values to their roles in public life. The Bible stories of Joseph and Daniel illustrate how devotion to God can have an enormous impact for the good of a community and a nation."

A total of 233 Jamaicans were recognized this year for their outstanding contribution to nation-building in various fields. The awards ranged from the Order of Jamaica to the Medal of Honor.
The Adventist News Network (ANN) is the official news service of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.
Nearly 200,000 Seventh-day Adventist members in Central America and the Caribbean have been awarded certificates for completing hours of training in areas such as how to give Bible studies, how to conduct an evangelistic series, or how to share Jesus with children.

The yearlong initiative, organized by the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Inter-American Division (IAD) under the banner “Year of Non-Formal Education,” aims to maintain the rapid increase in church membership in the region, one of the fast-growing in the world.

Division president Israel Leito told a four-hour graduation ceremony for 500 of the graduates in Willemstad, Curacao, that the training of the pastors, administrators and regular church members sought to prepare them to better serve the church and the community.

"The preparation you have received will help you understand the expectations of the Lord for He is ready for you to give everything of yourself," Leito told the 1,500 people who attended the ceremony, which was also streamed online to include the thousands of other graduates.

"What you will receive is not just a certificate, it is a moment of dedication, it is a moment when you tell the Lord, 'I want to use it for your honor and glory,'" the Curacao native said. “This will facilitate service, facilitate the mission of the church.”

Church leaders say the Inter-American Division has shown steady growth for decades because of the committed efforts of hundreds of thousands of members in spreading the gospel in their communities.

Myriam Guerrero, 60, was among the 500 dressed in academic regalia to receive the non-formal education certificates at the ceremony. She completed two 40-hour courses on how to prepare an evangelistic campaign and how to lead a Sabbath School class.

“This type of event motivates our church members to be more interested in serving the church,” said Guerrero, a native of Colombia who moved to Curacao 33 years ago and has been active in the Adventist Hispanic Church for more than 25 years. “Our members sometimes feel inadequately trained to teach a Sabbath School, to serve in any other ministry in our church, so the training provides the tools for us to lead others to fall in love with Christ.”
Melrose Cornelia, 39, said she was glad to take a special 32-hour certification program for children’s ministries. The training centered on how to minister to children from infancy to 7, and how to help parents deal with their children.

“Many parents leave the Bible teaching to Sabbath school and church once a week, and we need to help them understand that it is a partnership to raise children for the kingdom,” Cornelia said.

A total of 32,690 church members took the children’s ministries program, said Dinorah Rivera, children’s ministries director for the church in Inter-America.

Elsewhere in Inter-America, thousands watched and were awarded diplomas for completing certification programs this year. In southeast Mexico alone, the church had seven major sites viewing the ceremony and handing out certificates to about 31,000 people.

Leito, the division president, challenged the graduates to continue learning new ways to share Jesus and not specialize in only one ministry.

“Today you can be an elder, and next year you can be a Sabbath School teacher, or a year from now a youth director,” he said. “Be all-around servants of the Lord, wherever the Lord leads, wherever the church needs.”
Adventist Today

News Brief October 31, 2014

Adventist Today regularly provides a summary of stories that we have decided do not require in-depth reporting, but our readers may want to be aware of.

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

Adventist Physicians Working in Liberia Speak on Ebola
After working together in Liberia, Dr. Gillian Seton and Dr. James Appel were in the U.S. recently to attend the Global Healthcare Conference at Loma Linda University (LLU), reports The Sun, a newspaper based in San Bernadino, California. Seton, an LLU graduate, has been working in Liberia since February, and she believes the media hype is hurting relief efforts because fear has led to a reduction in the transport of needed supplies, reports KESQ-TV, the local ABC and CBS affiliate in Palm Springs, CA. Seton can be seen in the initial photograph in a video distributed by the North American Division (NAD) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church – http://vimeo.com/108797800. Appel, another LLU graduate, has been a missionary doctor in Chad for the past decade and more recently has been working with Seton in Liberia. Appel can been seen online answering questions about Ebola at KHQ 6, the NBC affiliate in Spokane, Washington – http://www.khq.com/story/27167506/6-questions-missionary-doctor-returns-from-epicenter-of-ebola-outbreak. Seton plans to return to Liberia, while Appel will be returning to Chad.

Islamic Professor Speaks on Peace at Oakwood University
Dr. Mahmoud Ayoub gave two presentations on the Quran and peace for the 2014 Ahl al-Kitab Lectureship sponsored by Oakwood University's Center for Adventist-Muslim Relations and the Huntsville Islamic Center, reports AL.com. "Salaam is doing something positive - building up the Earth to make it a holy, safe place to make it the abode of God," Ayoub is reported to have said. Ayoub is professor of Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut and emeritus professor of Islamic Studies and Comparative Religions at Temple University. Ayoub has written fifteen books, including Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations.

Adventist Church Releases Women's Study Bible
The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Women’s Ministries department released the Woman’s Bible, the first study Bible specifically designed for women by the Adventist Church. The Woman’s Bible uses the New King James Version and offers more than 100 commentaries, study materials and profiles on major and lesser-known female biblical characters. All articles were written by Adventist women members, biblical scholars and pastors, according to a release from the Adventist News Network (ANN).

Vegetarian Diet May Lower Sperm Quality
A vegetarian diet is correlated with reduced sperm levels and quality, reported Loma Linda University researchers at the American Society of Reproductive Medicine. The four-year study found "that vegetarians and vegan diets were strongly associated with lower sperm count compared to people who ate meat.... In addition, they had a lower average sperm motility, with a third of them active compared to almost two-thirds in meat eaters," notes Renal and Urology News. A Harvard University study “found that a diet high in fruits and vegetables could impact fertility due to the consumption of residual pesticides,” reported the same article. In summary, although “a diet that is rich in fruit and vegetables can protect against many illnesses and can prolong life, it appears that it may also harm fertility.” The Adventist Review adds, "The five-member research team suspects that the blame rests with the use of soy-based meat substitutes and a deficiency of vitamin B12, which is found in meat." In a follow-up article in the Adventist Review, Dr. Eliza Orzylowska, the study's lead author clarifies, “It's a very preliminary study and not clinically significant, so to get this much press surprised me.”

Nonprofit Gives Moms Handmade Gifts

Warm Hearts Warm Babies is “a nonprofit formed by a group of volunteers who knit, stitch, sew and crochet everything from booties to blankets for premature babies all over the state” of Colorado, reports the Denver Post. The group meets once a month at the Brighton Seventh-day Adventist Church to stuff dolls and animals, make quilts and cut patterns for clothes. “The group also makes burial clothes for newborns and takes them to hospitals.” Warm Hearts Warm Babies started in 1998 in a volunteer's home, and it has expanded with additional groups meeting in Loveland, Arvada and Colorado Springs. Each month the nonprofit distributes thousands of items “to hospitals, doctor's offices, day cares, foster homes, shelters, pregnancy centers and area clothing pantries.”

Huguley Hospital Recognized for Excellence

Texas Health Huguley Hospital Fort Worth South recently received two honors: Pathway to Excellence designation by the American Nurses Credentialing Center and a Gold Seal of Approval for inpatient diabetes care conferred by The Joint Commission. Huguely is the first hospital in two local counties to achieve the diabetes certification, and only 53 of 649 hospitals in Texas have received the nursing excellence designation.

Adventists Found to Have Highest Certainty in God's Existence

Of the forty-three largest faith groups in the United States, Seventh-day Adventists have the highest certainty in God's existence, according to the Pew Research U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, reports Religion News Service. Adventists were followed closely by Pentecostals (black), Assemblies of God and Jehovah's Witnesses. However, regarding a “personal God,” Adventists drop to fifth place. In the two least confident categories—agnostics and atheists—there were still a small percentage who were “absolutely certain” there is a God, even a personal God.

WORLD

Conference on Liberty and Conscience Held in Romanian

The Department of Religious Liberty of the Romanian Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church organized a conference on religious liberty, which was held in the Romanian Palace of the Parliament. The event was attended by the foreign affairs minister, the minister of education, ambassadors, parliamentarians, academicians, and leaders of several denominations.
ADRA Partners with USAID in Madagascar Food Program

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is partnering with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in a five-year, $75 million food security program in Madagascar. ADRA states the goal is to directly benefit 264,380 men, women and children by reducing “vulnerability and food insecurity among households in the nation’s central and southern regions.” More specifically, the “program aims to improve health and nutrition, increase sustainable access to food, improve disaster preparedness and response and improve natural resource management.”

Adventists in Jamaica Praised for School Food Program

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Chester, St. Ann, Jamaica, are providing meals twice a week for students at the Chester Primary School. Adventist Church members began the program in April in order to assist children attending school without breakfast. “Merline Ingram, who is one of the organisers, said: ‘We put everything together. We prepare egg, mackerel, bread, fried dumpling, callaloo, porridge, juice, fruits, and sometimes a baked item,’” reports the Jamaica Observer.

Adventist University is named Argentina's first ‘Healthy University’

River Plate Adventist University (RPAU), a Seventh-day Adventist school in Argentina’s state of Entre Ríos, was recently awarded an official certification as the first “Healthy University” in the country. The school is now the first of its kind to receive such a title by government health officials in the South American nation of 42 million, reports ANN. Dr. Horacio Gimenez, coordinator of Non-Communicable Diseases Control in Entre Ríos, said his goal was for other universities to reach the same status. “We would like them to start promoting a healthy lifestyle not only in their campuses, but also in the communities around them,” he said. RPAU has more than 2,500 students from 50 countries and offers 30 undergraduate and graduate degrees in health sciences, business, education and theology.
Excited chatter was heard throughout Camp Wesley Woods in Townsend, Tennessee, on Wednesday, April 9, 2014, as more than 100 Georgia-Cumberland Conference 5th and 6th grade students, teachers, chaperones, and Southern Adventist University students were getting settled into their cabins. The three-day Creation Outdoor School adventure was about to begin.

Lunch and orientation were first on the schedule. Delicious vegetarian meals were provided by the camp staff. After lunch, introductions were made and expectations were given.

Marty Miller, outdoor education professor at Southern Adventist University, led his students in creating 30-minute outdoor inquiry-based lessons on Creation and stewardship to present. The 5th and 6th grade students were split into eight rotation groups, with two Southern student leaders.

During the next 36 hours, groups were immersed in outdoor experiences throughout the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. They had worship by lantern-light in the Cades Cove 19th-century Primitive Baptist Church. The next day, groups were given a historical tour of Cades Cove by the Southern student leaders, where they also got knee-deep into the river to find and identify water creatures. A hike was led by Miller to the White Oak Sinks, where flowers and plants were identified along the way. One group hiked a little farther than expected, but were good sports, and in the end, had a great story to tell.
After a full day of exercise and learning experiences, the group headed back to camp for supper. The evening finished with an exciting game of “Environmental Feud,” where each group was quizzed on the information they had learned during their time at outdoor school. Everyone slept very well that night and packed up the next morning to head home.

Geoffrey White, camp director of Creation Outdoor School and principal at Knoxville Adventist School, summed up the experience by saying, “In a world full of technology and personal disconnect, I was proud and amazed to see so many teachers committed to supporting a nature-rich experience. I saw kids and adults splashing in creeks, sweating on hikes, and singing songs to God, all with smiles on their faces. It was a blessing to be a part of that.”
For 39 years, Western Kentucky University has sent 50-200 photojournalists to 39 different towns in Kentucky to document the lives of an equal number of natives of that town. Every year they produce a coffee table book from the results, but many of the stories are also available on their website at www.mountainworkshops.org.

This year they came to Berea, KY, and I was honored to be one of the citizens who was chosen—I have no idea why! I was shadowed by a young photojournalist named Matthew Herp for five days. He took around 1000 photos, and ten or so of them were published, along with a brief story. That was fun (and sometimes embarrassing, as he backed along in front of me, shooting pictures while I walked down the street…I always knew I was glad not to be a celebrity!)

But that’s not the important part, although I strongly recommend that you do go to the website and scroll through some of the amazing stories these young people did. To me, what mattered was the relationship that grew between Matt and me. He started out asking me questions about my faith because he had heard I attend two churches, and it was part of his job to ask. We ended up sharing such deep and meaningful stories that Matt has become one of my honorary sons (and even advised another young person with some struggles to call and talk to me!)

Probably the thing that touched me the most was the day he said, “To me, your story is your faith.” I was honored and humbled, and once again recognized the activity of the Holy Spirit, always busy in ways we humans never see or imagine. I didn’t think of it then, of course, but the time I spent with Matt mirrors what I ponder of Psalm 78 in this week’s devotion—passing the stories and the torch along.
Photo caption: Of course I had to teach Matt to milk my goat, Willow! (Matt might be the photographer, but I have a cell phone, too!)
Telling the Grandchildren

http://www.atodayarchive.org/article/2777/poetry-the-arts/devotional-thoughts/telling-the-grandchildren

By Debbonnaire Kovacs
Submitted November 5, 2014

Psalm 78:1-7 urges us to share with our children “the mysteries of ancient times…the praiseworthy deeds and power of YHWH, and the wonderful works he has done…that the generations to come might know, and the children yet unborn; that they in turn might tell it to their children.” In context, it speaks of the ways in which God lead the Israelites out of slavery, never abandoning them through forty years of wandering, and finally bringing them into the “promised land,” where Moses and then Joshua exhorted them to make a choice—God or not?—and then make a commitment to their choice.

The rest of the Bible is pretty much a depiction of how well people have generally not stuck with that commitment, even if they made it.

I was just wondering…

Have we told our children “the mysteries” of our own “ancient times”? They can’t even imagine life without Twitter, let alone without a microwave. I’ve lived without electricity or running water. Have you shared your “mysteries” with yours?

How often do we declare to them the “praiseworthy deeds and power of YHWH”? Have you told them their birth stories? How about the thinking and prayer behind your choice to adopt him or her? Have you told them the miracle stories from your own life?

Perhaps you have shared all this, but have you also shared your wilderness wanderings? It always amazes me when parents who are trying to keep kids drug-free want to keep it a secret that they experimented, themselves. Don’t these parents think it will help, rather than hindering, if they share some of their own struggles, and then share the ways God worked to deliver them? Of course one uses one’s best, prayerful judgment concerning what to share, what not to share, and when.

Have we described the slavery from which God delivered us—is still delivering us?

Most of all, have we extolled the wonderful works, giving God all the credit for deliverance and for eternal patience with us? Have we made our commitment out loud, in front of our kids, lived by it, and asked forgiveness when we’ve failed?

Let’s face it—our kids know we’re not perfect. It will not shock them to learn we made mistakes, sometimes big ones. What they need to hear about is the God that never abandons, the Shepherd that stayed up late and searched the cliffsides and risked his own life climbing down into the pit to get us out.
They need to hear that—tell somebody! And not just your blood children, either, but the children, youth, and new Christians in the church family. The struggling humans around us all need to hear. They need our help, and they need to be allowed to help us. That’s what makes us all strong together.