How to Engage Young Adults: Report from Retention Summit to Adventist Leaders: Amid increasing challenges to retain Adventist youth from generation to generation in the Church, North American collegiates have issued a challenge to denominational leaders.

Your God Is Too Small and Your Bible Needs Retranslation: Jack Hoehn wants to chat with Adventist evolutionists, agnostics, and atheists, and invites us all to listen in.

Training on How to Use 12-step Groups in Outreach Is Offered by Adventist Ministry: Always a bit controversial among SDA teetotalers, addiction-recovery programs offered initially on the US West Coast are now finding acceptance across the nation.
December 13 Offering Earmarked for Adventist Charity:
Church members religiously support weekly offerings for the needs of the Church, but rarely give through the offering plate for general philanthropy. This will change this coming Sabbath....

Adventist Leaders in NYC/Elsewhere Speak Out on Failure of Justice in Police-related Deaths: While views regarding use of lethal force by police vary, an SDA conference president and others have gone public, protesting recent developments in killings of young men....

Joy Springs (DEVOTIONAL):
For the third week of Advent (leading up to Christmas), the theme is Joy, a time when families who have Advent wreaths light a pink candle to remind them that Jesus is coming. Debonnaire Kovacs offers thoughts from Isaiah 61....

FEATURE
(Available to all logged-in subscribers; to apply for a free 30-day subscription, click here)

Adventism and the Arts: Spirit in a Storefront Exhibit:
In Birmingham, UK, nine Adventists have created an art display at a busy mall, catching the hearts of many passersby....

POETRY & ARTS

Millstone: A photo by S M Chen taken in Israel illustrates the theme of Mark 9:42: "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea."...
NEW WEBSITE ANNOUNCEMENT

Welcome to the new Adventist Today web site! There are 3 important items you need to know:

First, you no longer have to "log in" to post comments! You simply must supply your name and email address when you post a comment.

Second, for a few weeks, while we put the finishing touches on the new site, you will have access to all content without having to log in. We are in the process of transferring all the subscriber accounts to the new site. Once that is done, we will send our subscribers a link to create a new password and a significant part of our content will be available only to subscribers.

Third, as of December 1, all new Adventist Today content is being posted only on the new site. Content posted previous to December 1 will remain on the www.atodayarchive.org site and comments can still be posted with those articles. When transfer of the archives is completed, a notice will be posted on both the old and new sites and subscribers will receive an email. In the future the archives will only be available to subscribers.

We thank you for your patience as we move into the final stages of this transition. If you have any questions or suggestions, please let me know. You can send me an email at atoday@atoday.org if you put "Executive Director" in the subject line. Or you can phone (503) 826-8600 and leave a message for me.

Monte Sahlin
Executive Director
Adventist Today Foundation
Monte Sahlin

By AT News Team, December 9, 2014: The student associations on the campuses of the Adventist colleges and universities across North America sent key leaders to a Summit on Young Adult Retention the weekend of October 23-25. Adventist Today reported the meeting as it convened and has obtained a copy of the report prepared by the participants and shared with denominational administrators in the annual meeting of the governing body of the denomination’s North American Division on November 13.

“Why are young adults leaving the church?” The report lists six reasons, including “often” they are “casualties of the church’s inability to portray God’s love,” and “feel as if they are not allowed to ask questions.”

Where young adults are staying in the Adventist Church it is because “there is a safe place to be real, ask questions and be [accepted when they are] broken.” Young adults are retained as church attenders when they “have seen Jesus at the center” of both “relationships and doctrine.” The report lists five factors that result in retention.

The value of this report is that it is the work of young adults themselves; young adults who are actively involved in pursuing a Christian higher education at an Adventist institution. It reflects both their personal experiences and what they have observed among others on their campus at the local churches they attend.

“What young adults need from the church” is, among other things to see the church welcome, “the prayer warriors, the doubters, the artists, the analytics, the musicians, the introverts,” the report states. “Any and all are needed and wanted in our church.” It also included a section on “what young adults are willing to give to the church.”

“It is our hope that this report will inform our church leaders as we continue to explore the topic of young adult retention and involvement in the church,” stated the 19 young leaders who signed the report. “We, as young adult leaders in our respective schools, will take the information gathered here and find practical ways to carry out the ideas expressed in this document.”

The 19 include Andrew Ashley, Dani Nobuhara and Keren Pagan from Southern Adventist University; Danielle Barnard and Ro Sang Puia from Washington Adventist University; Natalie Dorland and Katie Heinrich from Walla Walla University; Josh Estrada and Amanda Schultz from La Sierra University; Jessica Hall and Andrew Orpana from Canadian University College; Jaryn Hart and Justin Springfield from Pacific Union College; Conner Mason and Ashley Smit from Southwestern Adventist University; Debbie Pinto and Douglas Barahona representing Union College; Lindsey Pratt and Jason Schockey from Andrews University.

Click here to view the full document.
Your God is Too Small and Your Bible Needs Retranslation

Jack Hoehn

Jack wants to chat with Adventist Evolutionists, Agnostics, and Atheists—you know who you are. Others welcome to listen in.

By Jack Hoehn, December 6, 2014: For the last three years I have blogged for the average thoughtful Seventh-day Adventist English speaking believer who is interested in seeking reason in faith. As I look back I recognize that the earliest non-Adventist influence on my own spirituality was a little book by J.B. Phillips called, Your God is Too Small.

Although that book did not carry a subtitle, J.B. Phillips himself offered a modern, alive translation of the Bible, that we called The Phillips Translation. This dynamic attempt to make ancient scripture open and understandable to our times was electrifying in the 1950’s and led to a plethora of attempts to restate the 66 books in both restricted and historical (what did the ancient writers mean), and dynamic and fluid (who cares what it meant then, what does it mean now) ways. The unstated subtitle then was, Your Present Bible is Too Old, and we need to retranslate our spiritual sources to be of use today.

Adventism that had retranslated the King James Bible by a certain inspired woman into the Spirit of Prophecy in the 1800’s, again made room in 1950’s Sabbath School Classes for Phillips Translation, and then the RSV, then the NIV, then The Message, and now even reluctant tradition bound have finally permitted a New-KJV to appear. (I’m sure a new-new-newer KJV can’t be that far away!)

For the non-faithful there was a parallel movement, and God was not found to be too small or the Bible in need of constant reapplication, but both were simply pronounced dead. Darwin and Freud and Marx danced through 20th century culture on God and his Bible’s grave. But by the 21st century Marx had died, Freud had died, and Darwinian thought itself was forced to constantly evolve. God refused to remain entombed; Easter keeps happening; and reality keeps marching on.

Science/Faith War Victims and Refugees

The battles for progress and change in religion and in non-religious thought are not bloodless academic exercises. Spiritual abuse is as real as sexual abuse and can be just as scarring. Even today our church at times seems led by spiritual troglodytes trying to drag Adventism back into a Doug Batchelor cave with a club of simplistic literalism beating back reapplication of Adventism on one shoulder, and with our women dragged by the hair of the male headship heresy on the other.

In the Adventist Today and Spectrum communities, in the comments on our blogs I find Seventh-day Adventist educated and nurtured men and women who have had personal war experiences in these battles. Former Adventist pastors linger to release the rest of us. Scientists who found that given the option of either young earth creationism or evolution they had no choice. Theologians who have learned that rigidity is fragile and very breakable and consensus sometimes impossible.

Adventism also has many “faithful-church-member” warriors who like our present church President feel threatened and endangered by the threat of progressive thought, so place barricades over any paths towards tomorrow. They pledge towards the 1800’s Bible retranslations by Ellen White undying fealty and like Peter on the edge of
Gethsemane draw their little swords to slash and burn those they feel threaten their KJV/SOP Lord. I've tried to dialog with them and their sympathizers in the past, and open their hearts to a kinder gentler faith and a willingness to follow Christ if he asks them to move along down the path of understanding towards a Newer Heaven and a Newer Earth with a Refreshed Adventism.

**Scientific and Free-thinking Joys**

This blog however is not for them. It is for you. Those of you who have escaped the narrow and restrictive confines of Adventism may have found the same sense of freedom that Peter Hitchens found as he set fire to his Bible on the playing fields of Cambridge in 1967. "I was engaged at the time in a full, perfect, and complete rebellion against everything I had been brought up to believe." At that moment he says he knew suddenly and decisively and liberatingly that "there was no God, that the Old Testament was a gruesome series of atrocity stories and fairy tales, while the gospels were a laughable invention used to defraud the simple."

He describes his emotional reactions as "with youth’s lack of sympathy for an attitude other than its own he despise [those who did not go along with his decision]... because they were content with the vague emotion which they called God and would not take the further step which to himself seemed so obvious."

Even deeper he “congratulated himself… on being able to be virtuous without hope of reward or fear of punishment.” "I rather think I imagined this was a tremendously original thing to do and a shrewd blow at the dull believers who needed to be scared or bribed into goodness. This is one of the principal joys of the newly fledged atheist (and a continuing joy for many rather experienced non-believers)."

"Praying was a comical folly, hymns were so much wailing at an empty heaven, churches were absurd building in urgent need of conversion into something more useful, or of demolition. Anyone could write a portentous book and call it Scripture. Enlightened self-interest was the evolutionary foundation of good behavior. I did not have to do anything that I did not want to do, every again. I would therefore be "happy," because I was freed from those things whereof my conscience was afraid."

**Abolishing the pains of life**

Hitchens continues, "We were sure we, and our civilization, had grown out of the nursery myths of God, angels, and heaven. We had modern medicine, penicillin, jet engines, the welfare state, the United Nations, and “science," which explained everything that needed to be explained. People still died, it was true, but generally off-stage and drugged into painless passivity. We could not imagine ourselves every doing so. The “pains of death" had been abolished, along with most of the pains of life."

The “widely accepted dismissal of faith by the intelligent and educated seemed then to be definitive proof that the thing was a fake." "(There were, after all, plenty of Christian intellects available if I had desired reassurance that faith and intelligence were compatible.) But I dismissed them as obvious dupes, who spoke as they did because it was their professional paid duty to do so. I had spotted the dry, disillusioned, and apparently disinterested atheism of so many intellectuals, artists, and leaders of our age. I liked their crooked smiles, their knowing worldliness, and their air of finding human credulity amusing. I envied their confidence that we lived in a place where there was no darkness… It certainly did not cross my mind that I had any low motives for it. Unlike Christians, atheists have a high opinion of their own virtue."

**Scientific Pretense**

“I was wholly satisfied that evolution by natural selection—which I did not understand because it was not though necessary to explain this holy mystery—fully explained the current shape of the realm of nature." “Science had fully explained the motions of the planets, the law of gravity, and mysteries of time. Anything that had not yet been explained would no doubt soon be discovered. There were no mysteries."
“Because we could observegravity in action, we somehow knew what it was. (Nobody then mentioned that its operation, especially in empty space, simply cannot be explained.) All was settled. Just learn the Table of Elements, your species, your elementary biology, and formulae, and that was that. The fact that the “laws” dealt with in this subject are all accounts of what did happen, rather than rules about how things should happen, was passed over in silence. Why and how were silently but inextricably confused. The use of the majestic word “laws” curiously turned the mind away from speculation about whose laws they might conceivably be or why they might have been made. Science, summed up as the belief that what could not be naturalistically or materialistically explained was not worth talking about, simply appropriated them.”

Personal Pretense

“I actively loathed anything that suggested the existence or presence of death.” “I learned how to shock my teachers… [and] had absolutely no idea that I might have been making any kind of mistake. I was in fact rather pleased with myself. I have come to think that this readiness to live entirely in the present—in which we spare ourselves any self-reproach and fail completely to see ourselves as others see us—is a metaphor for the Godless state, in which we simultaneously ignore the experience and warnings of our past and the unknown limitless dangers of our future.”

Beyond Adventist Pretense?

Peter Hitchens book, The Rage Against God,[i] then details his loss of faith in secularism, unlike his more famous and departed brother Christopher, who remained true to atheism till death did the brother’s part. So what does this have to do with Adventists who have “moved beyond” Adventism either with pain and regret or with easy and pleasure, stopping back now and again just to remind themselves of where they were, and why they are no longer there?

Just this warning: That non-belief can be as rigid and inflexible as religious fundamentalism. And that the assumptions of materialism may not be free of dogma and rigidity, any more than are ISIS, the Papacy, or Educatetruth.com. I particularly find this in the comments on my blogs from those Adventists or former Adventists who have rejected Young Earth Creationism and moved into the tent of Naturalism. Some are scientists whose Adventism was overwhelmed by the evidence in their fields, and supported by the weight of concord among fellow scientists. Embarrassed by our Adventist credulity and the apparent dishonesty of using scientific tidbits while rejecting scientific consensus, they write off as “creationists” any Darwinian critics and doublers.

I find some progressive Adventist theologians seeking a faith worth this world also tend to flee to a vague “let’s get along with the scientific majority position,” that is accepted without being deeply investigated.

Particularly noticed are parroted criticisms of the Intelligent Design movement that I read from scientists and theologians alike. Much like Judge John Jones in the Dover case, they seem to have swallowed the propaganda briefs of Darwinism in its latest but fully materialistic manifestation and repeat them untested and untried.

Why reconsider ID?

There are books and conferences and blogs to infinity on ID versus Darwinism and I will not try to refute the misunderstandings and misapplications regarding Intelligent Design here. I am just asking Scientists and Theologians with Adventist connections to carefully and thoughtfully listen to what ID says. ID is a broad tent and offers both support and criticism at the same time of several camps.[iii]

ID has something to offer Young Earth Creationists, that yes the evidence is compatible with your hope for God in creation. But ID has nothing to support the young earth age chronology or a namby-pamby view of the Designer.

ID has something to say to naturalistic scientists. ID fully respects your science and your methods, it welcomes the
data and all who methodically seek for information about the universe. But ID asks that the evidence of design that you see be permitted to be considered and not banned by a dictatorial proletariat forbidding discussion and evaluation of the fingerprints seen all over the cosmos and its life.

ID has something to offer theologians about how to read the Bible where it intersects with nature. God’s second book must be permitted to help us consider His first book. ID will require of Adventist theology a more robust doctrine of Creation than we presently have. Why have we restricted eternity to the future, and been uncomfortable with deep time in the past? What does a God willing to wait and adapt life over eons say about His openness, and about human participation in the Kingdom of God that began 2,000 years ago but is still fairly anemic?

(Adventist Theology, on the other hand, particularly the Great Controversy motif, offers ID something enticing. ID at present posits a Designer. ID has not yet explored the possibility of the Intelligent Destroyer also on display in life.)[iii]

I do not expect Adventist Young Earth Creationists, Young Life Creationists, Old Earth Creationists, Progressive Creationists, Theistic Evolutionists, Agnostics or Atheists to all convert to ID. I am asking for permission for the conversations to continue without the automatic, reflex, and dogmatic exclusion of thought and discussion about ID.

We shrink God and narrow the Bible by retreating into Adventist fundamentalism. We trivialize the realities of consciousness, music, mathematics, aesthetics, language, information technology, sexuality, romance, love and the resurrection of Christ by accepting materialism.

J.B. Phillips was quite right; our present or our former God may have been too small and our Scriptures surely remain in need of frequent retranslation. But so do the metaphysical projection of scientists suggesting materialism is adequate. ID could be a somewhat neutral meeting place to correct some of those problems.

Can we continue to talk?

_________________________

FOOTNOTES:

“In thinking about these questions I have been stimulated by criticisms of the prevailing scientific world picture… by the defenders of intelligent design. Even though writers like Michael Behe and Stephen Meyer are motivated at least in part by their religious beliefs, the empirical arguments they offer against the likelihood that the origin of life and its evolutionary history can be fully explained by physics and chemistry are of great interest in themselves. Another skeptic, David Berlinski, has brought out these problems vividly without reference to the design inference. Even if one is not drawn to the alternative of an explanation by the actions of a designer, the problems that these iconoclasts pose for the orthodox scientific consensus should be taken seriously. They do not deserve the scorn with which they are commonly met. It is manifestly unfair.”

Thomas Nagle, Mind and Cosmos, 2012, Oxford University Press. [iv]

[i] Peter Hitchens, The Rage Against God-how atheism let me to faith, 2010, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan.

The Intelligent Destroyer has been observed by both secular and religious observers, see: Howard K Bloom, *The Lucifer Principle*, 2008, Atlantic Monthly Press, for a secular opinion; Gregory Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*—constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy, 2001, IVP, for a Christian but not SDA opinion that sounds a lot like the Great Controversy.

Thomas Nagel is University Professor in the Department of Philosophy and the School of Law at New York University. His books include *The Possibility of Altruism, The View from Nowhere, and What Does It All Mean?: A Very Short Introduction to Philosophy*. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy. In 2008, he was awarded the Rolf Schock Prize in Logic and Philosophy and the Balzan Prize in Moral Philosophy.— from Amazon.com
Training on How to Use 12-Step Groups in Outreach is Offered by Adventist Ministry

Monte Sahlin

By AT News Team, Dec. 11, 2014:  The 12-Step approach to dealing with addiction was invented by Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and is now the most widely known and used around the world. Less well known is that there is a growing network of Adventists who use the 12-Step method in small groups both for church members and as outreach beyond the church.

At least five training sessions to help start more groups and introduce Adventist resource materials are planned in 2015 across the United States from New York City to southern California. These are being organized by Adventist Recovery Ministries:

February 9-11 in Atlanta, Georgia

February 27 to March 1 in Brooklyn, NYC

April 10-12 in Glendale, California

June 19-21 in Brooklyn, NYC again

October 9-11 in Dallas, Texas

Each of these training events includes presentations on the basic principles of the 12 Steps with correlations to Bible foundations and the Adventist heritage. There are simulated 12-Step small group meetings so that participants can catch the flavor of people sharing their experiences, needs, strengths and hopes. Adventist resource materials will be introduced.

The same training was conducted in Portland, Oregon, in October this year. Training teams are available for invitations to other locations.

The 12-Step approach is controversial for some Christians because in secular settings it often includes a kind of generic spirituality related to “a higher power” instead of specific Bible doctrine. A number of conservative Protestant and Adventist writers have also shown that it is rooted in biblical principles.

Adventist Recovery Ministries has been accepted by the denomination’s North American Division (NAD) as a recognized ministry of the Adventist Church. Its history goes back to Pastor Hal Gates in the 1980s, the Regeneration materials he developed in collaboration with the Institute of Alcoholism and Drug Dependencies at Andrews University and an Association of Adventist Parents of young adults with substance abuse issues that came together around the same time.

Gates was an alcoholic and drug addict who found Christ and changed his addictive behavior with the help of an Adventist friend in 1981. He was later hired as the pastor of a small church in Willapa Harbor, Washington, and began a 12-step outreach. In 1987, Dr. Pat Mutch invited him to help teach a class for graduate students at Andrews University and this resulted in him preparing resource materials published under the title of Regeneration. These quickly became widely used among Adventists in North America, Europe and Australia.

Pastor Ray Nelson became passionate about the effectiveness of recovery ministry and began to promote the concept. In 2002 through 2005 the health ministries department of the NAD sponsored many awareness seminars across the continent. In 2007 more than 200 people participated in an Addictions Ministry Conference at Andrews...
University and the following year the Association of Adventist Parents merged with the Regeneration network to form Adventist Recovery Ministries.

In 2011 the Adventist Recovery Ministries dissolved its independent board and the NAD voted to make it a ministry of the denomination and officially appointed a governing committee linked to the denominational organization. The committee includes 12 denominational leaders, three faculty members from Adventist universities, two Adventist health professionals and two lay organizers for the network. It is chaired by Debra Brill, a vice president of the NAD.

More information is available at the Web site: www.adventistrecovery.org
December 13 Offering Earmarked for the Adventist Charity

Monte Sahlin

By AT News Team, Dec. 10, 2014: One of only two times each year that Adventist churches take an offering for humanitarian charity is scheduled this coming Sabbath (December 13). In the United States the offering will go to Adventist Community Services (ACS) the domestic community action agency of the denomination. In Canada and the rest of the world … more about that below.

ACS is one of the best-kept secrets among Adventists primarily because of something called “Dorcas.” When that word is used among middle-aged and older Adventists they typically stop listening, stop reading and continue in ignorance of today’s reality. The Dorcas Society was the earliest form of social work among Adventists, dating to the 19th century. It was actually invented by the Wesleyan movement and because a number of early Adventist leaders had previously been Methodists, the concept was brought over into the new denomination.

The Dorcas Society was a volunteer program largely staffed by women that functioned primarily to share in-kind donations with local families in need. At the end of World War II in the late 1940s and 1950s the Dorcas Society was renamed Seventh-day Adventist Welfare Services (SAWS) and focused on packing used clothing and other donated goods for shipment to devastated countries in Europe and later the post-colonial, underdeveloped nations of Africa and Asia.

SAWS was merged with other Adventist activities in the 1970s and eventually re-named the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). In this process it was disconnected from the domestic activities in North America.

Today there are 250 to 500 local centers in the United States that provide emergency food, recycled clothing and household goods, health screening and other human services that make up the bulk of ACS programs. About 30 of these have hired a full-time professional as director and operate on a daily basis. Examples of these highly-developed ACS agencies include Good Neighbor House in Dayton (Ohio), Good Samaritan Center in Chattanooga (Tennessee), Portland (Oregon) ACS known locally as PACS, and ACS of Greater Washington (DC).

ACS plays a key role in disaster response under contracts with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the U.S., the American Red Cross and several other organizations. These contracts commit Adventists to mobilize a response when a disaster is declared by the president or a state governor and specify the nature of the activities.

ACS operates a number of less well-known programs, including a tutoring and mentoring program for underprivileged children in collaboration with AmeriCorps and America Reads, a youth service program, elder care and crisis care programs. The ACS Web site includes a list of 34 affiliated senior living facilities.

The offering this weekend will go largely to the ACS Community Development Program which started life in 1967 when the denomination’s General Conference executive committee set up the Inner City Program. This program was merged with ACS in the 1990s and was, in fact, never limited to urban neighborhoods. ACS recently announced a new grant program for local projects submitted by congregations and affiliated groups.

The most recent data available is more than a decade old, but in the early 2000s ACS programs were reaching more than 1.3 million people through 362 local units; raising a total of $15.6 million a year, about $6 million in cash, $7.6 million in donated food and $1.9 million in donated clothing, furniture, etc. ACS is incorporated as a nonprofit organization separately from the denomination itself, but under the control of the denomination’s North American Division (NAD). It has the legal status of a public charity under section 501(c)3 of the Federal tax law and receives significant donations and grants from individuals and groups not part of the Adventist denomination. Its board includes seven officers of the NAD, the ACS executive director, three local conference ACS directors and a
representative from the denomination’s General Conference.

In Bermuda ACS operates in much the same way and has negotiated a recognized role with the government of this British colony. In Canada, ACS does not exist as a separate entity or program and the activities of ACS and ADRA have been merged under ADRA Canada. The relationship between local community services and ADRA are “complicated” in the rest of the world.

This offering is collected in the NAD. In the rest of the world there are typically two annual giving opportunities that both go to ADRA, although this is a relatively new concept in many of the developing nations of the southern hemisphere and still not implemented everywhere. More information and a place to make a donation with a credit card are available on the Web here: www.communityservices.org
Adventist Leaders in NYC, Elsewhere Speak Out on Failure of Justice in Police-related Deaths

By AT News Team, December 8, 2014: (Updated Dec. 9) "I call on our pastors and lay leaders to speak up respectfully in support of the safety and civil rights our young men and women," stated Pastor Daniel Honore, president of the Northeastern Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. The statement was in response to widespread disappointment among many Americans at the failure of a New York City grand jury to indict the police officer involved in the death of Eric Garner.

A video of the incident "clearly" shows the officer "applying the banned chokehold procedure on the victim as he pleaded for his life," the statement pointed out. For "millions of law-abiding citizens … there is a sense that justice has eluded us and that certain lives are valued less than others."

Honore referred to Proverbs 14:34 and Isaiah 1:17 as a Bible foundation for his concern for social justice. The statement encouraged "participation in public forums, marches and non-violent events in which Seventh-day Adventists can speak up for peace and justice without compromising our religious convictions."

“As I think of my own sons and the thousands of minority youths whose spiritual home is the [Adventist Church], I cannot but be compelled to join our voices to those crying out for a more just society," said Honore. "I join those calling on the Federal Government to conduct its own investigation into the death of an unarmed black man."

Demonstrations occurred last week on several university and college campuses affiliated with the Adventist denomination in the U.S. On most of these campuses the majority or a significant minority of the students are non-white young adults. Large numbers have expressed personal fear about the danger in inter-actions with white police officers across the country.

Adventist groups from across Ohio organized a demonstration at the state capital building in Columbus yesterday afternoon (December 7). They called for prayer about the social tensions in Ferguson, Missouri; New York City, and a number of other locations throughout the nation. “You can’t meet anger with anger,” said Pastor John Boston, from the Central Adventist Church in Columbus. “We want to meet anger with calm, protest with prayer.”

In addition to the events in New York and Missouri, two recent events in Ohio have involved police killings of black men. One was in the Dayton area and another in Cleveland, in which a 12-year-old boy was shot. In both cases the victims were holding toy guns but not involved in overtly aggressive or unlawful behavior.

“About 100 people … locked arms, swaying and singing hymns," reported The Columbus Dispatch. As the groups returned to their buses, “several Columbus police cars arrived and parked on High Street, lights flashing." Boston told a reporter that he "was threatened with a jaywalking ticket for crossing High Street" in a downtown area on the grounds of the state capital where crowds routinely gather usually much larger than this one.

Police told the newspaper that they were “called because improperly parked cars and blocked bus lanes.” But “no one got a ticket.” It is likely that the church buses were standing in the bus lane to pick up returning groups, a source familiar with downtown Columbus, Ohio, told Adventist Today.

Adventist Today has been told that there were Adventist groups involved in various demonstrations and statements on this issue over the last weekend, but details of any other such activities have not yet come to the AT News Team. The majority of the members of the Adventist Church in North America are from ethnic minorities and a high percentage of the white members reside in small towns and rural areas. This demographic reality plays a strong role.
in the attitudes of Adventists on the current issues about police-community relations in America.

Update on December 9

On the evening of December 8, the denomination’s North American Division (NAD) released a statement by Pastor Daniel R. Jackson, president of the NAD: “The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America is deeply saddened by the tragic death of Eric Garner and the heartache it has caused his family and community. We extend our deepest condolences and continue to pray for his family.

“The recent grand jury decisions in Ferguson, Missouri, in the death of Michael Brown and Mr. Garner in New York City have stirred great emotions in the hearts of many Americans who question the equity with which all of God’s children are treated. Many citizens, including Seventh-day Adventist pastors, educators, and students have participated in non-violent marches, peacefully calling for equality and asking for change. We continue to support the right, which we are afforded in this country, to peacefully speak out and call for change.

“It is time for our society to engage in open, honest, civil, and productive conversation about the rights and equality of every member of our community. We pray that the tragedy of these two deaths will bring about much needed change and address the pain that many ethnic groups are facing in this country. We pray that awareness will lead to a two-way conversation that will lead to healing.

“We pray that those on either side of this conversation will speak with peace, love, and grace. We pray for the day when all of God’s children treat each other without suspicion, bias, and hatred. As the Apostle Paul reminds us: ‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’"
Joy Springs
A atoday.org/joy-springs.html

Debbonnaire Kovacs, Dec. 10, 2014  For the third week of Advent, the theme is Joy. This is the time when families who have Advent wreaths light a pink candle to remind them Jesus is coming!! For this week, I have simply taken verses 1-4 and 10 of Isaiah 61 from the NASB and sparked it visually. Read as if you never heard it before. It's true!!

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
   Because the LORD has anointed me
To bring good news to the afflicted;
   He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives
   And freedom to prisoners;
   To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD
And the day of vengeance of our God;
   To comfort all who mourn,
      To grant those who mourn in Zion,
         Giving them a garland instead of ashes,
         The oil of gladness instead of mourning,
            The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.
So they will be called oaks of righteousness.
The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.

Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins,
They will raise up the former devastations;
And they will repair the ruined cities,
The desolations of many generations...

I will rejoice greatly in the LORD,
   My soul will exult in my God;
For He has clothed me with garments of salvation,
He has wrapped me with a vesture of righteousness.
He has clothed me with the robe of righteousness,  
   As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,  
   And as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up,  
So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
   To spring up before all the nations.
Adventism and the Arts: Spirit in a Storefront Exhibit

Debbonnaire Kovacs

By Debbonnaire Kovacs, Dec. 10, 2014

If you read your Adventist World, you saw a story in the October edition about “a group of creative-minded young Adventists in Britain” who “decided to showcase their faith in a shop window.” In Birmingham, the second-largest city in Great Britain, Daniel Blyden, member of the Aston-Newtown Community Church, learned that a friend had opened a shop with a window display in The Square Shopping Center and jumped at the chance to have an art exhibit.

Eight other Adventists (Chrissie Hewitt, Paul Jones, Chari White, Anson Carridice-Davids, Abigail Hazel, Mawuena Patten, Reuel Jones and Keiran McKenzie) joined him, and they called the exhibit “The IQ: Innermost Questions.” The artwork was created around the Great Questions of life such as Why are we here? Where did we come from? What is the origin of morality?

Blyden said, “My whole aim with the IQ project was to make use of the creative skills we have in the church to bring the gospel outside of the church walls to the people.”

Speaking for myself, I was most struck by the words “bring the gospel outside”. It seems to me that we spend more time trying to bring people inside—which is not a bad thing! But those who don’t come may get left out, and some of those are artists and other hands-on, visual people who don’t respond as well to spoken word as they do to an experience.

I went looking for more about this project. One of the things I found was a blog called “Discovering Truth, with Keiran and Eraina McKenzie.” Keiran McKenzie had this to say about the exhibit:

“This week end just gone saw the marking of a well executed art exhibition directed by Daniel Blyden. I have to say it was very well done, and was pleasure to be part of the process that made it a success. What I enjoyed most, (and for those who know me personally, there will be no surprise here), it was the frequent exchanges of ‘self’, of ‘opinions’, and of the ‘Values’ of people from all walks of life, each sparking an opportunity to connect, engage and reason with them about morality.”

http://itstruth.co.uk/2014/06/22/innermost-questions-art-exhibition/ You can also go to this blog and click on a video clip of McKenzie and another musician playing and singing at the exhibit.

Blyden also has a statement on his own blog at http://www.danieljblyden.co.uk/portfolio/exhibition-curator-project-design/. Here, he stated:

“The IQ ‘Innermost Questions’ Project is an art project that commissions visual artists to explore the tough, often philosophical questions about life, existence and what it means to be human.”

There was also a news story about this event at http://adventist.org.uk/news/2014/2014-nec/creative-adventists-use-art-to-reach-others. They reported that the event:

“...proved highly effective in reaching people from all walks of life, resulting in follow-up Bible studies with atheists and Muslims alike...

[For example,] “On the invitation of a friend, art enthusiast and self-confessed atheist, Valerie, explored the exhibition unsure of what to expect. She began to question her own disposition towards disregarding rules and laws. This sparked a lengthy discussion with the team which challenged her thinking and resulted in her accepting the challenge to read the Bible with a different approach.”
Blyden says there will be follow-up (some has happened already) and he and I are now in touch via Facebook, so watch for more about this group of Christians who have dedicated the gifts God gave them to reaching out and building up the kingdom of heaven.

You can see pictures from the exhibit at all of the websites in this article. I also hope to have future art to feature in Poetry & Arts.
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Photo by S M Chen, Israel, 1970s  “And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.”

– Mark 9:42