Adventists Urged to Give Immediate Assistance to Japan
Church and ADRA Teams Assess Damage

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency continues to respond to the devastating tsunami triggered by the 9.0 magnitude earthquake that shook Japan on Friday, March 11. Assessment teams reached the severely affected city of Sendai in the Miyagi Prefecture within 24 hours after a 30-foot tsunami wave crashed through the city, destroying entire communities and claiming thousands of lives. Thousands are still missing. Read more from ADRA’s website HERE. “As the church in Japan copes with the impact of the recent earthquake and tsunami, the support of church members around the world through prayer and financial donations is greatly appreciated,” says Dan Jackson, president of the North American Division. Adventists can offer immediate support for ADRA or other church-related efforts in Japan, by texting or using one of the additional methods listed here:

- **Mobile Devices**: text “SUPPORT” to 85944 to make an automatic $10 donation
- **Online Donations**: at www.adra.org or through the NAD
- **Phone Donation**: 1-800-424-ADRA
- **Check by Mail**: make payable to ADRA and marked “Japan Relief” and mail to: ADRA International, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904
- **Local Church Offering**: Use your church tithe envelope and mark it “Japan Relief” to help churches and schools with recovery and outreach

Pathfinder Bible Achievement Teams Roll On

Package nine cracker-jack Pathfinder teams with a host of leaders, parents, grandparents and friends, and you’ve got the recipe for the North Pacific Union-wide Pathfinder Bible Achievement event. It was also the makings of a fun but intense Sabbath afternoon, March 12, at the Oregon Conference Holden Convention Center in Gladstone, Ore. In the end, seven teams were within 90 percent of the top score, and thereby granted first place status — Cascade Eagles, Colville Cougars, Lynwood Spanish Falcons, Newport POV Wildcats, Palouse Hills, Pasco Cherokee Lady Braves and Pleasant Valley Panthers (pictured here). The Riverside Chinooks took second (within 80 percent of the top score), and the Eagle Golden Eagles, who traveled all the way from Idaho, held on for third place (at least 70 percent of the top score). All first place teams have the right, if they desire, to enter the final step in Pathfinder Bible Achievement — a trip to Andrews University for the North American Division event held in April. See more photos HERE.

La Sierra Acknowledges Issues with Origins

Looking Ahead

March
24: May Ad/Article Deadline

April
1–2: Ore. Origins Conference
1–3: Wash. Impact Your World Retreat
3–5: WWU University Days
7: UCA Academy Days
9: Ore. Ministry Fest South
21: June Ad/Article Deadline
21–24: WWU Homecoming Weekend
30: OAMC Concert

May
19: July Ad/Article Deadline

GLEANER Blogs

- Cindy’s Garden Blog
- Monthly Archival Photo
- Let’s Talk
In a March 9 open letter welcomed by many Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders and members across North America, La Sierra University acknowledged serious problems in its teaching of origins over the last several years. The university apologized for not having adequately communicated Seventh-day Adventist beliefs about creationism to its students. "We found that only 50 percent of the students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that our Adventist view of creation was presented, and only 40 percent agreed or strongly agreed that our Adventist view was supported," Randall Wisbey, president, and Ricardo Graham, board chairman, write in the open letter. The letter accompanied the release of a board-approved report on the controversy that has focused on the Riverside, Calif., campus for nearly two years. "This is not acceptable, and we apologize," the two leaders add. Read more from the Adventist News Network.

Extremists Destroy Ethiopian Churches
Adventist News Network reports at least 30 Protestant churches in western Ethiopia, among them seven Seventh-day Adventist houses of worship, have been burned in a series of attacks by religious extremists from the region. Unrest was first reported on March 2 and has since killed at least one Christian, wounded several others, left personal property destroyed and displaced thousands of Christians. "The level of destruction is not fully and clearly confirmed," says Tamire Shaemalo, Adventist Church in Ethiopia communication director, citing inconsistencies between reports. Preliminary reports, however, indicate dozens of Adventist homes were burned alongside the churches, members were robbed and food and farm animals were destroyed during the attacks. Church officials in central Ethiopia estimate a total loss of more than US$300,000 in church property, including burned tithes and offerings. Census reports indicate Ethiopia is about 60 percent Christian and 40 percent Muslim. Approximately 170,000 Adventists worship in more than 800 churches across the country. Read more from the Adventist News Network.

Community Welcomes Post Falls Health Outreach
Post Falls Church, in Post Falls, Idaho, recently hosted 65 individuals for a live vegetarian cooking show by Mark Anthony, 3ABN celebrity chef. A month later, 35 health enthusiasts attended the nutrition and health seminar conducted by Jim Brackett and his wife, authors of Seven Secrets to Health. The Bracketts discussed major health concerns and issues, such as cancer prevention, reversing diabetes and gluten intolerance. "The response of the community is overwhelming and very encouraging," says Allen Branson, Bible work coordinator. "We used multimedia to spread the word about the seminars with radio and newspaper announcements, in addition to distributing the fliers at Wal-Mart. We got the most response from the fliers." Read more.

North Cascade Series Changes Minds

Tip Sheet

Current Issue
March
Adventist Church leaders are calling members to a new experience of revival and reformation. Read a personal message from Dan Jackson, North American Division president, in the March GLEANER.
When a church decides to hold an evangelistic series, they frequently request a guest evangelist. This was not the case at the North Cascade Church in Burlington, Wash. The series entitled The Revealing, was facilitated by Mark Witas, senior pastor, and averaged more than 200 in attendance each evening during the 15-night event. It also led into a two-month Daniel and Revelation seminar with 60–80 people attending. Read more about it and connect to series podcasts HERE. Also, watch for the story in the April issue of the GLEANER.

**God’s Math**

The request couldn’t have come at a worse time in Siberia or anywhere. To see if God’s math really “adds up” check out the new blog at Cindy’s Garden Blog.
In an open letter welcomed by many Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders and members across North America, La Sierra University on March 9 acknowledged serious problems in its teaching of origins over the last several years, and apologized for not having adequately communicated Seventh-day Adventist beliefs about creationism to its students.

"We found that only 50 percent of the students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that our Adventist view of creation was presented, and only 40 percent agreed or strongly agreed that our Adventist view was supported," LSU President Randall Wisbey and LSU Board Chairman Ricardo Graham wrote in the open letter.

The letter accompanied the release of a Board-approved report on the controversy that has focused on the Riverside, California, campus for nearly two years.

"This is not acceptable, and we apologize," the two leaders added.

Dr. Lisa Beardsley, Education director for the Adventist Church world headquarters, called the statement "a step in the right direction."

"My prayer is that Adventist education at La Sierra University will grow and acknowledge its redemptive purposes," Beardsley said.

Larry Blackmer, vice president for Education for the church's North American Division, also saw promise in the university's letter.

"I am so pleased with the board and administration's openness in addressing the issues that have concerned the church for the past few years," Blackmer said. "I found their statements to be sincere, looking to do what is right."

"This issue has been a controversy regarding the university for the past two years, and I hope with strong administrative follow-through, with monitoring by the board of directors and a continued commitment to the core values of the church, that this chapter can be closed and we can focus on the many wonderful things that are happening on the LSU campus," he said.

A team from Adventist Accreditation Association (AAA) -- which recently conducted a site visit at La Sierra -- concluded that, subject to AAA approval, the university "should receive the maximum accreditation possible under AAA guidelines." La Sierra announced the team's findings online on February 8, but has since removed the statement from the university's website.

The full board of AAA will vote next month on a final accrediting recommendation for the school.

In its place, La Sierra has posted "An Open Letter Regarding the Teaching of Creation," in which the school states its apology, adding, "Instruction at the university, while being strong in many areas, has not adequately presented the denomination's position on the subject of creation."

"There is some evidence that students have not always been respected for their belief in the Biblical creation position," the La Sierra statement said.

In 2009, one LaSierra student said he'd felt that lack of respect. Louie Bishop told Adventist Review he was placed on "citizenship probation" by the school for circulating letters opposing the teaching of evolutionary concepts and for posting notes of a professor's classroom lecture online.

Following consultation with its Board of Trustees at a February 10 meeting, the university announced, "The Board adopted, and directed campus administration to implement, the following measures:

* Accept and implement the recommendations from the Adventist Accrediting Association.
* Develop faculty workshops regarding the challenges of teaching controversial topics such as those in biology.
* Continue the work in progress, (as identified [elsewhere in the statement]).
* Conduct regular follow-up surveys of biology students.
* Provide the Board with ongoing candid and prompt reports of both progress and challenges in dealing with this issue."

Moreover, the school said, "The university president and provost identified steps to address this issue that have already been taken or are currently in progress. These include:

* Ensuring that all biology students discuss key documents relating to our Adventist belief regarding origins, including Fundamental Belief #6 [and] the 2004 Annual Council Reaffirmation of Creation, and Genesis 1 and 2.
* Increased participation by the Church's Geoscience Research Institute in planning the General Biology Seminar.
* Ongoing refinement of the General Biology Seminar, based on student exit surveys and other input.
* Attendance of biology faculty members at the Geoscience Research Institute summer workshop.
* Continue the lecture series that presents a range of Adventist views on the integration of faith and science.
* Establish dialogue with biology professors from sister Adventist colleges and universities."

According to the statement, La Sierra's "biology department specifically commits to:

* Faithfully present the Seventh-day Adventist Church's position on creation.
* Respect every student's religious beliefs.
* Help students learn how to grapple with issues of faith and science in faith-affirming ways.
La Sierra University won't neglect creation teaching, president, chairman...

In conclusion, the statement said, "La Sierra University is committed to being an institution that does not just present the Church's view of creation, but fully supports it. We pledge our commitment to work prayerfully and diligently to ensure that our mission to provide a rigorous and faith-affirming Seventh-day Adventist education is carried out on behalf of our students and our Church."

Daniel Jackson, president of the church's North American Division, expressed hope at the news.

"I appreciate the expression of the La Sierra University administration and the Board in terms of their stated determination to promote the teachings of Scripture, in particular creation," Jackson said in a telephone interview.

"My prayer would be that God would give them the commitment and resolve to see this matter through in a way that will be a blessing to students, faculty and the constituency at large," Jackson said. "La Sierra University has had a reputation as an excellent institution."

David Asscherick, the Adventist pastor and evangelist whose open letter to church leaders in 2009 brought attention to the concerns at La Sierra University, also expressed optimism.

"I'm happy to see the university affirm the reality and seriousness of these issues, and I look forward to observing the implementation of their plan," he said during a March 10 visit to the Adventist Church headquarters.
In Ethiopia, dozens of Christian churches, among them Adventist, burned in interfaith violence

Religious extremists blamed for attacks in region known for harmony

10 Mar 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
ANN staff

At least 30 Protestant churches in western Ethiopia, among them seven Seventh-day Adventist houses of worship, were burned down last week in a series of attacks by religious extremists from the region.

Unrest was first reported on March 2 and has since killed at least one Christian, wounded several others, left personal property destroyed and displaced thousands of Christians, reports indicate.

"The level of destruction is not fully and clearly confirmed," said Tamire Shaemalo, Communication director for the Adventist Church in Ethiopia, citing inconsistencies between reports.

Preliminary reports, however, indicate that dozens of Adventist homes were burned alongside the churches, members were robbed and food and farm animals were destroyed during the attacks, Shaemalo said. Church officials in Central Ethiopia estimate a total loss of more than 5 million birr (about US$300,000) in church property, including burned tithes and offerings, he added.

Some reports indicate the violence erupted in response to recent border skirmishes, in which Ethiopian soldiers sought to deter Muslim extremists. Others said the attacks were provoked when a Christian allegedly desecrated a copy of the Quran.

Police in Ethiopia yesterday arrested 130 religious extremists linked to the violence, Voice of America reported.

The attacks have ignited tensions in a region known for longstanding harmony between Muslim and Christians, church religious liberty advocates said.

"We are deeply troubled by what has happened in Ethiopia, where relations among religions have been relatively peaceful," said John Graz, director of the Adventist world church's department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty.

"We hope that these incidents will not incite further violence in the region, and we encourage people of all faiths who stand for peace and religious freedom to work toward reconciliation," Graz added.

Ethiopia is about 60 percent Christian and 40 percent Muslim, census reports indicate. Approximately 170,000 Adventists worship in more than 800 churches across the country.

The Adventist Church in Ethiopia will send six church officials to join representatives from five other faith communities later this week at the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia, which is expected to survey the situation, Shaemalo said.

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Community Welcomes Post Falls Health Outreach

by Maritess Robles-Branson, communication leader

Television chef, Mark Anthony, demonstrates healthy cooking.

Post Falls folks heartily received the health and vegetarian cooking classes in a row sponsored by the Post Falls Church in Post Falls, Idaho. Sixty-five people attended the live vegetarian cooking show presented by celebrity chef Mark Anthony of Three ABN on Nov. 1, 2010. The show featured an appetizing Southwestern vegan cuisine. The dynamic chef painted a picture of Jesus using his bare fingers while blindfolded, to the amazement and delight of the audience.

Meanwhile 35 health enthusiasts came to the nutrition and health seminar on Dec. 5 conducted by Jim Brackett and his wife, authors of Seven Secrets to Health. Brackett discussed major health concerns and issues, such as cancer prevention, reversing diabetes and gluten intolerance. His wife showed how to make healthy and tasty recipes. Then the participants enjoyed a vegetarian meal that church members helped prepare.

According to Allen Branson, Bible work coordinator, “The response of the community is overwhelming and very encouraging. Earlier we submitted an application to put a poster at the Wal-Mart bulletin board and distribute fliers at the store. It caught the attention of the head of the customer service department and she got excited about it and told her employees to come. She and her husband attended both seminars. A restaurant owner, who is diabetic, wants to add vegetarian options in his menu.

“We used multimedia to spread the word about the seminars with radio and newspaper announcements, in addition to distributing the flyers at Wal-Mart but we got the most response from the fliers. We are grateful for our church members, who stood out in the cold and rain to invite the community, Branson adds. “The Post Falls Church has lined up various events for the community in 2011. And with such a supportive mission-minded church family, we believe we will be able to meet the many needs in this area. And eventually lead them to the ultimate source of health and happiness — Jesus Christ.”
“The Revealing” Looks at God’s Character

When a church decides to hold an evangelistic series, they frequently request a guest evangelist. This was not the scenario for North Cascade Church in Burlington, Wash.

Instead, Mark Witas, senior pastor, read books, listened to sermons and interviewed authors and evangelists. He pulled elements from his research to develop "The Revealing," a 15-night series designed to take an honest look at the character of God.

"The goal was to look at God's character as revealed in the Bible and not through a medieval lens," says Witas. "We focused on the Great Controversy and the church's misrepresentation of God through the years."

The series generated a lot of interest within the church and in the community with an average attendance of 220 per night. And on Sabbath mornings, the sanctuary is full — for both services.

"Many people attended the meetings who weren't coming to church," Witas says. "The series rekindled their interest."

Peggy Fisher, who helped distribute cookies, was amazed at the number of people who came each night and the sense of community that developed. “Every evening there would be folks staying, visiting and enjoying homemade cookies,” she says.

Lillian Stutz appreciated how the presentations helped to reshape her picture of God. “Pastor Witas made the God that I thought of as a “strict and severe” God disappear and in His place a God who loves us and does all He can for us,” says Stutz. “Sixteen years of school Bible classes had not shown me this aspect, and I am grateful for this knowledge.”

Tami Rowe, parent, teacher and church elder, brought her family each evening.
"We never had to drag our boys (ages 11 and 13) to a meeting," Rowe says. "They chose to sit in the front row and diligently took notes. They fell in love with a God of love. They both have decided to be baptized in April and are sharing their overflowing love of God with others."

Additionally, Rowe invited her sixth grade students at Skagit Adventist School to attend the meetings as an alternative Bible class project. Eight students regularly attended, and came back to class excited to share their new knowledge with their classmates.

“My students are filled with the love of God and are excited to share what they know about Him with others,” Rowe says. “I am thrilled to see the change these meetings have made in my students' lives. Three have already requested baptism.”

"The Revealing" led into a two-month Daniel and Revelation seminar, with 60–80 people attending on Tuesday nights and Saturday mornings.

"The Lord is blessing," says Witas, "with members and guests alike having a new understanding of God's gracious character."

»LISTEN to "The Revealing"
Podcast files are available at http://www.ncsda.org/podcasts/840

Legal Notice & Privacy Policy
God’s Mathematics

The request couldn’t have come at a worse time. Nikolai, who attends my church, approached me after the worship service with a request for a hefty sum of money to help a fellow church member in Siberia who urgently needed to buy medication. I had that exact amount in my bank account, tucked away for an emergency.

When I explained that I was in a financially tight position at the moment, Nikolai said that even half the desired amount would be fine. I told him that I had to pray about it.

Pray I did. I wondered whether God was testing my faith. Times were tough after the 2008 financial crisis swallowed a large chunk of my salary. If I gave up my safety cushion, would God open the windows of heaven to pour out a blessing? Not likely, I thought darkly, because God had no options thorough which to provide me with money. There was no chance for a raise or a bonus at the end of the year. Indeed, I was fortunate to have a job at a time when newspapers around the world were going bankrupt.

I prayed earnestly. I wrestled with God. But I couldn’t find a good excuse to refuse the money. Nikolai was a reputable church member. The woman was clearly in need. It would be less painful to hand over only half the amount and no would be the wiser. But I did have the entire amount in the bank, and I could live just fine without it.

With anger I marched up to the automated teller machine on Monday and withdrew the entire sum requested. I knew I would never see the money again.

At church the next Sabbath I called Nikolai over. “I found the money,” I said, without telling him how much. I pressed the banknotes into his hand.

About two weeks later the top editors and publishers from the publishing house where I work left Moscow for a two-day management outing. In the past two years we had flown to Crete and Italy to hear the financial results for the previous year and corporate plans for the coming year. This time we chartered a bus and drove to a hotel about two hours outside Moscow. The financial crisis had hit the company hard.

Our CEO flashed up slide after slide during her PowerPoint presentation, showing the red ink of industry-wide losses. By God’s grace, the newspaper where I work ended the previous year in the black of profitability.

Then the CEO dropped a bombshell.

“It’s amazing that we made it through the year,” she said as she wrapped up her remarks. “We didn’t know how we would weather the crisis, so when it started we set aside a safety cushion for an emergency. It turned out that that things didn’t get so bad. So our company’s board of directors has decided to divide the reserve money as year-end bonuses for you and your staff.”

All the publishers and editors gasped, then clapped. I lowered my head in shame. God had opened a window where I thought none existed. While I had been trying to protect my safety cushion, God had been eying my company’s much larger safety cushion – a fund that none of us knew anything about.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isa. 55:8,9)

When my year-end bonus arrived, it amounted to seven times the sum I had given Nikolai.1

This story was written by Andrew McChesney, a journalist in Russia.


This entry was posted on Thursday, March 17th, 2011 at 12:57 pm and is filed under Cindy's Garden Blog. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.