This Week: Bryan to Return as WWU Pastor; Bags of Love Hit Portland Streets; and more!

**Bryan to Return as WWU Senior Pastor**

Alex Bryan has accepted the invitation to once again lead the Walla Walla University (WWU) Church as senior pastor. Bryan served as senior pastor of the University Church from 2009 to June of 2013. During his tenure, he expanded ministry programs and led renewal projects to commemorate the church’s 50th anniversary. He also taught university classes and served as an advisor to the WWU president for vision and strategy. Bryan has most recently been serving as president of Kettering College in Kettering, Ohio. His expected date of return to WWU is yet to be determined. Read more from the Upper Columbia Conference.
Portland Staff Bring Bags of Hope to the Streets

Rather than spending time, energy and money looking for gifts for each other this Christmas season, operating room staff at Adventist Medical Center in Portland, Ore., chose to prepare “bags of hope” to share with those less fortunate. The surgical team took their compassion to street corners and distributed holiday treats, and words of encouragement to those less fortunate. Nurses Julie Cowin and Carmen Gruia organized a baking party and created hundreds of delicious homemade gourmet treats. Items were carefully wrapped in decorative bags. The bags also contained information about resources for free or affordable food, clothing, and medical care. The staff were invited to share the gifts with those they encountered this week in their community who needed a spark of compassion.

Adventists Join Religious Garb Appeal

Late last week the Seventh-day Adventist Church filed an amicus brief in support of an American Muslim woman who claims she was denied a job because her head-covering violated an Abercrombie & Fitch company policy. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which filed a lawsuit on Elauf’s behalf, said the move defies Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The title obligates employers to take steps to “reasonably
accommodate” a prospective employee’s “religious observance or practice.” While a federal judge sided with the EEOC in 2011, a recent ruling by the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upends that decision. “There is tremendous concern well beyond the Muslim community about the weakening of Title VII that will take place if this ruling is to stand,” said Dwayne Leslie, Adventist world church legislative affairs director. Read Leslie’s comments at the Huffington Post online. Read more about this story from the Adventist News Network.

Battle Ground Clinic Receives $184,000 Grant

The Battle Ground HealthCare Free Clinic has been awarded a $184,000 three-year grant from the Washington State Attorney General’s office. The funds will help institute a formal treatment plan at the clinic for patients experiencing chronic pain. The clinic, started in 2011 as an outreach project of the Meadow Glade Adventist Church in Battle Ground, Wash., specializes in treating chronic health conditions for the uninsured at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level and between the ages of 18 and 65.

One More Christmas Gift?
In the midst of the holiday bustle, why not consider a donation to Adventist educational outreach in our own Northwest mission field of Alaska? The Amazing Grace Academy in Palmer, Alaska, is seeking funds to finish building a new gymnasium, where students can stay active through the harsh climate extremes. Watch a short video here about the growth of this remarkable school and its impact on its Alaskan community. And then consider doing something special for this outreach project of the Palmer Adventist Church before the end of this year.

A New CD from WWU Group

Walla Walla University’s select choir, I Cantori, has released a CD recording. The 17-track “Eternity Alone” is primarily classical church music, but includes a wide variety of sacred styles. Directed by Kraig Scott, I Cantori recorded the music in the University Church. Without a live audience, it was a novel experience for the 41 members of the choir. As Chelsea Bond, a soprano in I Cantori says, “there was something exhilarating in knowing that... each of our voices were going to be captured and remembered in that CD.” During three recording sessions, with microphones placed by Larry Aamodt, professor of engineering, the choir finished their part in the production of the CD. Read more from Walla Walla University online.

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Looking Ahead

**December**
A full list of Christmas events around the Northwest.

20: Sunnyside Church Musical Christmas Program

25: Merry Christmas!

31: New Year's Eve!

More Events

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*As we head through the holiday season, author Mike Jones asks a simple question: What was Jesus thinking before leaving heaven and coming to this world? [Read more in the December Gleaner.]*

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Wall University Church Calls Senior Pastor

by Jay Wintermeyer

Dr. Alex Bryan returns to Walla Walla University Church.

COLLEGE PLACE, Wash., December 14, 2013 – Dr. Alex Bryan accepted an invitation by Upper Columbia Conference to serve as senior pastor of the Walla Walla University Church. Bryan will return to fill the same role he previously filled.

Dave Thomas, chair of the church’s search committee and dean of the Walla Walla University School of Theology said, “I happily recall the joyous and uplifting church ethos that was so strong when Pastor Alex was here and anticipate it will become very evident again upon his return.”

For the past six months Bryan has been serving as president of Kettering College in Kettering, Ohio. In a letter to his college staff Bryan said, “Over the past many weeks I have sensed an ever-growing and ever-clearer prompting from God that I should return to pastoral and pulpit ministry.”

Bryan served as senior pastor of the University Church from 2009 to June 2013. During his tenure, he expanded ministry programs and led renewal projects to commemorate the church’s fiftieth anniversary. He also taught university classes and also served as an advisor to the president for vision and strategy.

"I am delighted Dr. Bryan accepted the invitation to return to serve as the senior pastor of our Walla Walla University Church,” said Paul Hoover, president of the Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. “God has obviously been doing something special with and in Dr. Bryan clarifying his calling to pastoral ministry.”

Bryan, and his wife, Nicole, have two children, Audrey and William. Nicole, a WWU alumna, has taught for WWU’s School of Social Work and Sociology. She has also served as a mentor in the Freshman Success Program.

Bryan graduated from Southern Adventist University in 1993 with majors in history and religion. He then earned his Master of Divinity from Andrews University in 1996, and his doctoral degree in ministry from George Fox University in 2009. He is also the author of “The Green Cord Dream,” which explores the purpose and possibility for Adventist Christianity in the twenty-first century.

Bryan’s date of return to the University Church pulpit is yet to be determined.
Americans are given extremely wide latitude in terms of how they are able to worship and express their beliefs (or whether to worship at all). While not exclusively an American phenomenon, it is fair to say that the United States does better than most other countries around the world in the area of religious freedom.

That's why cases like *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. Abercrombie & Fitch*, filed after a young Muslim woman was denied a sales position in 2008 because her head covering did not comply with the retailer's "look" policy -- despite having scored high enough during her interview to have been hired both overall and on "look" -- are extraordinarily disturbing.

After a federal district court provided a summary judgment in favor of the EEOC and Samantha Elauf in 2011, the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit recently reversed that decision, placing an unfairly high burden on applicants who need religious accommodation from a prospective employer in the process.

Because one of the tenets of our church is to actively protect religious liberty not only for our members, but also for other Christians and non-Christians alike, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists today filed an amicus, or "friend of the court," brief in support of the EEOC's petition for rehearing. The brief has been joined by several other religious and public policy organizations committed to the protection of religious freedom, including some that are rarely on the same side of an issue, such as the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Association of Evangelicals.

Key facts of this case are not in dispute:

1. In 2008, Ms. Elauf interviewed for a sales position at an Abercrombie & Fitch store in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and wore a hijab during the interview.

2. The store manager with whom she interviewed (and had hiring authority) scored Ms. Elauf high enough both "overall" and on "look" to meet the store's hiring criteria.

3. While the store manager never asked Ms. Elauf about her head covering, she later testified that she assumed the young woman was Muslim and dressed as she did for religious reasons.

4. Because the store manager was unfamiliar with Abercrombie & Fitch's policy on head coverings, she consulted with her manager. This person also was unfamiliar with the policy and elevated the query to her own manager.

5. This manager's manager responded that headwear did indeed violate store policy and that Ms. Elauf's score should be changed so that she was ineligible to be hired.

At the trial court level, the EEOC and Ms. Elauf's argument that Abercrombie & Fitch had engaged in religious discrimination in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prevailed, and Ms. Elauf was awarded $20,000 in the damages-only jury trial. The Tenth Circuit's recent decision has now overturned this verdict.

For a variety of reasons, the Adventist Church et al., takes strong exception to the Tenth Circuit's ruling.

First, despite a number of relevant precedents, the court has placed the burden on an applicant to proactively ask for accommodation for her or his religious beliefs. Yet, in this and virtually any other potentially similar future case, how could the applicant possibly know of the employer's specific dress code? Our position (and one we believe is fully supported by Title VII) is that for applicants who meet a company's hiring standards but for whom the company has any reason to believe that a religious accommodation may be needed, it is incumbent upon the employer to raise this issue, not the individual. Under the Tenth Circuit's new standard, employers would be able to insulate themselves from the duty to accommodate via willful ignorance.

Second, this standard has a negative impact not just in "groom & garb" cases, but also on scheduling. Many national employers have implemented an online application process that inquires about availability. These employers often make adverse decisions regarding applicants based upon their unavailability, for example, on a Saturday (during which Jews, Adventists and Seventh Day Baptists would decline to work for religious reasons) yet provide no means by which to apprise the employer of the religious nature of a limited schedule, or to ask for a religious accommodation in the online application.
Finally, we believe that the Tenth Circuit failed to consider the wide-ranging impact of their decision. As the large number of organizations supporting this amicus brief demonstrates, there is tremendous concern well beyond the Muslim community about the weakening of Title VII that will take place if this ruling is to stand.

History shows that extreme vigilance is required where matters of religious liberty are concerned. When one established right is weakened or worse, it's that much easier to erode additional rights. That is why cases like *EEOC v. Abercrombie & Fitch* -- despite the fact that no members of our own faith are involved -- motivate the Adventist Church to action... and why we are proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with so many other people of faith and public policy organizations to advocate for a just outcome in this important case.

After all, are we not, as the Scriptures admonish, our brother's (and sister's) keeper?

Follow Dwayne Leslie on Twitter: www.twitter.com/IRLA_USA
Adventist Church sides with Muslim woman in workplace religious freedom case

Adventists are supporting a Muslim woman in a workplace religious freedom case that pits the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission against retailer Abercrombie & Fitch. Above, a store in Columbia, Maryland.

Clothing retailer Abercrombie & Fitch shut Elauf out of a job

December 12, 2013 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Author: Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

The Seventh-day Adventist Church yesterday filed an amicus, or “friend of the court” brief in support of an American Muslim woman who claims she was denied a job because her head-covering violated company policy.

In 2008, Samantha Elauf wore a hijab when she applied for a sales position at an Abercrombie & Fitch store in Tulsa, Oklahoma, United States. After a manager confirmed that her headwear crossed store policy, she was deemed ineligible for hire without discussion of religious accommodation.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which filed a lawsuit on Elauf’s behalf, said the move defies Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The title obligates employers to take steps to “reasonably accommodate” a prospective employee’s “religious observance or practice.”

While a federal judge sided with the EEOC in 2011, a recent ruling by the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upends that decision, claiming Elauf never told Abercrombie she needed a religious accommodation, even though she was wearing a hijab in the interview.

And that, Adventist legal counselors say, places undue responsibility on the applicant to determine whether her religious beliefs or practices conflict with company policy.

“Placing the burden to inquire [about potential conflicts] upon the employer is not only the existing law, but makes sense because the employer is in the best position to know the work rules and anticipate a conflict,” the amicus brief states.

Dwayne Leslie, director for Legislative Affairs for the Adventist world church, said the 10th Circuit’s ruling sets a troubling precedent.

“And under the 10th Circuit’s new standard, employers would be able to insulate themselves from the duty to accommodate via willful ignorance [of the religious needs of employees],” Leslie wrote in a December 12 Huffington Post op-ed.

Religious clothing and the observance of Sabbath and other holy days are the most common areas of conflict in the workplace, church legal experts said. Hijabs, turbans, yarmulkes and other head coverings frequently conflict with a company’s “look” policy, while Sabbath observance can clash with scheduling.

This is especially a concern as the number of online job applications increase, said Todd McFarland, an associate general counsel for the Adventist world church’s Office of General Counsel.

Such applications typically require a job seeker to indicate scheduling limitations, but don’t offer an opportunity to explain why.
applicants submit limitations, they are automatically shut out of the job.

“This [ruling] could have a significant impact not just on Muslims in similar ‘groom and garb’ cases, but on all people of faith,” McFarland said.

“Any attack on religious rights in the workplace on any faith group is also an attack on the Adventist Church, its members and their ability to keep both their jobs and their faith,” he says.

The Adventist Church is joined by the National Association of Evangelicals, the Christian Legal Society, the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, the American Jewish Committee and the Sikh Coalition. The joint amicus brief supports the EEOC and Elauf’s petition for rehearing en banc, or before the entire bench of judges, rather than a select panel.

“There is tremendous concern well beyond the Muslim community about the weakening of Title VII that will take place if this ruling is to stand,” Leslie said.

Abercrombie & Fitch changed its policy on headwear three years ago. The Ohio-based company recently settled similar lawsuits in California, the Associated Press reported in October.

An Abercrombie spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.
WWU's I Cantori Releases New CD

Select Choir Shares Their Music Through Recording

By: Jaci Shankel

Cover of "Eternity Alone"

Walla Walla University’s select choir, I Cantori, has released a CD recording. The 17-track “Eternity Alone” is primarily classical church music, but includes a wide variety of mostly sacred styles.

Directed by Kraig Scott, I Cantori began recording on Sunday, Jan. 20, in the University Church. Without a live audience, it was a novel experience for the 41 members of the choir. As Chelsea Bond, a soprano in I Cantori says, “there was something exhilarating in knowing that…each of our voices were going to be captured and remembered in that CD.” Two more recording sessions later, with microphones placed by Larry Aamodt, professor of engineering, the choir had finished their part in the production of the CD.

The creation of “Eternity Alone” was inspired by the wish of members of I Cantori; the wish to share their music with the family and friends who could not attend the concerts and church services that the select choir performs throughout the school year. Mae Liongco, a then-freshman member of I Cantori, describes the CD as “hard work, good feels, and our gift to everyone in a bundle. It is one of the greatest products of our efforts, and what I think is a little piece of heaven on earth.”

They “pray that through this offering of praise and reflection God may warm your heart as you contemplate eternity alone.”

To view a list of the 17 tracks, as well as the names of the 41 members of I Cantori that contributed, visit www.wallawalla.edu/eternityalone.

To purchase a copy of “Eternity Alone:’

- Visit www.cdbaby.com/cd/icantoriowallawallauniv to purchase either a hard copy or download of the music
- Visit the office of the Department of Music, which is located in the Melvin K. West Fine Arts Center at WWU (204 S. College Avenue, College Place)
- Send an email to music(AT)wallawalla.edu with “CD Order” as the subject heading

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