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La Sierra University (LSU), a Seventh-day Adventist Church-owned school in Riverside, California, will have a year to demonstrate its faithfulness to church teachings on creation, at which time its current accreditation by the Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA) will be reviewed.

The school's denominational accreditation has been extended to December 31 of next year, with re-accreditation subject to an on-site review by an AAA panel in the second quarter of 2012, and AAA board action in October 2012.

The unusual action follows two years of controversy that has roiled the southeastern California campus and generated extensive comment by Adventist leaders and members across North America and the world church.

The La Sierra decision, during which a wide range of options were debated, came among several actions taken at the regular biennial AAA board meeting held at the General Conference's headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, on April 4.

"Although La Sierra University has deviated from the philosophy and objectives of Seventh-day Adventist education," the voted action reads, "it is moved that the university be granted an extension of accreditation to December 31, 2012 in order for the university to act upon its commitments and implement changes and enhancements" involving the teaching of origins at the school. The action extending the university's current term of accreditation did not address the prospect of a new term, up to five years in length.

Accrediting executives' rationale

"This was a challenging and complex decision," said Lisa M. Beardsley, director of the General Conference Education department. "The AAA board took into consideration the report of the AAA team that visited the campus in November 2010, and events that have transpired since, such as the actions of the institutional board, the finding of its special subcommittee, and the open letter published in March by the university. After careful and prayerful consideration, the board expressed its will as a body by means of a written ballot so that all views could be honored."

Ella Simmons, a general vice president of the world church and member of the AAA board, said, "Given the recent acknowledgment made by the La Sierra University board and administration, this action seeks to create a bridge for the university to meet its stated commitments and the accrediting requirements to give priority to the standards of Seventh-day Adventist education in harmony with the Church's official beliefs."

"The AAA Board has attempted to find a balance between punitive and redemptive help to the university in support of the LSU Board's recent statements," added Larry Blackmer, vice president for Education of the North American Division and another AAA board member.

Membership in the Adventist Accrediting Association board includes the director and associate directors of the General Conference Education department; General Conference vice presidential advisers for education; directors of education from each of the church's 13 world divisions; one representative each from a college/university board chair; a college/university president; an academic vice president or dean; a registrar or admissions officer; a finance officer; an academic department chair of education; a union conference education director; and a
In Cuba, Adventists dedicate first seminary campus church

Libna Stevens
Apr 5, 2011

Maranatha Volunteers International dedicated the Cuba Seventh-day Adventist Seminary's first church building in Havana last week in a ceremony that capped a long process of obtaining building permits and fundraising.

The church, which seats 336 people, is expected to serve the needs of seminary students and community members during the week, providing space for study, practice preaching and small group meetings.

5 Apr 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States...Maranatha Volunteers International/ANN

Maranatha Volunteers International dedicated the Cuba Seventh-day Adventist Seminary's first church building in Havana last week in a ceremony that capped a long process of obtaining building permits and fundraising.

The non-profit organization, a supporting ministry of the Adventist Church, built the seminary there 10 years ago. Maranatha broke ground on the new church three years ago, only halting progress when donations later ran out.

The remaining dollars to fund the building came in just before the dedication service, Maranatha officials said.

The Havana Seminary, which has graduated most of the pastors currently serving Cuba's 294 Adventist churches, is active in the surrounding community, seminary officials said. Students there have visited every home in their neighborhoods, giving Bible studies and inviting people to worship at the new church.

"A Seventh-day Adventist Church in a climate like Cuba can make a tremendous impact," Maranatha President Don Noble said at the March 26 dedication. "Life is often challenging for the people, and knowing that the world church cares and has provided them a place to worship gives them hope and inspires them to witness to their neighbors and friends."

Caridad Diego, minister of religion for Cuba, told dedication attendees that the new church is a "palpable example" of the country's expanding religious liberties.

"The Seventh-day Adventist Church's presence here has been a blessing to our communities," Diego said. "This building and the seminary will contribute to society."

Students will use their new church during the week to study and practice preaching, and community members will meet there for small group sessions. The Adventist Church in Cuba will also use the building for meetings and training sessions, leaders said.

The new church features theater-style seating for 336 people.

"People from all over Inter-America studied theology in Cuba," said Israel Leito, president of the Adventist Church in Inter-America. "Many of our former leaders were educated here. Since we have this church here now, we are saying, 'This will again become a center of theological studies.'"

In 1994, church membership in Cuba was just over 13,000. As of last month, there were more than 31,000 Adventists in the country.

"The vitality of the people, the excitement, the happiness, is certainly something that is just contagious," said Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Adventist world church and keynote speaker for the dedication. Wilson said Maranatha had been "instrumental" in providing church infrastructure not only on the seminary campus, but also across Cuba and worldwide.

To view more photos of the ceremony, click here

http://www.interamerica.org/users/index.php?type=news&id=1755&lang...
In Bermuda, Adventist ministers to gang community, enlists support of area churches

Inter-American Division > Communication Department

Libna Stevens

Apr 5, 2011

A Seventh-day Adventist layperson in Bermuda wants the island nation's churches to shut their doors. For a month.

5 Apr 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States...Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

A Seventh-day Adventist layperson in Bermuda wants the island nation's churches to shut their doors. For a month.

"The bible says 'Go ye therefore to the world,' not 'Go ye therefore to church,"' said Scott Smith, who is gaining recognition in Bermuda for advocating unconventional ministry to gang members and victims of gang violence alike.

The 44-year-old native Bermudian isn't against corporate worship; he's a member of the Pembroke Adventist Church. But he says many people won't step foot in a church -- not even one like Pembroke, which is situated in a neighborhood notorious for gang violence and is responsive to its community's unique needs.

To connect with their neighbors, Christians should visit them, Smith says -- a simple, obvious solution, but one he's observed is more likely to generate talk than action.

If churches in Bermuda closed their doors for a month, members and leaders could channel energy, time and resources into a concerted effort to change the atmosphere on Bermuda's streets, Smith says.

Parts of the Atlantic Ocean island nation have experienced escalating gang violence in recent years, leaving many Bermudians bracing themselves for the next shooting, Smith says.

Last week, Smith met and prayed with a mother whose 16-year-old son was shot in the family's front yard in what she described as an act of gang retribution. Among the lucky ones, her son is recovering in an area hospital, Smith says.

For a year now, Smith says he has visited the family of every victim of gang violence. "I hear about a shooting, I go," he says. "I know not everyone will accept Christ, but if I can share his love, that's something. You can't show people the Second Coming of Christ until you show them the love of Christ."

Smith, who introduces himself as "an advocate for a better Bermuda," often asks, "Where did we go wrong?" It's a question he's used countless times as a conversation wedge with gang members, families mourning a loss to gang violence and government officials. It generates a sense of shared responsibility, he says.

"Sometimes we're so quick to condemn, or to sell an agenda or a message, that we forget to acknowledge that we messed up somewhere along the way, too," Smith says.

Admitting that church members can and have made mistakes is key to getting community members to open up, Smith says. And when they do, be ready to listen, he says. "You'll develop relationships; you'll build trust."

Smith's background is one many he ministers to can identify with. As a troubled teenager, he was introduced to the Adventist faith, but for a time maintained parallel lives: one, as a drug addict flirting with gang affiliation; another, as a young man fascinated by the Daniel and Revelation seminars held in his neighborhood.
Trinidad: Church youth strongly involved in spiritual revival

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April 4, 2011 - Port-of Spain, Trinidad...Libna Stevens/IAD

Under the banner of the Constant In Prayer initiative, a spiritual revival and reformation emphasis launched throughout the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Inter-American Division (IAD) territory earlier this year, hundreds of Adventist young people in Trinidad and Tobago took to the streets of some of the most violent and drug-stricken communities. Their mission: to offer hope and prayer for a renewed life in Jesus.

Packed in six 25-passenger busses, young people were transported from the campus of Southern Caribbean University—an Adventist institution—to reach out to nearby violent communities. They distributed magazines on the importance of a connection with God through prayer and study of the Bible and prayed with anyone who welcomed them.

It's the type of outreach activity run by Adventist churches across the island and the surrounding islands several times every quarter for more than ten years, says Pastor Clive Dottin, youth ministries director for the church in the Caribbean, who heads out with the young people each Sabbath.

The outreach groups are called missionary action groups which meet every Sabbath and join together in regions.

The difference now, says Pastor Dottin "is that we are focusing more on prayer initiative in our already organized ministries to reach those in need."

So far, the church in Trinidad manages several organized support groups offering help to those who are grieving, in gangs, recovering addicts, the abused, and those suffering from diseases like AIDS, in hospitals, and in prisons, as well as helping young people in schools make positive decisions.

"Our main focus continues to be to rescue the young people of this world from addictions and temptations," says Dottin, who, together with church leaders, launched a 12-18 month plan to involve young people visiting and praying in homes throughout the Caribbean region. In addition, the plan seeks to reach one million young people in need.

In the La Mango community, a bus load of young people knocked on doors and offered prayer.

"We had some problems here [in La Mango]," says Dottin. "This has been a tough, tough area. It took a long time to establish a church. Some guys would bring marijuana joints the size of your hand into the church, but God is good." Today there is a group of 30 members meeting each week and regular visitors seeking hope and recovery.

The church, like many others in dangerous communities, also serves as a bridge to addicts seeking to participate in the drug-rehab centers run by the church on the island, according to