Jamaica: Adventists admonished to do the work of God now

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Adventists were admonished to “take advantage of the day to do the work of Him who has sent us, by preaching the truth with love” by Pastor Roberto Herrera, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) director for the church in Inter-America. His charge came as he addressed church members at a Religious Liberty Rally held at the Dover Adventist Church in St. Mary on Saturday, Jan. 28, 2012 in celebration of Religious Liberty Day. Every year, the fourth Sabbath in January is observed as Religious Liberty Day worldwide by the Adventist Church.

Referencing John 9:4, Pastor Herrera said "some people are obsessed by the topic of the Sunday law, and they want to spend the greater part of their time talking about the coming persecution, how it will be and about the laws that have been passed."

"Yes," he added, "it is certain, the night cometh. But this is not the message of the hour. The message of the hour is that we must take advantage of the day to do the work of Him who has sent us, by preaching the truth with love and in a positive way; and by presenting Christ and the truth that is found in Him," he emphasized.

"We must do this without insults or diatribe, without accusations or threats, without finger pointing or offence, only presenting the truth with love. We must defend liberty and the right of each person to believe in God, to obey God's commandments, and to not be obligated to have a religion determined by man's laws which go against freedom of conscience"

The Rally is the first in a series which will take place the church in Jamaica until 2013 and will culminate with a Religious Liberty Festival early in April 2014 at the National Arena in Kingston, Jamaica.

Thank God and Government for Religious Freedom

Nigel Coke, PARL director for the church in Jamaica expressed gratitude to successive governments of Jamaica who have upheld the constitutional rights of the citizens in the country for freedom of worship.

"We are enjoying what millions in the world are not and so we deem this a privilege," said Coke. "As we celebrate 50 years as an independent nation, there are laws that will be reviewed and there are some that need to be passed in Parliament. With this in mind, I take this opportunity to call on the Government to fast track the flexi-work-week legislation, which is part of the Labor Market Reform process that has been under discussion at the Labor Advisory Committee (LAC), as well as in Parliament, since 1997."

The arrangements address variations in the number of hours worked each day, the number of days worked each week, as well as in the days of the week when employees work. A key issue in this these discussions, is to ensure that the issue of the day of worship is dictated by the employee and not the employer. It states that if persons are denied the right to worship, the law
would protect them. The law must also protect persons from being dismissed because of their religion.

Earlier in the day a presentation on Adventist Diplomacy was held by Mr. Dwayne Leslie, Director of Legislative Affairs for the Seventh-day Adventist Church world-wide and the Church's liaison to the United States Congress, White House and other executive agencies.

The day climaxed with a panel discussion in the afternoon with discussion on the religious liberty challenges that are faced in Jamaica and the world. The panelists included: Pastor Roberto Herrera, Mr. Dwayne Leslie, Pastor Agustus McLeod, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Director of the North East Jamaica Conference and lawyer Mrs. Georgette Stewart-Harrisinigh. The moderator was Nigel Coke.

The day was the culmination of three days of activities for PARL in Jamaica, which included a meeting with the PARL directors in the union, a live radio and television discussion on NCU Radio and TV, and a courtesy call from Governor General, His Excellency, the Most Honorable, Sir Patrick Allen.

Nigel Coke contributed to this article