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Posted: 17 Jul 2012 09:00 PM PDT

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Student singers from the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Oakwood University, located in Huntsville, Alabama, took home three awards from the world's largest choir competition last week.

"The Aeolians rose to the challenge and on their debut at the World Choir Games ... and made a great impact," said Aeolians Director Jason Max Ferdinand.

Oakwood University is an institution that is directly affiliated with the Adventist Church's world headquarters.

Earlier in the summer break from school, the group practiced new songs for the competition individually. They later held group rehearsals remotely using Google Plus. All 42 members met for a final rehearsal at the university campus the weekend before the competition.

The World Choir Games, sponsored by the Interkultur Foundation in Germany, is the world's largest choral competition and is held every two years. Interkultur's website says the goal of the event is to "[bring] people of all nations, cultures and ideologies together in peaceful competitions and songs."

More than 15,000 Choristers in 362 choirs competed in 23 musical categories.

The City of Cincinnati (@CityofCincy) tweeted following an Aeolians' performance during the week: "The Aeolians of Oakwood University from Huntsville, AL, lifted our souls and the roof at the Cincinnati Masonic Center!"

The next World Choir Games will be held in Riga, Latvia, in 2014.
Director Jason Max Ferdinand leads the Aeolians in singing The Holy City during the World Choir Games in Cincinnati, Ohio, last week.
Colombia: Adventist rescue teams network to join forces in emergency response

Inter-American Division  >  Communication Department

Libna Stevens  SHARE  Jul 17, 2012

More than 200 Seventh-day Adventist first responders comprising 10 rescue teams from Colombia and Venezuela gathered in Juan Frio, Colombia, to review logistics, sharpen their skills, and network during a three-day training session organized by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) offices in Colombia and Venezuela, June 15-18, 2012. Rescue team members reviewed rescue procedures, airway management, trauma response, and vehicle extrication.

"This meeting was important in that it consolidated these volunteer rescue teams so that they can better respond to the continual emergencies which occur in their respective regions," said Alvaro Niño, ADRA Colombia director. "The purpose of the volunteer work which is promoted by ADRA is to complement the work that these rescue teams perform in emergencies through a joined strategy plan," he added.

Each rescue team present at the training sessions is nationally registered with their countries to respond in emergency situations, said Niño. Every rescue team reported on recent rescue operations in their respective regions.

Wally Amundson, ADRA director for Inter-America, met with the rescue teams, and reminded them of their mission as volunteers to support ADRA's efforts.

"Your work reflects the compassionate love of Jesus, just like ADRA's main goal is to respond to the needs of those outside of the church, without forgetting those who are inside the church," said Amundson. "This requires a balance and a great challenge for those who join this great work."

"The work of these rescue teams is very important for the disaster stricken territory of Inter-America, said Amundson. "Their valuable dedication and training can immensely help in the emergency response situations in their countries and beyond their borders."

According to Amundson, the idea is to ensure a networking so that when either country is facing a disaster emergency, they can team up and assist in disaster situations.

"This is so vital in Inter-America," said Amundson, "since the vast region is highly prone to natural disasters, five months out of every year. It's an initiative that is crucial for readiness and preparedness to meet unexpected catastrophes, he explained. Amundson praised the response of Colombia's GARSA rescue team which participated in rescue operations after the massive earthquake that devastated Haiti in 2010, and encouraged the other nine teams to continue working with ADRA in their efforts to offer assistance to affected communities in the wake of disasters.

Rescue teams included GUI-MAY, BACE, GRAS, GROCC, SEVENTH, MAHANAI, CRORI, GREL and GAHEV.
Both ADRA offices formed a committee to continue networking with the rescue teams and offer continuing education, in addition to training in each country for emergency rescue operations.

Plans are underway for another training session next year in Venezuela.

image by ADRA Colombia/IAD

More than 200 first responders from 10 rescue teams from Colombia and Venezuela gathered for a three day training session, organized by ADRA Colombia and ADRA Venezuela. The training took place last month in Juan Frio, Colombia, near the border of Venezuela.
Bahamas: Adventist leader tells Bahamians to trust God, not gambling for success

"Do not resort to the easy way out, do not seek shortcuts," said the president of the Atlantic Caribbean Union, Dr. Leonard Johnson, as he addressed the citizens of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, residents, and visitors at Clifford Park, Nassau, on July 9, 2012, the eve of the island nation's 39th anniversary of becoming an independent country.

Speaking at the 2012 Ecumenical Service of Thanksgiving, Dr. Johnson, president of the Adventist Church in the Atlantic Caribbean region, explained how the Biblical Joseph was given to self-discipline, industry, loyalty, unity, and respect for God despite the thirteen years he lived under constant trials and pain in Egypt. He admonished listeners to revisit the preamble of the nation's constitution and note that the same qualities that Joseph adhered to are the same ones listed in the preamble.

On the brink of a national referendum to determine whether gambling should be legalized, Dr. Johnson advised the audience to learn from the life of Joseph. Despite all the difficulties he faced he had faith in God and did not take chances to gain success, said Dr. Johnson. These qualities are what the Bahamas should place as its foundation for moving forward, he added.

Dr. Johnson pointed out that Joseph's success was a result of industriousness and faithfulness in God, underscoring that the Bible does not support gambling as a means to succeed. Quoting Carlton Francis, one of the nation's forefathers, Dr. Johnson listed the damages that the social fabric of the Bahamas can experience due to casino gambling and similar gaming.

"We cannot legislate morality," Dr. Johnson said. "But we can declare that the Bible is relevant and true." He noted that the choice to gamble or not is in the hands of each individual.

Referencing Genesis 41:50-52, Dr. Johnson implored Bahamians to, like Joseph, forget the things that could retard its forward movement and commit to the will of God to receive His blessing and healing as a nation.

There are more than 20,700 Seventh-day Adventists in The Bahamas worshipping in 55 churches and congregations.

The Atlantic Caribbean Union is comprised of the islands of The Bahamas, Cayman Islands and Turks and Caicos.