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At European Pastor's Conference, a call for relevant community ministry
Posted: 30 Aug 2012 09:00 PM PDT
Seventh-day Adventist pastors in Europe say a renewed emphasis on relevant, relational outreach will connect with communities there, despite the region's growing secularism.

Essay compilation addresses legal, theological issues of homosexuality
Posted: 29 Aug 2012 09:00 PM PDT
A new book of essays and testimonies addressing homosexuality is the first of its kind from an Adventist publishing house.

Inter-America: Church certifies dozens of chaplains serving at educational institutions
Posted: 26 Aug 2012 09:00 PM PDT
Dozens of chaplains from educational institutions throughout the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Inter-America met to gain certification to better minister to the needs of students across schools and institutions.

Jamaica: First non-Adventist minister graduates from NCU
Posted: 19 Aug 2012 09:00 PM PDT
In what is termed a historic occasion, Reverend Wayan Wellington of the New Testament Church of God, became the first non-Adventist to graduate from Northern Caribbean University's (NCU) Master of Arts in Religion program earlier this month.
Seventh-day Adventist pastors in Europe say a renewed emphasis on relevant, relational outreach will connect with communities there, despite the region's growing secularism.

In his keynote address, Trans-European Division President Bertil Wiklander told attendees that while many Europeans deny their need for God, such a lifestyle is ultimately "dysfunctional."

"To make God known in Europe is our great challenge and calling," he said.

Other presenters urged pastors not to confine their ministry to the pews. Dennis Meier, a pastor from Hamburg, Germany, referenced metaphors from Matthew 5 in his presentation. "As Adventists, we tend to be more comfortable with the metaphor of the light on the hill than the salt of the Earth," Meier said.

"With our established buildings and our structured worship times there is a danger of us becoming isolated," he added.

When pastors minister outside church walls, they need to be aware that their efforts and motivation will likely face scrutiny, said Adventist world church Vice President Lowell Cooper.

"A trustworthy God will never be made known by untrustworthy people," Cooper said in a presentation that highlighted the significance of humility, integrity, respect and accountability in pastoral ministry.

Derek Morris, editor of the church's Ministry Magazine, said he found a lecture by Biblical Research Institute Director Artur Stele particularly compelling.

"I grew up in Europe, so I am aware of some of the challenges they are facing with postmodern, post-Christian people," Morris said.

"[Stele] talked about how the New Testament uses more than forty words to describe sharing the good news about Jesus and mentions fifteen different places, such as the market place, cafe, temple, by the river, someone's house. So the message is to share Jesus in every way and in every place," he said.

Secular Europe is not unlike the environment the Apostle Paul faced ministering to Greco-Roman culture in the 1st Century, said Adventist recording artist and Pastor Wintley Phipps.

"I think Paul left us a theological heritage that we have lost sight of - that revealing Christ to the world around us, in us, is the true purpose of the church," Phipps said.

Veteran Adventist evangelist Mark Finley challenged church members not to let fear of failure hinder efforts to share Jesus. "I'd rather try and do something great for God and fail, than do nothing for God and succeed," he said.

European Adventists launched at least two new pilot outreach projects this year. In February, Bible stories came alive for community members who visited a three-dimensional exhibit in Reykjavik, Iceland. The church's display traced Biblical history from Creation to Jesus' resurrection.
Later, in Hungary, Adventists launched a health club and Bible university to respond to basic physical and spiritual needs. Leaders in the country also hosted “Jesus7,” an outreach series broadcast on television nationwide that they say offered lasting answers amid financial instability in the country.

Now, pastors in the region are calling for increased support for more such innovative approaches to evangelism.

“Those who try new methods need confidence and trust and a platform where they can share their experiences,” said Janos Kovacs-Biro, Trans-European Division Ministerial Association director.

“We need a lot of encouragement from church leadership,” Kovacs-Biro said, adding that health, the Sabbath rest and social justice issues such as human trafficking and domestic violence can be effective ways of connecting with a secular audience.

Training seminars for pastors to learn these new methods of outreach and service should be among church administrators’ top priorities, he said.

Niels-Erik Andreasen, president of Andrews University and chair of the University Press board, said the topic of this book is timely and needed.

"Recent developments in our faith community, religious organizations, American politics and secular society require careful thought on this sensitive subject," Andreasen said. "Andrews University is pleased to help sort out some of these issues by bringing together a range of perspectives on this subject within our church."

The book, released earlier this month, is a collection of 14 essays and six testimonies from individuals who have personally struggled with homosexuality.

"Much as it might like to, the church can no longer evade questions about homosexuality and same-sex marriage," says Nicholas P. Miller, lead editor of the work, along with Roy E. Gane and H. Peter Swanson, all of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews. "Society, with increasing stridency, is forcing Christians to confront these topics," Miller says.

Miller points to the several states whose legislatures have recently enacted same-sex marriage provisions. He notes that this November, at least two states, Maryland and Washington, will have referendums on election ballots, initiated by citizens seeking to overturn the same-sex marriage laws recently enacted.

"Consider the strange controversy and apparent outrage that erupted when the owner of a national fast-food chain recently expressed his support for traditional marriage," Miller said. "It was the same position held until very recently by the president of the United States. And the media-driven reaction is an indication of how efforts are being made to shift public sentiment on this issue."

Some in the church are trying to reshape attitudes on homosexuality as well. Recently, some Adventists have promoted a documentary film affirming the gay lifestyle among Adventists, Miller said.

"Through all of this, Adventists must have a clear understanding of all the issues at stake, and they are significant," he said.

Ronald Knott, director of Andrews University Press, notes that along with the biblical and religious liberty issues, the book makes a passionate case for the highest level of pastoral love and support for those Christians who, he said, "may have been lured down a dangerous spiritual path by charming but false arguments from scripture and political history, coming from outside and inside the church."

The book is divided into four sections: biblical material on homosexuality, legal issues, counseling, and testimonies. An appendix reproduces the various official statements relevant to homosexuality issued through the years by the Adventist Church.

In addition to his teaching responsibility as associate professor of church history at Andrews, Miller is also director of the university's International Religious Liberty Institute. The institute is sponsoring an October 6 forum on the political, religious and social issues surrounding same-sex marriage. The event will be held at the Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Spencerville, Maryland.

The forum, planned to coincide with Maryland's ballot referendum to overturn the state's
same-sex marriage law, will draw attention to the issues, to the new book, and will feature panel discussions and a sermon on Adventists and social action by Bill Knott, editor and executive publisher of Adventist Review/Adventist World.

For more information, visit universitypress.andrews.edu.
Dozens of chaplains from educational institutions throughout the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Inter-America met to gain certification to better minister to the needs of students across schools and institutions.

August 27, 2012 - Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic...Libna Stevens/IAD

Dozens of chaplains from educational institutions throughout the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Inter-America met to gain certification to better minister to the needs of students across schools and institutions. The event took place in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, Aug. 7-14, 2012 and was the first of its kind to be held in the territory, organizers said.

"Chaplaincy Ministries recognizes that most of our chaplains are functioning in the education area and it is where the greatest challenge lies due to the large number of schools and universities we have in our territory," said Pastor Benjamin Carballo, chaplaincy ministries director for the church in Inter-America.

The certification program focused on a number of seminars on how chaplains can prepare more attractive and interactive Bible classes, offer more sound counseling and continue to minister to the spiritual needs of students and teachers on a daily basis, said Carballo.

"We want to ensure that each chaplain can look at the whole aspect, with teachers, students, and student's families," said Carballo. "We want to ensure that the chaplain is more than a pastor, more than a Bible teacher who can fill the spiritual needs farther than praying for students, preparing devotional worships, and weeks of prayer during the school year."

The gathering was also an opportunity for chaplains to interact and network as they make their ministry more effective in facing the challenges of providing guidance to children and young people suffering problems at home, low self-esteem, drug addiction, worldly distractions, and a negative outlook, said Carballo.

The certification was validated by the General Conference Chaplaincy Ministry department, and brought chaplaincy experts like Dr. Mario Ceballos, chaplaincy associate director at the Adventist World Church, Dr. Miguel Alemany, clinical psychologist and professor at Montemorelos University in North Mexico among others, during the seven-day, 32-credit hour event, explained Carballo.

Pastor Jeremias Morales, chaplaincy ministries director for the church in South Mexico said the certification marked a new stage in chaplaincy ministry in his territory. Morales was accompanied by a dozen regional chaplaincy directors overseeing dozens of primary and secondary schools in South Mexico.

"God is calling us to double our efforts and work in favor of our students, parents and staff of each institution," said Morales. "There are souls to save, battles to fight but above all, God is with us."

The goal is to continue nurturing and guiding through the needed ministry of chaplaincy, said Carballo. "We hope that our educational institutions can soon see a difference for its students and faculty."

It can be a challenge as there are more than 25,000 primary and secondary students in 178 Adventist schools across Inter-America, but one that will see improvement in the coming months and years in the 12 Adventist universities as well, explained Carballo.

"We want our chaplains to be able to better discern what goes across the mind and heart of children and young people. That they may be blessed and rescued even if the home may be falling apart, and that each institution can be a light to help each one," Carballo said.

For more information on the Inter-America's Chaplaincy Ministries in Inter-America, visit https://www.facebook.com/CapellanesAdventistasDia

To view photos of the event, click here
In what is termed a historic occasion, Reverend Wayan Wellington of the New Testament Church of God, became the first non-Adventist to graduate from Northern Caribbean University's (NCU) Master of Arts in Religion program earlier this month.

Aug. 12, 2012 - Mandeville, Jamaica...Nigel Coke/IAD

In what is termed a historic occasion, Reverend Wayan Wellington of the New Testament Church of God, became the first non-Adventist to graduate from Northern Caribbean University's (NCU) Master of Arts in Religion program earlier this month.

Rev. Wellington, who serves as the National Youth Director of the New Testament Church of God in Jamaica and Grand Cayman earned his graduate degree with emphasis in the New Testament, after two and a half years of study. He received his diploma during this year's commencement exercise at NCU's main campus in Mandeville, Jamaica, Aug. 12, 2012.

"The experience with Rev. Wellington was refreshing and effervescent," said Dr. Newton Cleghorne, dean of the School of Religion and Theology (SRT). "He was open-minded and willing to be challenged. His participation in the course gave us an opportunity to share with the wider religious community, which is a part of our philosophy in the SRT. We currently have four students at the undergraduate level from Sabbath-keeping Churches who are completing their studies in the bachelors of arts in Religion."

Wellington is the fourth person to graduate from the master's program since it was introduced in 2009.

"Normally individuals from my church would move on to do these course at Caribbean Graduate School of Theology (CGST) or Jamaica Theological Seminary (JTS), but I chose to do the course at NCU to get a different experience, something new, something fresh," said Rev. Wellington. "In addition I was stationed at one of our churches in Georges Valley, Manchester, which made it easier for me."

Wellington found the lecturers excellent and a great opportunity to fellowship with other students in the program.

"The atmosphere was a comfortable one, with open and frank people that did not make me feel out of place," Wellington continued. "We had intense discussions, but mature ones, which in the end gave me a different viewpoint and I now have garnered a greater deal of respect for the Adventist doctrine and belief."

For more on Northern Caribbean University undergraduate and graduate programs, visit www.ncu.edu.jm