Unprecedented Meeting Examines Church’s Missional Structure

An historic meeting of administrative leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America met near Dulles Airport outside of Washington D.C. on May 13-15, 2014, to discuss the future of the church and its structure, organization, and mission. It is the first time presidents, executive secretaries, and chief financial officers of each of the church’s administrative units, conferences and unions, have met in a joint session.

The conference began with church leaders, which also included education and healthcare...
leaders, expressing a strong willingness to place the needs of the church’s effectiveness and mission before their own position. When asked, an overwhelming 95 percent of attendees said they would be willing to sacrifice their position, if it would help further the mission of the Adventist Church. The delegates welcomed the voted result with strong applause.

“It is so wonderful that this body of North American Church leaders, came to this extraordinary meeting with open hearts and open minds,” said Dan Jackson, president of the Adventist Church in North America, “this selfless spirit demonstrates a real desire to honestly examine our current organizational and missional delivery systems and how they need to be adapted to make the Adventist Church more relevant in our communities in the 21st century.”

Titled “Shaping the NAD of Tomorrow”, the conference featured presentations on: the changing face of the religious environment in North America, challenges to the Adventist education system, reaching the emergent secular society, and how governance and organizational structure effect the efficiency of the Church and its mission. After each presentation Conference attendees separated into small groups to discuss issues in one of three priority areas: mission to contemporary audiences, education, and church administrative structure. The points raised by the breakout groups were synthesized and presented to attendees who then prioritized the issues for further action.

The top priorities selected by the delegates were:

1. To develop a branding strategy for Adventism tied to a clearer positive sense of our identity, empowering members to mingle with the secular community, including opening our churches more hours to be available to local communities.
2. Make recommendations specifying ways that administration and ministries of the church can streamline operations and eliminate duplications where unnecessary at every level, and
3. Assign to a representative commission, the challenge of exploring at least three scenarios for the re-distribution of financial support from members for furthering the mission of the church.

A group representative of the church’s diverse membership will be commissioned by the North American leaders to further study the top priorities and make an initial report at the North American Division Year-End Meetings in November 2014.

Prior to the conference more than 470 church pastors, educators, administrators and retirees throughout the North American territory were surveyed on a variety of topics. The response rate of 72%, which according to survey analyst Dr. Karl Bailey, was “nearly unheard of” for participation for an anonymous survey. The results of the survey where evaluated and presented by Dr. Bailey and Dr. Duane McBride from the Behavioral Sciences Department of Andrews University, who evaluated the survey responses. These survey responses were used to support the subjects that were presented at the conference.

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