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Challenge Day 6 of 40

Story of the One project by Alex Bryan

In the autumn of 2009, I preached a series of sermons on the campus of Andrews University, where Pastor Japhet De Oliveira served as senior chaplain. There, in Berrien Springs, Michigan, I met Japhet for the first time, and we engaged in the first of what has turned out to be innumerable conversations. The theme of our dialogue: ecclesiology, the church. We discovered a shared passion and concern for our church. We acknowledged a mutual desire: that the church might enjoy a rich and meaningful future. And, in particular, we longed that emerging generations of young adults would fall in love with the church as we had.

The following year, in the summer of 2010, we invited three pastoral colleagues to join us for a mini-retreat in Denver, Colorado. We spent two days together, praying, talking, laughing, crying - but most of all, dreaming about the church. Ecclesiology had brought us together. But something happened in the Mile High City that we (or at least I) had not expected: We left not thinking about ecclesiology, but, rather, Christology. It seemed that over and over again as we mused upon the possibility of a bright future for the church, the conversation quickly turned to Jesus. (In fact, we celebrated communion before we dismissed our time together.) At the time, I’m not sure I could have articulated what had happened to us, and to our conversation. Later that year, reading the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann, the meaning and significance of the Denver dialogue’s direction came into focus for me. He writes:

The crisis of the church in present-day society is not merely the critical choice between assimilation or retreat into the ghetto, but the crisis of its own existence as the church of the crucified Christ. The question of ecclesiology, however unpleasant as it may be for conservatives and progressives, is no more than a short prelude to its internal crisis, for only by Christ is it possible to tell what is a Christian church and what it not.[1]

These words clarified the not-so-subtle shift in our conversation: we had come to the conclusion that
if our church was to have life we would need, first and foremost, to shift the conversation to The Life … from church to Jesus. Ecclesiology would never go anywhere good until we talked Christology. How could we sit inside the sanctuary of the church of Laodicea all the while Jesus was standing outside the building, knocking and calling to be let in? Church talk before Christ talk, we realized, is putting the theological cart before the horse. Jesus must be first.[2]

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Recalibrate: (send your thoughts/questions/answers here)

1. What does your local congregation look like with Jesus. All. ?

2. What does your life look like with Jesus. All. ?

We Need You

Something amazing has begun to take place at One project gatherings all over the world. Men and women who work for the church, young adults who've given up on the church, and members who question the future of the church have all come together to reconnect to the life blood of our church, Jesus. Through honest questions, open dialogue, and a respect for community, we see glimpses of the future, and the future is bright.

We need you to keep the conversation going.

We ask that, today, you think of a person or family who may not be able to afford to come to a gathering. You can name them and cover their registration fee here.

We ask for help in covering the cost of child care for families that do come. You can donate to that here.

And if you would like to support the future of the One project gatherings in any other way of your choosing, we ask that you email us or donate here.

Happy Thanksgiving, and thank you for your help in celebrating the supremacy of Jesus through the Adventist Church: Jesus. All.
the One project headquarters is located at the Boulder Seventh-day Adventist Church
345 Mapleton Ave, Boulder, CO, 80304, USA.