



Teachers, Books, and Beliefs

Foundation Awards Ten Adventist Teachers

BY MELISSA CECHOTA

TEN OF THE North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists' highest quality teachers were selected this spring by the Alumni Awards Foundation (AAF) to receive a 2011 Excellence in Teaching Award.

Nominated by principals, superintendents, colleagues, and former students, the ten teachers selected have been celebrated across the North American Division. AAF board members and staff have traveled from coast to coast to present each teacher with a \$2,000 gift, a medallion and a Certificate of Excellence during special events hosted by the recipients' schools. Colleagues, students and community members have had the opportunity to publicly thank the teachers for the impact they have had in their local schools. One remaining presentation for September is scheduled.

The finalists were chosen from 45 nominations received this year. The AAF staff and Selection Committee diligently considered each teacher, and what resulted was an impressive top ten.

"After reading the essays from the nominations and their supporting documents, my belief in the quality of teachers that we have in our schools has been strengthened," said Roo McKenzie (left),

Southeastern California Conference Evangelist for Education. AAF appointed McKenzie to serve on this year's Selection Committee. "Adventist Christian Education has some superstar teachers indeed."



Robert Nobuhara (left), a 2010 Excellence in Teaching Award recipient from Monterey Bay Academy, was also on this year's Selection Committee. Nobuhara

said what he appreciated most of all about the candidates was that many if not all of them strongly focused their teaching to connect their students to Jesus Christ.

AAF's Selection Committee of six agreed that choosing the final ten was challenging. In fact, committee members said it took several rounds of voting to determine the finalists.

"I had to go with my heart to make the selections, but it was very difficult," said Arpad Soo, Selection Committee Chairman and AAF Board Member. "We have so many outstanding teachers this year, and they all deserve an award. It's a thrilling experience to read and see what these educators are doing. My congratulations to our ten recipients this year."

AAF is a nonprofit organization that has awarded grants for Adventist education totaling more than \$1.4 million. The organization has recognized 106 exceptional teachers with an Excellence in Teaching Award since its establishment in 1995. AAF partners with educators, church officials and philanthropists to develop and fund programs that awaken the full potential in Adventist education.

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—Roo McKenzie



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The AAF Board of Directors includes individuals who have become leaders in their communities and professions. AAF board members say they draw inspiration from their common heritage in Adventist schools. Their major objective is to strengthen and reward quality Adventist education and foster the means for school improvements in Adventist K-12 schools.

For more information visit alumniawards.com.

Excellence in Teaching Award Recipients

1. Steven Atkins, *Andrews Academy*, Michigan Conference
2. Sonia Barrett, *Brooklyn Seventh-day Adventist School*, Greater New York Conference
3. Steve Baughman, *Highland Academy*, Kentucky-Tennessee Conference
4. Vivian Beierle, *Mission Hills Christian School*, Northern California Conference
5. David Goymer, *Paradise Adventist Academy*, Northern California Conference
6. James Marxmiller, *Mountain View Academy*, Central California Conference
7. Gordon Miller, *Sbenandoab Valley Adventist Elementary*, Potomac Conference
8. Mark Smith, *Portland Adventist Academy*, Oregon Conference
9. Keren Taccone, *West Palm Beach Junior Academy*, Florida Conference
10. Wendie Warren, *Bermuda Institute of Seventh-day Adventists*, Bermuda Conference

Selection Committee Members

Arpad Soo, *Selection Committee Chairman and AAF Board Member*

Joan Coggin, *AAF Board Member*

Greg Gerard, *AAF Board Member and Georgia-Cumberland Academy Principal*

Carla Lidner Baum, *AAF Board Member*

Roo McKenzie, *Southeastern California Conference Evangelist for Education*

Bob Nobuhara, *2010 Excellence in Teaching Award recipient from Monterey Bay Academy*

Further Definition for Adventist Fundamental Belief #6

Committee meets to clarify church's interpretation of origins

BY ELIZABETH LECHLEITNER/ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

MEMBERS OF THE Seventh-day Adventist Church's newly-formed Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee met in June, the next step in a five-year process to clarify the denomination's biblical understanding of origins.

Merging the church's fundamental belief on creation with the recently endorsed Reaffirmation of Creation



statement will clarify the denomination's understanding of origins, said Adventist theologian Angel Rodriguez. Here, Rodriguez speaks at the GC Session last

year, just before delegates voted to endorse the statement (*above*).

Last year, delegates of the 59th General Conference Session in Atlanta voted to reaffirm the church's belief in a "literal, recent, six-day creation." The vote formally endorsed a document drafted at the International Faith and Science Conference in 2004 and later that year affirmed by the church's Annual Council business meeting. The move addressed questions from some Adventists regarding interpretation of the denomination's Fundamental Belief #6.

The Reaffirmation of Creation statement specifies that the seven days in the Genesis creation account are "literal, 24-hour days" and tags creation as "recent," while the existing fundamental belief reads, in part: "in six days the Lord made 'the heaven and the earth'... and rested on the seventh day of that first week." Because the Adventist Church cannot hold two official statements on the same belief, session delegates also voted to grant top church administration what world church General Vice President Artur Stele called a "mandate" to merge the two statements' language and intent into one comprehensive fundamental belief.

The move is also expected to close what some Adventists claim is an interpretative loophole that hypothetically allows theistic evolution to explain the Genesis origins account, said Angel Rodriguez, former director of the church's Biblical Research Institute (BRI) and Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee co-chair with Stele. Theis-

tic evolution posits that evolution is a natural process of creation, overseen by God, and seeks to make the biblical creation story compatible with natural evolution. “We as the Adventist Church strongly believe that the Lord is our creator. If you take that away—it’s such a foundational belief—or even compromise it, then there is an effect on other beliefs,” Stele said. Because theistic evolution stretches each creation day into epochs, many Adventists fear the theory threatens another of the church’s core beliefs: observance of the seventh-day Sabbath as a celebration of the creation week.

While amending the church’s fundamental beliefs might seem exceptional, it’s neither unprecedented nor unsolicited. The preamble to the church’s 28 Fundamental Beliefs invites revision as the church’s understanding of truth expands. “We state, ‘This is how we understand Scripture,’ but we also state that if we find a better expression or better wording—or if our understanding is broadened—then we will be open to change,” Stele said. “We don’t have doctrines like some other denominations—unmovable, unchangeable.”

Why not?

Early Adventist Church leaders were adamant that the emerging church not be corralled by creeds. “Making a creed is setting the stakes, and barring up the way to all future advancement,” church co-founder James White said during a discussion in 1861. “Suppose the Lord... should give us some new light that did not harmonize with our creed?” Ten years later, *The Review and Herald* published a list of Fundamental Principles, drafted by early church leader Uriah Smith. They were printed with a disclaimer that sought to allay any remaining unease: “We have no articles of faith, creed or discipline, aside from the Bible. We do not put forth this as having any authority with our people, nor is it designed to secure uniformity among them as a system of faith, but is a brief statement of what is, and has been, with great unanimity, held by them,” Smith wrote.

The preamble to the Twenty-eight Fundamental Beliefs allows for the revision of any belief should the Adventist Church’s understanding of truth expand, said Artur Stele (left), co-chair of the church’s Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee.



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Those core beliefs shifted in number and content over the decades but were never officially voted by the church until 1980.

Two years before the 1980 GC Session in Dallas, Texas, a few church administrators at church headquarters wrote a preliminary draft of what would become the Fundamental Beliefs. Shortly afterward, scholars and theologians at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, participated in rewriting the beliefs, launching a revision process involving academics, administrators and church members.

What emerged were a set of beliefs that condensed and codified key Bible-based principles universally held by the church. “A major reason we’ve been able to achieve widespread agreement among Adventists worldwide is because the Fundamental Beliefs keep very close to the wording of Scripture. They either quote Scripture directly or paraphrase it,” said Bill Johnson, who was among the group of scholars and theologians at the seminary tasked with rewriting the preliminary draft.

How a belief is changed

The Fundamental Beliefs were first formally changed to accommodate the “Growing in Christ” belief voted in 2005 at the 58th GC Session. During that same session, church administrators also voted to adopt a protocol guiding any further changes to the Fundamental Beliefs. Suggested changes to the church’s beliefs must be rooted, the protocol states, in a “serious concern” for the “well-being of the world church and its message and mission,” as well as be Bible-based and “informed” by the writings of church co-founder Ellen G. White. A suggestion can come from the world field or world church headquarters. In this case, then newly-elected world church President Ted N. C. Wilson called for revision of the church’s belief on creation, responding to challenges to the church’s interpretation of origins. Protocol states that once a revision is entertained, world church headquarters should create an ad hoc committee to “coordinate” the revision process—this time, the Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee, co-chaired by Stele and Rodriguez. Joined by *Adventist Review* Editor and Publisher Bill Knott and BRI Associate Director Gerhard Pfandl, Stele and Rodriguez will draft the first revision of Fundamental Belief Number #6 in the coming months.

Church administrators, theologians, scholars and local church members will review the suggested draft as it cir-

culates through church business meetings at headquarters and each of the church's thirteen world divisions. Later, to solicit feedback from members worldwide, the draft will appear online and in *The Adventist Review*, which has historically published the church's beliefs as they have evolved over the years. "We want to make it as accessible to as many people as possible," Rodriguez said. "The committee will set up criteria by which to evaluate [the suggestions], trying to be as objective as possible."

Ultimately, the church's Annual Council will vote whether to add the revision to the agenda of the 2015 GC Session in San Antonio, Texas, where a final vote would occur. ■

Elizabeth Lechleitner writes for *ANN World News Bulletin*. This report was posted as a review of news issued by the Communication Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church World Headquarters and released as part of the service of Adventist News Network.

Adventist Filipino Choir Wins "Choir of the World" Title

Music an expression of "thanksgiving" for Adventist University of the Philippines-based group

BY ANTHONY Q. ESGUERRA/ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHOIR based at Adventist University of the Philippines earned the "Choir of the World" title at the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod this year.

The university's Ambassadors Chorale Arts Society bested more than 4,000 performers from 50 countries to earn the prestigious title. "This is God's victory," said director Ramon Molina Lijauco Jr. "We can't thank God enough for these opportunities," he said, adding that the choir's music is an expression of "thanksgiving and remembrance to the creator and source of music."

The small town of Llangollen has hosted Eisteddfod—Welsh for "festival"—since 1947. The event celebrates musical competition, performance and international peace and friendship. Well-known Italian tenor Luciano Pavarotti marked his first professional performance in

the United Kingdom at Eisteddfod in 1968.

The Ambassadors also won first prize in the categories of Mixed Choirs and Chamber Choirs, and received the Luciano Pavarotti Trophy.

They wouldn't have made it to the festival without prayers and the support of choir alumni, who helped raise the necessary \$43,000 to cover airfare, accommodation, visas and registration fees, Lijauco Jr. said.

The Ambassadors regularly perform worldwide and are counted among the notable choirs in the world, according to the World Ranking List of Musica Mundi. They have performed with the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra and at last year's General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia. In 2006 the choir earned "World Choir Games Champion" status in the Gospel and Spiritual Category at the Fourth World Choir Games in Xiamen, China. ■

Anthony Q. Esguerra is a staff member at *ANN World News Bulletin*.

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Awaiting Merger Approval

Atlantic Union College Faculty Receive Pink Slips

BY BONNIE DWYER

WHILE ATLANTIC UNION COLLEGE (AUC) and Washington Adventist University (WAU) await approval for their proposed merger from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, the faculty and staff at Atlantic Union College now find themselves without jobs. .

The Worcester Telegram and Gazette reported July 25 that the delay in the merger meant that the faculty and staff were to be laid off on July 31, the day the college's accreditation with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges expired, and AUC legally stopped operating.

To merge the two institutions, approval was needed not only from the constituents of both the Columbia Union and the Atlantic Union Conferences but also from federal, state, regional and church accrediting agencies. The plan was to establish a branch campus of WAU in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, where AUC is located.

On July 14, WAU announced that the Massachusetts

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Department of Higher Education was still processing the application and had not yet given approval. As a result the South Lancaster campus would not be allowed to open. The AUC students were invited to attend WAU classes on the Takoma Park campus.

AUC President Norman Wendth told *The Worcester Telegram and Gazette* that all but one of the currently enrolled 450 students at AUC had found other colleges for the fall semester.

Under the merger plan, many of the AUC staff were to be offered jobs with WAU at the satellite campus, with only 12 layoffs predicted. However, the plan is now on hold for at least nine months, the paper reported. So all faculty and staff were to receive pink slips. Wendth did not give a total number.

Severance packages were to be offered to the employees, and some were possibly to be offered positions at the Takoma Park campus.

If the state does not approve the merger, Wendth told the paper, “the college would close and the property, which includes several buildings and acreage on Main Street in South Lancaster, would revert back to the Adventist Church.”

On the WAS [not clear what this stands for] website, President Weymouth Spence is quoted saying, “We’re working through the process and are optimistic that we’ll be able to operate soon after permission is granted by the commonwealth. Moving this process forward keeps our commitment to serve the educational needs of students in 15 states in the MidAtlantic and Northeast United States and the islands of Bermuda.” ■

By Design, New Science Curriculum

BY NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION (NAD) NEWSPPOINTS

TEACHING SCIENCE to the 70,000 students enrolled in the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s K–12 system in North America ought to be Biblically faithful and academically rigorous, says Larry Blackmer, NAD vice-president for education. “A new curriculum to accomplish those important goals has been under development for the last three years, and will be ready for use in the 2012–2013 academic year.”

“Our purpose with this new curriculum is to open students’ minds to the concepts and methodology of

inquiry-based science,” says Blackmer, “and to do so within a perspective that is uniquely Adventist. Neither Scripture nor the Spirit of Prophecy put science and creation in opposition to each other. Correctly planned and instructed, science teaching and Biblical values are complimentary in pointing to a God whose creative power is on display in all that He spoke into existence.”

By Design will present science concepts within the context of the Adventist worldview, while integrating national and provincial/state science standards. Four biblical worldview concepts, in particular, will be used as a lens for conceptual

development: **creation** (What is God’s intention?), **the fall** (How has God’s purpose been distorted?), **redemption** (How does God help us to respond?), and **re-creation** (How can we be restored in the image of God?). The standards will be organized in relation to these big ideas or concepts, promoting greater understanding of the content and skills.

This curriculum points to what Ellen White consistently refers to as “true science,” even as it carefully instructs about the entire range of scientific belief and worldviews, including those that deny or diminish the Biblical account of origins. Equipping our students for lives of service and witness in our society means that we teach about views we don’t endorse, making sure at the end of the day that our students rely on the Biblical worldview as the basis for their deepest values and beliefs.

“We are excited about the potential of the *By Design* science program,” says Carol Campbell, NAD associate education director for K–12. “It is an inquiry-based program that will equip students to think conceptually about science content while engaging them in hands-on activities to explore and apply what they have learned. Students will also grow in their knowledge and appreciation of God’s creative purpose and design as they conduct investigations to seek answers to essential questions.” ■

