

# Better Together | BY BONNIE DWYER

For some people, it is traveling around the world that helps them understand the diversity within Adventism. While we all study from the same Sabbath School lesson quarterly, the discussion in Lake Titicaca, Peru, is different from that at Orcas Island, Washington, or the Seychelles Islands in Africa. Even regional travel can provide different pictures of Adventism.

In February, I went to Southern California for the One Project at the Crosswalk Church in Redlands, California. I came away blessed by Alex Bryan’s description of the big story of Christianity, delighted by Jennifer Scott’s exploration of the spiritual concept of play. There were earplugs available for those who found the music a tad loud, and lattes were served in the lobby. In the conversation periods between the short lectures, the audience shared their reflections and enthusiasm for the material presented.

A couple of weeks later, I went across town to the Sacramento Central Church where the Last Generation for Christ held a symposium defending Last Generation Theology, given that four new books have come out in the past year questioning this conservative take on Adventism. The Weimar Institute Chamber Singers led the audience in lively hymns between the hour-long lectures. A Fellowship lunch was served in between church and the afternoon session and bountiful refreshments were served at the conclusion of the program. It was a congenial symposium, punctuated with “amens” as the presenters suggested that Last Generation Theology is Adventist theology.

Thinking about these two very Adventist, very different weekends, I decided the attendees from each of the symposiums would benefit from attending the other session. The Last Generation people talk about the importance of

reproducing Christ’s character in believers, but they don’t spend much time on Christ’s character—a trip to the One Project could help fill that void. The One Project attendees might be motivated by listening to people talk about the importance of personal transformation—now. That how they respond to Christ matters.

In other words, we need each other. Adventism is better because of both the One Project and Last Generation

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Theology. Rather than harping at each other about the things that we disagree about, let’s celebrate the ideas that each brings to the table. And that might help us with a third group, a group that no longer considers itself part of Adventism—those who leave. In early April, I also attended a Nurture and Retention Summit at the General Conference where the discussion was about the 15 million who have left Adventism since 1965. “These are our brothers and sisters in Christ, our sons and

daughters,” Archivist David Trim reminded the audience. Loving attention might have helped them to stay.

The time-honored progression of acceptance, forgiveness, love would serve us all well. Accepting people for who they are, wherever they are, and not expecting them to be exactly like us could get us talking to each other. A spirit of forgiveness for ideas that might differ could bind us together, make possible that love that is to be the mark of Jesus’ followers.



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