A New Lighthouse Shines in Virginia Beach

After 20 years of meeting for worship in places they could not call home, last weekend members of Potomac Conference’s Virginia Beach (Va.) church celebrated the purchase of their own church building. Visitors from the community and over 10 sister churches in California, West Virginia, Maryland, Florida and North Carolina joined them for the grand opening ceremony. The sanctuary, lobby and hallways were standing room only when attendance soared to over 400 during the divine hour of worship.

According to Mark Sigue (pictured, center), the church’s pastor, celebrating this building at 4136 Holland Rd., was significant because, “this church is the first Adventist-owned church in Virginia Beach.”

The festivities continued with a Sunday brunch and the official ribbon-cutting, kitchen dedication and dedicatory prayers for church members.—Norman C. Belleza

READ MORE AND SEE SLIDESHOW
**WGTS’ “Night of Hope” Attracts Nearly 800**

They usually listen to the family-friendly, kid-safe radio station in their cars, at home, on their computers and probably on their mobile devices. But on a recent Saturday night, 788 listeners of WGTS 91.9 FM attended the station’s third “Night of Hope” at the Sheraton Premiere Hotel in Vienna, Va. As part of the WGTS family, attendees enjoyed an evening of worship, prayer, song and, of course, hope. Almost every on-air personality and staff member of the Washington Adventist University-owned radio station in Takoma Park, Md., was on hand, including Becky Alignay, WGTS program director; Brennan Wimbish, morning show co-host; and Pastor Terry Johnsson, the station’s chaplain. Listeners were also introduced to Rob Vandeman, the station’s new president, who gave the opening prayer to set the tone for the evening.

In addition to Christian recording artist Heather Williams signing autographs, there were various prayer stations for those seeking a deeper connection with God, giveaways and more. Look for the next “Night of Hope” in November.—**David Dickerson**

**Ohio Church Celebrates 50th Anniversary With Prayer Garden**

The Medina (Ohio) church celebrated their 50th anniversary by dedicating their new “prayer garden ministry” to the community. The garden was designed to bless those passing the church en route to the new Summa Hospital, located behind the church.

Present for the ceremony with Pastor Chester Hitchcock were Raj Attiken, Ohio Conference president; Dennis Hanwell, mayor of Medina; and Sally Gardner, representative of Medina Township. “Plans are to turn the entire church grounds into an area where neighbors frequent to pray,
meditate, relax or even have lunch at a future picnic shelter,” explains Hitchcock. Since beginning the project 18 months ago, church attendance has increased 25 percent and tithe by more than 40 percent.—Heidi Shoemaker

Allegheny West’s Ephesus Church Turns 100

Allegheny West Conference’s (AWC) Ephesus congregation in Columbus, Ohio, recently celebrated its centennial with a weekend full of festivities. Many former pastors returned to help celebrate, including James Washington, Charles Drake, Henry M. Wright, Stephen T. Lewis, Bufford Griffith and William T. Cox. Other guest speakers with close relationships to Ephesus included Barry C. Black, chaplain for the United States Senate, and James L. Lewis, former AWC president.

In addition to spirited preaching related to the celebration’s theme, “History, Homecoming & Heaven,” choirs and musical groups spanning the last 40 years of the church’s history returned to enrich the worship services. Another high point of the weekend was taking time to honor those families whose ancestors were charter or founding members.—Valerie Lee

READ MORE AND SEE SLIDESHOW

92 Attend Mountain View Summer Camps

This year Mountain View Conference’s Valley Vista Adventist Center in Huttonsville, W.Va., hosted some 92 children for its four summer camps (Adventurer, Junior, Teen and Life Guard).

Dumisani Ziwoya (pictured) attended this year’s junior camp because members at the Parkersburg (W.Va.) church went on a fundraising blitz to help kids who are not Adventists attend camp. Called Campaign for Community, the effort relies on members going door to door or to businesses for funding. The funds are
specifically used to help non-church members in many instances. Daniel Morikone, pastor of the Parkersburg (W.Va.) and Toll Gate (W.Va.) churches, says sending kids to camp leaves a lasting impression on the youngsters. “I know of four girls who have been attending summer camp for the last four years,” he says. “One of the girls even sent me a letter sharing how thankful she was for the opportunity.”—Taashi Rowe and Monica Zill

Rehoboth Spanish Group More Than Doubles Membership

At the beginning of this year, Allegheny East Conference’s Rehoboth Spanish group in Reading, Pa., had 25 members. Today they can claim 39 additional members, which means their membership has more than doubled in less than six months.

Leandro A. Perez, the church’s pastor, and Rabiel Torres, director of lay ministries, says they have been utilizing media to step up their evangelism efforts. First, the church distributed free CDs and DVDs from La Voz del Consolador ministry, featuring sermons by Andres Portes. They are also sponsoring a broadcast of Pastor Portes’ messages on a local TV station each Thursday night following the 11 p.m. news. At the end of the program, viewers are invited to call or visit the church.

The church then held two evangelism meetings in the spring and this summer, featuring Portes. Some 27 joined the church through baptism and 12 others joined by profession of faith. Pastor Perez says the increase can be linked to “the unity of the church. It is like a wake-up call and everyone is responding to the work of the Holy Spirit.”—Taashi Rowe

READ MORE AND SEE SLIDESHOW

La feligresía del grupo hispano de Rehoboth se ha más que duplicado

Al iniciar este año, el grupo hispano de Rehoboth, de la Asociación del Este de Allegheny, en Reading, Pa., contaba con 25 miembros. Hoy, afirma tener 39 miembros
más, lo que significa que su feligresía se ha más que duplicado en menos de seis meses.

Leandro A. Pérez, el pastor de la iglesia, y Rabiel Torres, director de los ministerios laicos, dicen que han utilizado los medios de comunicación para redoblar sus esfuerzos de evangelización. Primero, la iglesia distribuyó CD y DVD gratis de “La Voz del Consolador”, presentados por el Pastor Portes. También patrocinan la transmisión de estos mensajes en una estación local de televisión. Se transmite el programa cada jueves de noche después de las noticias de las 11:00 p.m. Al concluir el programa, se invita a los oyentes a llamar o visitar la iglesia.

Luego, la iglesia llevó a cabo—en la primavera y este verano—reuniones de evangelización con el Pastor Portes. Unas 27 personas se unieron a la iglesia por medio del bautismo, y otras 12 se unieron por profesión de fe. El Pastor Pérez dice que el aumento se debe a “la unidad de la iglesia. Es como un despertar, y todos están respondiendo a la obra del Espíritu Santo”.—Taashi Rowe

LEA MAS Y VEA FOTOS

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Washington Area Young Adults Fellowship on Friday Nights

“Sometimes as young adults, especially those who are single, we go our own way on Friday nights. But with this ministry, we can open the Sabbath together,” says Anthony Barnes, a member of Allegheny East Conference’s First church in Washington, D.C. It was at his church that young adults from around the region recently met for the “First Fridays” worship service.

Calling themselves the Metro Area Adventist Young Adults (MAAYA), members from Potomac Conference’s Restoration Praise Center in Lanham, Md., and Allegheny East Conference’s Emmanuel-Brinklow church in Ashton, Md., noticed a dearth of spiritual activities on Friday nights for young adults and started this worship service back in October 2009. This month young people gathered at First church and enjoyed personal testimonies, a song service; music from Metro Praiz, a choir from the Metropolitan church in Hyattsville, Md.; and a sermon from MAAYA founder Moses Eli, who is also associate pastor at Miracle Temple in Baltimore.

2012 Union Camporee Dates Set

Pathfinders can mark their calendars for August 8-11, 2012, the date of the “Choose Without Compromise” Columbia Union Camporee. Pam Scheib, camporee director, is leading youth and Pathfinder directors from each of the union’s eight conferences in planning this special event, which will be held at Camp Mohaven in Danville, Ohio. For more camporee details, visit columbiaunion.org and click on 2012 Pathfinder Camporee or columbiaunion.org/camporee2012.

Rachael Hall, a Delaware (Ohio) Discoverers Pathfinder, recently won an iPod for designing the winning patch for the 2012 union camporee. Her pastor David Sullivan is pictured presenting her with the award.—Frank Bondurant

Forward to a Friend or Subscribe

To share the Visitor News Bulletin with friends and church members across the Columbia Union, click the “Forward to a Friend” link below so all the photos and copy will appear correctly. Also, encourage them to sign up for the email at www.columbiaunion.org/emailnews. Thank you!

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Visitor News Bulletin Staff:
Celeste Ryan Blyden, Communication director; Taashi Rowe, news editor
5427 Twin Knolls Road, Columbia, MD 21045
Email: visitor@columbiaunion.net Website: www.columbiaunion.org
Visitor News Bulletin is an electronic newsletter published by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Columbia Union Conference. You are free to reprint any portion of the bulletin, however, please identify Visitor News Bulletin as the source.
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The sanctuary, lobby and hallways were standing-room-only when attendance soared to over 400 during the divine hour of worship.

According Mark Sigue, the church’s pastor, celebrating this building at 4136 Holland Rd., was significant because, “this church is the first Adventist-owned church in Virginia Beach, which has a really large population of non-members of our church.”

Dan Jensen, assistant to the Potomac Conference president for Communication, was the guest speaker and he spoke to the weekend’s theme of “God’s Defining Moments: Peace Within the Dark Night of the Soul.” Guest musicians came from Filipino Capitol church in Beltsville, Md.; the Canubas family and friends formed a string quintet from Maryland; and Kaydee Ann King from northern Virginia rendered a gorgeous solo Sabbath afternoon. The church also witnessed the rebirth of the Angklung Youth Ensemble as they played “In the Garden-Medley.”
“My chest is overflowing with joy. I can hardly contain my pride and excitement in worshipping in our new church,” exclaimed Abbey Reyes, the church’s former pastor, as he reminisced on the church’s 20-year journey.

“Today is truly a new day for Virginia Beach Seventh-day Adventist Church!” proclaimed Sigue, the church’s new pastor. “Having a facility to our own allows us to grow local ministries and not be held hostage to facility availabilities to host programs, ministries and services. By having this facility, we are able to now be the lighthouse in town as has been the church’s mission.”

The festivities continued on August 7 with a Sunday brunch and the official ribbon-cutting, kitchen dedication and dedicatory prayers for church members. The group of more than 100 attendees released purple balloons into the bright blue skies. For members each balloon symbolized letting go of the past and moving forward in their new church home.
WGTS’ “Night of Hope” Attracts Nearly 800 Radio Listeners

Story by David Dickerson; Photos by Warren Balogh
Published 8/16/11

They usually listen to the family-friendly, kid-safe radio station in their cars, at home, on their computers and probably on their mobile devices. But on a recent Saturday night, 788 listeners of WGTS 91.9 FM attended the station’s third “Night of Hope” at the Sheraton Premiere Hotel in Vienna, Va. As part of the WGTS family, attendees enjoyed an evening of worship, prayer, song and, of course, hope. Almost every on-air-personality and staff member of the Washington Adventist University-owned radio station in Takoma Park, Md., was on hand, including Becky Alignay, WGTS program director; Brennan Wimbish, morning show co-host; and Pastor Terry Johnsson, the station’s chaplain. Listeners were also introduced to Rob Vandeman, the station’s new president, who gave the opening prayer to set the tone for the evening.

“I’m looking forward to working with the staff to make sure Christ’s name is lifted high,” said Vandeman, who has been listening to the station for more than 27 years. In these “times in which we are living in, we need to get the message of Christ’s love to the masses in the most important area of the world, and we must dedicate our energies and our time to that task.”

Christian recording artist Heather Williams was the featured guest artist. She sang with the Gateway Fellowship Band for all of praise and worship but also gave her personal testimony about the loss of her first child and sang songs from her most recent CD. Chaplain Johnsson gave the inspirational message and 600 people came down for the appeal. The team collected 500 prayer cards, and the following on Wednesday, Chaplain Johnsson and the WGTS prayer team prayed over those names.

Dave Weigley, president of the Columbia Union Conference, gave the closing prayer. But the night was not over with “Amen.” Weigley also met with those who were in need of prayer, advice and further instruction.

Apart from the artist signing autographs, there were various prayer stations for those seeking a deeper connection with God, give-a-ways and more. Listeners also brought participated in the “Backpacks of Hope” program by bringing 100 filled backpacks for families who cannot afford school supplies this fall. One anonymous donor gave $5,000 to support this cause.

WGTS 91.9 staff say they love to connect with the listeners at these events and have them further connect with God. Look for the next “Night of Hope” sometime this November.
To receive email news, click here.

RESOURCES

2011 Calendar of Offerings
2012 Columbia Union Pathfinder Camporee

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5427 Twin Knolls Road
Columbia, MD 21045
Tel: (410) 997-3414
Tel: (301) 596-0800
Columbus' Ephesus Church Turns 100
Story by Valerie Lee; Photos by Angela Baker
Published 8/15/11

The Ephesus congregation in Columbus, Ohio, recently celebrated its centennial with a weekend full of festivities. Many former pastors returned to help celebrate, including James Washington, Charles Drake, Henry M. Wright, Stephen T. Lewis, Bufford Griffith and William T. Cox. Other guest speakers with close relationships to Ephesus included Barry C. Black, chaplain for the United States Senate, and James L. Lewis, former Allegheny West Conference president. In addition to spirited preaching related to the celebration's theme, “History, Homecoming & Heaven,” choirs and musical groups spanning the last 40 years of the church’s history returned to enrich the worship services. Another high point of the weekend was taking time to honor those families whose ancestors were charter or founding members.

The centennial celebration was made sweeter by the announcement that past and current members had fulfilled their commitment to current pastor, Donald L. Burden, DMin, to reduce the mortgage on the church’s school from $600,000 to $120,000 during the two-year period leading up to celebration. The saints accomplished this through sacrificial giving and a range of fundraising projects. Read more about the celebration at ephesus-sda.org.
Leandro Perez, pastor of the Rehoboth Spanish group, embraces his son, Caleb, after baptizing him.

Rehoboth Spanish Group More than Doubles Membership
Story by Taashi Rowe; Photos by Rabiel Torres
Published 8/17/11

At the beginning of this year, Allegheny East Conference’s Rehoboth Spanish group, located in Reading, Pa., had 25 members. After baptizing two more into the church this past Sabbath, they can now claim 39 new members, which means their membership has more than doubled in less than six months.

Leandro A. Perez, the church’s pastor, and Rabiel Torres, director of Lay Ministries, say they have been utilizing media to step up their evangelism efforts. First, the church distributed free CDs and DVDs from La Voz del Consolador (The Voice of the Comforter), a Houston-based ministry, featuring sermons by Andres Portes. The group is also sponsoring a weekly broadcast of Pastor Portes’ messages on WMCTV, a local TV station. Portes’ program comes on right after the news at 11:30 p.m. on Thursday nights. At the end of the program, viewers are invited to call or visit the church.

Rehoboth Spanish leaders also invited Portes to speak during a weeklong evangelism meeting in the spring. That meeting yielded 14 new members. They invited Portes to speak again at a summer evangelism series, themed “Transformados por el Espíritu” or “Transformed by the Spirit.” After that meeting, 13 joined the church through baptism and 12 joined by profession of faith.

Pastor Perez says the increase can be linked to “the unity of the church. It is like a wakeup call, and everyone is responding to the work of the Holy Spirit.” He also notes that church members are very welcoming, adding that community members have given them the nickname “the church of love.”
RESOURCES

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Columbia, MD 21045
Tel: (410) 997-3414
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La feligresía del grupo hispano de Rehoboth se ha más que duplicado
Escrito por Taashi Rowe; Fotos por Rabiel Torres
Publicado 8/17/2011

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Pastor Leandro Perez
“Sometimes as young adults, especially those who are single, we go our own way on Friday nights. But with this ministry, we can open the Sabbath together,” says Anthony Barnes, a member of Allegheny East Conference’s First church in Washington, D.C. It was at his church that young adults from around the region recently met for the “First Fridays” worship service.

Calling themselves the Metro Area Adventist Young Adults (MAAYA) members from Potomac Conference’s Restoration Praise Center in Lanham, Md., and Allegheny East Conference’s Emmanuel-Brinklow church in Ashton, Md., noticed a dearth of spiritual activities on Friday nights for young adults and started this worship service back in October 2009. The first Friday of each alternating month, the young people meet at a different host church for prayer, praise and a message from the Lord.

For this month’s “First Fridays,” young people gathered at First church and enjoyed personal testimonies, a song service; music from Metro Praiz, a choir from the Metropolitan church in Hyattsville, Md.; and a sermon from MAAYA founder Moses Eli, who is also associate pastor at Miracle Temple in Baltimore.

“The world has everything on Friday nights so that’s when some people are bound to get in trouble,” says Joanie Roberts, a member of the Metropolitan church. “This has always been a burden on my heart, and I’m so glad to see alternative Friday night activities like this.”
Trevor Fraser, a member of Restoration Praise Center and one of MAAYA's founders, says he'd love to have the program each month. He is encouraging young adult leaders from the various Seventh-day Adventist churches in the region to get involved. Find them on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/pages/MAAYA-Ministry-First-Fridays/279997310352.

MAAYA members are moving beyond just meeting on Friday nights and are inviting all to attend its “Barbeque for the People” where they will be serving shelter residents at this Sunday, August 21 at D.C. Central Kitchen, 425 2nd Street NW, Washington D.C., at 5 p.m. For More information, contact Racheem Sagay (301) 549-1075.