September 28, 2011

Metropolitan Church Baptizes 113

The pastors at Allegheny East Conference’s Metropolitan church in Hyattsville, Md., weren’t planning on performing a baptism on Sabbath, September 17. Members were in the midst of “Lifted,” a two-week evangelism campaign that attracted some 300 people each night, and the only baptism scheduled was for the second Sabbath. However, the Holy Spirit had been working on Christopher Robinson those first few days, and he couldn’t wait another week to publicly commit his life to Christ.

“He pleaded for us to do the baptism the next day. The seriousness in his eyes was the reason we filled the pool that first weekend,” said Brenda Billingsy, Metropolitan’s senior pastor. “When he took his stand, that opened the flood gates.”

At the end of that Sabbath, 61 additional people joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The next
Sabbath, an additional 51 people took a stand for the Lord, bringing the total baptized over the two weekends to 113.—Taashi Rowe

READ MORE AND SEE PHOTOS

Let’s Move Day! Garners White House, Media Attention

On Sunday Seventh-day Adventists from all around the North American Division (NAD) joined 50 other faith and community organizations in responding to First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move! national health and fitness campaign. In the Columbia Union, Vibrant Life, the church’s health magazine, organized a fun run and walk on the grounds of the Review and Herald Publishing Association in Hagerstown, Md., to which Obama sent two representatives: Joanne Grossi, regional director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and Judy Palfrey, MD, executive director of the first lady’s Let’s Move initiative. Both walked the three-mile course.—Kim Peckham

READ MORE AND SEE SLIDESHOW

Hispanic Pastors Work on Graduate Degrees Close to Home

Luis Estrada (right), pastor of Allegheny East Conference’s Emanuel Spanish church in Mount Ranier, Md., is one of 29 Spanish-speaking pastors and lay leaders working on a Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry from Andrews University (Mich.) He is earning the degree through three, one-week intensive classes he takes annually at the Columbia Union Conference’s headquarters in Columbia, Md.
Estrada (pictured with Ricardo Norton, DMin, the program’s coordinator) says, “This is one of the most important things I can do to serve God, and that is to update my education.”

The Columbia Union is one of four unions sponsoring the program. The 48-credit-hours program covers theology, history of the Adventist Church, mission, prophecy and practical theology. It also has two added benefits: it is offered in Spanish and it allows pastors to learn while they continue to actively minister at their home churches.—Taashi Rowe

READ MORE AND SEE MORE PHOTOS

Los pastores hispanohablantes estudian cerca de casa para obtener sus licenciaturas

“Bautizamos cuarenta y dos mil hispanos el año pasado, lo que representa alrededor de un tercio de todos los bautismos en la División Norteamericana”, comunica Ricardo Norton, D.Min., director del Instituto de Ministerio Hispano de la Universidad de Andrews (Mich.). Norton se encuentra sentado frente a una clase en la sede de la Unión de Columbia en Columbia, Md., la cual acaba de tratar los detalles del desarrollo y la implementación de los ministerios de los grupos pequeños.

Ante él están veintinueve estudiantes hispanohablantes—la mayoría pastores de iglesias en la Unión, quienes concluyen una clase para obtener su maestría en el ministerio pastoral.

“Este programa prepara a nuestros pastores para ser mejores profesionales”, explica Norton señalando hacia la clase. Él coordina este programa por medio del seminario teológico adventista del séptimo día en la Universidad de Andrews. “El cristianismo está enfrentando nuevos desafíos, nuevos problemas sociales, y nuevas cosmovisiones que militan contra el cristianismo. Estos cursos los preparan para enfrentar esos desafíos”.—Taashi Rowe

LEA MAS Y VEA FOTOS
Morija French Baptizes Four

Winning souls for the Lord this summer was a challenge for members of the New Jersey Conference’s Morija French church in New Brunswick. However, Pastor Bledir Larivaux (pictured with Martine Lima) initiated the effort and persevered to the end. The few Haitian families who live in the area showed no interest in the three angels’ messages, so the pastor utilized the Bible study on prophecies as a strategy to enter their homes. At the end of the crusade, four people gave their hearts to Jesus Christ and entered the church through baptism. Out of the four baptized, three of them are between the ages of 14 and 21.

Worthington Church Welcomes New Senior Pastor

After a yearlong search across the North American Division for a new senior pastor, Ohio Conference’s Worthington church found one in its backyard—Yuliyan Filipov, former pastor for the Bowling Green, Findlay and Northwood churches. Filipov now shepherds the Worthington congregation along with his wife, Milenka, and their daughter, Lora.

Carolyn Sowards, local church committee chair, reports that she finds Filipov to be “a pastor with Christ-centered qualities and aspirations.” She adds, “Pastor Filipov’s ministry focuses on encouraging and strengthening each individual on their journey to a greater relationship with Christ. He desires that each member recognize his or her spiritual strengths and serve within his or her own giftedness for the glory of the Savior.”—Heidi
Capital Memorial Members Create Vegetarian Cookbook

Potomac Conference’s Capital Memorial church is known in Northwest Washington, D.C., for its annual International Vegetarian Food Fair. After 20 years of members sharing their favorite dishes, they can now give a collective response to attendees’ regular demand for the recipes. Members Lisa Carreno, Esther Harter, Florence Williams, Virginia Harter and Jacquie Bokow (pictured clockwise) helped put together this three-ringed binder, which includes 524 vegetarian and vegan recipes from 40 countries. Also, the extensive glossary provides a description on a variety of ethnic and vegetarian ingredients. Order at CapitalMemorial.org.—Beth Michaels

Brinklow Member Records Obama Speech, Makes History

Before President Barack Obama delivered his jobs speech to a joint session of the United States Congress, he shook hands with Christina Anderson Smith. The official reporter for the U.S. House of Representatives, Smith is also a member of Allegheny East Conference’s Emmanuel-Brinklow church in Ashton, Md. She was present in the capitol to dictate the president’s remarks. History was made that night, as it was the first time an African-American reporter for the House recorded a speech by the first African-American president. Smith is also an alumna of Pine Forge Academy in Pine Forge, Pa., and of Oakwood University (Ala.)—Freda James
Parkersburg Church Member Named Volunteer of the Year

Clifford Leeson (pictured, second from the left) was recently named Volunteer of the Year for his work at the Newstart Thrift Mart in Parkersburg, W.Va. Mountain View Conference's Parkersburg church, which has operated the store for the past four years, sells clothes, furniture, some appliances, books and knickknacks. Leeson was recognized for his work as a jack-of-all-trades. He sorts articles for display, picks up and delivers furniture, moves merchandise and does other handy work at the store.

The Parkersburg church sees the store as a ministry. They show religious programming on the store’s television, offer religious literature and offer financial help to those in need.—Valerie Morikone

End Quote: Katie Cotton, Mount Vernon Academy Senior

"Deciding to attend Mount Vernon Academy [in Mount Vernon, Ohio] was one of the best decisions I have ever made. Not only have I grown character-wise in the two years I have been here, but I have grown spiritually as well. The connection I feel with the students and the staff is not one that I was able to get in public school. Even though I have been anticipating my senior year for quite some time, I [know that I] will miss this amazing environment and the people who helped mold me into who I am. I will always remember how attending MVA made me the strong, spiritual and independent woman that I will need to be to survive in this world."

UPCOMING EVENTS
October 1: Maryland Men of Faith will hold their annual conference at the Mount Aetna Camp and Retreat Center in Hagerstown, Md. Pastor Fredrick Russell, Allegheny West Conference president, will be the keynote speaker. Register online at mmof.org.

October 1: “Men of Honor” Awards The Washington Metro Area Women’s Ministries presents the 2011 “Men of Honor” awards ceremony at 5 p.m. at the Breath of Life church in Fort Washington, Md. They will recognize men who have exhibited an extraordinary dedication to their churches and communities.

October 1-2: Columbia Union Attorney Weekend The Adventist Lawyers Association of Greater Washington will host the Annual Columbia Union Attorney Weekend for all Adventist attorneys, pre-law and law students, and other legal professionals in the Columbia Union. The weekend will begin with worship at Sligo church in Takoma Park, Md., and culminate with the annual attorney dinner. For more information and registration, visit alagw.org or email info@alagw.org.

October 7: Christian recording artist Shawn McDonald will perform at the Kettering church (3939 Stonebridge Rd., Kettering) at 7:30 p.m. McDonald also will perform at Kettering College’s monthly Spiritual Emphasis session earlier that day at 9:30 a.m. at the Kettering church. Admission is free, and everyone is welcome. A freewill offering will be collected. To find out more details about the concert, contact the Kettering church at (937) 298-2167 or go to ketsda.org.

October 7-9: The Chesapeake Conference’s Adventist Singles Retreat will be held at the Mount Aetna Retreat and Conference Center in Hagerstown, Md. Kim Logan-Nowlin and Arthur Nowlin will be the main speakers. Learn more at ccosda.org or call (410) 992-9731.

October 16: Highland View Academy’s First 5K Run/Walk will benefit the school’s athletic program. Runners and walkers of all ages are encouraged to get out and move and enjoy a day of fun. Area churches will also provide a vegetarian buffet for attendees, complete with recipes. Register at hva-edu.com. Applications will be accepted up to the event date. For more information, contact John Henline at jhenline@highlandviewacademy.com or (301) 331-1016.
**October 22: ACTS 2011** Adventists in Ohio will come together to honor our past, celebrate the present and learn how to shape the future for the glory of God. This daylong convocation, held at the Roberts Center at the Holiday Inn, Wilmington, will bring together Adventists from across Ohio and neighboring states for a day of worship, study and fellowship. Speakers include Rebekah Liu, a pastor from Southwest China; Ted Wilson (pictured), president of the General Conference; and Ganoune Diop, the Adventist Church’s newly-appointed liaison to the United Nations. A free lunch is available for those who pre-register online at [ohioadventist.org](http://ohioadventist.org). Deadline to register for your lunch is Friday, October 14. Groups need to register with Heidi Shoemaker at the Ohio Conference, (740)-397-4665, ext. 165, or email [information@ohioadventist.org](mailto:information@ohioadventist.org).

For more news and up-to-date information from the Columbia Union Conference, visit [columbiaunion.org](http://columbiaunion.org)

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**Stay Connected:**

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**Taashi Rowe, Visitor News Bulletin Editor**  
5427 Twin Knolls Road, Columbia, MD 21045  
Email: [visitor@columbiaunion.net](mailto:visitor@columbiaunion.net)  
Website: [www.columbiaunion.org](http://www.columbiaunion.org)  

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This couple gives their lives to Christ together.

The pastors at Allegheny East Conference’s Metropolitan church in Hyattsville, Md., weren’t planning on performing a baptism on Sabbath, September 17. Members were in the midst of “Lifted,” a two-week long evangelism campaign that attracted some 300 people each night and the only baptism scheduled was for the second Sabbath. But the Holy Spirit had been working on Christopher Robinson those first few days and he couldn’t wait another week to publicly commit his life to Christ.

“He pleaded for us to do the baptism the next day. The seriousness in his eyes was the reason we filled the pool that first weekend,” said Brenda Billingy, Metropolitan’s senior pastor. “When he took his stand, that opened the flood gates.”

At the end of that Sabbath, 61 additional people joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Metropolitan church normally ends its worship services around 1 p.m., but on that Sabbath, the pastors were in the baptismal pool until 4 p.m.

“The Lord knew that was the way it should have happened,” Billingy realized, still sounding awed and excited as she relayed the story.

The baptisms didn’t end there. On the following Sabbath when the evangelism meetings ended an additional 51 people took a stand for the Lord bringing the total baptized over the two weekends to 113.

As people gave their lives, they shared their testimonies, including one young lady who walked into the church two weeks before. She said the Holy Spirit directed her to come to that church and to ask specifically about baptism. The next night, her husband joined her at the meetings then on that first Sabbath, in the baptismal pool. After her friend invited her, one Catholic young lady intended to come for just one night. However, she ended up attending the rest of the meetings and getting baptized. One young man, a victim of the 2002 Washington, D.C., sniper shootings,
also gave his life to Christ.

The meetings were a multi-platform "event." Pastor Marquis Johns, the church’s associate pastor, spoke powerfully those two weeks following a traditional public meeting model, however as a young adult, he readily utilized social media such as Facebook and Twitter to reach the community. They even placed commercials promoting the meetings on PraiseVision.com. Billingy noted that church’s leaders and members were also strategic in meeting community members. In the run-up to the campaign, they went door to door in the neighborhood not only to raise awareness about the meetings, but also to inform them that the church was there to help them in anyway possible. They also hosted a free VaShawn Mitchell concert, which attracted well over 1,000 attendees. Mitchell is not a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church but he is a well-known gospel singer who, if the numbers of concert attendees are any indication, has a solid following. The church also held a health fair on the Sunday following the baptisms.

With such tremendous results from their “teach, baptize and teach” model, Billingy and Johns are preparing their newly baptized members to take an active part in the three evangelism meetings planned for next year.
This couple was baptized after the Holy Spirit prompted the wife to come into the church and ask for baptism.

Pastor Marquis Johns gets ready to baptize Arlette Pile.
On Sunday, Seventh-day Adventists from all around the North American Division (NAD) joined 50 other faith and community organizations in responding to First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! national health and fitness campaign. In the Columbia Union, Vibrant Life, the church’s health magazine, organized a fun run and walk on the grounds of the Review and Herald Publishing Association in Hagerstown, Md., to which Obama sent two representatives: Joanne Grossi, regional director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and Judy Palfrey, MD, executive director of the first lady’s Let’s Move initiative. Both walked the three-mile course.

General Conference President Ted N.C. Wilson, Congressman Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD), two representatives from the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships as well as scores of locals attended the race.

The Vibrant Life Fun Run was one of the featured events for Let’s Move Day, and Katia Reinert, director of NAD Health Ministries, organized the national event to dovetail into Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move initiative.

Let’s Move addresses the problem of childhood obesity, which has tripled in the last three decades. “We’re seeing hypertension in children for the first time in history,” Grossi shared with the Vibrant Life crowd.
Palfrey, a pediatrician, read a letter from Michelle Obama. “We need your ideas, your hands and your [hearts] to lead to a brighter, healthier, tomorrow,” the first lady wrote.

Addressing the crowd, 85-year-old Rep. Bartlett gave credit to his Adventist lifestyle for his extended career in congress. “I couldn’t imagine when I was a kid growing up during the depression that you would need to run to get exercise,” he told the crowd. “We had enough exercise to keep food on the table, didn’t we?”

With multiple Adventist entities organizing health-boosting activities around the nation on Sunday, the church received news coverage from newspapers and TV news stations. Click on the following links to view some of the reports:

http://www.battlecreekenquirer.com/article/20110926/NEWS01/109260308


Spanish-Speaking Pastors Work On Graduate Degrees Close to Home

By Taashi Rowe
Published 9/26/2011

"Last year we baptized 42,000 Hispanics, which represents about a third of the entire baptisms done in all of the North American Division," shares Ricardo Norton, DMin, director of the Institute of Hispanic Ministries at Andrews University (Mich.). Norton is sitting in front of a class at the Columbia Union Conference's headquarters in Columbia, Md., which just finished covering the ins and outs of developing and implementing small group ministries. In front of him are 29 Spanish-speaking students, most pastors of churches throughout the union, who have just completed one class toward their Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry.

"This program prepares our pastors to be better practitioners," explains Norton motioning toward the class.  He coordinates this program through the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. "There are new challenges that Christianity is facing, new social issues and new world views that militate against Christianity. These courses prepare them to face those challenges."

The 48-credit hours program covers theology, history of the Adventist Church, mission, prophecy and practical theology. It also has two added benefits: it has a Spanish-speaking component and it allows pastors to learn while they continue to actively minister at their home churches.

"I live about 1 hour and 40 minutes from Columbia Union Conference, so we can travel in our cars and be back with our families each day," shares Rabiel Torres, a member of Allegheny East Conference's (AEC) Rehoboth Spanish church in Reading, Pa. "I really appreciate that this is near home. We still have the time to do our work with the people as we minister. If we were to go to Andrews, our work would have to wait until we come back."

The Columbia Union, Southern Union, Atlantic Union and Lake Union sponsor the program, which allows students to take classes at their union offices. Those who choose to can take classes in other unions. Each year participants in this five-year program can earn nine credit hours by taking three, one-week intensive courses throughout the year.

Even though he already holds an undergraduate degree in ministry, Olives Villamizar, a pastor of three churches in the Potomac Conference, says he has already reaped the benefits of advancing
his education. "What I learned here has helped me to plant a new church in Woodbridge, Va., and that has been a blessing," he said. "This is my second year in the program. With the help of God, I will acquire more tools to help in the work for the Lord."

Most of the participants in this program are full-time pastors, however, the program is also opened to distinguished lay leaders recommended by their pastors and conference officials. This explains Torres' participation. Director of lay ministries for AEC's Penniel Zone, Torres holds an undergraduate degree in psychology and was particularly excited about the small group class.

“This course taught us how we can implement small groups in the church in a wholistic way,” he says. “It's going to help me a lot. I learned how to work with different people, integrate them into a group and also learn from them.”

Luis Estrada, pastor of AEC’s Emanuel Spanish church in Mount Ranier, Md., is just finishing up his first week in the program and has quite a way to go. Still, he is excited, “This is one of the most important things I can do to serve God and that is to update my education.”

The first group of participants from this program is slated to graduate in 2013. In the meantime, their learning isn't limited to the one-week intensives, they have papers to present, books to read and churches to pastor.

Olives Villamizar, pastor of three Potomac Conference churches in Woodbridge, Va., planted a church as a result of participating in this program.

Leandro Perez, Luis Estrada, Rabiel Torres and Roberto Reyes-Perez, all from Allegheny East Conference, recently joined the program.
Ricardo Norton, DMin, director of the Institute of Hispanic Ministries at Andrews University, talks with Rubén Ramos (right), assistant to the Columbia Union Conference president for Multilingual Ministries.
Después de explicarle un asunto a su estudiante Luis Estrada (derecha), Ricardo Norton, D.Min., extiende su mano.

Los pastores hispanohablantes estudian cerca de casa para obtener sus licenciaturas

Historia Por Taashi Rowe
Publicado el 26 de septiembre de 2011

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Norton se encuentra sentado frente a una clase en la sede de la Unión de Columbia en Columbia, Md., la cual acaba de tratar los detalles del desarrollo y la implementación de los ministerios de los grupos pequeños. Ante él están veintinueve estudiantes hispanohablantes—la mayoría pastores de iglesias en la Unión, quienes concluyen una clase para obtener su maestría en el ministerio pastoral.

"Este programa prepara a nuestros pastores para ser mejores profesionales", explica Norton señalando hacia la clase. Él coordina este programa por medio del seminario teológico adventista del séptimo día en la Universidad de Andrews. "El cristianismo está enfrentando nuevos desafíos, nuevos problemas sociales, y nuevas cosmovisiones que militan contra el cristianismo. Estos cursos los preparan para enfrentar esos desafíos".

El programa de 48-horas clases cubre teología, historia de la iglesia adventista, misión, profecía, y teología práctica. También tiene dos beneficios añadidos: se provee en español y permite que los pastores aprendan mientras siguen ministrando activamente en sus iglesias locales.

"Vivo como a una hora y cuarenta minutos de la Unión de Columbia, así que podemos viajar en nuestros automóviles y estar con nuestras familias de nuevo cada día", comparte Rabiel Torres, miembro de la iglesia hispana de Rehoboth en la Asociación del Este de Allegany (AEA), en Reading, Pa. "Agradezco en verdad que esto se lleve a cabo cerca de casa. Nos permite realizar el trabajo con la gente mientras ministramos. Si nos fuésemos a Andrews, nuestro trabajo tendría que esperar hasta que regresásemos."

La Unión de Columbia, la Unión del Sureste, la Unión del Atlántico y la Unión del Lago patrocinan el programa, lo que permite que los estudiantes tomen las clases en las oficinas de sus Uniones. Los que elijan, pueden tomar clases en otras Uniones. En este programa de cinco años, los participantes pueden obtener nueve horas crédito cada año, al tomar tres cursos de una semana en el año.
Olives Villamizar, que tiene ya una diplomatura, es pastor de tres iglesias en la Asociación de Potomac y dice que ha cosechado los beneficios de avanzar en su educación. “Lo que aprendí aquí me ha ayudado a plantar una iglesia nueva en Woodbridge, Va., y eso ha sido una bendición”, dice él. “Este es mi segundo año en el programa. Con la ayuda de Dios, adquiriré más herramientas para ayudar en la obra para el Señor”.

La mayoría de los participantes en este programa son pastores de tiempo completo, sin embargo, el programa también se ofrece a líderes laicos destacados recomendados por sus pastores y oficiales de la Asociación. Esto explica la participación de Torres. Él es director de los ministerios laicos en la zona Penniel de AEA, y tiene una diplomatura en psicología. Se entusiasmó particularmente con la clase de los grupos pequeños.

“Este curso nos enseñó cómo implementar los grupos pequeños de manera integral en la iglesia”, dice él. “Me va a ayudar mucho. Aprendí cómo trabajar con diferentes personas, integrarlas en un grupo, y también aprender de ellas”.

Luis Estrada, pastor de la Iglesia Hispana Emanuel de AEA en Mount Ranier, Md., está por terminar su primera semana en el programa, pero le queda bastante todavía. Aún así, está entusiasmado. “Esta es una de las cosas más importantes que puedo hacer para servir a Dios: poner al día mi educación”.

El primer grupo de participantes en este programa contempla graduación en el 2013. Por ahora, su aprendizaje no se limita a intensivas de una semana, tienen papeles que presentar, libros que leer, e iglesias que dirigir.
Asociación del Este de Allegany, se unieron recientemente al programa.

Ricardo Norton, D.Min., director del Instituto de Ministerio Hispano de la Universidad de Andrews, habla con Rubén Ramos (derecha), asistente al presidente para ministerios multilingües en la Unión de Columbia.