Delegates Have Their Say, Vote Historic Motion

“I am so proud to be part of an historical day in the Columbia Union,” said Deborah Hill, a member of the Allegheny West Conference. “We voted on the right side of history. God was part of this decision and this has been a wonderful day for women to move forward in faith and in the Word of the Lord.”

Hill was one of nearly 270 delegates who attended the Columbia Union Conference Special Constituency Meeting on Sunday and approved a motion "that the Columbia Union Conference authorize ordination to the gospel ministry without regard to gender.”

Nearly 80 percent of the delegates voted in favor of the motion, but not before they discussed the major issues involved, such as unity, authority, the role of the union, the role of men and women, biblical and Spirit of Prophecy counsel and more. “I want to make a call for unity … [but] I would like some reassurance that [the world church] hears our pain and our embarrassment that we are treating our people differentially. We are deeply upset and ashamed, and we want to be also given equal say," said Bonnie Heath (pictured), a member of the Allegheny East Conference.—Story by Taashi Rowe
Constituency Live Stream Expands Audience, Social Media Reach

When the officers of the Columbia Union Conference decided to convene an historic constituency meeting, where they asked representatives from the eight states that comprise our union to authorize ordination without regard to gender, it occurred to communication staff that the world would want to witness this event and wouldn’t want to wait to read about it a month later in the September Visitor.

Sunday’s event called for unprecedented handling and garnered unprecedented attention. Over 100 new people started following @VisitorNews on Twitter; and though we only gained about 100 new fans on Facebook, our weekly Facebook report shows that our postings reached nearly 17,000 people. Our union website, which typically attracts some 200 people daily, saw visits from 4,426 unique visitors in one day. For example, people watched in Canada, Russia, China, Bermuda, Brazil, Sweden, South Africa, Mexico and all across the United States. And not only did they watch, they commented—on each and every photo, quote, comment, question and reply. Pictured is our team, from left to right: Taashi Rowe, Beth Michaels, Celeste Ryan Blyden, Kelly Butler Coe and Michelle Bernard. Click here for a snapshot of our day.—Story! By Celeste Ryan Blyden, Photo by Al Peasley

Chesapeake’s Korean Congregation Ministers, Grows Churches in Africa

Members of Chesapeake Conference’s Washington–Spencerville Korean (WSK) church are spreading the gospel and making a measurable difference in the quality of life for people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo), a country in central Africa plagued by hunger and malnutrition.
The church funds a project based at Rafiki Mission in Butembo City, which has helped educate students of all ages—including 26 theology students—as well as purchase amplifiers for public evangelistic meetings, build churches and schools, and operate an orphanage, a bakery and a poultry program. Recently, the church partnered with **Adventist World Radio** and donated more than 100 audio recorders to lay missionaries for personal evangelism.

“The impact on our WSK congregation is immeasurable,” says senior pastor Jonathan Hong. “It has given members a focus and an evangelistic mindset.”

Pictured is Seon Wook Yang, a WSK member, visiting with a local woman and her infant on a recent trip to the Congo.—*Story by Samantha Young*

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**Washington Adventist University’s Accreditation Reaffirmed**

The evaluation of **Washington Adventist University** (WAU) by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, which culminated with a site visit March 25-28, ended with a final report affirming that the university has met the standards for all of the criteria that it was evaluated against. With the accreditation reaffirmed for another 10 years, WAU’s next self-study evaluation will be from 2021 to 2022. A periodic review is due 2017.

“I feel the outcomes are reflective of a board, faculty and staff that are committed to the task of engaging minds and transforming the lives of our students,” said Weymouth Spence, EdD, WAU president. “Congratulations to the entire university community, and my deep appreciation to all who contributed to such an outstanding outcome.”—*Story by Grace Virtue*

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**Columbus Ghanaian Church Reaches Another Milestone**
The **Columbus Ghanaian** congregation started looking for a place to worship in 2001. The Lord rewarded the members beyond expectation for their prayers and patience with a desirable plot of land and started constructing their new facility in April 2002. By God’s grace, they finished the building and opened it for service in October 2002.

Through the help of the Ohio Conference, they contracted a loan from the Columbia Union Revolving Fund for the balance of funds needed. The following year, the church saw the need to expand the property and contracted another loan of $160,000, making their total debt $449,000. By members’ faith and faithfulness, they never defaulted in their loan payments.

By 2011 the members paid more than $100,000 toward the balance, and earlier this year raised more than $70,000 to satisfy the loans. Pictured is Raj Attiken, Ohio Conference president, joining Isaac Boateng, pastor of the Columbus Ghanaian church in Columbus, Ohio, in dedicating their church building.—*Story by Ohio Conference Staff, Photo by Robert Okyere*

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**2,000 Learn About Sanctuary Thru Ephesus Church Events**

Just after reaching the milestone of burning their mortgage, **Allegheny West Conference’s Ephesus church** in Columbus, Ohio, set out to accomplish new and unprecedented events. They achieved their goal by simultaneously hosting the Messiah’s Mansion tour and the “Salvation in the Sanctuary” seminar. Never before have both ministries appeared in the same place at the same time.

Donald L. Burden, Ephesus senior pastor, and Christopher C. Thompson, associate pastor, along with more than 120 members and the tour staff built the life-sized replica sanctuary based on the same blueprint given to Moses in the wilderness. According to Clayton Leinneweber, Messiah’s Mansion president, the Ephesus congregants set another record: erecting the replica in just one day.—*Story by Angela V. Baker*  

**READ MORE**

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**Corrections:** In the July 18 issue of the *Visitor News Bulletin* story titled “Pennsylvania Conference
Elder Turns 103,” we incorrectly identified Margaret Kitchen as an elder. She was very active with the church’s community service center and ingathering.

In the July 25 issue, a story titled “Ebenezer Member, First Black Marine, Receives Medal of Honor” incorrectly listed Phillip Herout’s medal as a Congressional Medal of Honor. He received a Congressional Gold Medal. We apologize for these errors.

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End Quote: Fishing in Deep Waters

“When we talk about opening new churches, are we committed to opening real cities of refuge for the people who suffer out there—people who live without Jesus? When I am talking about planting churches, I don’t mean snatching members from already established churches. Please do not go fishing in pre-stocked pools, but rather head out into deep waters in search of souls who do not know God. I’m talking about going after the unchurched, those who perhaps have never worshiped in a church. I’m talking about reaching out to the thousands who have abandoned the faith for one reason or another and wandered away. Are we willing to work for these kinds of folks?”—Jose H. Cortes is president of the New Jersey Conference

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Click here for a complete listing of upcoming events around the Columbia Union Conference.

MARYLAND

July 21-August 11: **Miracle Temple’s 2012 Prophecy Campaign** will be moving from Glen Burnie to Miracle Temple beginning this Sabbath, **August 4th at 7 p.m.** and will continue until August 11. In addition, there will be a baptism celebration on August 11, during the 11 a.m. service and an additional worship service on August 12 at 7 p.m. For more information, visit [miracletemple.net](http://miracletemple.net).

July 28-August 4: **The Metropolitan church is hosting “AirBorn,” an evangelistic series** focused on the grand occasion of Christ’s second coming. Pastor Carlton P. Byrd, DMin, speaker and director of Breath of Life television ministries, will present the series, which starts each night at 7 p.m. It ends Saturday, August 4 with the divine service at 11 a.m. There is no meeting on Thursday, August 2. There will be a Vacation Bible School during the series. The church is located at 6307 Riggs Road in Hyattsville,
July 29-August 5: Need to reconnect with God? Want your kids to grow spiritually? Join Wheaton church members at their Mega Week celebration. A revival service and Vacation Bible School will be held Sunday thru Friday, 6:30-8:30 p.m. On Saturday there will be adult and children’s church and gospel music on the lawn 6-9 p.m. The church is located at 3132 Bel Pre Road in Silver Spring, Md. For more information, visit wheatonsda.org or email wheatonsda@hotmail.com.

August 3: Metro Area Adventist Young Adults (MAAYA) invites you to First (1st) Fridays at 7:30 p.m. Pastor Gary Adams will share the Word and Kali Wilder will share music. First Fridays will be held at the Pennsylvania Avenue Seventh-day Adventist Church located at 4010 Belt Road in Capitol Heights, Md.

OHIO
August 8 – 12: The Columbia Union’s Pathfinder Camporee will take place at Camp Mohaven in Danville, Ohio. The camporee, which occurs every five years, will bring together Pathfinders from all eight conferences and will feature drill teams, honors, music, a pinewood derby and other fun activities. For more information, contact your Pathfinder leader or visit columbiaunion.org/camporee2012.

Having trouble viewing this email? Click here to read it online. For more news and up-to-date information from the Columbia Union Conference, visit columbiaunion.org

Forward to a Friend, Subscribe or Send Us Stories

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.

To send us a news story, email us at visitor@columbiaunion.net. The deadline for all submissions is 10 a.m. each Tuesday.

Stay Connected:
Delegates fill in their secret ballots.

Columbia Union Constituents Overwhelmingly Affirm Women Pastors Through Ordination

Story by Taashi Rowe; photos by Al Peasley
Published 7/29/12

Silver Spring, Md.—After two hours of presentations from multiple levels of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as well as 90 minutes of discussion, delegates to the Columbia Union Conference Special Constituency Meeting today voted an historic motion—"That the Columbia Union Conference authorize ordination to the gospel ministry without regard to gender."

According to a statement released by the union it means that the union executive committee will no longer deny requests from conferences to ordain proven female ministers to the gospel ministry but that their calling will be fully recognized on par with their male counterparts.

Using secret ballots, delegates from the eight conferences within the union’s Mid-Atlantic United States territory voted 4 to 1 in favor of the motion. The actual vote was 209 in favor and 51 opposed, with nine abstentions.

“This is not a surprise to those of us listening carefully around this union,” said Dave Weigley, Columbia Union president, following the vote. “This is not an easy time for the church but it is the time for the church. We are part of the worldwide church and we are united in the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I don’t know how God will use this as part of the revival, but I want my sisters, mothers and daughters to stand with me. We want young girls who hear the call to go forward. As I’ve said throughout the last few months, Who are we to silence God’s calling? It’s time for us to go forward together.”

The meeting, convened at 10 a.m. with a season of prayer led by Rob Vandeman, union executive secretary: “We pray that what we do today will not displease You and that the church may move on to see more victory, more expansion, more growth and more impact in a world that desperately needs You.”
The presentations reflected counsel from General Conference and North American Division (NAD) officials. Among them was Dan Jackson, NAD president, who reminded attendees that the church is the apple of God’s eye. He also cautioned, “What we are doing here today not only will impact us personally and as a union but will also impact our world church. I want to say that our primary accountability is to God.”

In extended remarks, Ted N.C. Wilson, president of the General Conference, appealed to delegates not to move forward with the motion but to wait for a new church study scheduled to be completed in 2014.

“I come to you today because I care about matters of conscience,” he said. “I come to you because I care about the unity of the church at large. There are many grave consequences that will result if you vote positively. I’m not threatening you in any way. I’m just presenting the facts that when an organization makes moves unilaterally, it will lead to fragmentation and collegial disunity. Do not vote the recommended action before you … stay in harmony … and do not branch out independently.”

Three representatives of the union executive committee offered delegates a different appeal. Bill Miller, president of the Potomac Conference and chair of the ad hoc committee tasked with studying this issue, started his presentation of the committee’s report by reiterating that he was a “loyal member of God’s remnant church.” He then recounted the church’s historical struggle with the issue of fully affirming women ministers through ordination.

“The world church at various General Conference Sessions has aptly demonstrated its inability to act decisively,” Miller said. “Gender-based discrimination must not continue. The right time to do the right thing is right now.”

Raj Attiken, president of the Ohio Conference, followed by addressing concerns about unity. “We have to ask ourselves will the action that we are proposing in anyway jeopardize or compromise the unity of the church? Our unity has been primarily based on unity in Christ who is head of the church. He will build the church and that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. As a church we have made a sacred covenant to be united around a common set of beliefs: mission, hope and faith in the Lord.”

Finally Brenda L. Billingy, senior pastor of Allegheny East Conference’s 1,100-member Metropolitan church in Hyattsville, Md., shared a compelling testimony of how God called her more than 10 years ago. “I found myself as a well-groomed financial aid director hearing a call from God, not knowing what to do with it but fearing God more than man. I knew I had to be obedient to the call and accountable to God,” she said likening her ministry to an educational journey that culminates with graduation. “The cap is God’s calling, anointing and producing, the gown is God’s grace. But no graduation is complete without a diploma,” she concluded.
Just after noon, when Chairman Weigley opened the floor for constituent input, delegates quickly formed three long lines at the microphones. Many agreed that all whom the Holy Spirit has clearly called to ministry should be ordained without regard to gender, however several admitted to being conflicted.

The first speaker, Bonnie Heath, a member of the Allegheny East Conference, said she found Wilson’s counsel touching. “I’ve been a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for 26 years,” she said. “I want to make a call for unity … [but] I would like some reassurance that [the world church] hears our pain and our embarrassment that we are treating our people differentially. We are deeply upset and ashamed, and we want to be also given equal say.”

Others were clear that unity trumps all other concerns. Larry Boggess, president of the Mountain View Conference, whose executive committee released a statement opposing the motion, said, “Lest it be misunderstand, I love you, too, even though I disagree with you. If we say we are the body of Christ, then we would act in unity. What we do today will not generate thousands of new members. I’m sorry but that will only happen when the rank and file in the pews go out and do Bible studies. I believe we should adhere to what the General Conference president and 13 division presidents said [in their June 29 appeal].”

Ron Christman, executive secretary of the Pennsylvania Conference agreed. “I support women in ministry but I believe we’ve taken the wrong approach to ordination,” he said. “It will set a precedent for dissention and rebellion that I really don’t like to see.”

Chris Holland, senior pastor of Chesapeake Conference’s Hagerstown (Md.) church, said, “To be in favor of this as a union we are telling the world church that we are smarter, wiser and more spiritually endowed than rest of the world church. That’s why I’m against this.”

However for Joyce Greene, associate treasurer for the New Jersey Conference, the matter was simple. “I feel compelled to say something when I am asked that I should vote for unity over my conscience,” she said responding to the General Conference appeal for unity. “We are not here just to vote yes or no; everyone should vote their conscience.”

Sharon Cress, Potomac Conference’s Women’s Ministries director, agreed. “The General Conference calls for unity in the face of unfairness and this wounds deeply the women who serve this church,” she said. “Some have appealed for unity today to justify continuation of unfairness. I tell you there is no unity today, and there can be no unity as long as we practice unfairness.”

Yuliyan Filipov, senior pastor of the Worthington (Ohio) church, testified that he used to oppose women’s ordination. “For two years I have been praying 7-7-7 for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our church. Are we here to give the Holy Spirit permission to work? It sounds like we’re only asking the Spirit to work for men and not women.”

Jimmy Ferguson, senior pastor of Allegheny East Conference’s [AEC] Dupont Park church in Washington, D.C., said, “Anytime there is a moral imperative, we hear that there will be grave consequences, opposition and spiritual dissunity.” He then listed several historical figures who challenged the status quo such as Martin Luther during the Reformation, Martin Luther King Jr. during the fight for civil rights, Ellen G. White, who questioned the church’s duty to people of color, and Jesus Christ, who challenged the status quo of His day. “They also heard that their actions would result in grave consequences, opposition and spiritual dissunity. The current policy flies in the face of the priesthood of all believers,” he continued during his allotted two minutes. “If liberalism, culturalism, racism, and secularism have not divided the church, neither will this.”

Oluchi Ukomadu, a member of AEC’s Marantha Adventist Fellowship in Bowie, Md., said she was compelled to stand up and speak after another delegate suggested that only men are chosen by God to head the church. “We are all equal in front of God. He has called us to be equal disciples. Why dampen the spirit of women?” she asked. “We all say that when the Spirit calls, we will answer. I was called to be a lead elder but the discrimination was too much for me to handle. My family was affected by how I was treated.” Noting her Nigerian roots, she then urged her fellow delegates to set an example for the rest of the world church to follow.

Following the vote, Rick Remmers, president of the Chesapeake Conference, commented, “I appreciated greatly the spiritual tone set today and sensed the love and loyalty for our church.”

“I am so proud to be part of an historical day in the Columbia Union,” said Deborah Hill, a member of Allegheny West Conference. “We voted on the right side of history and will work very hard to unify not only our union but to work more closely with the General Conference. God was part of
this decision and this has been a wonderful day for women to move forward in faith and in the Word of the Lord."

When asked how this vote will impact the work in the Potomac Conference where he is president, Bill Miller said, "We already have a motion from our executive committee authorizing us to issue new credentials with one word on it for everybody—ordination."

COMMENTS POLICY: Thank you for sharing your comments on this story. We have closed the comment section on this page but would like to refer you to the 2012 Special Constituency Comment page if you would like to share your thoughts.

Judy B. Dent
3 days ago

What a mighty God we serve! The Holy Spirit was present in the hearts of His people even before the vote was taken. To God be the Glory!!!

Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson
3 days ago

When a friend of mine expressed concern about the CUC and other unions taking a vote for inclusive ordination, I simply reminded him that if God was in it, the movement would prosper; if not, it would not. If this is of the Lord, it certainly comes at a perfect time, as the world church prays for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Joel said that old and young, male and female would have visions and dream dreams. Will we allow the Holy Spirit to do His will, and not ours?

Charles N Makombe
3 days ago

Why are you rushing this matter before the world has made a decision over this matter. Please which charpers in bible compelled you to make such a bad decision in the very eyes of lord whom you claim believe in him. Your actions are totally unacceptable before the eyes of lord and SAVIOUR, examine the spirit behind younot decision. Why are you going contrany the advice of general president of the general conference? Do we now have Jesuits among the remnant church? If the women are odened does that Them holy? Why do you want to follow the world? Are we

Dwayne Turner
3 days ago

Shame on this Union for what they have done! This is out of order! No Scripture or Spirit of Prophecy, if "correctly cited", to back up this action. Yet, it is an issue worth putting the World Church in disarray over? Wow! Sad thing is that you are proud of yourselves, and all dissent is merely confirmation.

Columbia Union..... You don't exist without the existence of the world church! The members of the Columbia Union are not members of the Columbia Union first! They are members of the SDA Church first! The Columbia Union is merely a territory of the North American Division; which is a division of the world church! The world church is the church! Must all the members of the Columbia Union now recognize the ordination of women pastors and exclude the decisions of the World Church? What do you suggest members do who don't recognize your action and decide to stick with the actions of the World Church? Must they pick and choose between the Union and the World Church? Pure chaos you have started!

Memo to the 209 who voted for this motion: Spectrum Magazine and Atoday are the biggest online supporters of the actions you have forged. They are also the number one supporters of the sin of homosexuality being sanitized by the church! Just a little looking into that will more than verify my claims. Perhaps you thought it was funny when one delegate from the Mountain View Conference made the connection between advancing the WO cause and homosexuality. Let me just say.... Declaring gender roles "non-existent" is merely the gateway to ultimately blurring all distinction between men and women. Accomplishing that "blur", you are now standing shoulder-to-shoulder intellectually, with homosexual reasoning.

And please brethren, the references to Martin Luther are killing me! Martin Luther was calling men and women back to the bible; Sola Scriptura! The Bible and the Bible alone! Your cause is
just the opposite! It is calling men and women AWAY from the bible! Culture and Culture alone!

To The Representatives Of The GC: Discipline must be meted out to the Columbia Union, otherwise copycat actions will sprout up all over the place. Pacific Union is ready to take the plunge on August 19th, exposing their members to the rebellion Columbia Union just exposed their members too. Conscientious members need to know that discipline takes place on all levels; not just the local church! In fact, on the Union level there is even greater responsibility to foster unity and act in harmony with the world body; as their actions effect a wider territory than local churches and/or conferences.

The Union has spoken and we have heard them! Now the GC must speak!

Ron STout
3 days ago

GC brethren, on this and many other areas of present truth: solo scriptura: "lead, follow or get out of the way"

Mason Craig
3 days ago

I am a relatively new member of the Adventist family. My wife is Bonnie Heath. I accompanied my wife to the meeting on Sunday to observe the discussion regarding the affirming women ministers through ordination. I was most startled and dissapointed to hear one member recount the number of times that the General Conference considered this issue and each time posponed a decision until a later time.

I attend our local Council meetings where my wife as Mayor sits in utter amazement as do I when our boro is afraid to make a decision with out a "study". It seems people who are unwilling to expose themselves to making a decision for fear of the unknown consequences that might result. I have always appreciated the role of women in the world and never have considered them second class citizens in any way. Today as a non voting person in attendance, I was delighted to see LIGHT shed in this meeting and you could FEEL the the lifting of the Holy Spirit as people hugged one another as they felt the joy and excitment not as a victory, but the long overdue releasing of the shackels of discrimination.

God Is good!

Darleen Sanford
3 days ago

In 1965 I advocated for and taught a Black child in a previously all-white Florida school. To deny Christian education to an intelligent, adorable child of a lovely Adventist family based on skin color was wrong. Even the pastor and few opposing members probably knew that. I believe the Seventy-day Adventist Church has Scriptural truth and will usually do the right thing if legally compelled or publicly embarrassed to do otherwise. All my life we have prayed for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and soon return of our Lord while building dams to stop the flow. Do the right thing. Open the floodgates. I want to see Jesus coming in the clouds in my lifetime.

Wesley McDonald
3 days ago

While the constituency of the Columbia Union voted to ordain women to the gospel ministry, let us remember just what the gospel ministry is supposed to be. The word minister means "one who is sent". Where are these women and men who are ordained going to be sent? Are they being sent into areas where the majority of the people have never heard our message? Are they being sent two by two to raise up new churches in unentered areas? Unfortunately, for more than a century, our ministers, regardless of sex, have been sent to spend the majority of their time preaching every Wednesday night, Friday night, and Sabbath to people who already know the message and to minister to them. Only a small portion of their time is spent in true gospel ministry. The problem in all our constituency sessions is that the lost souls in the world who are dying without ever hearing our message, have no voice in the contituency sessions. No one hears their cries for knowledge and peace. Let us begin to place our focus on what God has called all of us, ordained and unordained, male and female, clergy and laity, to do - go into unentered areas with a message of salvation and raise up new churches of believers and hasten the coming of our Lord.
As a church, we have not been fully faithful to our calling and have become in many cases, the object of our own tithes. Let unite as a church, repent and carry out the true gospel commission. Matthew 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

Madeline S. Johnston
3 days ago

Thank you for the action and the spirit with which it was taken. I watched the whole thing and was moved by the humility, dedication, courage, fairness, logic, and careful presentation of the issue. Another way to look at it (than those just above): We are in recent months seeing a groundswell of Holy Spirit action that no man can stop, perhaps even in response to our pleadings for Him to bring revival and reformation. And, if that might be the case, we should all beware of obstructing in any way.

Billie Shepherd
3 days ago

I am a woman. I found no where in this article that ordained women in the Bible. It is not Biblical. I am a strong independent woman who has struggled with whether or not women should be 'ordained' by God. They are not. They are being ordained by 'man'. I am disgusted at my church for 'pushing' this issue. This tells me that the next issue will be - Women should be the head of household if they now 'want' it. This also opens the door for 'Gay' pastors to be ordained in our churches! God forBID! I agree totally with Pastor Ted Wilson- our God appointed LEADER!! Should we not listen to him and the GC votes? God forBID if we don't! I am reminded here of the israelites who did whatever they wanted.... and guess what happens when we do our own will? I believe God is disappointed.

No, we cannot say. EG White was ordained- she was not! God did not ordain women in the Bible, it was men- aka 12 disciples, priests elders, etc. I believe my church has made a grave mistake in this voting of passion and 'feelings'.

Billie Shepherd RN

Ray
3 days ago

The Columbia Union is now a disunion ...no longer exists .....all tithes to Amazing Facts...and the world feild....

Rayleen Hansen
2 days ago

I was born and raised in this church and have worked as a teacher for the church for the past 35 years. I remember the uproar in the 1970s, when I was in college, over women receiving equal pay for equal work. It was sad that Mary Kay Silver, a gifted author and church member, had to sue the church to receive this right for all of us that followed her. (It is interesting that the GC president at that time was Neal Wilson, Ted Wilson's father.)

During this time, we were told that to do this would cause the women of the church to become feminists who would destroy the role of the man in a marriage. We were told the church would be split in two and that God would destroy the church because of women selfishly wanting to be paid the same as men. We would told that the church would become bankrupt within a few years because of this.

None of those things happened; instead, I believe God has blessed because the church finally did what was right. It was a shame that the secular government of our country had to order our church to do this. I admire the Union presidents who have the courage to stand for what is right. As a woman, thank you for making me proud of my church and feeling that I do count as a church member and a church employee.

Visitor Staff
2 days ago

Thank you for your comments on this topic. If you would like to post a comment, please click here http://www.columbiaunion.org/article/1093/news/2012-news-archives/july-29-2012-special-constituency/july-29-2012-special-constituency-comments-page
Anonymous

Comments are closed on this article.
Constituency Live Stream Expands Audience, Social Media Reach

Story By Celeste Ryan Blyden
Published 8/1/12

When the officers of the Columbia Union Conference decided to convene an historic constituency meeting where they asked representatives from the eight states that comprise our union to authorize ordination without regard to gender, it occurred to us that the world would want to witness this event and wouldn’t want to wait to read about it a month later in the September Visitor.

Sunday’s unprecedented event called for unprecedented handling and garnered unprecedented attention. Over 100 new people started following @VisitorNews on Twitter; and though we only gained about 100 new fans on Facebook, our weekly Facebook report shows that our postings reached nearly 17,000 people. Our union website, which attracts no more than 200 people daily, saw visits from 4,426 unique visitors in one day. For example, people watched in Canada, Russia, China, Bermuda, Brazil, Sweden, South Africa, Mexico, and all across the United States. And not only did they watch, they commented—on each and every photo, quote, comment, question and reply.

Here’s a snapshot of our day:

As Pastor Henry Wright of Potomac Conference’s Community Praise Center in Alexandria, Va., stepped to the microphone, Michelle Bernard, Visitor Facebook editor, finished posting a tweet, grabbed her camera, ducked past the microphone obstructing her view and darted across the sanctuary to snap his photo. Meanwhile, Beth Michaels, Visitor managing editor, started typing what he was saying into a Facebook post. Shortly afterward, the duo posted the photo and quote on the Columbia Union Visitor Facebook page and seconds later, Kelly Coe, Visitor art director and designer, tweeted it @VisitorNews using the hashtag #ColumbiaUnion. By this time, Wright wrapped up and the chair recognized another who would have two minutes to speak to the motion pending.

“Hey, somebody on Facebook is asking if it’s true that we ordain women elders,” said Michaels seated on my right. “She says one of the presenters reported it.”
Aaron Cheney, Potomac Conference’s communication intern, managed the live stream and edited the nearly four-hour video.

“Tell her we’ve been doing that since 1975,” I said, noticing that the delegate at the microphone next to us was beginning to speak. “I’m still trying to tweet another quote. Can somebody grab this one?” I heard myself say over my shoulder. I got my answer with the sound of fingers clicking on keyboards behind me and further down the pew where Taashi Rowe, Visitor news editor, was typing furiously on her laptop as if taking dictation from the delegates.

“I dragged my mouse across all the pages open on my browser—Facebook, Twitter, email, Google Analytics—and stopped on our specially created webpage to make sure the live stream was working properly.

That really was unnecessary because a friend watched and texted commentary throughout the proceedings. “Why r u all taking pics during prayer? Seems irreverent,” and “U need titles on the speakers. Who is this guy?” and “This guy needs to go back to wherever he came from!”

And so it continued for four hours! In that time, five of us (see photo) shared dozens of tweets, photos and Facebook posts, all, the while keeping up with the meeting and answering questions or comments via text message, email and the aforementioned social media. And nobody stopped to use the bathroom.

“Thanks for your updates … keep them coming,” tweeted @reggieexum.

“President Weigley is praying before the delegates vote. #ColumbiaUnion,” Bernard tweeted.

“Shut the mics down. We shouldn’t be able to hear their offside comments,” texted Ednor Davison, communication director for the Atlantic Union Conference, while the votes were counted. From her living room in Boston, she kept one eye on the live feed and the other on our social media posts.

And when the results came in, so did more texts, tweets, Facebook comments and emails.

“Proud to be an SDA today. RT @carpenterale: Historic! @VisitorNews: Results of the vote: 209 Yes, 51 No, 9 Abstain. #ColumbiaUnion,” retweeted @lillithp after @Cpe tweeted the results.

“My prayer was that the Spirit would work in a clear fashion. Can you get any clearer than 80%?” emailed retired Pennsylvania pastor Bob Cowdrick, who was among the more than 160 others who emailed or posted comments on our website in the weeks after we published a 12-page section of the July Visitor advocating for women’s ordination and announcing the special constituency meeting.

“Riveting program, Celeste! More so than the Olympics,” emailed Martin Weber, communication director for the Mid-America Union Conference.

Hello Social Communication Era

All of this makes me want to say: “Hello social communication era! This is your predecessor trying to keep up!”

It’s true that before this weekend I pushed for “real time news distribution” and often explained that we are not scooping ourselves by daily posting news to our website (www.columbiaunion.org) or publishing the Visitor News Bulletin email weekly (sign up at www.columbiaunion.org/emailnews) because the circulation numbers are still very low compared to our magazine, which is mailed to 55,000...
households monthly and proved to be a strong tool in educating members about women's ordination (see July 2012 Visitor). And yes, we've had a freelance Facebook editor for over a year now, but the rest of us paid lip service to work-related social media and basically used it to find quotable tweets and posts to reprint in the magazine. Now, having coordinated communication for the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s first live-streamed, live-blogged and social-media reported constituency meeting, we’ve somehow added this uncontrollable, uncontainable beast to our portfolio.

Suddenly, social communication is our new reality and, as much as Adventists event hop, I expect this will soon be our new norm. A year ago, after attending the North American Division (NAD) Media Summit, I defined social media as “the blending of technology and social interaction for the co-creation of value.” Now that it’s part of our job description, I would define social communication as “the convergence of technology, social networking and communication management to facilitate news reporting and information sharing in real time.”

No Turning Back

Remember life before smart phones? Remember the General Conference Session newsroom before computers? Remember file sharing before email? Neither do I. And soon, I wonder if we might say, “Remember when we printed books, newspapers, magazines and newsletters and mailed them?”

We just got word from Barna Research Group that they’ve completed the survey commissioned to help us know how our members prefer to get news about their local and global Adventist Church family. We are eager to get the results, but after experiencing this unprecedented event and the impact of social media on our communication work, I can almost predict what we’ll learn from the report.

And now that we’ve tried—and survived—our first foray into social communication and understand the value, demand and potential it brings to our work, church and mission, just like the hymn suggests, there’s no turning back.

Celeste Ryan Blyden serves as communication director for the Columbia Union Conference and editor and publisher of the union’s Visitor magazine.

COMMENTS POLICY: The Columbia Union Conference Visitor encourages quality conversation and welcomes your thoughtful comments. All comments are subject to approval but will not be edited. Please limit your comments to 500 words or less. Only one comment per person will be published.

Join the discussion:

Cindy Tutsch
Reply
about 20 hours ago

You and your team did an amazing job, Celeste! Thanks for all that hard work to keep not only your constituents but the world "in the know."

Anonymous

Name: __________________________
Email: __________________________
Just after reaching the milestone of burning their mortgage, Allegheny West Conference’s Ephesus church in Columbus, Ohio, set out to accomplish new and unprecedented events. They achieved their goal by simultaneously hosting the Messiah’s Mansion tour and the “Salvation in the Sanctuary” seminar. Never before have both ministries appeared in the same place at the same time.

Donald L. Burden, Ephesus senior pastor, and Christopher C. Thompson, associate pastor, along with more than 120 members and the tour staff built the life-sized replica sanctuary based on the same blueprint given to Moses in the wilderness. According to Clayton Leinneweber, Messiah’s Mansion president, the Ephesus congregants set another record: erecting the replica in just one day.

For seven days from 1-7 p.m., Oklahoma Academy students guided 2,000 visitors through mansion tours while offering detailed, biblically based teachings on the sanctuary rooms and furniture and their application to visitors’ daily lives. From 7 to 8:15 p.m. nightly, except Thursday, “Salvation in the Sanctuary” founder and evangelist Dwight E. Haynes (pictured) lectured about how Christ shows His love through the sanctuary message.
To prepare for the simultaneous evangelistic events, Ephesus members distributed more than 10,000 invitations to area residents, while the ministerial staff, Bible workers and prayer warriors prayed over every area of the Ephesus church.

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Join the discussion:

There are no comments.

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