In Takoma Park, Adventists Make Friends Over Breakfast

Last Friday members of the Adventist Community Action Council invited Fred Schultz (pictured), Ward 6 councilman for Takoma Park, Md., and three other members of the Takoma Park City Council to a breakfast meeting at Washington Adventist University (WAU) in Takoma Park, Md. The acting city administrator and two representatives of the city’s police department also joined them.

After breakfast in WAU’s Wilkinson Hall, they assembled around a large table with about 30 leaders from 15 local Adventist organizations, who shared the many ways in which the church and its members serve the community. Councilman Schultz, and the others in attendance, who listened intently for nearly two hours, shook his head in disbelief. “Very impressive,” he said after the meeting. “It provided an opportunity for those of us on the city council to understand that there are a lot of services offered by the Seventh-day Adventist Church that we and the community don’t know about.”

Erwin Mack, head elder at Potomac Conference’s Sligo church, couldn’t agree more. “We cannot hide our lights under the proverbial ‘bushel baskets’ and then wonder why our secular friends don’t know more about us,” he wrote in the email invitation to the Adventist leaders.

—Story and photo by Celeste Ryan Blyden

READ MORE
Pennsylvania Member’s Vacation Turns Into Mission Trip

When Mark Sorensen (pictured), a member of Pennsylvania Conference’s York church, decided to visit his son Chris, he was planning a quiet vacation to enjoy his son and family. But, Chris’ church had other plans. They invited Mark to speak at their six-day evangelistic series.

Chris and his wife, Shannon, are missionaries with Adventist Frontier Missions in Surin, Thailand. Their mission field is 97 percent Buddhist.

Thailand is a country where it's difficult to become a Christian because of family and societal pressure and threats.

Still, some 50 Buddhists, Seventh-day Adventists and other Christians crowded into the church to hear Mark’s basic gospel presentation with Chris translating. As a result of the meetings, three people were baptized.— Story by Tamyra Horst

READ MORE

New Pastor Joins Potomac Conference

Rubén Ramos didn’t go far from his childhood stomping grounds of Silver Spring, Md., for his first full-time pastoral position. Ramos is a new pastor shepherding several congregations in western Virginia: the North Valley church in Roanoke, the Advent Hope church in Salem and the Rocky Mount church.

Ramos is also no stranger to the Potomac Conference. It was following his graduation from River Plate University in Argentina with a bachelor’s in theology that he first joined the ministry as a youth/associate pastor for the Alexandria Spanish church in Alexandria, Va.
In Takoma Park, Adventists Make Friends Over Breakfast

“I have been called by God to uplift Christ by teaching, preaching and serving the church to form disciples of Jesus that will expand God’s kingdom,” Ramos says. He and his wife, Silvana, say they are “committed to seeking the Lord’s will through His word and prayer and to equipping and empowering the church to be used by Christ in this community.”—Story by Beth Michaels

Deceased Columbia Union Member Used Technology to Bolster Church Mission

Andrew Kuntaraf, an advocate of using technology to empower better and more effective ministry, died on April 6 from injuries sustained in a motorcycle accident near Charles Town, W.Va. He was 33. Kuntaraf was director of the Seventh-day Adventist world church’s office of Adventist Church Membership Software, where he oversaw the development of standardized membership accounting software for church use worldwide. In addition to his interest in technology, Kuntaraf was also a skilled musician, often embellishing hymns on the piano during song service at Potomac's Capital Chinese church in Silver Spring, Md., where his parents are members.

Kuntaraf is survived by his wife, Alysia; his parents, Jonathan and Kathleen, both employees at the Seventh-day Adventist Church headquarters in Silver Spring, Md.; and his sister, Andrea. A funeral service was held Sunday, April 14, at the Southern Asian church in Silver Spring, Md.—Story by Elizabeth Lechleitner/Adventist News Network

READ MORE on Adventist News Network

No Greater Love: True Stories of Ultimate Sacrifice

Somehow Karl Haffner, senior pastor of Ohio Conference’s Kettering church—an active, sizeable congregation in a suburb of Dayton—finds time to put pen to paper. For his latest and sixth book, No Greater Love: True Stories of Ultimate Sacrifice, this pastor’s son says he dug through the file of stories his own father set
In Takoma Park, Adventists Make Friends Over Breakfast

aside for communion services.

“I started there and then added my own stories as it proved a daunting challenge to find copyright holders on many of those old stories,” Haffner explains. The book ended up a compilation of “timeless stories of human sacrifice and divine love,” like “Uncle Harold’s Love Story” and “Terror at the Taj.”

What does Haffner hope readers will take away from the book? “A deeper sense of awe and appreciation for the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the cross,” he says. Order at adventistbookcenter.com.—Story by Beth Michaels

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**The Adventists 2 DVD Scheduled for Release This Week**

After more than a year of location production, the new documentary film *The Adventists 2* is scheduled for release on DVD this week. The film is the sequel to the critically acclaimed film *The Adventists*, now airing on public television stations nationwide.

The *Adventists 2* was filmed in Haiti, the Brazil, Malawi, Africa, China, Peru and the Dominican Republic. It explores how Seventh-day Adventists are addressing important health issues around the world and doing it out of a century-old tradition of medical missions.
The film will begin airing on public television in early fall. To view a clip of the film, [CLICK HERE](http://us5.campaign-archive1.com/?u=fe12b9595dd2970ceea6479d5&id=10d9598316).

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**End Quote: “Who Moved My Haystack?”**

Some people were coming over. We were serving haystacks. My assignment: get the right ingredients. Haystacks are basic: chips, beans, cheese and veggies. How hard can it be? ... But, that’s not how life works! Just when you get comfortable, someone changes the label. Comes up with a new way of combining things. Suggests new ways of doing things. Confronts you with unripe avocados. Introduces ranch dressing or something like that.

Where does it all stop? It doesn’t. With apologies to Forrest Gump, I must say, ‘Life is like the perfect haystack—it’s always changing, always confronting us with decisions about the perfect ingredients’ … and what to do when you run out of salsa or got the wrong one. It’s kinda fun with haystacks, but it’s a lot harder with life. The changes come, and the choices are all ours about how to respond. That’s just the way it is. It’s your haystack—enjoy building it.—**William G. “Bill” Robertson, president and CEO of Adventist HealthCare**

[READ MORE on Adventist HealthCare's Facebook page](http://us5.campaign-archive1.com/?u=fe12b9595dd2970ceea6479d5&id=10d9598316).

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**Columbia Union Members in the News**

**As they turn 150, Adventists still praying for the Apocalypse**
UPCOMING EVENTS

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

MARYLAND

April 19-21: The Middletown Valley church invites you to attend a seminar titled “Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage.” The April 19 session runs 7:30-9:30 p.m. The Sabbath, April 20 service will include a potluck at 1 p.m., followed by a seminar at 3 p.m. The Sunday 9 a.m. seminar will be followed by a brunch at Dutch’s Daughter at 12:30 p.m. Register by April 12 by contacting Lynne Williams at (301) 371-6887. The cost to attend this program is $10 per couple, which includes materials and light refreshments on Friday evening (brunch is not included). The church is located at 1811 Arnold Road in Jefferson, Md.

April 21: Takoma Academy is hosting a 5K race and fun run with proceeds going to the Worthy Student and Matching Fund. Those funds raised help alleviate financial barriers for those families desiring to be in a Christian environment. Participants will meet at 8 a.m. at the Washington Adventist University gym located at 7600 Flower Avenue in Takoma Park, Md. For more information and to register, contact Pam at homeschool@rpcsda.org.

April 27: The internationally known Breath of Life Quartet will be in concert at the Sligo church in Takoma Park, Md. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and admission is free. The church is located at 7700 Carroll Avenue in Takoma Park, Md. For more information, visit sligochurch.org.

NEW JERSEY

April 26-28: Trinity Temple Academy's alumni, family and friends are invited to celebrate the academy's 80th anniversary during this year's alumni weekend. Organizers will be celebrating and honoring classmates and graduates, presenting alumni awards and rededicating themselves to the future of the school. The weekend begins at the school with a meet and greet with guest speaker and alumnus Pastor Marvin McLean. On Sabbath Pastor Ronald Reeves, an alumnus, will speak for the divine service at Trinity Temple, which is located in Hillside, N.J. Saturday night's event, called “The Celebration of Trinity Temple Academy,” will take place at the Pantagis Renaissance featuring guest speaker Pastor S. Peter Campbell and performances by a live band. On Sunday there will be a special alumni brunch at Trinity Temple, 11 to 2 p.m. For more information, visit trinitytempleacademy.com.

OHIO

April 20: The Temple Emmanuel church is celebrating the first anniversary of their Alcohol Drugs Addictions Ministry (ADAM). The celebration, which starts with their 11 a.m. service, will feature guest speakers Tamika Cammon and Myron Edmonds, pastor of the Glenville church in Cleveland. The church is located at 108 West Indianola Avenue in Youngstown, Ohio. For more information, call the church at (330) 788-9796.
In Takoma Park, Adventists Make Friends Over Breakfast

VIRGINIA
April 20: The Lynchburg church is hosting a Prison Ministry Emphasis Day. Hector Cruz, president of Potomac Adventist Prison Ministry Organization, will be the special guest speaker. After fellowship dinner, there will be a training session, including a demonstration of the church's video visitation ministry. For more information, send an email to healthnutmike@yahoo.com.

WASHINGTON, D.C.
April 19-20: Capitol Hill church's ConneXus Singles Ministry Summit will feature special guest, Andrea D. Hicks, founder of FOCUS. Ministries (Fellowship of Christians Unique and Single). The program starts at 7:30 p.m. on Friday with an interactive vespers titled “Managing Your Sexual Desires” and continues on Sabbath at 4 p.m. with an interactive panel discussion titled “It's Not YOU, It's Me: Reasons for Break-ups.” For more information, contact Michael Wright at connexusministry@yahoo.com.

April 21: Celebrity Chef Mark Anthony will be at the Capital Memorial church (CMC) for a free cooking demonstration, dinner and message. Anthony has done cooking shows in every single state in the country. He has had spotlight coverage in dozens of newspapers and magazines around the country, has published four books and appears regularly on 3ABN. John Kelly, MD, a lifestyle medicine specialist, will also be a special guest to introduce the LivingWell/Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP), which CMC will be hosting this fall. The event runs from 3 to 5:30 p.m. The church is located at 3150 Chesapeake Street in northwest. There is no fee, but registration is required so we have enough food. For more information, send an email to capitalmemorialchurch@verizon.net or call (202) 362-3668.

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Stay Connected:
Fred Shultz was one of four members of the Takoma Park City Council to meet with Adventist leaders last Friday.

“I am a conduit from residents to the city, and I’d like to be able to tell them about the services of your church that can help them,” said Fred Schultz, Ward 6 councilman for Takoma Park, Md. “This meeting opened up the channels of communication.”

It was more like the floodgates: “We offer a number of free health screenings to the community and you’d have to go online to our website to see a list of the many health-related classes we offer,” said Judy Lichty, director of Health and Wellness for Adventist HealthCare, parent company of Washington Adventist Hospital in Takoma Park, Md.

“We are praying for local schools,” said Chris Daley, a member of the city’s Sligo church, who is helping coordinate their new prayer initiative for safety and security at local schools. He and another member then read a prayer they’ve written for schools, which ends with, “May the securing presence of Your guardian angels be residents at each school and with each student.”

Jeff Taylor, associate pastor at Takoma Park (Md.) church, followed the prayer with a list of the activities his church offers the community: “At Takoma Park church, we offer health screenings, organize street fairs and host a concert series,” he shared, adding that they had a classical concert last weekend and, this fall, will host a gospel choir from Howard University in Washington, D.C., all open to the community.

“At the Metropolitan church right down the street in Hyattsville, Md., our 1,100 members offer job fairs, clothing drives, mentoring programs, hot lunches for homeless persons, blanket drives, an ESL [English as a Second Language] class to help the growing number of immigrants in the community, financial services, exercise classes, baby blessings for community families and a program for autistic children,” announced Brenda Billingy, senior pastor.

“On May 5 we are hosting a Mother’s Day brunch for single mothers,” said Vee Akehurst, executive assistant, representing Adventist Community Services of Greater Washington.
This community staple, which also houses a food pantry and clothing distribution center and offers job training and computer classes, is located about a mile from the campus Washington Adventist University (WAU) shares with Washington Adventist Hospital (WAH) in Takoma Park, Md.

It’s also where, on the second Friday of each month, a group of Seventh-day Adventist pastors, principals, presidents and other leaders meet to fellowship over breakfast, share ideas, address mutual concerns and host community leaders.

They call themselves, Adventist Community Action Council (ACAC) and their purpose, printed in bold lettering atop each month’s agenda, reads: “To coordinate the resources of the Adventist organizations in the Takoma Park area and to address key community issues.”

Last Friday, the group, chaired by Erwin Mack, head elder at Sligo church and a longtime educator and business owner, who signs some of his emails, “Retired, but not disinterested,” hosted Shultz and three other members of the Takoma Park City Council. The acting city administrator and two representatives of the city’s police department also joined them.

After breakfast in WAU’s Wilkinson Hall, they assembled around a large table with about 30 leaders from 15 local Adventist organizations. From Joyce Newmyer, president of WAH and her vice president, Geoff Morgan, to Doug Morgan (no relation), interim general manager at WGTS, and its parent, WAU, whose president Weymouth Spence, started the meeting off with a presentation by some of his award-winning business students about their work in the community and the trademark, “This is Washington Adventist University.” Around the table they went, each one introducing themselves, sharing their role in the church and how they serve the community.

Councilman Schultz, and the others in attendance, who listened intently for nearly two hours, shook his head in disbelief. “Very impressive,” he said after the meeting. “It provided an opportunity for those of us on the city council to understand that there are a lot of services offered by the Seventh-day Adventist Church that we and the community don’t know about.”

Erwin Mack couldn’t agree more. That’s why he started the group 10 years ago with Monte Sahlin, then vice president for Ministries Development at the Columbia Union Conference. Though Sahlin now works for the Ohio Conference, Mack continues to keep the group moving and growing to help raise public awareness of his church in the community. “We cannot hide our lights under the proverbial ‘bushel baskets’ and then wonder why our secular friends don’t know more about us,” he wrote in the email invitation to the Adventist leaders.

His continuing efforts to convene the group each month; longtime connections with community, county and state officials; and “gentle reminders” are appreciated, valued, and having impact.

“Thank you for having the vision and execution of the ACAC program,” wrote Chris Daley via email after the meeting. “You saw the value and sharing the value with the Takoma Park city leadership, which was most appreciated.”
Doug Morgan, acting general manager for WGTS 91.9 FM, and Weymouth Spence, president of Washington Adventist University, share a laugh.

Erwin Mack, head elder at Sligo church, helped start the Adventist Community Action Council (ACAC) some 10 years ago.
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.
Pennsylvania Member’s Vacation Turns into Mission Trip

Story by Tamyra Horst Published 4/17/2013

Mark Sorensen, a member of Pennsylvania Conference’s York church, stands outside of the church in Thailand where he preached for six days.

When Mark Sorensen, a member of Pennsylvania Conference’s York church, decided to visit his son Chris, he was planning a quiet vacation to enjoy his son and family. But, Chris’ church had other plans. They invited Mark to speak at their six-day evangelistic series. Mark’s son Chris and his wife, Shannon, are missionaries with Adventist Frontier Missions in Surin, Thailand. Their mission field is 97 percent Buddhist. Thailand is a country where it’s difficult to become a Christian because of family and societal pressure and threats. Still, some 50 Buddhists, Seventh-day Adventists and other Christians crowded into the church to hear Mark’s basic gospel presentation with Chris translating. As a result of the meetings, three people were baptized. Back home, Mark shares the gospel through music to both Adventist and other groups. He regularly receives numerous invitations to share his music along with several invitations to preach to other denominations. He sees his music as an opportunity to build bridges with others and his community. “I try to do my part where I live,” says Mark, who is also a member of the Pennsylvania Conference Executive Committee. He recently participated in a concert where he not only had the opportunity to sing, but also to mention his trip to Thailand and how God had worked. A leader from a local Lutheran church heard Mark and invited him to come to their church to share about his trip to Thailand.

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In Remembrance: Andrew Kuntaraf used technology to bolster Adventist ministry, mission


Apr. 08, 2013 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

Andrew Kuntaraf, an advocate of using technology to empower better and more effective ministry, died on April 6 from injuries sustained in a motorcycle accident near Charles Town, West Virginia. He was 33.

Andrew Kuntaraf, right, was instrumental in establishing a unified membership accounting software for church use worldwide. He died in a traffic accident Saturday at age 33. [ANN file photo]

Kuntaraf was director of the Seventh-day Adventist world church’s office of Adventist Church Membership Software, where he oversaw the development of standardized membership accounting software for church use worldwide. The software, now in its pilot implementation stage, is streamlining how the church maintains its membership database.

Kuntaraf told ANN last year that he expected the software to address discrepancies in accounting for the global denomination’s estimated 17 million members, lending greater accuracy and transparency to the process.

Kuntaraf grew concerned by church membership records when a colleague pointed out that the church was "keeping better track of its money than its members." At the time, Kuntaraf was serving as associate director of the office of Seventh-day Adventist Accounting Software. There, he had worked to help the church implement a global standard for accounting software. Shortly afterward, he was hired under the church’s office of Secretariat to standardize membership records worldwide.

"Andrew had a heart for mission and viewed his work as a service to God," said John Beckett, director of the Adventist world church’s Office of Global Software and Internet. The two church technology directors worked together closely on projects.

"His ability to make friends complemented his excellent information technology skills in a way that made him a great leader and colleague," Beckett said.

Colleagues in the office of Secretariat echoed Beckett’s sentiment and added that Kuntaraf brought a spiritual tone to a job that could have been seen as purely technical.

"The passing of Andrew was a huge loss, not only to his family, but to God’s family worldwide," said G. T. Ng, Adventist world church secretary. “Not only was Andrew technically qualified, but he was spiritually qualified. He was driven by the mission of the church."

Andrew Oey Kuntaraf was born in Loma Linda, California on September 10, 1979, while his parents were pursuing higher education in the U.S. In 1987, the family moved to Singapore, where they worked for the church’s Southern Asia-Pacific Division, then called the Far Eastern Division. Andrew later returned to the U.S. to complete high school and college.

In 2001, he earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration at the church’s Southern Adventist University in
Collegedale, Tennessee, adding a master’s degree in business administration in 2008.

In addition to his interest in technology, Kuntaraf was also a skilled musician, often embellishing hymns on the piano during song service at the Capital Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland, where his parents are members.

“I used to joke with him and say, ‘Andrew, you are adding extra notes, I can’t keep up!’” said Norma Hendrixson, a family friend who watched Kuntaraf grow up and often led song service with him. At one point, Kuntaraf considered a career in music, Hendrixson said.

Kuntaraf was also an avid motorcyclist. He had borrowed a friend's motorcycle for a ride in town on the day of the traffic accident, family members said.

"We are deeply saddened by the loss of Andrew, and the Adventist Church will greatly miss his contributions at a time when more and more of the church’s mission relies on the Internet and technology," said Williams Costa Jr., Communication director for the Adventist world church.

“Andrew was one of our cornerstones of technology for the world church,” he added. Costa had worked closely with Kuntaraf to prepare for the church’s upcoming Global Adventist Internet Network (GAiN) conference, scheduled for May in Dubai.

Peter Landless, an associate director for the Adventist world church’s Health Ministries department and colleague of Andrew’s mother, Kathleen, said Andrew was “like a son to my wife, Ros, and I in the kind deference he always showed us."

“I was always impressed by his smile, his energy and his talents. It was an absolute blessing to know him. He epitomized the vibrancy that young people can bring to the church,” Landless said.

Kuntaraf is survived by his wife, Alysia; his parents, Jonathan and Kathleen, both employees at Seventh-day Adventist Church headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland; and his sister, Andrea.

A funeral service is planned for Sunday, April 14, at 4 p.m. at the Southern Asian Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland.
Weekly Meditation - Who Moved My Haystack?
by Adventist HealthCare (Notes) on Tuesday, April 9, 2013 at 12:39pm

The goal of the mission: “Haystack Perfection,” the most complete expression ever created of the meal that is so ubiquitous in the subculture I grew up in that most of the people I grew up with not only have their own list of the essential ingredients for the perfect Haystack, but have strong opinions about the way these ingredients are assembled—and can tell you when and where they were when they last ate a perfect Haystack.

Some people were coming over. We were serving Haystacks. Nothing less than perfection would do. My assignment: get the right ingredients.

Maybe I should explain what Haystacks are. They are nearly unique to Seventh-day Adventist culture, at least by that name. It is basically a taco salad that you assemble yourself—starting with corn chips (generally), followed by some sort of beans (pintos, IMHO), and then topped with cheese, lettuce, olives, guacamole, onions, etc. (Variety is encouraged at this stage.) If you are feeling expansive, you can also add salsa or a dressing (Ranch being a fairly recent innovation). The deconstructed approach to Mexican cuisine.

When I was growing up, we ate Haystacks at nearly every communal meal—particularly those where young people were attending in great number. Oh, we had pizza, and we had veggie burgers, but right up there among the four food groups would be Haystacks. We loved ‘em.

And now—as an adult, with all the experience and training, and my own wheels—I was dispatched to the grocery store to get The Right Stuff for Haystacks. This was a serious assignment.

The trouble started with the beans. I was shown a label and told to Get These Beans. OK. No argument from me. Trouble is, they've changed the labels. Now “Whole Pinto Beans” and “Chili Beans, Mexican Style,” look exactly the same. What to do? I got both.

Now the cheese. Whose idea was it to combine three types of cheese? I wasn’t asked about this. Grated or block? We always grate our own, but this looks pretty convenient. Wait—what’s this grated multi-blend gonna cost? And here is one with SIX different cheeses! Is that even legal? I defaulted to a block of Colby. Seemed safe.

Most of the ingredients were easy—lettuce is lettuce, tomatoes are tomatoes, onions are onions. The avocados may have been too hard, but they were the only ones for sale, so someone else could deal with them. There was a slight delay amongst the olives, but I managed.

I didn’t know there were so many choices of fresh salsa. And I was in uncharted territory here, with no guidance, no label to fall back on, just the words, “Fresh Salsa” on the list. And I doubt you can return this stuff. What to do, what to do? Casting caution to the wind, I went for the Chunky Mild, and an additional container of Pico de Gallo. (Who was Pico de Gallo, anyway? Maybe a famous cocinero.)

Just one last thing on my list: the corn chips. As kids, the choices were Fritos or Fritos. But now there's a whole aisle filled with corn chips. Seriously. Is everyone eating Haystacks these days? This is too much. Guacamole flavored? Lime Flavored? Spicy Sweet Chili Flavored? Where does this all end?

I can’t be expected to manage all these changes. Haystacks are basic: chips, beans, cheese, veggies. How hard can it be?
And why is life always like this? Just when you get comfortable, someone changes the label. Comes up with a new way of combining things. Suggests new ways of doing things. Confronts you with unripe avocados. Introduces Ranch Dressing, or something like that. Can sundried tomatoes and oven-roasted poblano peppers be far behind? Where does it all stop?

It doesn’t. With apologies to Forrest Gump, Life is like the perfect Haystack—it’s always changing, always confronting us with decisions about the perfect ingredients, and the right mix of all these wonderful things together, and what to do when you run out of salsa or got the wrong one. It’s kinda fun with Haystacks, but it’s a lot harder with life. The changes come, and the choices are all ours about how to respond. That’s just the way it is.

So take your time there amidst the corn chips, if you need an extra minute. Accept the world’s apology if your first choice is no longer available—but here are the choices we’ve got now. It’s your Haystack—enjoy building it.

I’m hungry.

***********

¿Quien movió mi almiar?

El objetivo de la misión: «El almiar perfecto», la expresión más completa del platillo que es tan ubicuo en la subcultura en la que crecí que la mayoría de las personas con las que crecí no solo tiene su propia lista de los ingredientes esenciales para el almiar perfecto, sino que tienen una opinión muy firme de la forma como esos ingredientes se han de combinar—hasta te pueden decir cuándo y dónde estaban cuando comieron el almiar perfecto.

Ibamos a tener visitas y el menú para la ocasión era almiar. No podíamos servir menos que la perfección misma. Mi tarea: obtener los ingredientes ideales.

Quizá debería de explicar lo que es un almiar. Son distintivos de la cultura Adventista del Séptimo Día, por lo menos con ese nombre [nota: en inglés es «haystacks», que al español se traduce como «almiar» aunque es dudoso qué nombre se le dé en realidad, si se consume fuera de los EE.UU.]. Es básicamente una «taco salad» que tú mismo preparas—empezando generalmente con los totopos de maíz [corn chips], seguidos de algún tipo de frijol (pintos, en mi humilde opinión), cubiertos de queso, lechuga, aceitunas, guacamole, cebolla, etc. (se recomienda la variedad). Si se está de ánimo extravagante se le puede añadir algún tipo de salsa (la innovación más reciente es usar «ranch», que me parece ser un insulto a la cocina mexicana).

Mientras crecía comimos almiar en casi cada comida comunitaria—sobre todo cuando había una buena cantidad de jóvenes. Teníamos pizzas y «veggie burgers» pero entre los cuatro grupos de comida se encontraba el almiar. Nos encantaba.

Ahora, de adulto, con toda la experiencia y entrenamiento y con mi propio vehículo—he sido enviado a comprar los Elementos Ideales para Hacer Almiar. Es una responsabilidad muy grande.


La mayoría de los ingredientes son pan comido—lechuga es lechuga, tomates son tomates, cebollas son cebollas. Es probable que los aguacates no estén maduros, pero es todo lo que hay así que alguien va a tener que hacerse cargo de ese asunto. Las aceitunas me hicieron perder algo de tiempo, pero salí adelante.
No sabía que hubiese tantos tipos de salsa fresca. Estoy en terreno virgen y sin derrotero seguro, ninguna etiqueta para guiarme, solamente las palabras «salsa fresca» en la lista. Dudo que se pueda regresar si no es la correcta. ¿Qué hacer, qué hacer? Echando la precaución al viento decidí comprar Chunky Mild y un frasco de Pico de Gallo. (¿Quién era ese Pico de Gallo, a todo esto? ¿Algun cocinero famoso?)

Solamente un ingrediente más en mi lista: totopos de maíz. De niños teníamos que escoger entre Fritos o Fritos. Pero ahora hay todo un pasillo con totopos de maíz. En serio. ¿Será que todos comen almiar? No lo puedo creer. ¿Con sabor a guacamole? ¿Con sabor a limón? ¿Ligeramente espolvoreados de chile? ¡ Esto es asunto de nunca acabar!

¿Cómo se espera que me las arregle con tantos cambios? El almiar es algo sencillo: totopos, frijoles, queso, verdura. ¿Por qué complicar las cosas?

¿Por qué es la vida siempre así? Cuando te estás empezando a sentir cómodo alguien te cambia la etiqueta. Deciden combinar las cosas de una forma nueva. Sugieren nuevos métodos de hacerlo. Te ofrecen aguacates verdes. Sugieren «ranch dressing», o algo por el estilo, como una opción. ¿Será que van pronto a sugerir tomates secos y chiles poblanos asados? ¿Adónde vamos a parar?

No vamos. Con perdón a Forrest Gump pero «La vida es como un almiar perfecto —siempre cambia, siempre nos enfrenta a decisiones sobre los ingredientes ideales y la mezcla correcta de todos esos maravillosos elementos y qué hacer cuando se acaba la salsa o compras la salsa equivocada. Uno se goza con un almiar pero la vida es mucho más dura. Los cambios se suceden; las opciones y las decisiones son asunto nuestro. Así son las cosas.

Así que tómate tu tiempo en el pasillo de los totopos si tienes que reflexionar por unos minutos. Acepta la disculpa del mundo si tus preferidos ya no están en venta — aprovecha aquello que ahora está disponible. Es tu almiar — disfruta cada minuto del mismo.

Tengo hambre.

-----

William G. “Bill” Robertson
President & CEO
Adventist HealthCare
As they turn 150, Adventists still pray for the apocalypse

(RNS) Over the past 150 years, Seventh-day Adventists have built one of Christianity’s most inventive and prosperous churches, all the while praying for the world to end as soon as possible.

A small band of believers has mushroomed to more than 17 million baptized members, including 1.2 million in the U.S. Nearly 8,000 Adventist schools dot dozens of countries. Hundreds of church-owned hospitals and clinics mend minds and bodies around the world.

You might expect Adventists to celebrate their success while marking their church’s 150th anniversary this May. There’s just one problem: the church wasn’t supposed to last this long.

Back in the 1860s, the founders of Seventh-day Adventism preached that Jesus would return – and soon. That’s why they called themselves “Adventists.” By Second-Coming standards, the church’s long life could be considered a dismal sign of failure.

“If you took a time machine and visited our founders in May 1863, they’d be disconcerted, to say the least, that we’re still here,” said David Trim, the church’s director of archives and research.

Current Adventists aren’t exactly excited about the anniversary, either.

“It’s almost an embarrassment to be celebrating 150 years,” said Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, the church’s director of education. “But it’s also an affirmation of faith in Christ’s return.”

Adventist leaders have slated May 18 – the Saturday before the 150th anniversary – as “a day of prayer, remembrance and recommitment to mission.” On May 21, Adventists will hold a small ceremony at church headquarters in Silver Spring, Md. Don’t expect balloons or birthday cake.

“In one kind of way it really is a sad event,” said Michael Ryan, a vice president at the church’s General Conference, its top governing body.

“We’re a church that by its name believes in the Second Coming of Christ, and we have been hopeful that long ago Christ would have come and taken the righteous to heaven and this world would have ended.”

But Jesus told Christians to occupy themselves until he returns – advice that Adventists take to heart.

Ryan, the church’s director of strategic planning, said he eagerly anticipates projects to open health centers in poverty-stricken communities and a 26-story hospital in Hong Kong. Besides worshipping on Saturday – the biblical seventh day when God rested – Adventists may be best known for their healthy lifestyles. Studies show they live about 10 years longer than their neighbors.

Of course, most Christian churches preach the Second Coming, and nearly half of Americans believe Jesus will return in the next 40 years, according to a 2010 poll conducted by the Pew Research Center. But few American churches have been built on the ashes of apocalyptic dreams.
Adventism was founded in the aftermath the Great Disappointment, which dashed the hopes of some 50,000 followers who expected Jesus to arrive in 1844. Some had sold their possessions and let their fields lie fallow. The celestial letdown drove a few insane, crushed under the weight of what social psychologist Leon Festinger would later call “cognitive dissonance.”

But the movement did not disintegrate, as Festinger argued. Instead, early Adventists like James and Ellen White adjusted their beliefs. Something of divine import had happened in 1844, even if it wasn’t the Second Coming, they taught.

Meanwhile, Adventist leaders brought dejected believers together, feeding the hungry and bonding over their shared disappointment. While keeping their ears perked for Gabriel’s horn, Adventists also turned an eye to earthly time, setting Saturday as their Sabbath and preaching the value of healthy living.

Over time, Adventists’ social bonds and distinctive doctrines “led to the creation of a church which survives and prospers today as one of the fastest-growing denominations in Christendom,” writes Stephen O’Leary, a scholar at the University of Southern California.

When those doctrines sail against cultural winds – as when Adventists are forced to work on Saturday, or famous members back Creationism – church solidarity strengthens, scholars say.

Adventist growth is especially intense in Latin America and Africa, where people are attracted to the faith’s blend of ethereal optimism (Jesus is coming soon!) and earthly education (Eat your vegetables until he does.)

“It’s a religious movement whose belief system compensates for both human needs and human longings,” said Edwin Hernandez, a research fellow at the University of Notre Dame’s Center for the Study of Latino Religion.

But some Adventists worry that the church’s modern success may bring Adventism full circle: a movement haunted by the hereafter becomes preoccupied with the present.

Adventism thrives because of the urgency of its message, argues church historian George Knight. Countless missionaries have crossed the earth to warn of Jesus’ imminent arrival. “When that vision is gone,” Knight writes, “Adventism will become just another toothless denomination that happens to be a little more peculiar in some of its beliefs than others.”

But Adventist leaders say the apocalyptic pull is still strong at church headquarters, especially during planning sessions. “I see that in our education system,” said Beardsley-Hardy. “Not wanting to over-invest in building because Jesus is coming.”

Beardsley-Hardy said she feels the same tension in her personal life. Should she sock away extra money in her retirement account, she wonders, or gratify immediate needs?

As a child, Beardsley-Hardy said she was convinced that every passing thunderstorm heralded the Second Coming. Now 54, with two grandchildren, she said that sense of urgency is returning.

“I’m getting back to waiting,” Beardsley-Hardy said. “But I’m kind of glad the Lord has tarried.”
Ellen White, the founder of Seventh-day Adventism, was viewed by outsiders as delusional yet the church she started is now one of the world’s fastest-growing.

RNS file photo

This image available for Web and print publication. For questions, contact Sally Morrow.
Upcoming Events Around the Columbia Union

NATIONAL
September 1: Enter the 2014 "Forever Faithful" International Camporee theme songwriting contest by September 1. Click here to enter the contest. If your submission is chosen, you could win two free tickets to the camporee and the honor of having your music become the 2014 Forever Faithful International Camporee official theme song. For more information, contact Justin Yang or Stacy-Ann Thomas.

NEW JERSEY
April 26-28: Trinity Temple Academy's alumni, family and friends are invited to celebrate the academy's 80th anniversary during this year’s alumni weekend. Organizers will be celebrating and honoring classmates and graduates, presenting alumni awards and rededicating themselves to the future of the school. The weekend begins at the school with a meet and greet with guest speaker and alumnus Pastor Marvin McLean. On Sabbath Pastor Ronald Reeves, an alumnus, will speak for the divine service at Trinity Temple, which is located in Hillside, N.J. Saturday night’s event, called “The Celebration of Trinity Temple Academy,” will take place at the Pantagis Renaissance featuring guest speaker Pastor S. Peter Campbell and performances by a live band. On Sunday there will be a special alumni brunch at Trinity Temple, 11 to 2 p.m. For more information, visit trinitytempleacademy.com.