Allegheny West Delegates Vote Officers, Face Tough Numbers

Sunday at the Allegheny West Conference’s Third Quadrennial Constituency Session, some 220 delegates gathered at the Ephesus church in Columbus, Ohio, and elected William T. Cox, president; Marvin Brown, executive secretary; and Zenobia Seward, treasurer. Cox was re-elected after serving 17 months as president; Seward after 12 years as treasurer. Brown previously headed the conference’s Ministerial Association, Stewardship Ministries and Trust Services.

“I’m humbled by the fact that, as a group, you are allowing us to serve in this capacity,” Cox said. “It is time to be about our Father’s business.”

In his President’s Report, Cox addressed some of the challenges facing the small conference. Among them is a preliminary budget deficit of nearly half a million dollars. In order to reduce the deficit, the financial taskforce recommended several actions, including reducing the conference office workforce. Cox said conference leaders implemented many of the recommendations, and although in 2012 the conference suffered a $123,000 loss in tithe, they had a $150,000 increase in their working capital.—Story and photos by Taashi Rowe

READ MORE AND VIEW MORE PHOTOS

Columbia Union Leaders Discuss Young Adult
Attrition

A. Allan Martin, PhD, didn’t mince words. The former professor (pictured) at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University (Mich.) and a current young adult pastor at a thriving church in Texas, Martin hit the members of the Columbia Union Conference Executive Committee with stark numbers: some 60 to 70 percent of young people leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Last Thursday Martin gave a nearly two-hour long presentation to committee members meeting at the Columbia Union headquarters in Columbia, Md. Using the David Kinnaman book *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church ... and Rethinking Faith* as his primary reference, Martin brought the gathering up to speed on the whys and wherefores of persistent young adult attrition from churches across North America. However, Kinnaman’s findings may not have been exactly news to the committee members. “We’ve heard the sirens in regard to young adult attrition for years,” Martin said.—Story and photos by Taashi Rowe

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Macedonia Members Support Better Living Thru Faith

Members of Allegheny East Conference’s Macedonia church in Chester, Pa., have taken a flying leap of faith. Looking around their community they saw many of their neighbors in need and wondered how they could help. So after surveying residents, they renovated an empty building on their property to the tune of $100,000 and are now using it as a community center. Calling it the Better Living Center, it was opened last fall.

The building has a nearly $90,000-a-year operating budget and the church, which has a membership of 70, is committed to supporting this project to the tune of $30,000 annually. They have also received help from the North American Division, Allegheny East Conference
and from several corporate donors, but church members are by far providing the highest subsidy both in monies and volunteer time.

“On the balance sheet, it doesn’t make sense,” said Blane Stoddart, president of the center. “The numbers don’t add up, but God is faithful,” Stoddart says.— Story by Taashi Rowe; Photo by Patricia Wagner

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Newport News Members Launch Blanket Ministry

Potomac Conference's Newport News company in Newport News, Va., recently launched Covers of Love, a ministry where participants make blankets and quilts for the needy. The ministry supports various community organizations.

“The idea for the Covers of Love Ministry came as a result of prayer,” said founder, Viorica Oana. “For many years, I asked God what I could do for Him. When my friend, Tabitha Brinceanu’s house flooded last year, she wanted to give me all the fabrics she had in storage. Between the two of us, we had accumulated quite a lot, that’s when we decided these fabrics needed to be used in a practical way to fulfill a need.”

Recalling a segment on 3ABN, which highlighted a quilt ministry, Oana and her friend felt this would be a good direction to go and prayed for guidance. Church members soon started donating money, materials and time and began working on projects. With the first completed quilt sent to Africa and others distributed internationally and locally, the group is excited to ‘cover’ the world with love.—Story by Anda Wood

Chesapeake’s Glen Burnie Center Gets a Facelift

Last Thursday, about 100 volunteers spent the day sprucing up the Adventist Community Services center
operated by Chesapeake Conference's Glen Burnie (Md.) church. The volunteers came as part of the nationwide Keller Williams Realty RED (Renew, Energize and Donate) Day initiative dedicated to celebrating the company's commitment to improving the community. Renovations included painting the center and outbuildings; installing new flooring, kitchen countertops and doors; and landscaping and clearing an adjacent lot.

Carolyn Goss, church community services director, estimates that about 400 people come through the center each week. A hot meal is served to 150 local residents each Tuesday, groceries and clothing are distributed to those in need of basic supplies and support groups such as a local Alcoholics Anonymous chapter regularly use the center as a meeting place.

“The RED Day was an answer to our prayers,” said Diego Boquer, church pastor (pictured center with volunteers). “The Lord is faithful, and this has encouraged Glen Burnie church to do the Master's work in our community even more. To God be the glory.”—Story by Samantha Young

READ MORE ON CHESAPEAKE'S WEBSITE

Ohio Members Honored as Volunteers of the Year

Jim and Jean Spitler, active members of Ohio Conference's Newark church for 44 years, were recently named volunteers of the year for outstanding service by the local Fiberglas Credit Union. Jim has served the church as an elder, deacon and song leader while Jean has served as the church treasurer, Sabbath school teacher, a deaconess and helped with potluck dinners.

At 87 and 90 years of age, the Spitlers (pictured receiving their award) manage the food pantry at the Adventist Community Services Center located in downtown Newark. They have
managed the pantry for well over 20 years. When asked what their favorite part was of managing the food pantry, Jean was quick to respond, "Meeting the people."

The couple, who have been married for 69 years, have four children, 12 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren. They also enjoy working in their large garden each year and giving away a lot of what they grow. They give glory to God for all good things in their marriage, their church and their working relationship with the community.—Story by Schmaine Meadows

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**Spotted: Highland View Academy Teacher Picking Up a $5k Check**

Ophelia Barizo, a science teacher at Highland View Academy (HVA) in Hagerstown, Md., was spotted picking up a $5,000 grant from Younger Toyota in Hagerstown, which will go toward renovating the school’s science lab. The entire school was present in daily chapel when Barizo accepted the check. HVA’s chapter of the National Honor Society are pictured with Barizo. Students are ecstatic to see what changes are to come in the science department next school year.—Story by Renee Williams

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**End quote: Why Evangelism is My Life**

"Evangelism is what I’ve
been called to do, and I love it! It's my life. I'll be involved in full-time evangelism in some way, shape or form for the rest of my life. I'll never forget meeting Norma in Summersville, W.Va. She was so excited about what she was learning! One day after our Bible study, she looked at her Bible, lying open in her lap, grabbed it with both hands and said, 'I just … I just want to eat it!' And I knew she meant it. I think that’s what Jesus meant when He said ‘Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.’ It's a privilege to be able to study with hungry souls like her.

I think God intends for all of us to be Bible workers in our own way. The gospel commission is for all of us. As long as we’re willing, God promises to give us wisdom to know how/when/what to share."—Daniella Pusic, Mountain View Conference’s Bible Worker and Young Adult Ministries leader

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

MARYLAND

May 25: The Seabrook church is hosting an international weekend. There will be a Parade Of Nations at 11 a.m. divine service. An International Choir Fest begins at 5 p.m. Sunday, May 26th there will be an international business expo at 11 a.m. The church is located at 8900 Good Luck Road in Lanham, Md.

June 3: Sligo church’s Scholarshipping Our Sisters chapter is hosting a tea and silent auction to raise money to help Seventh-day Adventist women worldwide pay for college. The event will be held at 7 p.m. in the church’s fellowship room, and the church is located at 7700 Carroll Avenue in Takoma Park, Md.
NEW JERSEY
June 2: Sapphire Throne Media is presenting a one-day camp meeting and revival at the Robbinsville (N.J.) church. Registration is necessary, and the registration deadline is May 26. There will be eight different seminars from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Lunch is provided). Topics include “Your Creation Armor,” “The Successful Family,” “Supercharged Health,” “Evangelism made Easy,” “Disaster and our Response,” “Ellen White’s Dreams and Visions Campaign” and “The Elijah Message and The Prophetic View.” For registration details, download the camp meeting flyer at SapphireThroneMedia.com, or email eric@SapphireThroneMedia.com.

PENNSYLVANNIA
May 31-June 2: The Allegheny East Conference is hosting two-day workshop on how to raise money and other resources for local ministries and hear about innovative outreach ministries that can be replicated in your area. There will also be a full disaster response training with the train the trainer and leadership modules. Joe and Sherry Watts, North American Division’s Adventist Community Services Disaster Response leaders will lead the training. The weekend training will begin at 1 p.m. on Friday, May 31st and end at noon on June 2nd. Click here to learn more and to register.

VIRGINIA
May 25: The Lynchburg (Va.) church invites everyone to their special, free showing of The Conscientious Objector at 7:30 p.m. The film tells the story of Desmond T. Doss, a native of Lynchburg, who won the Congressional Medal of Honor for saving numerous lives in WWII. The movie will be shown at the Desmond T. Doss Christian Academy, located at 19 George Street in Lynchburg.

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Allegheny West Delegates Vote Officers, Face Tough Numbers
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reducing the conference office workforce. Cox said conference leaders implemented many of the recommendations, and although in 2012 the conference suffered a $123,000 loss in tithe, they had a $150,000 increase in their working capital. Cox also recognized churches that had significant tithe increases in 2012: the Shiloh church in Cincinnati, Ohio; the Smyrna and Appomattox churches in Lynchburg, Va.; the New Hope church in Canton, Ohio; and Ethan Temple in Dayton, Ohio.

Although the quadrennium covered 2008 to 2012, Cox focused heavily on 2012. He noted that the conference, which has an estimated membership of some 12,231 members, had 286 baptisms that year. He also noted that some 33 churches had none or very low baptisms. He then encouraged delegates to take evangelism more seriously. “Nobody wants what you have, if what you have is not working for you,” Cox admonished. “If you think you can finish the work without lifestyle evangelism, then you are deluding yourself. … Jesus can’t come anywhere until the gospel is spread everywhere.” Cox also noted that while the conference was not growing as fast as he’d like, he was pleased to see that the church had grown in diversity. Due to the efforts of Walter Castro, director of Multicultural Ministries and church planting, 10 churches were planted during in the quadrennium, three in 2012. The conference now boasts 52 English-speaking churches, seven Spanish-speaking churches, two Korean churches and two Haitian churches. However, right before the constituency session, Castro accepted a call to the Florida Conference. Education also was a bright spot. The conference’s two schools have seen record enrollments. Columbus Adventist Academy in Columbus has 105 students and Ramah Junior Academy in Cleveland has 88. In outlining his plans for the conference’s future, Cox discussed infrastructure development and professional development for clergy and making evangelism their number-one priority. He also shared the conference theme for 2012: “We are a FAMILY,” with the acronym standing for faith, acceptance, mission, integrity, love and you. Robert Moore, who served as executive secretary in the previous quadrennium and presented the secretary’s report for the session, focused on efforts made to train church clerks to input membership records into the eAdventist system. He reported that there are now 8,000 members in the system. He then welcomed four new churches that joined the conference during the past quadrennium: Erie Temple in Erie, Pa.; Beacon of Hope in Columbus; Bethesda Haitian church in Roanoke, Va.; and Ohio Philadelphie Haitian church in Columbus. Additionally, delegates voted to close the Beckley and Kimball churches, both in West Virginia. Moore also spoke about the conference’s relatively low rate of baptism. He compared the conference’s high point for the quadrennium, 498 accessions in 2009, to when baptisms averaged around 206 accessions in 2012. He noted that many of the conference’s churches have memberships of 50 and below. “We are not growing fast enough to avoid museum status,” he said. “Not many of our churches are growing. In fact,
many are decreasing.” He warned that without growth, the conference will face a financial crisis. However, he was hopeful. “We have to sustain active evangelism, and with clergy and laity working together, God will bless us,” he said. In the treasurer’s report, which she titled “State of the Plate,” Seward reported that the conference has taken in $27 million over the past four years and detailed how the monies were spent. In addition to listening to reports and electing officers, delegates also considered some changes to their constitution. The bylaws committee recommended that all officers and department heads be limited to two full terms of service, a total of eight years in their position. Delegates defeated the measure. Despite a motion made from the floor to dissolve all term limits, they did, however, leave in place a current bylaw that limits the president to two terms. They also voted to include a position on the executive committee for one young adult and one multicultural representative. Delegates also voted in the following department heads:

- **Bryant Taylor**  Communication
- **Jerome Hurst**  Community Services
- **Sharon Bowen**  Disability Ministries
- **Yvette Cooper**  Education, Singles Ministries and Health Ministries
- **Lloydston Burton**  Family Ministries
- **Kenneth Washington**  Personal Ministries and Message magazine
- **Colin Parkinson**  Prayer Ministries
- **Melvin Mitchell**  Prison Ministries
- **Jack McCrory**  Stewardship, Wills and Trust, and Campground
- **Danny Milton**  Religious Liberty
- **Joel Johnson**  Youth Ministries, Pathfinders, Adventurers
- **Allen Baldwin**  Men’s Ministries, Children’s Ministries, Sabbath School
- **Shirley Benton**  Women’s Ministries
- **Carl Rogers**  Sensational Seniors
- **Multicultural Ministries**  To be determined by executive committee (TBD)
Young Adult Ministries TBD

Publishing Ministries TBD

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Columbia Union Conference of Seventh–day Adventists


Columbia Union Leaders Discuss Young Adult AttritionWhole Church Solution Needed, Speaker Says

Story by Taashi Rowe Published 5/17/13

A 2011 book reveals that 59 percent of young adults are leaving the church.

A. Allan Martin, PhD, didn’t mince words. A former professor at the Seventh–day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University (Mich.) and a current young adult pastor at a thriving church in Texas, Martin hit the members of the Columbia Union Conference Executive Committee with stark numbers: some 60 to 70 percent of young people leave the Seventh–day Adventist Church. Yesterday Martin gave a nearly two–hour long presentation to committee members meeting at the Columbia Union headquarters in Columbia, Md. Using the David Kinnaman book You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church ... and Rethinking Faith as his primary reference, Martin brought the gathering up to speed on the whys and wherefores of persistent young adult attrition from churches across North America. For his book, Kinnaman, president of the Christian research firm the Barna Group, looked at the Christian community as a whole.

However, Kinnman’s findings may not have been exactly news to the committee members. “We’ve heard the sirens in regard to young adult attrition for years,” Martin said. He then
referenced Roger Dudley's 2000 book *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories From a Ten-Year Study*, which had similar findings as Kinnaman. Dudley who led the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University, tracked hundreds of young North American Adventists from the late 1980s through the late 1990s, and, found that between 40 and 50 percent of teens end up leaving the church.

Martin noted that repeating the information he shared today was important because, “most of this stuff is not intuitive. The Seventh-day Adventist church is about 25 years behind culture and about 15 years behind mainstream Protestantism so the older generation is still trying to figure it out.”

With young adults continuing to drop out, the union's executive committee members have made engaging and partnering with young adults to further the mission of the church one of their six priorities for 2011–2016. Bringing in Martin to address the leadership on this critical issue was one small step in the direction of stanching the exodus of young adults from the church. While Martin gave some familiar reasons why young adults leave the church, which include them finding it repressive, overprotective, shallow, exclusive, anti-science and having no room for doubt, the presentation also left room for discussion and some solutions.

Beverly Miles said in the urban areas he noticed that those who are leaving the church “feel no need for Jesus in their life and find that answers come from another source.”

Martin was not surprised. He responded that he knew a young lady who became a Muslim because she felt that a greater sense of community and involvement in that religion.

**An Intergenerational Solution**

Martin also discussed how generational differences impact today’s church including that flattened hierarchical structures have made it easier for young adults to have immediate access to formally distant “authority figures.”

Rubén Ramos, assistant to the Columbia Union president for Multilingual Ministries, wondered if a child’s early education and relationship with their parents impacted their future relationship to their church.

Martin said while he could not fully answer that question, he did know that a child’s relationship with his parents does impact what kind of adult he will become. He also said
more youth pastors alone was not the answer. “Kids are smart enough to know that the youth pastor gets paid to be their friend,” he said. “Not having a significant relationship with another adult makes young adults two times as likely to drop out of church.”

He continued, “Older adults are missing from young people’s lives. They are going to their friends [for moral centering] not their parents who have dismissed themselves from young people’s lives.”

Dennis Austin, a Pennsylvania Conference pastor, admitted, “There are some churches that want nothing to do with young people. Sometimes we demonize young adults by telling them we don’t have a place for them so we give them their own spaces. But we need each other. We need to find ways to encourage our congregations to become intergenerational.”

Martin agreed, “It is our responsibility to interface with the next generation of the church. I’m all about church planting but if it’s done to segregate, then the church will become anemic especially if it is done to accommodate a preference for a certain worship style.”

Martin then detailed the ABCs and D of building young adult relationship, which included authenticity, belonging, compassion and discipleship. He especially stressed longitudinal relationships or what he calls reverse mentoring. “We used to look toward the ‘sage on the stage,’ but this generation is more interested in the ‘guide on the side,’” he said. Finally, he asked committee members to write down the names of 10 young adults who have varying connections to the church, pray for them and reach out to them.

Following the presentation Dave Weigley, Columbia Union president, promised to procure copies of Kinnaman’s book for committee members. “I hope this presentation was beneficial to all of us,” he said. “If we are serious about engaging young adults, we must realize that this was just one step in the process of intentionally reaching them.”

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Macedonia Members Support Better Living Thru Faith

Story by Taashi Rowe; Photo by Patricia Wagner Published 5/21/13

Macedonia members pose in front of the Better Living Center on the day of the grand opening.

Members of Allegheny East Conference’s Macedonia church in Chester, Pa., have taken a flying leap of faith. Looking around their community they saw many of their neighbors in need and wondered how they could help. So after surveying residents, they renovated an empty building on their property to the tune of $100,000 and are now using it as a community center. Calling it the Better Living Center, members opened the center last fall. The building has a nearly $90,000–a–year operating budget and the church, which has a membership of 70, is committed to supporting this project to the tune of $30,000 annually. They have also received help from the North American Division, Allegheny East Conference and from several corporate donors, but church members are by far providing the highest subsidy both in monies and volunteer time.

“On the balance sheet, it doesn’t make sense,” said Blane Stoddart, president of the center. “This is a huge cost center for our church, but we believe it’s going to change lives and it has changed lives.”

According to the 2010 United States Census, some 32.3 percent of Chester residents are below the poverty line, and church members aim to help through distributing food to some 30 families each month; tutoring 80 kids a month; and providing a computer lab for training, home work and job search. They’ve even teamed up with a nearby YMCA to provide summer programs for youth and are preparing inmates at the local prison for re-entry to society when they are released. All these services are offered free of charge.

“We are not just about having church services each Sabbath, we want to be there as a
service to the community. The church exists to help people on a regular basis,” said George Jackson, the church’s pastor.

“The numbers don’t add up, but God is faithful,” Stoddart says. For more information, or to donate, contact Stoddart at 610) 497 1082.

Church members gave away book filled with school supplies at the center’s opening.

During the grand opening, a volunteer provides free health screenings, including blood pressure checks.

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GLEN BURNIE CENTER GETS A FACELIFT

May 16, 2013

Last Thursday, about 100 volunteers spent the day sprucing up the Community Services center operated by the Glen Burnie (Md.) church. The volunteers came as part of the nationwide Keller Williams Realty RED (Renew, Energize and Donate) Day initiative dedicated to celebrating the company’s commitment to improving the community. According to agent Wendy Hess, about 80,000 agents across the United States participated in RED Day this year.

Star Hood, a center volunteer and realtor for the Keller Williams Crofton/Ft. Meade agency, nominated the center as a project site. In addition to the realtors, who are all independent contractors who take a day from work to volunteer, Hood says that the staff reaches out to builders and skilled contractors to join in the effort.

“Keller Williams is like a family,” says Hood. “We come together and we give back to the community.”

Renovations included painting of the center and outbuildings, new flooring, kitchen countertops and doors, landscaping and the clearing of an adjacent lot.

Carolyn Goss, church community services director, coordinates up to 45 volunteers. She estimates that about 400 people come through the center each week. A hot meal is served to 150 local residents each Tuesday, groceries and clothing are distributed to those in need of basic supplies, and support groups such as a local Alcoholics Anonymous chapter regularly use the center as a meeting place.

“The RED Day was an answer to our prayers,” said Diego Boquer, church pastor. “The Lord is faithful, and this has encouraged Glen Burnie church to do the Master’s work in our community.
even more. To God be the glory."

- Samantha Young

Photos by Evelyn Gates and Samantha Young

Volunteers prepare the floors for installation of new vinyl flooring.

Volunteers unload supplies. Local vendors donated building materials valued at $15-20K.

Glen Burnie members Evelyn Gates (left), conference Adventist Community Services director, and Carol Goss stop to appreciate the magnitude of work accomplished in just one day.
Diego Boquer (center), Glen Burnie pastor, takes a break with volunteers. Star Hood (far right) and Wendy Hess (next to Hood) organized the project.
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.