Weekly News From Around the Columbia Union Conference

March 5, 2014

Columbia Union President Offers Prayer in U.S. Senate

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“We’re thankful to Chaplain [Barry] Black for providing this opportunity,” says Celeste Ryan Blyden, the union’s communication director, who coordinated the prayer with Black, who serves as U. S. Senate chaplain. “As a church, we need to seek more opportunities to make connections, build relationships and increase...
Union Leaders Meet With Senate Chaplain

The Columbia Union group of conference presidents who visited the U.S. Capitol on Tuesday also took time to interact with Barry Black (pictured center), an Adventist minister who has served as the U.S. Senate chaplain since 2003. While there, Walter Carson, the Columbia Union’s vice president and general counsel, presented the chaplain with an obelisk and thanked him for his “outstanding service to his country and his church.”

Black told the church leaders that if they have not taken the time to get to know their government officials, they are missing a great opportunity to get more involved in their government. “These are the last days. I challenge you to interact with our government authorities before it is the last time,” he said. “Having been here with a front seat to history, I have seen the difference that interaction can make when teaching the Word of God.” Black leads a weekly Bible study for senators and staffers.

On Capitol Hill, Union Leaders Wrestle With Church, State Separation
On Tuesday, with the United States Capitol building only a few blocks away, about a dozen leaders of Columbia Union’s local conferences, university and healthcare systems wrestled with ideas on choice and separation of church and state.

The three-lecture symposium was the brainchild of Walter Carson, the union’s vice president and general counsel; and Gary Ross, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty consultant.

Carson noted that this day was the first of its kind for the Columbia Union. “As leaders of the church, religious liberty is an important component of our faith, and this opportunity to get an in-depth lesson on this matter is not always available. We believe this day has equipped us all to be better leaders,” he said. Pictured is Dwight Nelson who spoke about freedom of choice.—Story by Taashi Rowe

**Capitol Hill Workers Encourage Involvement**

Michelle Chin (pictured left with Walter Carson), a member of Potomac Conference’s Capitol Memorial church in Washington, D.C., and a legislative assistant for Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, was delighted with the union leaders’ visit. Chin, whose senator has been a co-sponsor of the Workplace Religious Freedom Act, said to them, “I just want to encourage you, as pastors, to encourage your church members to be active. I think one thing beautiful about the Adventist Church [is] while we are interested in policy, we haven’t been active in pushing on these very divisive and controversial social issues.”
Dwayne Leslie (pictured right), director of legislative affairs for the General Conference, also encouraged more Adventist involvement in government. "I think we have an important voice to be heard," he said. "We can have an influence. We can fight for freedom."—Story by Taashi Rowe

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**New Principal to Lead Highland View Academy**

Starting July 1, Malcolm E. Hutchinson, EdD, will be the new principal of the Highland View Academy (HVA) in Hagerstown, Md. "We're excited to have Dr. Hutchinson join us at Highland View Academy," says Rick Remmers, conference president. "His experience, combined with his energy and passion for Adventist education, will be a great asset in advancing HVA's mission to provide a Christ-centered program of academic excellence."

Hutchinson transfers from Richmond Academy in Virginia, where he has been principal since 2011. He has a solid background in boarding academy settings, having been an administrator at Pine Tree Academy in Maine, Blue Mountain Academy in Pennsylvania and Bakersfield Adventist Academy in California. Hutchinson was also a corporate executive for several years. "After traveling the world as a director for a Fortune 500 company, I consider serving at HVA a God-given opportunity," he says.—Story by Samantha Young

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**Ohio to Bring Back an ABC on a Limited Basis**

After the Ohio Conference's lone Adventist Book Center (ABC) closed in December, church leaders have been working to bring to members a similar service. David Kijak, former manager of distribution for the Pacific Press Publishing Association in Idaho, is partnering with the Clark Distributing Company in Tennessee to lease the old ABC building. The space will be called New Leaf Market and will be open for business in mid-March.

The healthy food store will carry bulk, frozen and canned products. There are no plans to carry denominational books at this point. Kijak plans to have the store...
Allegheny East Literature Evangelists Brave the Cold

Two sisters and literature evangelists in the Allegheny East Conference’s Youth for Change literature evangelism program braved the weather on one of the coldest days of the year. Gessy and Hongkara Desir (pictured), students from the Washington Adventist University in Takoma Park, Md., entered Sporty’s Perfect Gentlemen Barber Salon in Chesapeake, Va., and came out with a testimony.

They shared with the men copies of the book Bible Answers. All of the men seem to be interested and excited about the book. Three out of the four purchase Bible Answers, including Anthony Harrell, the owner of the shop. Immediately afterward, the gentleman in the chair getting a hair cut by the owner started a conversation on God’s grace for sinners. This led to the sisters giving them a Bible study right there on the spot. Harrell later sent a text to Reginald Alexander, the program director, which said, “It was record low temperature today, but the ladies came in the shop and set the shop on fire with a good word. They are truly representatives of Youth 4 Change.”

Is Custom-made Education the Future of Adventist Education?
The Columbia Union is in its second year of a five-year initiative to encourage a more intentional focus on viewing students as individuals and factoring in their learning levels, interests and styles when teaching. The goal? Making sure that all students—whether struggling, on level or advanced—have the opportunity to learn and succeed. Is this the future of Adventist education? Read more of the March Visitor cover story here.—Story by Arin Gencer

Cómo los maestros hacen que la educación funcione para todos los estilos de aprendizaje
Los maestros en Columbia Union están adoptando un concepto que los funcionarios de educación esperan que se establezca como práctica común. La enseñanza diferenciada (DI por sus siglas en inglés) insiste en ver a los estudiantes como individuos y tener en cuenta sus niveles de aprendizaje, intereses y estilos al momento de enseñarles, para que así todos—los que tienen problemas, los promedio y los avanzados—tengan la oportunidad de aprender y triunfar. La Unión se encuentra en el segundo año de una iniciativa de cinco años que promueve una atención más intencional en este enfoque, y así mejorar el aprendizaje estudiantil. Lea más en inglés. —Historia por Arin Gencer

End Quote: I’m a Rwandan Genocide Survivor

Norah Bagirinka, who is a member of Ohio Conference’s Worthington church, shared her story in this month’s issue of the local magazine Columbus Monthly. Below is an excerpt:

“I am a [Rwandan] genocide survivor. I was from the small tribe the Tutsi. I had intermarried a Hutu. We started working for the [Seventh-day Adventist] Church. It
was fun; life was good. But there were rumors of war. Then in 1994, when the genocide came, it was so horrible.

We were staying at the mission station. A lot of people were coming to hide during the war thinking they would get protection. The killers waited because they knew. They waited until we were more than 2,000. And then one morning, our whole compound was surrounded.”

Click here to read the rest of her story.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARYLAND

March 8: Highland View Academy’s senior class members invite all to enjoy their performance of Trouble Across the Pond. Tickets will be sold at the door; prices are as followed: Single—$10, Couple—$18, Family of Four—$30 (plus $5 for each additional child). The school is located at 10100 Academy Drive in Hagerstown. For more information, visit hva-edu.com.

OHIO

March 14: Christian recording artists Selah, Mark Schultz and JJ Heller will appear in a concert sponsored by the Kettering College Office of Spiritual Life and Kettering Seventh-day Adventist church. The free concert will take place at the Kettering church. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., with the show beginning at 7:30 p.m., and seating is general admission. The church is located at 3939 Stonebridge Rd. in Kettering. Admission is free, and everyone is welcome. A freewill offering will be collected.

VIRTUAL

February 17-April 14: Oakwood University is competing again in the “Retool Your School” Contest. With the support of Adventists worldwide, the university won a $50,000 prize that allowed them to construct an outdoor pavilion. Once again, Oakwood is the only Adventist institution in this competition. You can help Oakwood to win again by visiting https://www.retoollyourschool.com/vote-now/ and voting daily and on every computer and device you own. You can vote more than once as long as it is on a different your own computer and device.

March 6: Join the NAD Prayer Ministry team for an all-night prayer teleconference, from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. ET. Call (712) 432-0031; access code is 435650#. Each half hour will have a different leader. Join any time during the call, even if you can participate for only a few minutes. Invite your friends and family. To become a prayer warrior for evangelism and receive weekly prayer requests send an email to nadprayerministries@gmail.com. Download a bulletin insert for your church.

TENNESSEE

February 4-March 7: Submissions for the 2014 SONscreen Film Festival, which will take place on the campus of Southern Adventist University in Tennessee will be accepted starting February 4. The regular submission deadline is March 1 and the late fee deadline is March 7. Click here to register.
Why Were We on Capitol Hill?

your SONscreen 2014 entry.
Columbia Union President Offers Prayer for U.S. Senate

columbiaunionvisitor.com/columbia-union-president-offers-prayer-for-u-s-senate/

March 4, 2014 · by Michelle Bernard · in Columbia Union News

Columbia Union President Offers Prayer for U.S. Senate

*Story by V. Michelle Bernard*

On Tuesday Columbia Union President Dave Weigley offered the opening prayer for the U.S. Senate in the Senate Chamber of the U.S. Capitol.

“It is a great honor for me to participate, but it is not about me. It is about the church,” said Weigley, the first Seventh-day Adventist Church president to do so. “We are a viable force that God has designed to be on the Earth just before His return. This is recognition that God is calling our church to be involved in the last days. That is why Barry Black is there.”

U.S. Senate Chaplain Barry Black invited Weigley to serve as guest chaplain for the day. Black, whose prayers during the Federal shutdown made federal headlines, encouraged Weigley and the other leaders from the Columbia Union to become more involved in their local governments.

“Your group represents the greatest number of Seventh-day Adventist leaders who have ever visited my office. In the nearly 11 years that I’ve been here, there haven’t been many of our leaders to visit this office … You’re missing a great opportunity frankly to become more involved in the governments where you are. Many of you know that the prayers that I prayed during the Federal Shutdown became almost a cause célèbre. People are waiting for gadflies. People are waiting for individuals who are not afraid to call sin by its name,” he continued.

Black, chaplain since June 2003, is the first Seventh-day Adventist to serve in this position.

“We’re thankful to Chaplain Black for providing this opportunity,” says Celeste Ryan Blyden, the union’s communication director, who coordinated the prayer with Black and his staff. “As a church we need to seek more opportunities to make connections, build relationships and increase awareness of our faith.”

The prayer includes six Bible texts and the “Doxology,” and espouses Adventist beliefs in creation, the Second Coming, religious liberty and community service. It aired on C-Span2. Here is a transcript of the prayer:

*Let us pray.*

**Almighty God, Creator and Maker of all. Who sits enthroned above the Earth, and in whom we live, move and have our being.**

*We praise You from whom all blessings flow. We thank You for Your sustaining power, for peace and for the freedoms we enjoy.*
We ask Your blessing on our great nation, insightful leaders and dedicated lawmakers. Establish their steps, and give them discernment and courage to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly. Strengthen them to uplift those who are downcast, who need the compassionate touch of a brother or sister's hand.

Above all, may Your Kingdom come, may Your will be done and may we readily incline our ears to Your call today.

This we pray in Your holy and righteous name. Amen.

Before the prayer, Weigley, his Columbia Union leadership team and the presidents of the union’s eight conferences, Washington Adventist University in Takoma Park, Md., and an Adventist HealthCare representative met with Chaplain Black and several Adventist Hill staffers. Earlier that day, they met nearby for a special symposium on religious liberty.
On Capitol Hill, Columbia Union Leaders Wrestle With Church, State Separation

March 5, 2014 · by Taashi Rowe · in Uncategorized

Church leaders from around the Columbia Union spent the day in Washington, D.C., where they attended a symposium on religious liberty from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective.

Story by Taashi Rowe

Yesterday, with the United States Capitol building only a few blocks away, about a dozen leaders of Columbia Union’s local conferences, university and healthcare systems wrestled with ideas on choice and separation of church and state.

Interestingly, while Columbia Union leaders were guests of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (BJCRL), the focus for the day was looking at religious freedom from a uniquely Seventh-day Adventist perspective.

“I can’t think of any two groups that care more about religious liberty,” said J. Brent Walker, BJCRL’s executive director, when welcoming the group. “I’ve found it beneficial to work with Adventists on this issue as we promote religious freedom for all of God’s children.”

The three-lecture symposium was the brainchild of Walter Carson, the union’s vice president and general counsel; and Gary Ross, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty consultant.

Carson noted that this day was the first of its kind for the Columbia Union. “As leaders of the church, religious liberty is an important component of our faith and this opportunity to get an in depth lesson on this matter is not always available. We believe this day has equipped us all to be better leaders,” he said.

Dwight Nelson, senior pastor of the Pioneer Memorial church and an adjunct homiletics professor at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Michigan, began the day by discussing freedom of choice and found biblical parallels to the American democratic system.

Jon Paulien, dean of the School of Religion at Loma Linda University in California, titled his talk “America and the End-Time in Prophecy: A Seventh-day Adventist Perspective.”

Although much of the day’s focus was on the potential dangers of an entangled church and state, Doug Morgan, professor of history at Washington Adventist University in Takoma Park, Md., spoke of AT Jones, one of the first Adventists to make a foray into influencing legislation. He pointed out that Jones’ efforts as well as Ellen White’s writings support conscience-based activism.

Gary Ross summed up the lectures for the day as “substantial, relevant and beautifully presented.”

Attendees also briefly met with two Adventists who work on Capitol Hill: Dwayne Leslie, director of legislative affairs for the General Conference, and Michelle Chin, a legislative aid for John Cornyn, a Texas senator.
**Meeting With The Senate Chaplain**

The group also met with Barry Black, an Adventist minister who has served as the U.S. Senate chaplain since 2003. While there, Carson presented the chaplain with an obelisk and thanked him for his “outstanding service to his country and his church.”

Black told the church leaders that if they have not taken the time to get to know their government officials, they were missing a great opportunity to get more involved in their government. “These are the last days. I challenge you to interact with our government authorities before it is the last time,” he said. “Having been here with a front seat to history, I have seen the difference that interaction can make when teaching the Word of God.”

In reflecting on the day, Ron Halvorsen, Jr., president of the Ohio Conference, said the entire day was a reminder that throughout Scripture, God placed spiritual people in the political arena. “We have such a strong community stance on separation of church and state that we’ve stayed at arms length from [government]. The presenters did a good job of talking about how to be a spiritual voice for justice. And Dr. Black’s challenge that we get to know our political leaders is a good reminder of that,” he said. “The other reminder is that if people don’t know us, it’s easier for them to stereotype us and what we believe. When they know us, we are friends and they know we care. And who knows what difference it can make at key moments.”
Custom-Made Education

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February 27, 2014 · by Michelle Bernard · in Chesapeake Conference, Education, New Jersey Conference, This Month's Issue

How teachers are making education work for all learning styles

Article by Arin Gencer Photo by Jamie Bodo

Flexibility is at the heart of Carrie Hess’ English classes at Spencerville Adventist Academy (SAA) in Spencerville, Md. That flexibility is manifested in several ways: Assessing students before test days and rescheduling if they haven’t quite grasped a concept. Allowing some to do alternate assignments or giving others more time to complete papers if inspiration has yet to strike. Coming to school with an agenda that can change once she gauges where her class stands.

“You’re not lowering your standards, but the way you’re able to get your students to that standard may vary from student to student,” says Hess, who teaches juniors and seniors. “It’s about doing what’s right for that student at that point in time.”

Hess’ approach to teaching embraces a concept that education officials in the Columbia Union hope becomes common practice. Differentiated instruction (DI) emphasizes viewing students as individuals and factoring in their learning levels, interests and styles when teaching so that all—whether struggling, on level or advanced—have the opportunity to learn and succeed. The union is in its second year of a five-year initiative to encourage a more intentional focus on this approach and, ultimately, improve student learning.

Join our panel of education experts Tuesday, March 18, at noon, to discuss why Adventist education is still worth the investment, and for tips on how to help your child succeed, no matter what school they attend. Weigh in at facebook.com/columbiaunionvisitor.

“Differentiated instruction speaks to good teaching,” says Donovan Ross, the Columbia Union Conference’s associate director of secondary education. “It forces the teacher to expand his or her repertoire of teaching strategies.”

The concept also aligns with “what [Seventh-day] Adventists believe: that every child can learn; every child has God-given talent,” says Ileana Espinosa, the union’s associate director of elementary education.

Differentiation: A Quick Primer

Differentiation is “just a way of thinking about the classroom,” says Carol Tomlinson, chair of educational leadership, foundations and policy in the University of Virginia’s Curry School of Education, who has researched and written extensively on differentiated instruction and curriculum.

“It begins with the belief that kids come to you with different learning needs, and as teachers, we have to make a decision whether we do anything with those differences,” Tomlinson says. “The core of it is really the decision about whether a teacher needs to study his or her students and responds to what the students bring.”

Research shows students bring three key elements to the classroom, Tomlinson says, all of which differentiation responds to: a readiness to learn, which can vary by subject; personal interests; and learning profiles—a combination of gender, culture, how children’s brains are wired and their learning style (i.e., whether they learn better by reading or listening).

Readiness—assessing where a child is in a given subject on a given day—is the most important, she says. “Addressing readiness is necessary for academic growth. If we don’t get a kid … in the right ballpark, they don’t learn. They can’t learn.”

As classrooms have grown more diverse in the past 15 to 20 years, more people have seen the need to differentiate, Tomlinson says. “Differentiation is very broadly accepted as good practice, and in public schools in the United States and Canada, it appears as a key
element in systems for evaluating teacher effectiveness.”
We are Russian, Japanese, Burmese, Mexican, Thai, Argentine, Polish, German, Ecuadoran, Peruvian, Iranian, Nepali, Canadian, Turkish, Palestinian, Vietnamese, Somali, Ethiopian, French, Pakistani, Chinese, Eritrean. In all, more than 104,000 of us were born somewhere other than in the U.S. We color and flavor the city with our languages, our culture, our art, our culinary traditions and our clothing. We grow communities of fellowship and faith with our fellow countrymen. We are American.

We are Columbus.

Norah Bagirinka, asset development coach, ECDI, founder, Rwanda Women in Action
Norah Bagirinka

**Occupation**: Asset development coach, Economic and Community Development Institute; founder, Rwanda Women in Action

**Home country**: Rwanda

**Lives in**: Worthington

I am a [Rwandan] genocide survivor. I was from the small tribe, the Tutsi. I had intermarried a Hutu. We started working for the [Seventh-day Adventist] Church. It was fun; life was good. But there were rumors of war. Then in 1994, when the genocide came, it was so horrible.

We were staying at the mission station. A lot of people were coming to hide during the war thinking they would get protection. The killers waited because they knew. They waited until we were more than 2,000. And then one morning, our whole compound was surrounded. They were identifying who was a Hutu and who was not. They told my husband, "Walk away and take the kids. She has to die." In the church, they said, "Sing your last songs; say your last prayers. Even your God has forgotten about you." Then immediately they started shooting.

It was chaos. I went down under the chairs, and I laid down there. After some hours, I heard someone shouting, "Whosoever can walk, let’s walk away. They’re coming back to finish us.” We were only three people in that church who survived.

After the genocide, I started working for an international women’s organization in Rwanda. I was hired to organize a women’s conference. There were journalists from all over. They were coming to me, but I chose one. She brought me to America. I helped her with [the documentary “God Sleeps in Rwanda”], but I didn’t know where it would take me. Eventually I was invited to come and speak [in Columbus], at the Seventh-day Adventist Church annual meeting. People said, ‘We wish you could live here in Ohio. We feel the spirit is calling you.’ I got my asylum in 2005 and moved to Columbus [from LA]. My sons came in 2008.

I decided to start my organization (Rwanda Women in Action) because I was helped by other people. Now, what about the women who come here with no language, with no skills? Who helps them? We help them. I belong here. I know my calling was here and I know why I am here. I know why I survived.

—As told to Michelle Sullivan

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