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Communication/Technology Director Southeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Regional Conference Presidents pull invitation to Bishop T.D. Jakes

By: Regional Conference Presidents
Date: 08/05/11
25 Comment(s) Read/Add Comment
Email this story to a friend.

The Regional Conference Presidents, with full support of the Pastoral Evangelism and Leadership Conference (PELC) planning committee, has made a decision after much deliberation and prayer, to pull back on our invitation to Bishop T.D. Jakes to share a leadership presentation at this year’s PELC. Our invitation to Bishop Jakes to speak at PELC is a continuation of the sixteen-year, successful outreach to ministers of other faith communities for the purpose of they’re having direct exposure to Seventh-day Adventist and our unique journey and mission.

The Lord has used these seasons of close contact to break down barriers and prejudices—providing greater understanding to those who have not always grasped the special calling of Seventh-day Adventist. Many, if not all, of our clergy colleagues of other faith communities have come away from their time in this unique setting among Adventist pastors with a greater appreciation and regard for our church. There is no doubt that God can and will in the future use strategically some of these contacts for His own purposes on behalf of our people.

While it should be noted that Ellen White directly encouraged reaching out in collegiality to “ministers and men of Influence,” unfortunately, there have been those who were sincerely unaware of the counsel that Ellen White provided relative to these endeavors. This clearly represents a time to inform as we move into the future.

But what’s been most disturbing has been those in the Adventist fellowship who were aware of the mission-driven strategy of PELC’s clergy outreach, but chose to mischaracterize and malign it by using tactics and methods that were clearly ungodly, notwithstanding their perspective.

There were inaccuracies put out that purported to speak with fact that Bishop Jakes was coming to teach evangelism at PELC, preach sermons to Oakwood University students, and even bring the Sabbath sermon at the University Church. None of this was remotely true, but some for their own purposes advanced this story. There was one particular web site put up by a group of anonymous individuals that so mischaracterized this outreach to clergy, that people were emotionally caught up in these anonymous individual’s perspective without realizing that Ellen White encouraged the exact opposite to what this website was espousing.

Our concerns heighten when misinformation strategies were deployed targeting Oakwood University students, and those anticipating attending Oakwood University. While Oakwood University is not linked to PELC at all, and has no purview over the speakers invited, we felt, given the impact on the University, that it was prudent not only to go in a different direction with our Non Adventist speaker this year, but to use this as a time to inform and dialogue about what it means in the 21st Century to reach out to clergy of other faith communities, in affirmation of Ellen White’s direct counsel in
this regard.

We invite and encourage both the North American Division and the General Conference leadership to speak strongly and decisively regarding ideological groups who use "attack" methodologies against their brothers and sisters to advance a point of view. This is ungodly behavior and must be termed as such. Silence in these regards only invites more of the same.

God is working in ways we don’t always immediately see, and thus our hope is that those who have been the most strident in advancing their views, will take time to reflect on the fact that we must take advantage of every opportunity to reach every one we can, even those who might on some points initially disagree with us.

The Pastoral Evangelism and Leadership Conference will continue to be firmly focused on evangelism and our passion in reaching everyone we can, as well as encouraging the same passion among our members: neighbors reaching neighbors, co-workers reaching co-workers, doctors reaching doctors, teachers reaching teachers, lawyers reaching lawyers, and pastors reaching pastors.

25 Comment(s) | Add Your Own Comment

Carnell | Aug/09/11 07:08:22
@ Frank. That's what I'm talking about from both sides.

Frank E. Legette III | Aug/08/11 03:08:25
I'm a bit concerned here. I'm always concerned when we use Ellen White to justify our actions and yet there is no quote from Ellen White for all to read for themselves to ascertain whether or not one's interpretation of her comments are consistent with her writings. When I looked up the quote that the brethren used to justify their decision to have T.D. Jakes speak at the Evangelism Council, I typed the words "minister's and men of influence" into the EGW software and here is what I found. Ellen White used the word "minister's" - 212 times, the word "and" - 228,556 times, the word "men" - 43,127 times, the word "of" - 232,689 times and finally, the word "influence" - 15,313 times. However, not once did she ever combine them in one sentence to say "minister's and men of influence." I'm not saying she didn't say something of the sort, all I'm saying is if the brethren are going to use one of her quotes to support their argument then, you must certainly provide where the reference or quote is to be found. Come on people, we are the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with the number one educational system in the world amongst Protestant Churches - I shouldn't have to explain this to you. It should be a no-brainer. You can't use an Ellen White quote without an ACCURATE EGW reference. Is anybody feeling me? I'm not refuting their claims. I'm saying, show us the evidence and we'll all shut up! I don't expect this kind of shoddy research from Seventh-day Adventist professionals. Let's do better. We must do better.

M.S.Waters | Aug/08/11 11:08:19
Dear Brethren, God has given us great light to guide us into perfect truth, via his messengers. As Seventh Day Adventists we represent the 3 ANGELS, and if I am not mistaken, which I don't believe I am, those three angels in Revelation are quite clear to stay away from those 3 FROGS in Revelation, so you want PEACE, all tongues tied, no sounding alarms, then let's stop making and ENCOURAGING statements like this: "that it was PRUDENT not only to go in a DIFFERENT DIRECTION with our Non Adventist speaker THIS year, but to use this as a time to inform and dialogue about what it means in the 21st Century to reach out to clergy of other faith communities, in affirmation of Ellen White's direct counsel in this regard." (THIS year, how long have the Angels been inviting th Frogs???) PRUDENT?? and DIFFERENT DIRECTION than what??) Please respond.

Brown | Aug/08/11 10:08:08
Jesus is the truth. The leaders prayed and made a wise decision. The issue is now settled. There is not a winning or a losing side. Let us also pray and move on. Let each one of us do our best to preserve the unity of the body. Let us pray and invite the Holy Spirit to continue to guide us in the truth. God is in charge.

Brown | Aug/08/11 10:08:19
Yes, the truth will set us free. Jesus is

Carnell | Aug/08/11 09:08:30
@Brown. No insult intended. I'm glad I'm not Jesus as well. But the Truth will set US free.

Brown | Aug/08/11 09:08:42
They said "after much deliberation and prayer, to pull back on our invitation to Bishop T.D. Jakes to share a leadership presentation at this year's PELC." We also need to follow the path of prayers and ask God to continue to reveal His light to us. Stop insulting each other. Carnell, I am glad you are not Jesus either. Let us all go to Jesus in prayers.

Carnell | Aug/08/11 08:08:58
Wouldn’t this be a great opportunity to present Bishop Jakes a set of the Spirit of Prophecy books since most Seventh Day Adventist live by these books instead of the Bible. Yea I said it! Now think about it!

Carnell | Aug/08/11 08:08:58
Wouldn’t this be a great opportunity to present Bishop Jakes a set of the Spirit of Prophecy books since most Seventh Day Adventist live by these books instead of the Bible. Yea I said it! Now think about it!

Carnell | Aug/08/11 08:08:59
I'm so glad none of you Brethren and Sisters are not Jesus with your comments.
Brethren, Do not be angry against each other. We all need to be saved thus we all need to be obedient to God's warnings. Sis. White never said to invite leaders of other denominations to teach us. Instead of interpreting sis. white's writings, why can't we just share her quotes and let people read for themselves? I invite all of you to read the chapter "False Shepherds" from Early Writings (http://www.gilead.net/egw/books2/earlywritings/ewindex.html). She said "God is displeased with us when we go to listen to error." Now we are inviting them to teach us their errors. We need to humbly go to God in prayers and thank him for the light shown.

Dear Brethren, You stated "While it should be noted that Ellen White directly encouraged reaching out in collegiality to ministers and men of Influence, How come you never invited the Pope!? T. D. Jakes openly rejects the Sabbath, not only that, he even BOASTS about it (Youtube), no apologies needed, courting of ideas leads to marriage of the same. Thank the Lord our Conference listened to the Holy Spirit.

How do we go to the world (who do not keep the commandments of God) to teach ministerial students, when God has given us the doctrines of our faith biblically? T. D. Jakes openly admitted that Seventh-Day Adventists are keeping the wrong day as the Sabbath. Why ponder over something like this on whether or not he should be the main speaker?
I'm all for reaching out to members and ministers of other faiths. But why not sit down with them in private and discuss God's Word with them? Personal contact and forming friendships is always a great way of coming close to others. How would bringing a minister with completely different beliefs strengthen ministers of our most precious faith? - Joe C.

Mac Crockett | Aug/06/11 07:08:43
Clearly, this is not about simply allowing a non adventist minister to address the evangelism council. Rather TD Jakes has used his expansive platform to openly challenged the core belief of the 7th day Sabbath. I think this is the problem. I have attended evangelism council in the past and this was not an issue. We can learn from non adventistbut our Leadership must always remember to seek out the comments from the "Pew". In a multitude of counsel there is safety. Proverbs 11:6

Joseph | Aug/06/11 08:08:56
In my opinion the explanation is worse than the invitation.

O.A. Dennis | Aug/06/11 03:08:43
With the advent of fast moving electronic communication we must make sure our message and motives are clear from the conception in order to inform the people. The negative add reached the mass before it could be cleared up. Let us close the door tighter with Jesus in our planning sessions before any premature leaks. Yes, the devil is very busy trying to foil our plans. I beleive the committee had good intentions. Brethen, Don't let this railroad the mission. My prayers are with you all. Peace and Blessing!

Jan Whittom | Aug/05/11 10:08:29
The tendency to hear a couple of facts, twist them, repeat them, fill in the gaps and then jump on a bandwagon is a shameful part of the SDA subculture that has chased me out of the church twice. Right now I am in the middle of a similar struggle but this time I'm fighting back! Reason and logic are God's gifts to us, to help us protect ourselves from deception and "groupthink".

phil | Aug/05/11 10:08:55
It's amazing that we relegate ourselves to ba a

Praise | Aug/05/11 07:08:23
i think its great that people stand for something. however, i wonder where were all these voices for the past several years when first day pastors were invited to preach! i'm not saying we're operating under sensationalism, but i speculate the uproar will soon die out and the next first day speaker will meet zero resistance. perhaps if the person invited was not world renown with little to no notoriety we wouldn't even be having this conversation.

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Selwyn Carrington | Aug/05/11 05:08:46
I believe this is the right decision. Our SDA community is a small one and we need to keep it together. Potentially divisive decisions should always be well thought out, especially when they may have adverse impact on our community. Let's continue to pray for our leaders in these difficult times when very challenging decisions will have to be made. "Be wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove"
Adventist Health Study-2 awarded $5.5 million from National Institutes of Health

By: Jennifer Frehn
Date: 08/05/11

The United States' National Institutes of Health (NIH) has awarded Loma Linda University's Adventist Health Study-2 a $5.5 million grant over the next five years, which will allow the study to continue its analysis on cancer and other lifestyle diseases. The award was announced July 27. "This will not only allow us to conduct our ongoing functions, but to conduct them more efficiently, and to begin analysis on projects we have had to shelf," said Dr. Gary Fraser, principal investigator of the study.

Adventist Health Study-2 is a long-term health study of more than 96,000 Seventh-day Adventists from the United States and Canada. The study began in 2002 with the purpose of examining the links between lifestyle, diet, and disease.

The study has operated without NIH funds for the past three years, but it has received other funds and grants, as well as significant support from Loma Linda University. The new funds come from the National Cancer Institute, a division within NIH, and will be used for analysis of cancer. This means funds the university had previously lined up for cancer can now be diverted to other areas the study is examining, as well as in support of new researchers.

Though the study is in the beginning stages of analysis, it has had several key findings so far, which include: linking a vegetarian diet to a lower risk of heart disease and diabetes; linking a high consumption of brown rice,
cooked green vegetables, dried fruit, and legumes to a lower risk of colon polyps, a precursor to colon cancer; and revealing that black and non-black Adventists report a higher mental and physical quality of life than the average American.

For more information, visit adventisthealthstudy.org.
On April 17, 2011 Samara Bowden, singer and song writer, recorded nine songs for the 11th season of new Kids’ Time programs, a popular children’s program on Three Angels Broadcasting Network (3ABN).

"What impressed me most, even above her beautiful voice, was her love for Jesus." said Brenda Walsh, producer and host of Kid’s Time. "When she sings, she forgets the cameras and just shines for Jesus! I have no doubt that God will use Samara in a powerful way to win souls for His kingdom.”

Bowden taped 15 songs last year and 9 songs for this season of Kid’s Time, and she is currently scheduled to return to the 3ABN studios to record during a special live taping in December 2011.

Bowden began her early musical training at the age of 5 under the direction of Jacqueline Waldon.

In the last five years, she has performed in Florida, Atlanta, California, Mississippi, Ohio, Illinois, and Western Samoa. She was recently a featured artist at the 2011 Black Adventist Youth Directors Association United Youth Congress in Orlando, Florida where she debuted two of her original songs entitled “Uh Oh” and “Like I do.”

She is currently going to the 8th grade and will be attending Mt. Olivet SDA School in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. She is a very bright student who is learning how to juggle school, friends and her passion of singing.

When asked why she loves to sing, Bowden simply said, “Jesus gave me this talent to sing, so why not use it? Every time I sing, I feel so free and happy.” Bowden is currently working on a solo album with producer Claude Matthews the Third and vocal coach Tracy Anthony. Bowden utilizes every opportunity to grow her talent and never lets a day go by without singing something.
New possibilities after family tragedy

By: Angela Baerg
Date: 08/05/11
0 Comment(s) Read/Add Comment
Email this story to a friend.

The lives of twins Cecilia and Dawnmarie Simmons were changed forever on June 11, 2009. Their parents, Jonathan, 47, and Undine, 46, were killed by a Ford Explorer driven by Joan Brown of Kentucky, who hit them while they were surveying the damage done to their vehicle, after it hit the guard rail on Highway 75 because a tire blowout.

Two years later the twins have continued to piece their lives back together. Enrolled in Southern Adventist University, the two are pursuing careers in education. From day one, the lives of twins Cecilia and Dawnmarie Simmons were filled with educators – their father, their uncle, their aunts, and their mother, who home-schooled them from elementary school through high school.

Believers in the importance of Christian community, the Simmons family, members of the Shiloh Seventh-day Adventist Church, involved their girls in many activities, including Adventurers, Pathfinders, and Bible Bowl. Cecilia and Dawnmarie always appreciated their unique educational experience, but didn’t realize how deeply it was a part of them until college.

For their associate’s degrees, the girls enrolled at a local community college. In keeping with their childhood experiences, they tried to get involved on campus, but found it difficult since so many events were held on Sabbath. When they enrolled at Southern Adventist University for their bachelor’s degrees, these limitations suddenly melted away.

“I had always wanted to be involved, and now everything was a possibility,” says Dawnmarie. “I could participate in whatever I wanted without a Sabbath conflict.” Dawnmarie’s first project was running for Senate. Nervous that she wouldn’t be able to balance her academic and extracurricular activities, she only half-heartedly campaigned, but her twin, Cecilia, who had faith in her abilities, secretly printed posters and urged people all over campus to vote for her sister. Dawnmarie won.
Things took off from there. Cecilia was soon getting involved herself, as a mentor for freshmen. Dawnmarie later became a resident assistant. Both girls participated in campus intramurals, led out in a women’s Bible study, and became officers in the campus chapter of the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI).

In the whirlwind of activities, the girls chose for their majors something that had been deep in their hearts for many years: education. The more they explored this field, the more they realized God had been preparing them for it all along.

“My love for learning began in our home when my mother home schooled us,” says Cecilia. “It was definitely a labor of love. I hope to be as much of a blessing to my future students as my mother was to me.”
ADRA continues famine relief in Somalia despite instability in region

By: Adventist News Network Staff
Date: 08/05/11

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Email this story to a friend.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency is continuing famine relief efforts in Somalia despite attempts by an insurgent group to ban Western aid organizations from the country and block starving Somalis from fleeing the country to neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia.

The agency's work in Somalia was first hampered last year when the group issued a declaration forbidding ADRA and two other international non-governmental organizations from operating within the country. The statement accused the organizations of "acting as missionaries under the guise of humanitarian work," ADRA said.

ADRA, which has pledged that its relief efforts "will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint," has since 1992 focused "solely" on emergency relief and development in Somalia, including water, sanitation and food security.

"ADRA remains committed to serving the people of Somalia, with the assistance and trust of the local communities, providing long-term, sustainable change," a July 29 press release from the agency stated.

The humanitarian agency has scaled up its initial response in the region in recent weeks. A newly appointed emergency coordinator based in Nairobi, Kenya is expected to oversee continued relief efforts alongside ADRA's Africa Regional Office, agency officials said.

The agency continues to administer a $4 million project in Somalia, maximizing access to clean drinking water, constructing latrines in refugee camps and distributing shelter supplies, ADRA said.

Low rainfall across much of the Horn of Africa, which includes Somalia, has contributed to the region's worst drought in 60 years.

Last week, the United Nations declared a famine in two locally-controlled parts of southern Somalia. The group's anti-Western policies are widely blamed for enabling the famine and frustrating relief efforts, the New York Times reported.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 11.5 million people in East Africa are currently in need of humanitarian assistance. One quarter of Somalia's population is now displaced, as they flee to neighboring countries in search of food and water, OCHA reported.
Adventist Church in Hungary loses legal status, must reapply under new legislation

By: Bettina Krause/IRLA/Adventist News Network
Date: 08/05/11

Under controversial legislation passed last month, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Hungary is one of 344 Christian churches and other faith groups that have lost their legal status and must apply to the Hungarian Parliament for registration. Only 14 religious organizations have retained their previous status under the new law, which human rights advocates around the world have decried as "draconian" and "oppressive."

Ócsai Tamás, president of the Adventist Church in Hungary, has expressed his dismay that, in spite of previous assurances by government leaders, the church must now undertake the considerable task of applying to parliament for renewal of its registration.

"We're currently reviewing this matter with our church members, legal experts, the Trans-European Division, and the General Conference, and we intend to make a decision in September regarding the best way to move forward," Tamás said.

"The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Hungary meets all the criteria for re-registration under the new law," he said. "We ask for the prayers of our brothers and sisters around the world as we face this challenge."

According to Raafat Kamal, director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty for the Adventist Church's Trans-European Division, the legislation that was passed by the Hungarian Parliament during the early morning hours of July 11 was very different to the version shown to faith groups during consultations in May and June this year.

"The process of applying for registration has now become politicized," Kamal said. "The outcome will be dependent on the political climate at any given time, and could expose religious minorities to unchecked discrimination."

John Graz, PARL director for the Adventist world church, says the new law has seriously compromised Hungary's standing as a country that respects and protects basic human rights.

"This law is inconsistent with both European values and with international covenants protecting religious freedom," Graz said. "We respectfully urge Hungary's lawmakers to consider the message this law sends to the international community, and to take steps to protect its religious