Dan Jackson Interviewed on Hope Channel Special Program

By: George Johnson

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Full story at http://www.secsda.org/sketches/story.cfm?id=1037

Church Chat: Where did London’s majority white church population go?

By: Ansel Oliver/ANN

Ian Sweeney says that within the more than 11,000 Seventh-day Adventist Church members in the London area there are probably less than 200 white British. Ian Sweeney, president of the Adventist Church in Britain, wants members to reach out to all cultural groups. Many areas in the UK have no Adventist presence, he says. [photo courtesy BUC] Like several world regions of the denomination, church growth there is mainly among immigrant communities.
Prayer: Joining Hearts with God's
By: By Ruthie Jacobsen, NAD prayer ministries coordinator
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Full story http://www.secsda.org/sketches/story.cfm?id=1038

Church leaders meet with Hungarian ambassador on looming deregistration of churches
By: Bettina Krause/PARL/ANN
Religious liberty leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church this week met the Hungarian ambassador to the United States in an effort to help officials from that country better understand the potential effects of a looming deregistration of churches.
Full story at http://secsda.org/sketches/story.cfm?id=1035
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Recently, Pastor Ted Wilson, General Conference president, sat down with Pastor Dan Jackson, North American Division president, and the rest of the Division presidents in a prerecorded interview for a Hope Channel special program called Revival for Mission. This 58:30 program shares reflections about their visit to Seventh-day Adventist historical sites in the northeastern United States. The program is available now on the ANN Web site. You can download the video in low quality (small) and high quality (large). If you want to use for radio or podcast you can download the audio only version. On the ANN site, the program is available for translation (by Google translator) in 63 languages. Please click "Multi-Lingual captions."

If you prefer to make a professional translation to your language you will find the text in English as a full transcript. (Below are the times when Revival for Mission will be aired on Hope Channel (DirecTV channel 368) and Hope Church Channel:(

Hope Channel( Fri., Dec. 30, 9:00 p.m. EST(Sat., Dec. 31, 9:00 a.m. EST(Sat., Dec. 31, 12:00 p.m. EST(Sat., Dec. 31, 3:00 p.m. EST(Sat., Dec. 31, 6:00 p.m. EST( 

Hope Church Channel( Fri., Dec. 30, 10:00 p.m. EST(Sat., Dec. 31, 8:00 a.m. EST(Sat., Dec. 31, 11:00 a.m. EST(Sat., Dec. 31, 8:00 p.m. EST(Sat., Dec. 31, 11:00 p.m. EST(}
THERE WERE 72 AT FIRST THAT WERE FOLLOWING JESUS. SOME CEASE FROM FOLLOWING HIM. HOWEVER, JESUS DID NOT CALL 72 DISCIPLES. HE chose 12.
Ian Sweeney says that within the more than 11,000 Seventh-day Adventist Church members in the London area there are probably less than 200 white British.

Ian Sweeney, president of the Adventist Church in Britain, wants members to reach out to all cultural groups. Many areas in the UK have no Adventist presence, he says. [photo courtesy BUC] Like several world regions of the denomination, church growth there is mainly among immigrant communities.

That's causing Sweeney, the president of the Adventist Church in Britain, to assess how Adventists are ministering to the 70 percent majority white population in London, as well as throughout the British Isles. His advice is for Adventists to find better ways of impacting communities surrounding its congregations.

He plans to identify people who excel at conducting ministry across cultural barriers in un-entered areas, which may require financial support for those regions without an Adventist presence.

Sweeney, 46, a black British national, was appointed president of the Adventist Church's British Union Conference in July.

He spoke with ANN by phone from his office in Watford the week before a quarterly meeting with his five local field presidents. He discussed issues involved in creating a plan to grow membership across the board, regardless of race or culture. He also discussed his influences and which biblical character might offer the most relevant example for his situation. Some interview excerpts have been edited for length:

Adventist News Network: What's the demographic makeup of the Adventist
Church in the British Isles?

Ian Sweeney: We're about 45 percent West Indian, and then slightly less than that is African and some from Asia. About 10 percent at most is white English, and I think I'm being generous with that.

ANN: What's your plan to build membership across the board, regardless of race and culture?

Sweeney: To start, we need to have the discussion, and we have begun that. My Communication director has started a blog on our website about this. It's also gone into the union paper, which comes out on a fortnightly basis. Within the church there are people who can minister cross-culturally and cross racially. I look at Peter and Paul. Peter was a great guy, but God had to give him a whole vision of sheep and unclean things just to get him to do one Bible study. Paul, however, had an ability to minister to the gentiles. It's not without significance that Paul was the major contributor to the New Testament. So my call to the pastors is, let's identify the Pauls who can minister outside their own cultural context.

ANN: What role does leadership play in reaching all cultures?

Sweeney: What we have to do is really support the pastors and conference presidents who are prepared to make the bold steps and say, "We see that things need changing. This is how we're going to try to reach our host community." It may evolve into placing pastors into un-entered territories and saying to them, "What do you need, how can we support you?" Then again, we put a person into an un-entered territory and there's no tithe to pay his wage. But I think it's about the stronger supporting that which is not so strong. We're going to have to be pioneers and send people into those un-entered territories.

ANN: Why is outreach a big part of this plan?

Sweeney: I suspect -- and I can tell by some of the comments on the blog -- that sometimes the church is so internalized looking at our own issues that our board meetings, for example, haven't spent the time as our church manual says for our primary focus of evangelism. In my previous church, instead of praying that people come in, we prayed about going out and we saw results. The figures weren't brilliant in context of big numbers, but the impact for me is not simply about how many accessions we bring, but about whether or not people know. Noah for example, was a useless evangelist if we look at him only by number of accessions. He reported zero baptisms for a century. But when the rain began to fall, everybody knew. Impact for me is about "Did somebody hear?"

ANN: How open are we to talking about race and racism in the church?

Sweeney: I think we're moving into a stage where we can speak more openly and honestly about issues that really face us. I'm not fully conversant on the history of the church here in Britain. I think there is [pain] and I'm sort of hesitant to speak of that era of the 50s and the 60s. I was raised here but that all predates me. I don't want to open too much of the old wounds.
When we have those discussions, I want it in the context of, "I hear where you came from, but this is where I think we all need to going." I know for some folk who are black they may say, what about the [historical] struggle? I'm not decrying the struggle. I'm simply saying let's never lose sight of what God has called us to do. I really want us to place our focus on the bigger picture, which is the 65 million or so in Britain who don't know Christ.

ANN: Where might repentance fit into how Revival and Reformation is expressed in UK?

Sweeney: I'm really glad for the whole emphasis that Elder Wilson is putting on Revival and Reformation and the Great Controversy Project, because to me it's about remembering our Adventist roots. One of the great challenges Britain has is that it isn't as God-friendly as the United States. Sure the queen is the head of the church in England, but believe me, this is not a Christian-welcoming society. Christians are often in the media under attack. Having said that, there is also in Britain a search for some sense of spirituality. There are churches that among the host community outside of Adventism that are growing. A lot of times Adventists think it's about the worship service and that you have to bring a band in. It's not about that. You have to be relevant to people's lives where they're at. Most of these growing churches do things that impact their community, whether it be childcare, mentoring, youth clubs, they are there visibly in the community saying, "We're here, we see your needs, how can we help you?" I think that's what we are to do as a church.

ANN: Who are your mentors and models of success?

Sweeney: One of the church leaders who has been an inspiration to me is Fredrick Russell [president of Allegheny West Conference based in Ohio, United States]. He has a principle, "Hang around people who are successful." And anyone who I see is doing something [I admire] I'll call them so I can sit at their feet. I'm reading Ted Engstron, The Making of a Christian Leader, I'm sharing that with our staff. I'm also looking at a book by Nigel Rooms, Faith of the English, which talks about integrating Christ with Culture. And Ellen White of course. Right now my biblical inspiration is Jeremiah. It's a difficult example -- God tells him to go preach and says "No one's going to listen, but do it anyhow." That's [caused] me to re-evaluate success. Do we need people to listen, or is it a success that we do what God asks us to do? He asks us to preach to those people because He loves them, not because He's trying to waste our time. I really want folk to go and witness because they love Christ.

ANN: How are you going to integrate faith and prayer into an action plan?

Sweeney: Coming back to Jeremiah, he cried for the people, cried over Jerusalem. The one thing we as Adventists are not seen to do well, when last have we cried over the lost? And I ask that starting with myself. We cry for money, for jobs, for this, for that, but what [Jeremiah] was doing was crying for the people who have been lost. One of the things we're emphasizing for 2012 is that if you're not crying in prayer for the lost, you're certainly not going to be interested in seeing them saved and working for their salvation.
At the beginning of each New Year, the North American Division church family joins together, setting aside the first Sabbath in January as the NAD Day of Prayer (January 7). Some begin on Friday night, and finish with a Prayer Breakfast on Sunday morning. In many places it has become a power-packed weekend of fellowship and intercessory prayer setting the tone for a new year.

As God's people join their hearts with His all across this vast Division on the first Sabbath (in some cases, it may be the second or third Sabbath) to pray together for our countries, our communities, our churches, our families, and our own needy hearts, He responds. Whether your fellowship decides on the full weekend, or a special prayer emphasis on Sabbath, join with your family all across this Division at this crucial time in our history. Is there a better way to begin the New Year, than to come together seeking harmony with the heart of God? ( ( 

The format for the Sabbath or weekend may vary according to the needs and purposes in your communities, but one component that is always appreciated is a time of prayer and blessing for our pastors, and conference, union, and Division leadership. Pray for those in your area by name, asking God for specific help and blessing. Let's stand on His Word and claim promises for the needs of our own hearts and those of others. (Recently I was impressed with an amazing quote from the beautiful book, Desire of Ages, which says, God is well pleased when His children make the very highest demands of Him, that we may glorify His name. We may expect large things if we have faith in His promises. p. 668 (As you look ahead, what great prayers would God lead you to pray? Why not ask Him to help you pray really big prayers?

Ask Him what is on His heart. How would He like to expand your horizon to include some of the people and needs you may not be praying for? (Your prayers profoundly affect the dark and hopeless places of the world ( 
because prayer is a life-changer: The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results. James 5:16 Touchpoint Bible (So how can we break through the darkness in the least-evangelized nations and the dark places in our nations of North America? The answer is prayer. Supernatural battles are only won with supernatural weapons.)

(Here are some ideas you may want to discuss with your prayer leadership committee. Incidentally, you'll want to have a planning/prayer committee, which meets regularly to consider the needs of the church and community.)

- 1. Seminars on Prayer walking. How to pray for an hour, or How to pray for your pastor and/or church leaders. These can precede the weekend, or be offered on Sabbath afternoon.
- 2. Some will have an all-night prayer service, or a come-and-go attendance through the night. If that's your plan, you may want to begin at sundown with a special vespers to open the Sabbath, and each hour until midnight or later, could be planned by a different person, family, Sabbath School class, or department in the church.
- 3. Invite pastors of other denominations to join you for this evening service. They may even wish to help with the planning. Provide for families with children to participate early in the evening.
- 4. You'll want to provide time for youth to sing, share, and pray. A personal testimony is not only an encouragement to others, but a strength for those sharing. Everyone has a story that can inspire someone.
- 5. Small group Bible studies with sharing and discussion of discoveries from each group is a memorable and inspirational experience. We learn from one another as we study and pray together.
- 6. Some may wish to plan some form of community outreach for the Sabbath prayer walking, visiting shut-ins, nursing homes, hospital patients, etc. Try to randomize the groups formed so that families and friends have an opportunity to meet and work with others.
- 7. Some plan for a baptismal service, special communion service, or Agape meal fellowship.
- 8. Some pray through the church directory, and prayer walk through the church, praying for each department and ministry even the baptistry.
- 9. Pray for your school and/or academies, colleges and universities in your community and conference.
- 10. Pray for churches of all denominations in your community. Do you have a request that seems impossible? You're not alone; you're in good company. Abraham was there too, but his faith never wavered (Romans 4:20).

We'll be praying for you that this New Year will be all that God has in mind for you and for your church.
Church leaders meet with Hungarian ambassador on looming deregistration of churches

By: Bettina Krause/PARL/ANN
Date: 12/30/11

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Religious liberty leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church this week met the Hungarian ambassador to the United States in an effort to help officials from that country better understand the potential effects of a looming deregistration of churches.

The Law of Churches, set for implementation on January 1, would deregister all but 14 religious denominations in Hungary, including the Adventist Church. It could also potentially affect the church's theological seminary.

Dwayne Leslie, legislative affairs director for the Adventist Church, was one of two church representatives who met with the Hungarian ambassador this week to explain the effects of the Law of Churches. Here, Leslie speaks at a religious liberty event in Washington, D.C. earlier this year. [ANN file photo]

Hungarian Ambassador to the United States, Gyorgy Szapary, met with officials from the Adventist Church's Public Affairs and Religious Liberty department on December 12 at the Hungarian embassy in Washington, D.C. While the law is still set for implementation, Adventist representatives later described the meeting as "cordial" and "productive."

"We expressed our deep concerns to Ambassador Szapary about Hungary's recently passed 'Law on Churches' and its impact, not just on the Adventist Church, but on many other minority religions as well," said Dwayne Leslie, the Adventist Church's director of legislative affairs. Leslie represented the Adventist Church at the meeting along with Ganoune Diop, the church's representative to the United Nations.

Diop and Leslie provided the ambassador with an overview of the international denomination and the history and scope of the Adventist
presence in Hungary. They also explained the potential impact on the Adventist Theological Seminary in Pécel, near Budapest, which serves 66 students.

Adventist Education officials have previously said the seminary is key for providing theological and counseling education in the Hungarian language and cultural context. "Although it's small, the seminary meets the needs of the church in Hungary for pastors and theologians, as well as for life style and family life counselors," said Mike Lekic, an associate Education director for the Adventist Church.

Following Monday's meeting, Diop said the ambassador was gracious and receptive to the issues presented by the Adventist Church. "The meeting provided an excellent opportunity for dialogue -- we stated our concerns clearly, and heard the perspective of the Hungarian government," he said.

When the new law, voted in July, goes into effect next month, it will strip all but 14 "historic" religions of their legal status. Minority religions must then apply to the Hungarian parliament for re-registration.

Since the legislation was passed, Hungary has maintained that the move was not "anti-religion," but rather a legislative means to root out fraudulent organizations operating behind the protection of religion.

Religious liberty advocates worldwide, however, have decried the law, calling it unnecessary state interference with religion and a setback for human rights in Hungary. More than 300 groups are set to lose their registration, including Hungary's Methodists, Unitarians, a number of Islamic communities, and many smaller Protestant and evangelical churches.

In November, Diop and John Graz, PARL director for the Adventist world church, met in New York with Hungary's ambassador to the United Nations to express the church's concerns about the potential plight not just of Adventists, but of other religious groups in Hungary that will be affected by the new law.

Leslie and Diop said the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty department will continue to monitor the situation in Hungary and will provide any assistance requested by local church leaders.