

Cover Feature

“Good News Atlanta”

Builds Momentum for General Conference 2010

BY TAMARA WOLCOTT FISHER

The Georgia-Cumberland and South Atlantic conferences are working together in practical ways to share Christ's love with the more than 5 million people living in the metro Atlanta area.

Recently, 285 church members from the two conferences worked together to build a Habitat for Humanity home in Atlanta. Each Sunday for seven weeks, volunteers met to raise the walls, hang sheet rock, paint, and put the finishing touches to the house. On the final Sunday, Ed Wright, president of Georgia-Cumberland, and Vanard J. Mendinghall, president of South Atlantic, met to help present the home to Angela Kendrick, a deserving single mother of three daughters.

"One of the most rewarding things about 'Good News Atlanta,'" according to Bill Winston, executive secretary of South Atlantic, "It has forged a strong bond with our sister conference, Georgia Cumberland. We worked together in cooperation with Habit for Humanity and built a beautiful home for a deserving family. What a joyful and rewarding experience that turned out to be!"

Good News Atlanta was founded in 2005 by churches from both conferences joining forces to meet the challenge of reaching the more than five million people living in the metro Atlanta area. With only 12.4 percent of this population attending church, the harvest is ripe but the laborers are few (Matthew 9:37).

"A disturbing set of figures shows that more than 450 new people move into Atlanta every single day, 365 days a year," says Bill Levin, director of Good News Atlanta, church planting, and global missions for Georgia-Cumberland. "Last year, Georgia-Cumberland baptized 1,171 individuals. While I praise God for these people who have given their hearts to Christ, I had to come to terms with this other figure. In any given three-day period, more people move into the Atlanta metropolitan area than all the people who were baptized in all of Georgia-Cumberland during 2007. Frightening!"

"We have already experienced many blessings as I have worked with leaders and members from both conferences, such as working side by side on the Habitat house with complete unity to show God's love," says Chris Donovan, global evangelism, and church planting assistant for Good News Atlanta. "For me, Good News Atlanta means participating in a 'new' evangelistic work that incorporates and models revolutionary steps which will help our Church return to the soul-winning results we had when we began. The biggest challenge I think we face is limiting God by allowing our fears to paralyze us, so we become unwilling to risk everything for the sake of a lost world."

Members and leaders from the two conferences share other exciting activities associated with Good News Atlanta.

Georgia-Cumberland's Initiatives

Church Planting

"Two days after Christmas, my family and I moved into an apartment complex in the most crime-infested area in Atlanta," says Rustin Sweeney, Good News Atlanta community life coordinator. Sweeney and his wife, Stacy, intend to plant



Rustin Sweeney, Good News Atlanta community life coordinator, and his wife, Stacy, moved into an apartment complex in the most crime-infested area in Atlanta so they could befriend and minister to their neighbors.

a church at their new apartment home. They have a deep interest in intentional community as described in Acts 2 and 4, opening their home to be a place of hospitality. It is estimated that 95 percent of people who live in apartment complexes don't attend church.

"After visiting over 60 apartment communities, we felt that God led us to the one He wanted. After only six days in our new apartment, our Jeep and other items were stolen, but God turned it into a blessing." Here is Sweeney's follow up email:

"Just wanted to praise God... Our Jeep was found and we were able to get it from impound tonight. I had asked God to somehow show my wife that, despite the things going on, He was in charge and protecting us. The \$40 in quarters for laundry and the new stereo were still in the car... and we are closer to Christ now than at the beginning of the day! ... When we got home tonight a bunch of guys were sitting in the gazebo, so my son and I went over and invited them all to Friday night dinner (and hopefully an encounter with the Father!)."

Reaching Postmoderns

Rhoda Lapp, postmodern coordinator for Good News Atlanta says, "Postmodern ministry helps Seventh-day Adventists build relationships with people of today's generation by sharing key elements in lifestyle, philosophy, and approach to the postmodern mind. A postmodern ministry is also very attractive to our young people who are interested in exploring alternative ways of connecting people to church life." LIFEdevelopment is a ministry specifically to postmoderns, primarily young people of today's culture, by being involved in building authentic friendships with unchurched, secular people, and in the process, lead them to Jesus, and provide them hope through support and nurture.

Fusion Sponsors Weekly Prayer Walks

"Weekly prayer walking in downtown Atlanta, Fusion, one example of postmodern ministry, goes



Volunteers raise the walls of the Habitat for Humanity house in Atlanta near the beginning of the project.



After seven Sundays of work on the Habitat for Humanity house in Atlanta, finishing touches were completed before the dedication ceremony.

out in search for lost souls on the streets. For the past eight months, this group has grown as a ‘Search and Rescue’ endeavor,” says Chris Bullock, pastor of the new church plant, Fusion. “Relationships have been formed with street, business, and residential dwellers. Drug addicts, the homeless, and prostitutes are valued as children of God. Homes have been entered. Worship takes place on street corners. Fusion believers know they are the Church, not a building. They take church to where life happens.”

Carrying Good News to Muslims

“As the Adventist Muslim relations person for The Quiet Hour, and one of the main educators for the North American Division Adventist Muslim Relations Center, yet living close to Atlanta, I am excited to share a picture of God’s love that includes Adventists being loving and lovable people and actually befriending Muslims,” says Bryan Gallant, assistant for Muslim relations, Good News Atlanta. “With-

in the scope of the Good News Atlanta team, my work is trying to help local Adventists learn how to share that picture of God in the most effective way so that individual Muslims can hear it and be blessed by it.” If you think the Three Angels’

Messages includes the mandate to share with EVERY people group, including Muslims, then maybe you should have a training program at your church or study group.

Doing Greenhouse Ministry in Crystal Cove

A cornerstone of Good News Atlanta is the little community of Crystal Cove, Georgia, approximately 35 miles north along Lake Lanier. Good News Atlanta as-

sistant Jan Levin says, “Several years ago, Bill and I were compelled to put the ‘Greenhouse’ (see sidebar) principles to the test. Using its simple principles, we prayed for God’s leading and entered a community (Crystal ‘Meth’ Cove), where we did not know anyone, or have any connections. We have since been meeting every Friday evening with more

than 30 people from this troubled community. There are currently five older teenagers attending a baptism class every Monday night, and several “Life Transformation” groups going. God is working, doors have been opened, and life transformation is taking place.”

South Atlantic’s Initiatives

There is “Good News” for Atlanta from the South Atlantic Conference as well. In anticipation of General Conference 2010, and of the soon return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, several initiatives have gained spiritual traction during 2007. Positive results give testimony to the power and goodness of God.

Under the leading of the Holy Spirit and the dedicated efforts of pastors and laity, evangelistic efforts added more than 600 individuals to metro Atlanta in 2007. In addition, new congregations were planted and organized in Acworth, Adairsville, Lawrenceville, Roswell, and Stone Mountain.

Women’s ministries raised more than \$7,000 last year, which will be used for an “extreme home makeover” to bless some family with much needed repairs and upgrades. Disability ministries kicked into high gear plans to make each worship facility accessible for all who are physically challenged, and to provide interpreters for the hearing impaired at each of our services.

The prison population is one of the fastest growing segments in



Candles in the shape of a cross help people focus on sharing the word about Jesus at Fusion, a ministry for young people reaching out in unique ways.



Ed Wright (left), Georgia-Cumberland president, and Vanard J. Mendinghall, South Atlantic president, meet with Angela Kendrick, a single mother of three daughters for whom the Habitat for Humanity house was being built.

American society. South Atlantic has one of the more active prison ministries within the Church. Pastors are aided by a large contingent of

laypersons, each ministering to inmates and their families, and to the staffs who work in these tense and stressful environments. Currently we have access to all jails and prisons in north Georgia.

Southern Union Women's Conference

Nearly 2,000 women who will attend the Southern Union Women's Conference, September 4-7, 2008, will help carry the good news to Atlanta. Hundreds of women will share Christ's love by

getting involved in practical projects around the city.

Bill Winston says, "As God intended, working together we can help hasten the day when Jesus will break through the clouds to take us to our Heavenly home. And that, my friend, is the best news of all!"

Goods News Atlanta is working hard to carry the good news of Christ to Atlanta. Contact your conference office or visit www.goodnewsatlanta.net if you sense God calling you to help reach out to the people in Atlanta.

Ministry Opportunity
If you would like to be a part of Good News Atlanta, please contact your local conference office.

Turn Your Church into a GREENHOUSE

Greenhouse teaches what constitutes biblical DNA and how crucial it is for spiritual life. The main purpose is to teach people how to reach those who don't know Christ, and provide simple and practical tools anyone can use to connect with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers for Jesus. All who are interested in reaching people for the Kingdom will come away from this weekend enriched, challenged, blessed, and with hands-on tools to access their world for Christ!

Spend one day learning how to turn your churches into Organic Greenhouses. This event is a weekend training experience based on biblical principles that serves to naturally build relationships.



Lay people meet at Cobutta Springs Conference Center for a Greenhouse conference where they learn how to build churches through building relationships with people who don't know Christ.



Bill Levin, Georgia-Cumberland director, Good News Atlanta, global evangelism, and church planting, with his wife Jan, Georgia-Cumberland evangelism assistant, and an artist and musician who works with Bill as a partner in ministry

Presenters

- Bill Levin, Georgia-Cumberland director, Good News Atlanta, global evangelism, and church planting
- Jan Levin, Georgia-Cumberland evangelism assistant, and an artist and musician who works with Bill as a partner in ministry
- Chris Donovan, global evangelism and church planting assistant, Good News Atlanta

Call to schedule your seminar: 800-567-1844 or www.goodnewsatlanta.net.