

Revelation of Hope Comes to Harlem

As the ancient church at Ephesus stationed at the crossroads of the world so it is that the Ephesus Seventh-day Adventist Church is nestled in the heart of New York City on the island of Manhattan. The Ephesus church located in the Harlem community for nearly 90 years is an international congregation in the African American tradition. Harlem with a median income of \$26,000 for a family of four makes Harlem one of the city's poorest neighborhoods.

Additionally, Harlem has some of the highest mortality and morbidity rates in the city. Diabetes, high blood pressure, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, asthma, and death by violence are all major public health concerns in Harlem. It was, therefore, determined that integrating the health message and addressing psycho-social indicators with the gospel would prove a powerful approach to this unique community.

The village of Harlem and the Ephesus church members were electrified for four weeks as Ella Simmons, General Conference vice president, preached the powerful Revelation of Hope evangelistic series. She was supported by a small team of Bible workers and prayer warriors.

Each of the General Conference World Church divisions sponsored a youth representative to participate in the NY13 effort. Four of these, One Year in Mission workers, were assigned to the Ephesus church. They canvassed the neighborhood, prayed with business owners, and distributed literature.

In addition to the meetings in the Ephesus church, this series enjoyed live-streamed connections via Internet around the world in English, and a live blog conducted in both English and Spanish. Numerous individuals posed questions or made comments that were answered in real time or over the next few evenings during the "Talk on the Sofa" between Simmons and Dedrick Blue, Ephesus church's senior pastor.

Another unique feature of the series was the on-the-street video interview set. These random interviews were conducted in sunshine and rain by the young missionaries assigned to Ephesus and were aired nightly, allowing questions and issues raised by those on the street to be answered in the evening messages. Some were addressed directly in the "Talk on the Sofa," while others were addressed in Simmons' message for the evening.

The NY13 program at Ephesus was more than just a preaching event. Christine Haynes,

noted author of seven books, conducted a series of seminars on relationships and purity in sexuality. The workshops explored the dynamics of principles of personal integrity, maintaining healthy Christian relationships, and God's intentions for sexuality.

The young missionaries organized, sponsored, and conducted an eight-week International Vegetarian Cooking School. A wide range of recipes from Mexico, Korea, India, several African nations, and other parts of the world were demonstrated and sampled by as many as 60 enthusiastic participants from the community. Scores from this community group completed the full series and were recognized at a special graduation during one of the evening meetings. Several of these then attended the evening and Sabbath health and preaching services.

At the outset of the series the world famous Apollo Theater in Harlem invited the Northeastern Conference and Ephesus church to participate in a major community health fair. Thousands passed through the Northeastern holistic health booth and the Ephesus mental health station. In cooperation with Review and Herald Publishing Association, thousands of copies of the Vibrant Life and Message magazines were distributed throughout the community during and following that health fair. This health emphasis kick-off was then followed by 30-minute health seminars each evening during the four-week series. In these sessions participants enjoyed rich presentations on health maintenance and disease prevention strategies by local Adventist doctors, nurses, therapists, social workers, counselors, and dentists.

Although the meetings were held before the end of the school year, children were included throughout the series. Children from the church and community were invited to attend a special children's Bible study each evening while the adults met. The well-planned program provided both spiritual and physical nutrition for children by the faithful leaders of the Ephesus children's ministries department. On a regular basis, several of the children joined the adult praise team to close the evening meetings with inspirational music. Their study focused on the Word of God and a personal relationship with Christ.

Hundreds of people were blessed by Simmons' preaching, and 14 people were baptized, and others are taking Bible studies. But the effort did not end there. The expressed intent for this series, in addition to winning souls, was to strengthen the presence of the Ephesus church

in the Harlem community.

Therefore, NY13 continues at the Ephesus church. The outreach to the children continued with an all-day Vacation Bible School and day camp. A children's baptismal class was formed by Andrew Pileggi, who was then assistant pastor. The Ephesus youth church also followed up with Church in the Park outreach. The nurses corps and the health and wellness departments launched a major community health fair that reached thousands. The stewardship department has launched Financial Peace University with scores of people attending from the community. The personal ministries department conducts a weekly Daniel and Revelation workshop.

The church has also inaugurated an International Visitors Center to reach the growing diverse population of people groups who visit and are moving into New York City. The Ephesus church and Harlem are being transformed and won for Christ!

Dedrick Blue, senior pastor, Ephesus church and Ella S. Simmons, vice president, General Conference