

Advent House

by
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College years are a period when young people experience the greatest change in their lives, a time when students need support and less outside control. The university often provides just the right environment for growth. However, it can also be a very intimidating environment for Christians, both personally and spiritually.

Friendship and a sense of community are important in helping a young person through these years of change. College and university students join fraternities or sororities, while others get involved with other campus groups to meet their need for group support. Involvement in campus ministry organizations provides the added spiritual dimension to university life, encouraging students to a deeper relationship with God and fostering friendships that last for eternity.

In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* there is a house that the traveler Christian comes to called Beautiful that perhaps best illustrates this function. It is a house built by Emmanuel for the safe lodging of weary travelers who have left the city of destruction and are on their way to the Celestial City. Here Christian is refreshed, nurtured, and provided direction for the journey ahead.

In many respects this model describes the function of our ministry at Advent House. This center represents the Seventh-day Adventist Church at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville (UTK), U.S.A., which boasts 25,000 students along with some 6,000 faculty and staff.

Advent House includes a large meeting room, office, and kitchen, on the main floor, with more bedrooms on the second floor. These rooms are reserved for student leaders. Two separate apartments

connected to the main house provide further housing. The basement includes a recreation room, study, and conference room.

The ministry program got started 15 years ago as Adventist students began meeting on Friday evenings for worship, fellowship, and snacks at the design firm of Harold and Beverly Duckett, active members in the Knoxville First Seventh-day Adventist Church. This weekly gathering eventually led to the purchase of the house and the development of a full-scale campus ministry. Carolyn and I came to the ministry in 1985 helping to shape the mission and structure of the program further.

Each year there are 40 to 50 Adventist students enrolled at UTK. The Advent House program is directed primarily at them, but seeks also to minister to non-Adventist students. Of the 30 to 40 involved in our program, nearly half belong to other denominations and religions, while some profess no faith at all.

Under the chaplain's guidance, our nurture and outreach ministry is led by carefully chosen student leaders. The leadership team attends an annual leadership retreat and meets monthly to plan events together. Summer activities include meeting with incoming freshmen and parents during student orientation, social events, a midweek all-campus Bible study, a leadership retreat, and planning for new student outreach.

Weekly events during the school year include Friday night fellowship, small group Bible studies, a home-cooked meal prepared by students on Wednesday evenings, campus worship on Saturdays, Saturday night socials, retreats, and social action and outreach events.

Our leadership includes international students. In fact, one of our greatest rewards has come from seeing other international students receive Christ through our efforts. An international student banquet is held at the beginning of the year to acquaint those students with our program, while the midweek meal allows them to socialize with American students as well as other internationals.

The annual budget of Advent House is approximately US\$20,000, which



includes all costs except the chaplain's salary. The budget includes rent received from house residents, subsidies from three area Adventist churches and the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, and from private donations. Donations actually make up about 40 percent of the budget. Administration is handled by an executive board and a small administrative council.

The key to the success of our overall ministry has been the gracious hand of God and our broad base of support from area churches, the local conference, the Southern Union, and many individuals. We believe that Advent House is a good example of how our church can minister effectively on public college and university campuses. We have such confidence in this that we are committed to the development of similar programs on other campuses in North America.

The first step is to find ways of appointing Seventh-day Adventist chaplains to serve on public campuses. Another step we are taking is networking with Kettering Medical Center to offer a curriculum at Advent House to prepare Adventist ministers for the special demands of public campus ministry.

Public college ministry is both rewarding and challenging. The spiritual needs of college students today are great, and the opportunities for our church are enormous. We at Advent House feel privileged to be at the forefront of this ministry and pray that the door will open wide for many more programs like ours in the North American Division and the world. ☐

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