

Jesus & Politics scholarly conference

*Featured evangelical theologians
Jim Wallis and Ronald Sider*

THEOLOGIANS JIM WALLIS AND RONALD Sider headlined “Jesus & Politics: Christians, Liberty, and Justice Today” at Andrews University from October 17–19. Sponsored by Andrews University, the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary and the Lake Union Conference, the scholarly conference and community gathering featured experts in church history, theology and human-rights activism. It aimed to apply biblical teachings to modern issues through careful study, thought and dialogue in order to answer the question, “What might the political impact of Jesus’ followers look like today?”

The conference opened with a keynote address by Jim Wallis, who grew up in the Baptist faith community and is founder, president and editor-in-chief of *Sojourners*

magazine and author of “Christ in Crisis: Why We Need to Reclaim Jesus.”

Offering a keynote address on Friday was Ronald Sider, Mennonite theologian, professor at Palmer Theological Seminary and author of “Just Politics: A Guide for Christian Engagement.”

Nicholas Miller, professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary and co-chair of the conference organizing committee, notes that neither keynote speaker fit neatly into the standard right/left political divide. Like Seventh-day Adventists, Wallis and Sider take both Testaments of the Bible into serious consideration and have roots in the radical reformation and its heritage of separating church and state.

“What might the political impact of Jesus’ followers look like today?”

“This same heritage also takes seriously the role of Christian as citizen in holding the state and its leaders accountable on matters of public morality,” Miller says. “This proud heritage is seen in 18th and



President Luxton presents an award to Maya Duncombe, a student winner of the Liberty and Essay contest.

19th century efforts to combat slavery and the slave-trade, promote laws preventing the sale and use of alcohol, and seek protections for women and children from immoral predations and unsafe and dangerous working conditions,” Miller adds.

The conference included a series of breakout sessions, such as “Jesus and the #MeToo Movement” and “Jesus and the Immigrant.” It concluded with a Concert Celebration of Faith and Freedom at the Howard Center that featured the Andrews University Wind Symphony and included an award ceremony for student winners of the Liberty and Essay contest.

IFAMS Death and Ancestors conference

Addressed challenges of mission work

THE INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF Adventist Mission Studies (IFAMS) conference was held September 12–14 at the Seminary. It addressed the challenges of mission work, specifically research findings from the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research.

While the Seventh-day Adventist Church officially holds to and teaches the biblical account of the non-immortality of the soul, recent worldwide studies show that a significant number of Adventists have retained their religio-cultural beliefs that spirits and ancestors continue to interact with the living. Most commonly, this theological dualism was found in people groups where there is animism and belief in the immortality and transmigration of the soul.

The IFAMS conference explored specific missiological implications and religio-cultural understandings needed to shape evangelism and Bible work for specific people groups. A wide array of papers was presented by scholar-missionaries with experience among Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, animists and secular people. In one paper, professors Wagner Kuhn and Boubakar Sanou pointed out the importance for those in missions to understand peoples’ beliefs and, consequently, how the fear of death and hell causes many to live in captivity to superstitions and rituals that cause “a great deal of fear, trauma and hopelessness.”

Gorden Doss, professor of world mission, reported that some Christians have previ-

ously responded by ignoring, dismissing or accommodating unbiblical perspectives. Instead, Christian missions must engage the issues in a context-specific way that seeks transformation at the level of deep worldview assumptions.

Regine Rimarzik, Doctor of Missiology student, explained that the Thai Buddhist karmic understanding of gods and afterlife necessitates the practice of devoting merits to ancestors to improve ancestors’ afterlife and strengthen family connectedness. For this group, she asserted that Adventist biblical theology is the key.

With the rising desire among Adventists to work for the salvation and discipleship of their Jewish brethren, Reinaldo Siqueira, dean of the Brazil Adventist Seminary, noted that Adventist mission to the Jewish people requires special wisdom and finesse in helping them rightly apply the biblical truths originally bequeathed to them.