

What is the official position the Seventh-day Adventist Church has about Christmas?

What is our position in Dublin West SDA Church?

What can we do better?

Introduction

The pastor will present the opportunity for such a discussion, having now experienced different views over the subject in the local church and in the larger home background of our members. Introducing his own story over Christmas, he will clearly show the need and benefits of this discussion.

The pastor will present in a short review the resources available here:

<http://dublinwestsda.ie/2018/01/25/resources-for-adventist-perspectives-on-christmas/>

Opening questions for the audience

- Do you know the official position of the SDA Church about Christmas?
- Do you agree with it? Yes. No. Where is the challenge?
- If you are undecided, what kind of arguments will most likely help you decide?
- Why are you indifferent? What are we (you) missing here?
- If one is interested to know more, where will he/she go to get more info and resources?

Choosing guests for the panel discussion

- in favor (1 person); against (1), undecided (1), indifferent (1), interested to know more (1)
- staying in the audience, two persons will play the role of the observers – not involved until the end of discussion, when his and her balanced view will add value to our discussion.

Questions for the panelists

1. For the person in favor (1). *Share with us your experience. What is the best way one can use the Christmas motif to preach Christ? How can one reach the indifferent (4)?*
2. For the person against (2). *Share with us your experience. What are risks one should be aware of when dealing with this subject? How can you help the undecided (3)?*
3. For the undecided (3). *How come that you are undecided? Share with us your troubles.*
4. For the so-called indifferent. *You came here as indifferent. Yet, you are interested somehow, otherwise you wouldn't have come all the way here, in the first place. What are the nuances that will really make a difference and take you out of this indifference?*
5. For the "interested to know more". *You said you want to know more. Now you know or at least have realized there are many resources available. What question will you ask your fellow panelists?*

Questions for the group discussion

We will split in 5 groups, the 6th one being the one made of the panelists, along with the moderator and the two observers.

Q1. Why do you think the Church Manual does not say a word (ZERO) about Christmas?

(Are we afraid to talk about it; it is not really a salvation matter; it is an option left to individual or to the specific of the local churches, just like other issues; is it just a cultural thing, etc.)

Q2. How accurate is the article on Christmas on the SDA Encyclopedia?

CHRISTMAS. The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not follow the Christian, or church, year of festivals and fasts, and hence does not celebrate Christmas as an ecclesiastical festival. However, it is customary in some SDA congregations to have a special program or special music with a Nativity theme on the Sabbath that falls on or near December 25. SDAs have ignored Christmas as a church festival because of the absence of any divine command to observe the day. Furthermore, Christ's birth date is unknown, and December 25 was chosen by the Roman churches late in the fourth century, to coincide with the "birthday of the sun," the pagan solstice festival. On the other hand, SDAs have utilized the spirit of the Christmas season to direct people to the biblical teachings concerning Christ's birth.

Q3. How can we as Dublin West SDA Church deal with such a divisive subject in a way to grow and come more united?

(The options and solutions may differ: some will jump in another boat, some will want all to be in their boat, some might go from one position to another, like "undecided" and now... "indifferent". Don't forget, our main task is to find solutions for our multicultural church!)

Q3. Decide on a new question to be publicly addressed by the panelists.

Group #1 will have one hard question for panelist #1. Group #2 for panelist #2 and so on.

Last questions to the panelists

The questions are coming from the groups. (See point #3 above).

A balanced voice from the audience

As said in the beginning, we wanted a balanced view to help us for a larger image. Our brother and our sister are not to present their own views, but to present their perceptions as observers.

What have you noticed? What are your recommendations?

Conclusions

The pastor will conclude with the Word of God, reading

- Romans 14:1 – welcome another without quarrel over opinions
- Romans 14:3, 10 – the strong should not despise, the weak should not judge
- Romans 14:5 – each one to be fully convinced in his own mind
- Romans 14:23 – whatever is not from faith is sin
- Romans 14:15 – do not let your acts grieve your brother
- Romans 14:20 – do not let your acts become a stumbling block
- Romans 14:19 – let us pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding

The conclusion will be Romans 15:1-7.