



Official Newsletter for the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

MICHIGAN MEMO

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▲ Typical housing for 1850s camp meeting attendees

Wright Church COMMEMORATION

By Jonathan Walter

PASTOR, WRIGHT AND GRAND HAVEN CHURCHES

“At that meeting revival, confession and reconciliation took place resulting in 60 baptisms and 300 recommitments to Christ.”

Having grown up in Europe, Adventist history had mostly been just stories that needed my imagination to come alive. I remember well when I visited the Historical Village in Battle Creek for the first time in 2013. In a way it felt like stepping on holy ground, knowing that here God raised up our movement. Even today, walking through the places that defined our early church is still very special. I felt very honored when I was asked to pastor the Wright Church, one of the oldest continuous Adventist congregations (since 1858) and a church in which Ellen White and other pioneers preached, lived, and

worked. It is a privilege to walk in the footsteps of such a legacy and become a part of the lineage of ministry in this special place.

The Wright Church is very proud of the fact that behind their church building, the first general Seventh-day Adventist camp meeting took place 150 years ago in September of 1868. And this we celebrated with a special anniversary weekend on September 7-8. The weekend itself and its preparations were led by God’s guiding hand. He blessed despite unfortunate circumstances. Our Friday night presenter, Jim Nix (director of

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- EDITORIAL -

Called to Serve

By Jim Micheff

MICHIGAN CONFERENCE PRESIDENT



“Jonah needed a place where he could think and shut out all the distractions of life. God miraculously provided just the place.”

Serving God is both an honor and a privilege, when we willingly, obediently, and joyfully answer His call. Sometimes, we as Christians forget that “serving God” is not about what “we” want to do, but rather what “God” wants us to do. Our one great desire is to hear God say, “Well done!”

One of the greatest evangelistic success stories of all time is recorded in the book of Jonah. Jonah preached to the people of Nineveh and the whole city was converted. He must have been one powerful preacher, right? How did he do it? His story helps us to understand why he was so successful, and if we apply what we learn from Jonah’s story, we will be successful too.

The Bible says in Jonah 1:2 that God looked down and saw a large group of people who were becoming so hardened in sin that soon they would be unable to hear God’s warning and call to repentance. God knew that if given a chance, many of those people would respond to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. He also saw a rebellious servant – one of His prophets who lacked love when ministering to others. Sadly, Jonah had no idea that the deadly seed of rebellion was in his heart.

God gave Jonah a message to deliver to a people that he didn’t know or love. As Jonah heard the command of God, he thought that there must be some mistake because he knew the people of Nineveh were evil. In fact, many times Israel had

personally experienced their wickedness. If they heeded the warning and repented, he was sure God would not destroy them. In Jonah’s mind, these sinful people deserved to be punished.

Instead of being instantly obedient to God’s will, he paused and contemplated the assignment God had given him. This gave Satan the perfect opportunity to fill Jonah’s mind with questions, which in turn, led to doubts. Instead of reflecting love for people and sharing God’s desire for all men to come to repentance, Jonah questioned God’s plan. How could one man deliver a message of doom to that huge city, and how would the Ninevites react? Perhaps they would demonstrate their cruelty against *him*?

As a result of his hesitation and lack of faith, Jonah became discouraged. Discouragement is a tool the devil uses to distort our thinking, and that is exactly what happened to Jonah. Instead of doing what God asked him to do, he decided he would only follow God’s instructions if he felt comfortable doing so. God said to *go* – so he went, but not in the direction God commanded.

Jonah stubbornly and defiantly went in the direction of his own choosing and perhaps with the idea that if he refused to give the message of warning then God would have to destroy Nineveh. We must remember that *partial* obedience is still disobedience.

By rejecting the divine command, Jonah

put himself in rebellion against God, and therefore, was in danger of losing his own soul. The evil attitude in his heart prevented Jonah from being in direct communion with the Lord, so in order to reveal Himself, God used trials, trouble, and suffering in an effort to save His disobedient servant. In the process, God was also able to reveal His power and glory to the sailors aboard the ship, who accepted Him as the only true God.

Jonah needed a place where he could think and shut out all the distractions of life. God miraculously provided just the place. It took a storm, a big fish, and parts of three miserable days, but in the end, Jonah learned the valuable lesson that salvation belongs to the Lord.

Even though Jonah was now willing to deliver God's message with conviction, he didn't realize that he still lacked a vital quality – supreme *love* for God and sinners. He could preach the facts with conviction and passion, dispensing a warning of doom, but is passion and conviction the motivation necessary for effectively preaching the gospel? Do facts about the gospel bring conviction of sin and melt the calloused heart? Definitely not! Unless God had wrapped the message of Jonah with His supreme love the words would have fallen on hearts of stone.

The Bible makes it very clear in 2 Peter 3:9 that God is “not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance.” God turned Jonah's certain failure into success by weaving love and hope into His message that Jonah preached – and the people responded. Ask yourself, was this because Jonah was a great preacher or because God spoke to their hearts? Jonah may be the only recorded evangelist in history that actually became angry when people repented after hearing God's message. What God asked Jonah to preach that day wasn't just for the people of Nineveh

– it was for Jonah as well. The message of repentance and a plea to turn to God with your whole heart is an invitation for all people.

Have you ever wondered why Jonah was so angry? He had acquired a bad habit of questioning God and entertaining doubt. When he saw the people responding with remorse and repentance to God's message, he knew God would have mercy and not destroy them as promised. Jonah's pride got in the way and he worried that the people would consider him to be a false prophet. He would rather have people destroyed in their sins than to have his reputation as a prophet be questioned – all because he cared more about his reputation than he did about people.

God gave His prophet a living illustration to help him realize his own selfishness. Jonah decided to wait around and see if he had been successful in convincing God to destroy the city of Nineveh. He went to a place where he could see the city from a safe distance and built a small shelter. God caused a vine to grow overnight to be a shield from the sun, which pleased Jonah very much. However, the next day, a worm so damaged the plant that it withered. Jonah became faint from the heat and scorching sun and, in his discomfort, felt sorry for the plant. God then asked if it was right for him to be angry with the worm for destroying the plant. Jonah's response was yes, it was right for him to be angry. The Bible doesn't record why Jonah was angry, but it does imply that it was because the plant would not be able to shield him from the sun.

The book of Jonah ends with a question. God pointed out that Jonah's pity for the plant was based on what the plant could do for him. Jonah had pity on a plant that he had no investment in, but he had no pity on a city filled with people who didn't know “their right hand from their

left.” Shouldn't God have pity on people He created? The question God really asked Jonah was, “Does salvation belong to man or God?” God's question points out that as a result of sin, we can't truly love people unselfishly unless we first love God supremely. It is only then that God removes our selfishness and fills our hearts with love for lost souls.

This “heart of love” that is essential for successful ministry is not something that can be conveyed to others by man. Ministry is *heart work*. Simply put, our hearts must be connected to the heart of God. This is not an instantaneous process. It comes from first surrendering our wills to God and then spending time with Him. Without this “heart connection,” the best we can do is share biblical information or theory, which lacks convicting power. God's last message to a dying world is so important to God that He Himself is giving the invitation through us. He refers to it as the *latter rain*. If *self* has not been surrendered, the Holy Spirit will not be able to speak from our hearts.

God is calling us to give a message to a wicked and dying world - a message of warning but filled with love and hope. The only motivation that will effectively enable us to carry out God's command to take “this gospel of the kingdom to all the world,” is supreme love for God. Jesus said in Matthew 9:37, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” It is this “fear of the Lord” that qualifies us as a laborer for Him.

Perhaps the book of Jonah ends the way it does because God is asking us the same question: “Will we love Him supremely?” God is calling you to serve as His messenger. He promises you success but this requires a close heart-connection with Him. How will you respond to God's *call to serve*?



▲ Seniors were enriched in a variety of ways.

Seniors on the Go!

By Pat Hutchins

MEMBER, TRAVERSE CITY CHURCH

PRAYER FOCUS

Every Monday morning, the Michigan Conference staff meets for worship and prayer. Here is the list for November/December. Please join with us as we pray for these churches and ministries.

NOVEMBER 5-9

Lapeer/Orion Oxford/Otter Lake
Pastor Victor Vaughn
Lapeer Community Services

NOVEMBER 12-16

Niles Westside
Pastor Darrel le Roux
Niles Adventist School

NOVEMBER 19-23

Covert/Hartford/Pullman/So Haven
Pastor William Richardson
Gobles Junior Academy
Covert and Hartford Community
Services

NOVEMBER 26-30

Urbandale/Charlotte
Pastor Jerryyn Schmidt
Battle Creek Academy, Charlotte
Adventist Christian

Seniors spent four beautiful days in September at Camp Au Sable. Those attending ranged in age and physical abilities. I'm not sure about the official age range but the spirit of the group was young and seemed younger with each passing day.

Each morning began with Sabbath School study and prayer time led by Pastor Joel Nephew. The rest of the day was punctuated with various activities, including horseback riding, go carts, a trip to the Nature Center and more. Each year is a little different, sometimes providing craft time, water activities such as a ride on the pontoon boat, a trip to Hartwick Pines State Park, hayrides, campfire, rides to the Fort, etc.

Of course you are not required to join any of these activities. You may feel the need for rest and relaxation, absorbing the sounds and beauty of nature, a reprieve from the noise of the world.

Gordon Atkins presented our evening programs, sharing some "nature nuggets." His slide program and vast knowledge of various birds and their habitats demonstrates the beauty and variety of God's creation.

In keeping with the current theme of this quarters' Sabbath School study regarding the testimony of Paul, we heard

from some of the pastors, expressing their personal experiences. Pastor Rod Thompson was asked to return a second unscheduled day to continue his inspiring testimony. As he said, we each have a testimony to share.

Of course, many attendees have health issues. The atmosphere of Camp Au Sable seems to ease and calm our physical and emotional pains while at the same time renewing our relationship with God.

The camp personnel were very helpful in accommodating physical limitations. Chef Miquel Larcher was able to meet some specific dietary needs while providing delicious, nourishing meals. He also made large yummy cinnamon rolls reminiscent of those from many years ago at camp, leaving us to wonder if he found the secret recipe. Thumbs up Chef Miquel!

Next year's Senior Camp promises some new surprises as well as fun, fascinating activities. The new medical/crafts/office building should be completed. Watch for dates and information so you too can reap the blessings. We are grateful to the Lord for this wonderful camp.

Thanks go out to the camp staff and conference staff who worked hard to provide these services.

Reaching Missing Members



▲ Pastor Howard provided practical soul-winning training.

By Kameron DeVasher

SABBATH SCHOOL AND PERSONAL MINISTRIES

The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work, and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers. (*Christian Service*, p. 68). In light of this incredible truth, the Michigan Conference seeks to inspire, encourage, equip, and train every pastor and lay member to be effective soul-winners for Christ.

While the Ministerial department works primarily with the pastors in the conference and coordinates the work of public evangelism, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries (SSPM) works specifically with those “men and women comprising our church membership.” Elders Kameron DeVasher and Mark Howard (SSPM director and associate director, respectively) believe that one of the primary ways to equip church members to help their local churches function and grow is to conduct training events.

Aside from the Cedar Lake and Upper Peninsula camp meeting seminars, over the last several months, DeVasher and Howard, along with Elder Wes Peppers (immediate predecessor in Personal Ministries) have conducted training events in various locations across the state of Michigan such as Clare, Irons, Midland, Grand Rapids, Detroit Metro, Reed City, and before the year is out,

Saginaw, Holland, Belleville, and Detroit Northwest.

One such event was a special week of prayer training event in the Berrien Springs Village Church. What a blessing to have more than 100 church members come out each night to learn how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in His work of winning friends, family, co-workers, and former members to Christ and His remnant church! Ron Kelly, pastor of the Berrien Springs Village Church, notes how, “The personal ministries training week was well attended and deeply impactful on the members of the Village church. We were definitely led to higher ground and greatly benefited by the journey.”

Jesus explains in Luke 10:2 that, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” Furthermore, the same inspired author that spoke about the need of cooperation between church ministers and church members also tells us how, “Many would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin” (*Christian Service*, p. 59). So if you have the chance to attend one of these training events, please take advantage of the opportunity to be better prepared to share the precious Advent message in your portion of the Lord’s vineyard.

PRAYER FOCUS CONT’D

DECEMBER 3-7

Warren
Pastor Cory Herthel

DECEMBER 10-14

Menominee/Wilson
Pastor Tom Hubbard
Wilson Junior Academy

DECEMBER 17-21

Frankfort/Irons/Manistee
Pastor Mac Mills
Irons Community Services

DECEMBER 24-28

Battle Creek Spanish/Kalamazoo
Spanish
Pastor Jonathan Flores
Kalamazoo Junior Academy, Battle
Creek Academy

DECEMBER 31-JANUARY 4

Grand Rapids Central
Pastor Bob Stewart
Grand Rapids Adventist Academy



▲ Friday night vespers on the campus of Michigan State University

Reach the Campus

Reach the Church

By Israel Ramos

CAMPUS MINISTRY DIRECTOR

We are well into another academic year and entering a very critical time for our students attending public schools, colleges, and universities. Experience tells us that the early fall months are the most crucial time—especially for students attending public colleges. Our chances of retaining our Adventist young people studying on public college and university campuses dramatically decreases if we don't connect with them in the first few weeks of school. Outreach programs on campuses will be most successful if conducted before midterm exams in the fall semester while the weather is still nice, students are still friendly, and schedules are still flexible. Here's what you can do to support our students on public college campuses.

Be convinced that public campus ministry is everyone's ministry. Many mistakenly believe that public campus ministry only applies to students. Now, more than ever before, we must remember that it takes a village to keep our Adventist young people. Have you ever attended a public school before? Do you know of anyone in your family or a close friend who has or is currently attending a public college? Is there a public college in your city or near your church? In almost every case, our church members will answer "yes" to one or more of the questions above. If we take personal interest in our students on public college campuses, we will have done a great

work for the church and for the young person!

Maintaining an open line of communication is very important. When a young person has made their decision to attend a state school, the pastor, parent, or friend should take the time to reach out to the student before they embark on this journey. Let the student know that you'll be contacting the church nearest to the school they are attending as well as our public campus ministry department office so that we can help minister to them. Let the student know that you will be asking us to reach out to them, and encourage them to respond. Most students will respond positively to this approach.

Hold an event on campus as soon as possible! In the beginning of the year, students are *expecting* to be solicited! Every student organization on campus is recruiting members for their group. Although gaining interest or membership for the local Adventist student group may still prove difficult, this will actually be the easiest time to make the greatest impact on the campus. Michigan State University started the school year off with CRAVE – an evangelistic series held in a central location on campus. The university actually helped to sponsor the event financially through the local student organization!

Investing in our students on public college campuses will yield high returns.

Over the years, we've seen that some of the strongest advocates, promoters, and financial supporters of Adventist education are graduates who spiritually survived the public campus experience! One of the main reasons for this is that they don't want others to experience while studying in an environment that in many ways exists to destroy faith. In October, students worshipped together for a Collegiate Sabbath at Central Michigan University. They made simple care packages for other students as a way of expressing their love and care for them. The greatest encouragement that I've received in this ministry is usually tied to students being thankful that someone invested in them during these, the most challenging years of their lives.

Don't forget to send these young people to our events. We have two retreats each year (November and February) for students attending public colleges and universities. The events are open to our Adventist young people and their non-Adventist friends. Additionally, our students take a road trip each year to GYC in December. These are great opportunities for our young people to know that they are not alone and to build their faith.

By supporting our students on public college campuses, we are doing a work that must be done and will be done by those who are led and taught of God.

HISTORY, cont'd

the Ellen G. White Estate) flew in from abroad, and due to an aircraft problem, got there literally just in time for his presentation.

With his 'Songs of Zion' program he took us on a journey with stories of the life of Ellen White and the singing of her favorite hymns. The evening ended with the hopeful thought, that one day, God's faithful will be in the presence of Jesus singing with the angels to His glory.



Another challenge was our Sabbath program. The presenter we had originally booked had to cancel due to sickness just three days before the event. After



surrendering this situation before God in prayer as a united church family, God stepped in and provided just the right speaker for three presentations on the Sabbath. Kevin

Burton, Andrews Theological Seminary Graduate, PhD student of Florida State University and expert on the detailed stories of the pioneers, agreed,

despite the short notice, to heed the 'Macedonian call' and fly up to Michigan to present and save the weekend celebrations.

In his first session, Burton took us on a fascinating and somewhat unknown journey of Adventist history. He shared the challenges Ellen and James White went through as many members distrusted their judgment and integrity in the mid-late 1860s. He showed how gossip, slander, pride, abuse of authority, worldliness, lack of respect and love amongst leaders and members led to the need of holding this first general camp meeting at Wright. At that meeting revival, confession, and reconciliation took place resulting in 60 baptisms and 300 commitments to Christ.

Burton also shared the unbelievable story of the 'Battle Creek purge' of 1870 in which J. N. Andrews and J. H. Waggoner were given the authority to disfellowship 98% of the 300 member Battle Creek Church, including Uriah Smith and other prominent leaders, based on a mixture of gut-feeling, wrong understanding of perfection, and N. Richmond's false accusations.

Finally, in the last session, Burton spoke on the leadership crisis of the 1870s in which G. I. Butler proposed to give the General Conference (GC) president a Moses-like authority. His stance, even though theologically incorrect, caused a certain unity after the turmoil of the

previous years and led to a brief refocus on mission in 1874. This resulted in the opening of Battle Creek College, J. N. Andrews leaving as the young denomination's first missionary for Europe, and the founding of Pacific Press. Yet Butler's leadership proposal was opposed by James and Ellen White and at the 1877 GC session adjusted, by giving the church body, and not just one man, a God-given authority. This GC session brought reconciliation and true unity in Christ to the church.



The weekend's celebration, which included beautiful special music by 'Testify', Dr. Eric Umali and Tim Rasmussen, and 'Sisters 4 the Savior' as well as a wonderful potluck, ended with a shared solemn, yet joyful understanding of our need to learn from history, to embrace Christ, and His leadership style of humility and love as we move forward in God's mission.

All presentations were recorded and are available in audio and video format at www.wrightsgda.com

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MONTHLY CALENDAR

November

- 2-4 Public Hi-C - Camp Au Sable
- 4 Daylight Savings Time Ends
- 6-8 New In Ministry
- 9-11 Crystal Mountain Marriage
Retreat
- 9-11 Personal Ministries -
Camp Au Sable
- 13 District Superintendents
- 15 MI K-12 Board of Education
- 18-20 Education/Ministerial Summit -
Camp Au Sable
- 21-23 Thanksgiving Holiday -
Office Closed
- 22 Thanksgiving Day
- 28 Camp Meeting Directors
- 30 Office Staff Retreat

December

- 1-2 Office Staff Retreat
- 2 Lay Advisory
- 2 Women's Ministries Board
- 4 District Superintendents
- 11 MI Conference Executive
Committee
- 12-23 MI Evangelism - Ecuador
Mission Trip
- 24-26 Christmas Holiday - Office
Closed
- 31 New Year's Holiday - Office
Closed

UNDERSTANDING THE GENERAL CONFERENCE UNITY DOCUMENT

By Daniel McGrath

PASTOR, SPARTA AND THREE ANGELS FELLOWSHIP CHURCHES

On Sunday, October 14, the General Conference (GC) Executive Committee voted to accept the unity document with a 60% majority. This document outlines the steps to be taken if and when an organization of the church is out of compliance with church policy.

If an entity of the church is perceived to be noncompliant, the next highest and closest level of administration would be initially responsible for handling the issue. The review by the administration is to be done with prayerful dialogue throughout the process. The administration would need to notify in writing the perceived noncompliance issue to the entity in question.

Once the entity has received the letter they have 60 days to provide evidence of compliance or a plan to achieve it. If they have not made evident their intent to comply, then a GC review committee may be requested to evaluate the matter and make recommendations to the appropriate administrative committee charged with handling the matter.

If matters remain unresolved then the issue is passed up to the next highest level of administration and they are charged with the responsibility to facilitate a process leading to compliance. If however, the organization in question does not

comply, a discipline process is outlined in three phases that affects the entity or its' elected leader.

- A warning is given if an entity of the church is following practices voted by the General Conference session but is out of compliance with church constitution, bylaws or working policy. A warning applies to the entity and not to individuals

- A public reprimand is given when the actions of the church are ignored. The Executive Committee will list the names of those on their committee who have received a public reprimand and will be notified of their noncompliance at the opening session of each spring and fall meeting.

- If noncompliance continues after the reprimand the representative member of the noncompliant entity can be removed from the Executive Committee for cause by a two-thirds majority vote of the same committee.

If compliance is achieved at any point in this process the recommendation will be to allow the individuals representing the noncompliant entities or the entities themselves back into regular leadership standing with the church.