

MICHIGAN MEMO



MONTHLY CALENDAR

OCTOBER

- 11-15 Work Week – Camp Au Sable
- 18 Lay Advisory/Constituency Meeting
- 21-25 GLAA Home Leave
- 23-25 Lake Union Club Ministries Training – Berrien Springs
- 23-25 TLT Squared
- 25 Pathfinder Council
- 26 Teachers In-Service
- 30-Nov 1 Sabbath School Workshop

NOVEMBER

- 1-6 New in Ministry
- 13-15 Personal Ministries Training
- 15-17 Prayer & Fasting
- 22-29 GLAA Home Leave

MICHIGAN MEMO is a monthly publication of the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for its constituents. Andy Im, editor; Beth Thomas, acting assistant editor; *Seminars Unlimited*, layout, design, and print. Comments may be submitted by emailing communication@misda.org.

NATURE NUGGET

Red-headed Woodpeckers

By Dr. Gordon Atkins,
 Nature Director,
 Camp Au Sable



Photos: Dr. Gordon Atkins

The Red-bellied Woodpecker (left photo) is a common visitor to backyard bird feeders in Michigan, and it does have a small patch of red on its belly that is hardly ever seen because of the way it likes to perch against a tree. However, the striking coloration of its head, in contrast with the black and white checkerboard pattern on its back, often leads to a case of mistaken identity. It's often mistakenly called a Red-headed Woodpecker. BUT, when you see the "real thing" (right photo)... when a real Red-headed Woodpecker shows up, you realize why!

Red-headed Woodpeckers really do have a completely red head, not just partially red like the Red-bellied Woodpecker. This year, we were treated to a pair of Red-heads nesting in a tree over the entrance to the boardwalk

at Camp Au Sable. They successfully raised two young ones and feasted on the plentiful acorn crop in the oak trees around the main camp area.

This common case of mistaken identity begs the question for us as Christians: Are we suffering from a mistaken identity? Are the people we interact with at work, school, in our neighborhood, or even at home absolutely sure that we are Christians? Or, do we sometimes act or talk in such a way that they begin to question our Christianity? Or worse, have we ever caused anyone to say, "Well, if that's the way Christians act, then I don't want to be one"? What a responsibility we have when we claim the name of Christ. Let's be like Samuel of old. 1 Samuel 9:20 (The Message paraphrase) says, "Everyone...recognized Samuel was the real thing—a true prophet of God."

The Evangelism of Education

According to the Institute of International Education, the leading non-profit educational exchange organization in the United States, more than one million international students study in our country's colleges and universities. Statistics indicate that many international students on our public college campuses are highly educated and financially wealthy. There is a significant possibility that many of these individuals will return to their home country and become leaders.

Two key items should be considered regarding international students attending public college campuses. First, they typically come from highly educated homes, with the financial means to afford an American education, and many are current or future leaders of their countries. Second, even more significant are their countries of origin. Students from Saudi Arabia, China, India, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Japan make up more than 60% of the international population on public college campuses. They represent a region known by missiologists as the 10-40 Window—the

area with the greatest number of unreached people groups. Thirteen of the top 25 countries of origin for international students are nations who are predominantly or entirely non-Christian.¹

Although sending volunteers on overseas mission trips is critical to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is hard to exceed a more efficient method of world outreach than reaching international students on public university campuses. In addition to engaging the future leaders of the world, the wealthy and educated, public campus ministry is more pragmatically effective. International students of non-

Thirteen of the top 25 countries of origin for international students are nations who are predominantly or entirely non-Christian.

Christian religions who are studying on American college campuses have already overcome the language barrier. We are engaging them in safer contexts, both physically and socially. And in many cases, we have an easier time engaging with them on a cultural level than we would if we were guests in their home countries.

Reaching the public college campus is the most effective missional way to reach the world of non-Christian global religions. It is also the most responsible way of reaching the North American Division's largest unreached people group in its territory.²



Group Bible studies and social interaction bring students together in meaningful ways.

1. Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange. *Institute of International Education*, Institute of International Education, 2017, www.iie.org/research-and-insights/open-doors.
 2. "Year-End Meeting 2017: New Perspectives (Parts 1-11)." *Year-End Meeting 2017: New Perspectives (Parts 1-11)*, North American Division, 26 Oct. 2017, www.facebook.com/pg/NADAdventist/videos/. Watch the entire NAD Year-end meeting reports from Secretariat and Youth Ministries where the public college campus is identified as the largest unreached people group in the North American Division.

(continued on page 7)

By Mike Bernard,
Treasurer



“The devil works hard to instill the idea that we need to protect our interests at all costs, but God is calling us to rise out of that selfish state.”

JUST TRY IT!



“God is the Master Chef and has a recipe for our character that includes many ingredients.”

I grew up in a home that had many wonderful smells coming from the kitchen. My mother is an amazing cook and, not only that, she tailors her cooking to include whatever you like most. I vividly remember one exception to those wonderful smells though, and it happened on Friday nights. Mom grew up in a home with a tradition to have bean soup to bring in the Sabbath. I couldn't imagine how anyone could ever think that beans were a special Sabbath treat, and to think someone thought they were worth a birthright! My mother would say to me, “You can't say you don't like it, you haven't even tried it yet. Just try it!” I couldn't bring myself to venture past that dreadful smell, so I always passed and, for a significant part of my life, I missed out on the joy of that soup.

God is the Master Chef and has a recipe for our character that includes many ingredients. Just like most recipes, if you leave out a major ingredient, whatever you are cooking will most likely not turn out well. In this article, I want to focus on the ingredient of an unselfish heart.

Selfishness, I believe, is one of the harder things in life to surrender to the Lord. It is very intriguing to me that a selfish heart tends to desire only those things that please us without consideration for others, yet God is clear in His Word and other inspired writings that unselfishness is the only true path to joy and contentment.

As the Lord calls upon us to engage in this unselfish work, we can praise Him for the opportunities He gives us to be shaped and molded after Him. We can experience love, joy, peace and the presence of His Spirit, at levels we have never experienced as He takes our heart of stone and replaces it with a heart of flesh according to Ezekiel 36:26, 27. We can trust that the Lord will never lead or ask us to do anything that we would not choose ourselves, could we know the end from the beginning. (*Should include paraphrase reference here.)

We are counseled, “Those are brought nearest to their Creator who thus become participants in labors of love. He who refuses to become a ‘laborer together with God,’—the man who for the sake of selfish indulgence ignores the wants of his fellow men, the miser who heaps up his treasures here,—is withholding from himself the richest blessing that God can give him” (*Review and Herald*, December 6, 1887).

It is clear that God has something much better for us than we can imagine. By our unselfish labors of love, we are brought closest to Christ, and through that experience, He bestows His richest blessings possible

on His children. What an amazing God we serve! He not only wants to bless us, but He continually gives us opportunities to experience those blessings. Each day, the Lord provides ways in which He can shape and mold us after His perfect selfless character of love. These opportunities of choice may come in different shapes or forms, some of which may be difficult for us to choose in our selfish state.

“It should not be a lamented fact that there are increasing calls to give. God in His providence is calling His people out from their limited sphere of action, to enter upon greater enterprises. Unlimited effort is demanded at this time when moral darkness is covering the world. Many of God's people are in danger of being ensnared by worldliness and covetousness. They should understand that it is His mercy that multiplies the demands for their means. Objects that call benevolence into action must be placed before them, or they cannot pattern after the character of the great Exemplar” (*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 14).

We are reminded in scripture of this principle in the story of the good Samaritan. The priest saw the wounded man and barely glanced towards him. The Levite's curiosity caused him to stop and he was even convicted to help him. He reasoned away his opportunity and went on his way. Finally, a Samaritan passed by. My guess is that he had somewhere to go; he had other cares and/or reasons he could have come up with to justify in his mind why he shouldn't stop

and help, yet he didn't do that. He saw the situation and couldn't pass up the opportunity to help the man in need. The concern of his surroundings faded, he gave his own garment, used his own oil and wine that he had brought for his journey, and placed him on his animal to carry him to safety. He setup his care, paid for his time and told the innkeeper he would cover any future expenses, as well.

It is interesting that this story is in response to a question that originated with an inquiry of “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” The good Samaritan did not earn his salvation that day, but he drew near to God and received a rich reward for his unselfish act of kindness. In the midst of that tragedy, he became more like his Savior. God will use those times for His glory, as the “Lord permits suffering and calamity to come upon men and women to call us out of our selfishness, to awaken in us the attributes of His character,—compassion, tenderness, and love” (*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 23).

In the midst of our present crisis, the Lord has given us much opportunity to wake up to our current state. At the onset of this pandemic, there were many videos and stories of hoarding and fighting in the aisles of stores over different products that were running low. Love for man was seemingly set aside for their own selfish needs. The devil works hard to instill the idea that we need to protect our interests at all costs, but God is calling us to rise out of that selfish state. He has made us

stewards of all that He has given us, to be used as He directs in the benefit of others, trusting He will provide as He guides us along the way.

As we experience the joy of serving the Lord and it drives us to praise Him in gratitude, we are counseled that, “God permits us to show our appreciation of His mercies by self-sacrificing efforts to extend the same to others. This is the only way in which it is possible for us to manifest our gratitude and love to God. He has provided no other” (*Review and Herald*, *ibid.*). Even when all glory goes to God for His mercies, He selflessly asks us to repurpose that gratitude to Him by sacrificially helping others in need. He is our example in all things.

Now, when I get a chance to thoroughly enjoy a meal that includes some delicious lentils that are seasoned in just the right way, I am reminded of the spiritual lesson that is sometimes hard for me to learn. When God calls me to surrender that selfish heart and to do something for Him, I should trust Him enough to try it. If God is offering me a blessing and my mind is in conflict with what He is asking me to do, who am I going to trust? My own desires or the Lord? The answer is obvious: the Lord. I encourage you to experience the true joy of full surrender to Him in all things, growing daily to be more and more like Jesus, seasoned with grace and love. “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” Ps. 34:8.



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

OCTOBER 5
Frankfort, Irons, Manistee
Pastor Mac Mills

OCTOBER 12
Ann Arbor Spanish, Detroit
Shalom Spanish
Pastor Ronald Costa

OCTOBER 19
Bauer, Wyoming
Pastor Dan Rachor

OCTOBER 26
South Haven
Pastor Jorge Diaz



Pastor Wes Peppers sharing messages of hope and truth in Cuba.

Conquering Cuba for Christ

By Wes Peppers,
Evangelism Director

In March, forty Michigan members followed God's call to become foreign missionaries in Cuba for two weeks. Cuba is a repressed, restricted country where life is extremely toilsome. Citizens regularly stand in 6-10 hour queues for simple items like cooking oil and over-the-counter medication. It was an incredible opportunity to meet the needs of humanity, reveal God's love and share the truth of the everlasting Gospel with people who need to know that Jesus is coming soon. God worked miraculously; lives were changed, but the experience didn't end in Cuba. Michigan members left home as foreign missionaries and returned home as local missionaries ready to impact their churches and communities for Christ!

As Seventh-day Adventist Christians living in the last days, we have divinely inspired counsel guiding us in the work of ministry as we fulfill the Great Commission. Christ's method, joined with the Cycle of Evangelism, are two of the most powerful, soul-winning tools, both at home and abroad. When we follow God's plan, His work cannot and will not fail!

In Cuba, we witnessed God's miraculous blessing as we assisted 10 churches with the GROW cycle. Each morning began with worships that included personal and public

evangelism training. The five phase cycle of evangelism was successfully launched in just two short weeks! The first two phases (Preparing Soil/Planting Seed) took place in the morning with construction projects and medical clinics. The construction site consisted of adding a second story to a church that had outgrown its capacity.

The clinics included massage, spiritual counseling, a lifestyle age test, blood pressure and glucose



Providing health-related services and treatments are effective ways for reaching communities.

checks, reading glass testing and distribution, and professional health education. The five clinics operated in the local church and moved to a different village each day. Often, the lines were out the door and down the street from the church. The teams cared for over 2,200 people and provided more than \$450,000 worth of medical care. Naturally, the medical care and kindness of our missionaries working unitedly with local Cuban church members, awakened a spiritual interest in many from the communities.

One elderly lady who came to the clinic had only the bottom of a glass bottle which she used as a rudimentary magnifying glass for reading. Our volunteers lovingly cared for her at every station. Upon receiving her first pair of glasses, she began to cry and rejoiced, "Now I can see to read my Bible. I'm going to read it more than ever before!" We later learned that it was she who first sacrificially brought the Adventist message to that region as a local missionary many years ago. We were building on her fruitful labors!

We shared more than 2,200 Bibles and literature with souls eager for truth. Nearly 1,000 people signed up for free Bible study courses. Local elders immediately coordinated church members to begin studies with those who indicated interest on our registration forms. This was the beginning of phase three: Cultivating. Each person at the clinic received an invitation to attend the evening evangelism series (Phase 4 - Harvesting). Hundreds came out each night at the 10 locations. Our Vacation Bible School was so popular, more than 250 non-Adventist children attended at one site!

One preacher's remote village was very poor and well-known throughout Cuba for having the highest levels of witchcraft and sorcery (Santeria). We continuously witnessed the Great Controversy as nightly supernatural occurrences unfolded right before our eyes. Because the church was small and poorly built, the meetings were held outside under a large canopy.

Mid-week, a vicious storm came and blew it down on top of everyone. The speaker held up the canopy and abruptly ended the meeting with prayer. Thankfully, everyone was in good spirits and returned with reports that the only winds felt that night in the village were right there under the canopy.

As the pastor called for decisions night after night, no one responded. Satan's agencies were surely at work. News came that we must leave Cuba early due to the Coronavirus outbreak. We went from four meetings left to our last night in a moment. The group pled with God for souls from every site who had not yet made decisions. On the last night, an appeal was made at the site previously mentioned. Still, no hands went up. Silently, the speaker called on God to do something in those final moments. Just then, the only source of light went out! The Lord immediately gave the right words. The speaker explained that "the devil had done these things all week to distract

and discourage people from choosing Christ, but He [Jesus] was indeed coming soon and loved each one more than His own life. If we don't choose now, we don't know what tomorrow will bring!" As the final appeal went out, 19 souls raised their hands for baptism. It was a miracle! In all, 39 people were baptized, with 113 additional decisions to soon follow. Church members promptly began discipleship to ensure Preservation in phase five of the cycle.

God still works miracles, and many more transformational stories are left untold. A church plant is underway as a result of the efforts in Cuba, and soon new areas will hear the Adventist message. The Michigan missionaries came home forever changed, yet eager and equipped to serve their own local church in its mission to reach Michigan for Christ. As the final cry goes into all the world, is God using you in the greatest way possible? He can and will as you yield yourself to Him each day in surrender and service to His cause.



Cuba Mission Trip, March 2020



The canvassing group

“God took us from eager but nervous students, to confident workers for him.”

“Canvassing During Covid-19: A Story of God’s Blessings”



Bethany Peterson and Jolene Anderson, ready to head out.

If you had an opportunity to work alongside your guardian angel, would you take it? What if you could be the answer to someone’s prayer? How would you like to put in someone’s hand the key that would free them from the bondage of sin? This is what the young people of the Fairplain Church in Benton Harbor had the amazing privilege of doing for two weeks.

In late July, an excited group of youth met, ready to be sent out as the hands and feet of Christ to bring hope to the hopeless in our community. Few of us had any experience, but we were eager to serve Jesus. After a brief training session, we shouldered our bags and headed out. Little did we realize just how much God would change us through this experience!

Aaron Leffler remarked, “Before I knocked on the first door, I felt very hesitant but eager to find out what the Lord could and would do.”

Feeling uncertain and even fearful was common for nearly everyone at the beginning, but as they went, they

realized, as Seth Leffler pointed out, that “nothing could stop me and the Lord.”

God took us from eager but nervous students, to confident workers for him. After that first day, Harmon Balorda shared, “I felt like God was working through me, and that was awesome!” Jolene Anderson added, “The most exciting thing for me was when someone got a book and seemed very interested and wanted to read it.”

Every day our skills and confidence grew as God blessed people through us. As we canvassed anything from rich houses that made us want to tip-toe on the sidewalk, to poor, alcohol-soaked apartment complexes, we began to see just how many people out there are searching for hope.

“I saw a little kid running around in an apartment filled with marijuana smoke. It was sickening! I saw so many people who are inwardly crying toward heaven for answers. The hardest part was that I was holding in my hand the answer, yet I felt so inadequate! How could I help them to see how much they needed what I had?” pondered Bethany Peterson.

We saw first-hand the transforming power of God. Etien Balorda told of a woman who was impolite and quite angry with him, but she accepted his offer to pray for her, and by the end of that prayer she was moved to tears. At another door, Jolene met a lady who said she was interested in the books but didn’t have enough money. She asked for prayer, and by the end of the prayer she, too, was crying.

We saw God answer prayers. Bethany related how she prayed that that she could be the answer to someone’s prayer. At her first door of the day, a woman told her how she had been praying for God to end the suffering and sickness in the world. “I know God has a plan somewhere in all of this, but where? How much is enough till God is appeased?” she was asking. By God’s grace, the woman took The Great Controversy—the answer to her prayers!

Some may wonder how COVID-19 affected our project. Aaron believes that “this crisis has helped open doors that otherwise would have stayed shut.”

Matheson Imperio agrees. “I believe COVID-19 was on our side, as more people were home and were more receptive to what healthful things we had to offer them.”

A week into the program, our youth seemed to switch from “training” mode to “business” mode. The second week saw a substantial increase in books distributed and donations received.

On the last day of the program, God helped the team raise nearly as much money and hand out nearly as many books as all the days in the first week combined. In total, they brought in well over \$15,000 and handed out more than 800 books, including 165 Great Controversy books.

The experience really changed our youth, bringing them closer to each other and to God. For Matheson, the experience pushed him to “rely more on God for help, face rejection, and

get out of [his] comfort zone.” Jolene believes that “God made [her] a little braver and stronger as a witness for Him.” Etien affirmed, “It was a very enriching experience for me, and at the end everyone was revitalized.”

Every young person who was involved would, without hesitation, go canvassing again and would strongly recommend it to others. “There are always people searching for truth, and you might be the one that God uses to show them truth and hope,” suggested

Christian. His brother Aaron added, “I’d like to encourage you today to step outside of your comfort zone, to share hope with someone today that will make an impact for eternity.”

By Bethany Peterson and Jolene Anderson

PASTORAL ORDINATIONS



Pastor Sean Brizendine was ordained on Sabbath, September 5 at the Upper Peninsula Camp Meeting. He pastors the Bessemer, Greenland, and Houghton churches. He has served a number of years in the literature ministries work and as a canvassing leader. He has served in Michigan from 2015.



Pastor Josiah Hill was ordained on Sabbath, August 29 at the Tawas SDA Church. He pastors the Glennie, Tawas City, and West Branch churches. Prior to serving in Michigan, he served as Director of Literature Evangelism at Ouachita Hills College in Arkansas. He has served in Michigan from 2016.



Pastor Carlos Sotomayor was ordained on Sabbath, September 26 at the Battle Creek Tabernacle where he serves as Assistant Pastor. He served as a teacher at Guam Adventist Academy for several years and also as a Bible worker and coordinating pastor at the Saipan Central Adventist Church prior to accepting the call to Michigan. He has served in Michigan from 2017.

TRANSITIONS



Pastor Leeroy Hernandez has accepted the call to serve as the new CAMPUS Missionary Training Program Director. He was ministering as the pastor of the Grand Rapids Maranatha Spanish and Kentwood churches, prior to his new position. He arrived in Michigan in 2014 where he served in various capacities in literature ministries before accepting the call to be a minister. He will be working closely with Pastor Israel Ramos, Director of Public Campus Ministries.

(The Evangelism of Education)

A Call to Prayer

A call for missionaries is a call that will take place until the return of Christ. However, the ability to share the gospel with others in relative ease will not last forever. Growing travel restrictions and health concerns are making it harder to effectively communicate biblical truth the way we’ve been accustomed to in the past. History teaches us a valuable lesson.

In early America, when Christian students lived out their faith on the campus of the College of William and Mary, opposition arose from their secular colleagues. Seeking revival on campus, faithful young people locked themselves in dorm rooms to pray, only to be interrupted by classmates who refused to allow them this exercise. Things seemed hopeless, until the college president intervened. Seeking to remedy this injustice, he opened his personal office as a safe haven for the young people to live out their conviction

to pray. The campus was revived.

Whether a pandemic is physical or spiritual in nature, nothing can smother the missional impact of a real Christian life.

Public Campus Ministry: Saving Adventist Educational Institutions

Although the case for the public college and university campus lies in its mission opportunity, this type of ministry has the potential for even more returns.

In nearly 20 years of ministry on public college campuses, I’ve seen a growing trend emerge. Adventist students who complete their undergraduate education at public campuses and who stay in the church, along with students who convert to Adventism on a public college campus, often choose attend an Adventist graduate program. This gives them a deeper appreciation for Adventist Education that is likely to be passed on to their children.

Reaching the campus allows us to reach the world in a more effective manner. But it does much more than that. Public campus ministry can actually strengthen our Adventist educational institutions. When the students that we invest in on the public college campus attend Adventist colleges and universities, the Church and our schools benefit.

They benefit with tuition dollars, with tithe money and the services of the students who graduate, and with a strengthened view of Adventism that is often passed on to future generations. For these reasons and more, public campus ministry today is the single most effective model of ministry, mission and educational development in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. And now, more than ever, the Church cannot afford to forget that.

By Israel Ramos,
Public Campus Ministries Director