



Official Newsletter for the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

MICHIGAN MEMO

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▲ Pastor Gene and Ciliciana Hall

Invest in Your MARRIAGE

By Altagracia Cruz

GRAND RAPIDS MARANATHA HISPANIC CHURCH

“Thoughts of divorce were mentioned frequently in our arguments and our relationship with God was also very poor.”

On a scale of 1 to 10, how do you grade our marriage?” That was the question my husband asked me on our return from a marriage commitment retreat at Camp Au Sable. “Nine,” I quickly responded. And then the thought hit me, “Praise the Lord!” It hadn’t always been like that.

We were married in the Dominican Republic in 1990. We were very young and soon after we moved to the states and found ourselves far removed from family and friends. We were also immersed in a new culture, which initially was shocking, not to mention the language barrier, and having just been married.

In the beginning we used to argue a lot. We both had our insecurities, control issues, and feelings of hopelessness. At times my husband didn’t want to return to our home from work, and I didn’t want him home either. Thoughts of divorce were mentioned frequently in our arguments, and our relationship with God was also very poor.

You see, my parents were divorced when my mom was pregnant with me; and even though my husband was raised in a more stable family, both his parents worked long hours. In essence, he was raised by both a nanny and his older sister.

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- EDITORIAL -

Youth for Eternity

By Ken Micheff

MICHIGAN CONFERENCE YOUTH DIRECTOR

“Camp Au Sable is a place where the harvest has been especially bountiful. The seed of God’s Bible truth is planted year after year in the heart of every camper.”

People need to know the truth about God—that He loves them, gave His life to save them, and is coming again soon to take them home to heaven to live with Him for all eternity. And the good news is, this gift of eternity is free! Jesus paid the price on Calvary and all you need to do is “believe in Jesus.” The Bible says in Acts 16:31, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”

Now that may sound rather simplistic, but it really is that easy! Sadly, people are going down in Christ-less graves every day because they don’t believe in Jesus! Many kids today don’t have a clue who Jesus is, much less believe in Him. You might be surprised to learn that there are even children from Christian families who, although they attend church every week, don’t have a connection with God or a relationship with Him.

So, how can we introduce our children to Jesus? Well, let’s consider for a moment how a plant grows. When you plant a small seed in the right soil, it’s not enough to plant it, then walk away and expect it to grow. You need to feed it, keep it watered, and make sure it gets sunshine and just the right nutrients. When taken care of and fed properly, a miracle begins to take place and that little seed begins to grow.

Day by day, it grows a little more until it reaches its full potential, and before you know it, this little seed has grown into a beautiful plant, which produces hundreds and thousands of other seeds that can do the same. Just like seeds need the right environment and food to grow, so do our children. And even more than earthly seeds, the spiritual seed of believing in Jesus, planted in the soil of their hearts, has the full life-giving potential to grow, reproduce, and dwell in the garden of God eternally.

Our Michigan Conference Youth Department is committed to spiritually feeding our children. *Youth for Eternity* is the goal that motivates everything we do. That’s why our staff works hard to make Christ the center of all our programs, not only at camp, but at every event, every location, and every outreach. The plants in God’s “garden” require lots of love and Holy Spirit power in order to raise kids for the kingdom. Jesus loves each one of His children, and He is eager to dwell in their lives so that He can help them gain the victory over sin.

Growing seeds in God’s garden requires spiritual food that comes from His two books, the Bible and nature, delivered with an extra helping of His amazing love! This is exactly what we have done and continue to do, and

God has richly blessed our efforts with a bountiful harvest. Over the years, we have had the privilege of witnessing countless baptisms as the result of these precious kids accepting Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. It's amazing how the Holy Spirit has stirred their hearts at so many of our sponsored venues, events, and activities such as Pathfinder outings and camporees, evangelistic outreaches for youth, and many more.

Camp Au Sable is a place where the harvest has been especially bountiful. The seed of God's Bible truth is planted year after year in the heart of every camper. Whether it is Teen Bible Camp, Adventurers, Pathfinders, or a wide variety of summer camps geared for various age groups, the Holy Spirit is watering those seeds. God is present around the campfire for worship while children are listening to Bible stories or personal testimonies from staff, singing songs of praise, and reading from God's Word. Many times, God reaches kids through the influence of a counselor, an act of kindness from a staff member, or just the simplicity of listening to God's voice in the stillness of the nature setting at Camp Au Sable.

It's amazing seeing the changes in these young people through the spiritual food received at camp. Kids go home singing songs about the love of Jesus to witness to their own families back home. In any given summer, 250-350 campers make decisions for baptism.

One of our very successful programs has been a special Bible camp called, Hi-C, which reaches out to students attending public high schools or colleges. At Hi-C, public school students interact with university students and the older students mentor the younger

ones. They are blessed with worship services that include rousing song services, testimonies, and Bible preaching. They learn how to defend their faith on topics like evolution, science, morality, and postmodern thinking. Students return home inspired and motivated to share their Christian beliefs with their non-believing teachers and fellow students.

In an age where so many young people are leaving the church, we can't just focus on the younger children. God loves teenagers and so do we! That's why we have a camp just for teens, where they are given opportunities to witness and share their faith. They go home filled with thrilling stories of how God used them to touch hearts for Him. They get excited about the people who requested Bible studies and have tears in their eyes as they relay the experience of praying with someone. Many people are attending church today because God blessed the efforts of our teens.

At all of our teen events, a special call is given for each to pray about giving one year of mission service to God before the age of 25. To date, several hundred youth have accepted the call and many have already fulfilled their commitment. Many more have taken their commitment cards home and have shared their decisions with their parents and church families and are preparing for their year of service.

At Camp Au Sable each summer, over 100 young adult staff are hired to work with almost 1,000 boys and girls. They continue to build the faith of Jesus in the lives of campers, both young and old alike. The staff are loved, valued, and respected as they are trained to do God's work in planting God's seeds of

Looking Ahead

I have the privilege of working with dedicated colleagues that are both proficient and effective in ministry and firmly committed to the mission and message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

It's exciting to hear how our Conference departments are engaging in ministry around Michigan, and it's my desire for you to get a clearer firsthand picture of the exciting things that are taking place.

In the future about a third of the editorials will be provided by the various ministry leaders of the Michigan Conference. It's our desire that you get better acquainted with those who are serving the field, and obtain a clearer picture of how God is blessing our members and the people of Michigan.

This month's editorial features the Youth Department and what God is doing through their ministry team. With school starting around the time of the next edition of the Memo, I have asked Jeremy Hall, our new Superintendent of Schools, to share on the topic of Adventist education.

It is a privilege to serve here in the Michigan Conference and a joy to work with you to accomplish the mission God has given us to do. We lift you up daily in our prayers and ask that you keep us in your prayers also as we seek to fulfill our calling in accordance with His will.

Blessings,





▲ Belleville Church impacting the community in creative ways.

Day Care Devotions

By Sarah Canada

BELLEVILLE CHURCH CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR

PRAYER FOCUS

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

MAY 7-11

Berrien Springs Spanish
Pastor Nilton Garcia

MAY 14-18

Bauer/Wyoming
Pastor Dan Rachor

Kalamazoo Korean Company
Pastor Jinwon Lee

MAY 21-24

Big Rapids/Bristol/Reed City
Pastor Garhett Morgan
Big Rapids Community Services

MAY 28-JUNE 1

Midland/Mt. Pleasant
Pastor Rod Thompson
Midland Community Services
Tri-City Elementary School

Sometimes we struggle to think of new and creative ways we can evangelize our community, but sometimes, if we wait for God to lead, He simply provides us with perfect opportunities that we never imagined possible. Over this past year, it's been exciting to see how God has opened the doors for a new form of evangelism in our small city of Belleville.

It all began through the interaction of our pastor, Nathaniel Oregon, with members of the local city council as he regularly attended their events. At one of these events, he met with the owner of Our Father's Child Care, Dorene Mroz. Dorene is trying to create an atmosphere in her day care where kids can come and learn about Jesus on a daily basis. As a result, Dorene began contacting our church to help her day care in presenting spiritual activities for her kids, as well as the community. The first event was planned, and it was decided that the Belleville SDA Church would provide a short worship talk, a healthy cooking demonstration, and an interactive health expo for the children and the visiting community.

We were thrilled to be invited to participate in the Earth Day event for our town, but that's when the devil began to throw obstacles in our way. Our vehicles were packed with goodie bags, Bible story props, tasty food samples,

television monitors, and more. As we pulled out of the driveway, a call came, informing us that there had been a fire in the building. The entire event was canceled. In spite of this, new events were created for us to participate in: Christmas in July and Winterfest in December.

The Christmas in July event provided us with the chance to again pull out the goodie bags, Bible story props, and healthy food recipes. It also included a walk-through health fair for the children in the community. Due to the success of this event, we've continued to receive other witnessing opportunities at the local day care and citywide activities. In July, the older students of the day care attended our Vacation Bible School program. The December Winterfest had our church members playing ukuleles and singing Christmas carols to those lining the street for the Christmas parade, while other members opted to stay inside and help visitors learn more about the baby Jesus at our kids' craft tables.

Dorene has continued to call our children's ministry department for assistance at the day care. Sarah Canada was able to come and share a mini version of our Beginners' Sabbath School program with the youngest children at Our Father's Child, complete with bells, angels on sticks, and costumes.

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A Praying Church is A Working Church



By Dennis Page

BERRIEN SPRING VILLAGE CHURCH BIBLE WORKER

A number of us stood outside the Village elementary school gym that sunny Friday afternoon as we waited for the trucks to arrive. For the second time the Village Church had partnered with *Christmas Behind Bars* prison ministry to reach those that are lost and often forgotten.

A group of youth also joined us, eagerly waiting to help unload and set up. Some of the lower grades had made cards with Bible promises for the inmates. We had been praying and planning this event for a couple weeks and finally the day had come.

At 1:00 PM the trucks arrived. One semi and a 24-foot box truck were stacked with snack items, Bible studies, *Spirit of Prophecy* books, and more. The local Village hardware store lent us a forklift and pallet jack to assist with the unloading.

The gym was cleared and four assembly lines were set up for the Sunday morning bagging day. The goal was for 200 volunteers to pack 4,000 grocery-sized bags and put six of these bags inside a large black bag, and then load them onto two box trucks ready for delivery.

Sunday morning, which coincided with the arrival of daylight savings time meant that our 8:30 AM meeting was more like 7:30 AM! Now, what

could possibly motivate 200 plus people to get up early enough to do such a task? Nothing but the love of Jesus and a passion for mission!

The people filtered in and after a brief devotional, we dispersed into groups for our specific duties. The smiling faces, busy hands, friendly chatter and camaraderie could be felt and seen as everyone worked through the assembly lines. This was a blessing to our church members and students because it gave us the opportunity to bond with one another as well as answer the Savior's commission to minister to those in prison.

It also gave us an opportunity to invite the broader community to a mission outreach and several volunteered, including my sister. And yes, we accomplished our goal, which meant that one bag was packed and loaded every 1.35 seconds. Praise God!

The following Thursday, 17 members and a community individual met in the parking lot at the Village Church at 4:45 AM and car-pooled to Michigan City Correctional Facility. When we arrived we worked together with a large Amish group for six hours. We gave all 2,500 inmates a gift package, encouraging them to trust in Jesus, to read the literature, and prayed with them.

In one of the dorm units a man called me over and asked about the *Amazing Facts* Bible studies that I was telling everyone about. I showed him the envelope and pulled out the sign-up sheet so he could receive them. He looked at me and said, "I'm a Muslim." I smiled and said to him, "then you and I have some things in common." We talked for a couple minutes, and he said that he was willing to do the Bible studies. Praise God! Our group left that day very blessed.

We read in Matthew 25 that Jesus specifically mentions ministering to prisoners, and in fulfilling this calling many souls have been brought to Christ. Even more could and should be done.

"Jesus is watching, ready to help everyone who desires His help. My brethren, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Watch and pray, and work to answer your prayers by seizing the precious opportunities for service as they come (Health Food Ministry, p. 89)."

MARRIAGE, cont'd

Consequently, both of us had no idea what an ideal marriage looked like! But praise God, He had the answers.

God brought us to Michigan, and while living in a friend's house, an older couple came to give them Bible studies, so we ended up joining the group. Initially, we joined just to be polite. That was the first time we met a Seventh-day Adventist, and praise the Lord that we did!

A few months later we moved to our own apartment. We were really struggling and barely surviving. After six years of marriage, I became pregnant, and tragically three months later lost the baby. That was devastating. How could a good God allow such thing? We were trying to do everything the right way, and then this?

I fell into deep depression. The nurse that had assisted me asked if I had any

family, and I stated that I only had my husband who was gone most of the time with work and some friends.

The following Saturday she and another lady came to visit and invited me to their church where a lot of Dominicans attended. She volunteered to pick me up the following Saturday. I was so lonely because my husband worked Saturdays. I agreed to go, and ended up loving it!

The people were very nice. We ended up having more Bible studies with the couple we met at our friend's house. Eventually we were both baptized at the Maranatha Spanish Church.

Some time after, they invited us to attend a marriage retreat in Spanish, our first ever. Everything was so new to us. We were like sponges sucking up all the new information. It dawned on us that we didn't know anything

about marriage! We ended up going every year and things kept improving little by little. We made a promise to each other that we were going to keep investing in our marriage, and that divorce would no longer be an option for us. We saw that with God all things were possible.

We ended up having two children after dealing with two more miscarriages, and by the grace of God we're still married after 28 years. It's not a perfect marriage, but one that desires to reach heaven together.

We attend the marriage retreats twice a year, and our passion is to encourage other couples to invest in their marriage.

If God can work a miracle in our marriage, He can surely do the same to yours!

Painting Donated to Office

This "portrait" of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Marquette, Michigan was done by Pastor C. Raymond Holmes in 1957. It was there that he and his wife Shirley worshiped, and he preached his very first sermon, while he was a student at Northern Michigan University. It has hung in the entryway for 59 years until June 26, 2016 when it was returned to him, and the light of that church went out on July 31, 2016.

He presented it to this new office building, in gratitude for the great privilege of serving most of his ministry in the Michigan Conference.

Let us determine that, by the grace of God, and empowered by the Holy Spirit together with unyielding faithfulness to the Scriptures, the light of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will never go out!

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:15)



▲ C. Raymond Holmes, Jay Gallimore and Justin Ringstaff

DEVOTIONS, *cont'd*

She was invited to return for their staff training in January, where she trained educators on how to bring Jesus into their teaching. Each teacher was given a copy of a sample Bible lesson, small booklets of *The Bible Story* series, and other religious tracts. The school was given a Bible felt set, angels on sticks, small felt Bibles, and other tools to use when sharing children's lessons.

God has provided us with such wonderful opportunities to get involved in children's ministries in our local city. We feel so blessed that God has allowed us to be called upon for local community events, and we're excited to be known for having an excellent children's ministry program. We're looking forward to seeing what other opportunities God drops into our laps next! It's time to stop making our own plans, and instead allow God to take us places we never imagined!

YOUTH, *cont'd*

love. Once the staff is trained they are empowered and given a great amount of responsibility. Because of their spiritual experience at camp, thousands of these staff grow to be passionate workers and leaders for Jesus in our churches.

As the youth director for the conference, I encourage members and leaders alike, to let the youth know how important they are in the service of Christ. Don't forget to tell them how much you love, appreciate, and value them. Let them know they are needed and show them where and how they can serve. Fast and pray, asking for Holy Spirit's guidance on how God wants you to reach out to the youth in your church. Encourage, inspire, mentor and nurture them to be not only future leaders – but also current leaders in your church now!

If you would like guidance on how to give youth an active roll in your church, please feel free to contact any of the three pastors (Ken, Chad or Craig) in the youth department. You can contact us on our cell or by calling the conference youth department and talking to Judy our administrative assistant. I'm blessed to work with an amazing team. They are



Karmon DeVasher is the new Personal Ministries and Sabbath School Director. He brings his experience as a teacher, evangelist and administrator to this position.



Jeremy Hall has been asked to be the new Superintendent of Schools. He has been working for the past several years as an associate.



Wes Peppers is the new Associate Ministerial Director and will continue to coordinate the evangelism program.



Cathy Oliver is the new secretary for the Publishing Department.

Deanna Hutchins is now serving as secretary for the conference secretary.

Wendy Welch is working in Property Risk Management.

all dedicated to serving young people here in the Michigan conference with one united goal—to reveal the likeness of Christ's character and to labor for the enlargement of His kingdom.

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MONTHLY CALENDAR

MAY

- 8 District Superintendents
- 13 Mother's Day
- 16 Camp Meeting Leadership -
Great Lakes Adventist
Academy
- 17 K-12 Board of Education
- 18-20 Pathfinder Fair -
Au Sable Northwoods
- 25-27 Great Lakes Adventist
Academy Graduation
- 25-27 Hispanic Camp Meeting -
Camp Au Sable
- 27-31 Certification Week - Camp
Au Sable
- 28 Memorial Day - Office Closed

JUNE

- 1 Certification Week - Camp
Au Sable
- 3-9 Camp Orientation - Camp
Au Sable
- 3 Pathfinder Council
- 10-16 Adventure Camp - Camp
Au Sable
- 10-14 Camp Pitch for Camp Meeting
- 15-23 Camp Meeting - Cedar Lake
- 17-23 Junior Camp - Camp Au Sable

A CHURCH HOPPER SETTLES

By Garhett Morgan

PASTOR, BIG RAPIDS, BRISTOL, AND REED CITY CHURCHES

Brenda had never set foot into a Seventh-day Adventist church before. In fact, she hadn't even heard of them, much less any of their publications. She had been listening to Strong Tower Radio at the suggestion of someone she had become acquainted with, and this was her first introduction to our faith.

She is a self-proclaimed church hopper and enjoyed bouncing from denomination to denomination to see what they had to say. She would stay a few weeks, and then leave for the next. That all changed when her new found friend, Sarah Ripley, decided to invite her to Reed City Church's book club when they were reading the book *Ministry of Healing*.

She had heard this book advertised on Strong Tower Radio also, and she began to feel convicted that this was something the Lord wanted her to look into. Brenda loves to read, and it

didn't take much convincing to pick up this book and dive in.

Once she began, she couldn't put the book down. In fact, she quickly ordered an entire case of them and began handing them out to her friends and family as gifts.

At the book club meeting, she held up the *Ministry of Healing* in a church she had never attended before, and exclaimed, "I don't know who this Ellen G. White is, but she must be an inspired prophet!"

However, she reminded the pastor that she wasn't sure she was done church hopping. He smiled, and now, a few months later, Brenda responded to an

appeal for baptism, and pronounced that she was there to stay.

She is currently attending and studying at the Reed City Seventh-day Adventist Church, with her baptism date soon approaching.

