



Official Newsletter for the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists:

Michigan Memo

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One Small Book to One Big Study

— Bob Stewart

Pastor of Grand Rapids Central and Lowell Riverside churches

On the morning of Saturday, March 10, 2012 William Yates noticed a book on his stoop that would forever change his life. At a time when things had not been going well in his life, the delivery by the Lowell Riverside Seventh-day Adventist Church of *The Great Controversy – The Storm IS Coming* was timed just right.

Accepting the truth about the Sabbath and being baptized into God's remnant church, William began seeking ways to share the precious truth he had embraced. In his own words, he says about his past, " 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.' This old saying could not be farther from the truth. You see, I can show you the scars from my physical abuse when I was a child. But the verbal and emotional scars given to me by my father are just as deep as they are wide. My father, who constantly criticized, threatened, and dismissed me until my self-esteem and feelings of self-worth were depleted, set the course for my young adult life. I left home at 17, ill-prepared to deal with what the world dished out."



Photo by William Yates

After William was shown the truth, he started to notice men in his circles of influence who had scars from the past. So he decided to start a men's group to try to meet those needs. "This men's Bible study group started simple enough with just a few of us men hungering for more, knowing instinctively

we need God. We went around the room. Each man shared a little about his life. With tears and true ownership, each man confessed his weaknesses and mistakes. Their hearts bled for the damage they had brought to those they love, and they gushed at how they lived without forgiveness. But I knew they were forgiven because of Jesus Christ."

He continues, "I found myself longing to help them. These men were trying to recover from the consequences of sin. I wanted them

to need God as I do. I wanted to make God their Hero and not sin. I wanted to break the cycle, not to repeat the sins of their earthly fathers.

"So I decided to start a men's group focusing on the 'Fundamental Beliefs,' more specifically, 'Marriage and the

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Guest Editorial

The Wedding of Laodicea and Cultural Adventism

— Wes Peppers
Pastor of the Lansing Church

In the timeless struggle between the church and the world, a growing crisis in the last days promises to leave many church members unprepared for the soon coming of Jesus. While the final Laodicean church suffers a barrage of divisive attacks from the outside world, a more sinister deception and cunning temptation has reared within the church, between those who have genuine Biblical faith and those who mimic this lifestyle through their reliance upon the mere religious culture of Adventism.

This division is not a new one. We need only go back to the Genesis account where we find twins, Jacob and Esau, who could not be more illustrative of the issue. It should be noted that both were raised in the faith (church) by their parents, knew truth, and had a knowledge of God. It is from this point that the similarities of these twins radically diverge. Esau quickly cast off the restraints of his religious upbringing at the first temptation of his fleshly nature, as evidenced by the selling of his birthright for a temporary, earthly indulgence which influenced the course of his life. However, Jacob found a life-altering power through a new birth experience from his faith and submission to God at Bethel.

Both started out with the same spiritual foundation, so what made the difference? Esau was immersed in the faith of his fathers as a child, but his preference for the culture of his faith rather than possessing faith itself did not lead him to seek transformation of heart and character as did Jacob. He sought the blessing of God and benefit of the culture simply for earthly gain. As one minister duly noted, “Being born in the truth is not the same as being true.” How accurate for many today as well!

Jesus also rebuked this superficial mimicry of true faith. In the Gospel of John, we read His words, “...you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life...” (John 6:26, 27). They followed Jesus to have their stomachs filled with bread rather

than their heart filled with His Spirit and presence. They ate from His hand, but not His heart. Religious culture wishes to sit at Jesus’ feet, but only to be fed conveniently in this life without any discomfort of preparation for the next. Biblical faith will seek the spiritual bread even at the expense of earthly bread.

Herein lies the heart of the problem of Adventism today. Those who profess Christ within Adventism, but cannot in the life testify and bear fruit of a changed heart, only admit that they are the product of a nice culture rather than divine grace. They may appear to drink of the Water of Life, and yet be as destitute as the hills of Gilboa. A life enriched by Adventist culture

without living faith cannot live above the world, but only comfortably in it. Without an entire surrender of the will, they do not experience genuine conversion. And without this, they neither come to Christ, nor practice self-denial to lead others to Him.

The 25th chapter of Matthew prophetically describes the distinct division that exists among God’s people right

before He comes. A contemporary view of the parable and its application would allow us to say that there are those cultural Adventists who have secluded themselves from the world, understood truth, and yet they still enjoy the world’s pleasures and benefits. They want deliverance from evil, but not from sin. Consequently, they seek their own kingdom rather than His. True Adventism, by contrast, seeks not only escape from the consequence of sin, but more importantly receives freedom from the root of sin itself through surrender to Jesus in everything. As a result, the new heart seeks actively to advance the kingdom of God through sharing its faith under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This new heart is filled with the power of grace because it is in constant surrender to the leadership of Christ. In addition, true Biblical faith views God’s commandments and counsel not merely as church rules, but as grace from the heart of Christ for an abundant life. It accepts the plain, straight truth of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy with joy, recognizing that it is out of infinite love and the strong delusion of sin that God gives

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such straightforward instruction. Anything short of this is a sure indicator that one is only culturally Adventist, but not a transformed Adventist.

This distinction being made, it should be noted that there is nothing objectionable with Biblical Adventist culture, as long as it is driven by true Adventist faith. The two can exist together with hope of eternal life, but the former cannot save without the latter and will only result in eternal loss. Adventist culture alone will not meet the requirement in the Judgment when we stand before God. We must each seek God personally with all our heart while He is seeking us with all of His and be truly born again through living faith in Christ. To live each moment saturated with faith, not simply parroting the culture we know so well, is the sure remedy for Laodiceanism in Adventism today. To revive the first love, or sadly for many who are baptized members in the church already, the need to discover it for the first time, is of paramount importance for each of us personally as we live on the edge of the final prophetic crisis. Yet, there is rich hope for any who look to Him today in earnest, heartfelt faith.

Are you experiencing true Adventist faith or merely a cultural experience? Your answer today is of eternal, life and death significance. Choose faith. Choose life.

Nature Nugget

— Gordon Atkins
Camp Au Sable Nature Director

If you are an “old-timer” at Camp Au Sable, you may already know of the “Presidents Tree,” an eastern white pine dedicated years ago in recognition of the presidents of the Michigan Conference. This tree is the largest living tree that we know of at Camp Au Sable (a larger one was toppled in a windstorm years ago.) The Presidents Tree now holds a new claim to fame! Our resident pair of bald eagles has decided it would be a good spot to build a nest! While not yet confirmed by Michigan Department of Natural Resources, it appears that the pair laid eggs. This is the fourth bald eagle’s nest on camp property. After trimming a few small branches near the Nature Center, visitors will be able to view the nest (and hopefully some hatchlings) from the “Art Gallery” of the Nature Center.

In addition to being our national symbol, bald eagles are often used to symbolize wilderness majesty in the movies and on television. However, they have a rather uninspiring voice. So most often, Hollywood dubs in the call of a red-tailed hawk instead! This drives serious birders crazy! This begs the question: “Do we speak with an authentic voice revealing the character of God within us, or do we dub in a fake voice pretending to be something else in an attempt to hide an ungodly character?” Something to think about!



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

August 3-7

Lansing

Pastor Wes Peppers

Greater Lansing Adventist School -

Judy Shull (Principal), Heidi Hunt, Robert Patterson,

Julia Robinson, Bonnie Velez

Community Service - Marvin Anderson

August 10-14

Grand Blanc, Holly

Pastor Daniel Ferraz

Adelphian Jr. Academy - Ann Barrett (Principal),

Gretchen Brown, Alan Patterson, Jill Simon

Community Service - Jennene Brill

August 17-21

Fenton, First Flint

Pastor Chris Ames

LE - Chris Moore

Community Services - Linda Marie Moore

August 24-28

Frost, Ionia

Pastor Taylor Hinkle

Ithaca Elementary School - Kari Williams (Principal)

Jessica Goodrich

Community Service - Virigina Pfeifle

70th Anniversary

— Harry S. Fountain
Plymouth Church Communication Secretary



Photo by Cori Hamstra

Congratulations to Dr. Arthur and Natalie Weaver! They are long-time members of the Plymouth Seventh-day Adventist Church, having celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on June 26 this year. Art and Natalie have contributed immensely to the spiritual and health outreach in southeast Michigan as well as many parts of the globe. They have been team leaders for the past 16 years sponsoring mission trips all over the world. Their contributions to the Michigan Conference and Adventist Church have been immense. Very few have obtained such a milestone! Our thoughts, prayers, and blessings go out to this most worthy couple!



Photo Credits to Shawna Campbell, Julie Clark, Dawn Heeg, Cheryl Hosford, Ben Martin, Daniel McGrath, Daniel Mendez, Jerry Pemberton, and Israel Ramos

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reat. Luke 10:2



Transitions in Mission



Sean Brizendine grew up in California and became an Adventist in 2007, sensing God's call to be a pastor. Having just completed a Master of Divinity degree at Andrews University in 2015, he serves as associate pastor of the Greenland and Bessemer churches. He steps in for Elder Gordon Frase who has retired.



Daniel Jean-Francois was raised in New York City and graduated from the ARISE Institute. He has been a Bible worker in Sterling Heights, CAMPUS chaplain in the Upper Peninsula, and assistant to the pastor at the East Lansing University Church. He and his wife Laura reside in Edmore where he now is the assistant pastor of the Cedar Lake Church.



Originally from the Metro-Detroit area, Judy Ramos has served as a Michigan Conference teacher as well as the Administrative Assistant for GYC. She and her husband Israel have three boys. Judy will be the new Administrative Assistant for the Youth Department. Her predecessor Alanna Knapp will be teaching at Battle Creek Academy.

David Austin is the new pastor of the Kalamazoo Countryside and Centreville churches.

Kameron DeVasher will be the pastor of the Kalamazoo and Kalamazoo Downtown churches as well as the District 11 Superintendent.

Mark Howard will be the pastor of the Cedar Lake Church as well as District 5 Superintendent.

Nancy Larsen is the Bible worker for the Lansing Church.

Terry Nelson will be pastoring the Clare and Edenville churches as well as being District 6 Superintendent.

Bayani Pastrana is now the pastor of the Delton Church while also associate pastor of Battle Creek Tabernacle.

William Richardson will pastor the South Haven Church in addition to his current district of Covert, Pullman, and Hartford and Pullman churches.

Staci (Osterman) Schefka is the Bible worker for the Lakes Area Church.

Dale Sheridan is the Bible worker for the Detroit Metropolitan Church.

Donald Sparks is the new pastor the Marion Church along with the Estey and Gladwin churches.

Immanuel Roth will pastor the Bristol and Reed City churches.

300 Men of God

— Jeremy Carlson
Member of the Bristol Church

In May 2015, more than 50 men from three states gathered for the first annual 300 Men of God Retreat held in Tustin, Michigan. The weekend was sponsored by the Bristol Seventh-day Adventist Church. With the theme of Gideon and God's 300 warriors, keynote speaker Pastor Lynn Bryson gave his personal testimony, along with counsel targeted for men and the unique challenges they face every day.

Speakers Scott Ritsema of *Belt of Truth Ministries*, Dan Augsberger, Pastor Jonathan Chitwood, Gunther Schwartz, and Rod Boothby provided power-packed breakout sessions on lust, prayer, how to study the Bible, marriage, and parenting.



Men were divided into pairs and spent time in heartfelt prayer for each other. The weekend fellowship brought men to seek God on a deeper level, through His Word, and to build long lasting friendships and community.

The Strong Tower Radio Quartet provided inspirational music to kick off on Friday. Incredible weather allowed the group to enjoy horseback riding, canoe races, disc golf, hiking, kayaking, and campfire stories.

Efforts are already underway to plan the 2016 event to be held at Center Lake Bible Camp and Retreat Center. For more information, please call Jeremy Carlson at 616-460-7383.

Between Two Book Ends

— Yasmin Osorio

Member of the Midland Church

On August 15, 2015 the Midland Seventh-day Adventist Church will be celebrating 100 years in Midland!

It all started when evangelist I. H. Evans came to Midland to conduct a series of meetings in the year 1911. As a result of these meetings and the guiding of the Holy Spirit, nearly a dozen families were baptized. A small group of people continued meeting for worship in people's homes and other venues. Thus, the church was officially organized as the Midland Church of Seventh-day Adventists on February 28, 1915. Shortly after organizing the congregation built their own church which remains until today, it is known as the Midland Seventh-day Adventist Church.



Elder Don Livesay, President of the Lake Union, will speak at Midland's 100 year centennial celebration on August 15. The day will kick-off with Sabbath School starting at 9:20 AM, such as it was 100 years ago, using a 1915 quarterly. The Sabbath School and church service promises to bring back memories to former members and friends as it will be taught by former pastors.

Following the church service, there will a picnic in an outdoor tent, with church providing vegetarian hot dogs and complementary dishes. Members and friends are asked to bring food that will not require much preparation.

We would like to invite former members and friends to mark this date on their calendars and join us for a very high Sabbath full of history, music, pictures, food, and good fellowship. Any questions can be directed to David Moll 989-832-3835 or djmoll@aol.com.

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Family.' We men need to be warriors for Christ. Walking with God is the first thing that every man needs to discern. I want to help every man succeed in life by telling my own experiences of dealing with real-life problems and how God has solutions."

William's small group began to grow: first a handful, then ten, then more; to the point, in fact, that there was no longer any room to meet for all of them. He looked around for another place to meet and found a Sunday church across the street from where he and his wife lived, that was willing to open their doors to his growing ministry.

How much did it grow? The last time he checked, his little group had grown a few hundredfold! Other churches in the area were interested in having him branch out into their churches with the same ministry.

William saw a need and asked God to help him fill it. God has blessed him beyond his wildest dreams. His goal is to weave

the truth for this time into the fabric of their studies and to "know our Lord Jesus Christ more fully," William says.

"This small group study helps men build the skills they need to succeed and offers encouragement and accountability as men journey together. The goal is to equip all men with the tools to grow in grace and to know our Lord Jesus Christ more fully. Besides, that is the purpose of all our spiritual journeys – to know Jesus and to be transformed into his image (John 17:3 and 2 Corinthians 3:18). With that in mind, are you making yourself available to know our Lord? Let the journey begin..."

That "journey" for William was richly encouraged by a church that prayed and sacrificed to deliver a book that not only changed his life, but continues to change others' lives through William's "small group study."



Michigan Senior Camp 2015



September 13-17 at Camp Au Sable

Seniors who are 55 years old and wiser are invited to five spiritual and relaxing days of:

- Morning and evening worships with pastors
- Nature lessons and insights into creation
- Heightened spiritual awareness
- Three wonderful meals a day
- New friendships, fellowship, and fun!

A \$20 deposit secures a reservation, but you may pay in full which will speed up your arrival registration. For full information, contact Mona Hickman at (517) 316-1520.



August

- 2 Family Camp III -
Camp Au Sable
- 9-11 New Teacher Orientation -
Camp Au Sable
- 10-13 Teachers Convention -
Camp Au Sable
- 16-19 Ministerial Retreat -
Camp Au Sable
- 21-23 Adventurer Workshop -
Camp Au Sable
- 25 MI Conference Executive
Committee - Conf. Rm
- 27 K-12 Board of Education
- 28-30 Pathfinder Workshop -
Camp Au Sable

September

- 4-7 Office Closed
- 7 Labor Day
- 10-13 Adventurer Family Camp -
Camp Au Sable
- 10-13 Family Ministries -
Camp Au Sable
- 10-13 UP Women's Ministry Retreat -
Camp Sagola
- 13-17 Senior's Retreat -
Camp Au Sable
- 18-20 Health Professionals Retreat -
Camp Au Sable
- 18-20 Pathfinder Camporee - Camp
Au Sable Northwoods
- 21-24 UP Outdoor Education -
Camp Sagola
- 25-27 ACS Fall Workshop
- 26 Men of Faith - GLAA

A Field Trip to Remember

— Corina Nephew
Pittsford Elementary School teacher

A part of an Adventist education to me means helping kids realize that the intricacies of their church extend far beyond the local congregation. That belief propelled me to schedule a visit to the Conference Office in Lansing for our little school.

Wow! It was even better than we imagined!

Our tour began in the Education Department, where we were greeted by the sweetest guide ever, Sheri Castanon. To our surprise, she handed out pretty gift bags to all the kids, telling them they might be collecting things along the way. Then the fun, informative stroll started!

Everyone was so nice. Even Elder Gallimore paused for a friendly chat and prayer with the students! The little baggies of homemade granola, complete with attached Bible verse, prepared by

his administrative assistant, Jean, were just some of the many, many meaningful gifts the children received from the different departments/areas. By the time we reached the second floor, we were in need of a bigger bag, which Janie Harris kindly provided. We even got to see “The Dungeon,” recommended to us by the handsome director of Trust Services, my

husband Joel.

Our tour ended with a stop at the Adventist Book Center, where we did a little shopping.



All in all, it was a most interesting day, and well worth the hour drive. In the words of my third grader, “Those people over there are real Christians.”

Thank you, Conference staff, for your hospitality!