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MEMO

INFORMING MEMBERS SINCE 1988

AUGUST 2023

IMPACT OF UNIVERSITY SUPPORT NETWORK



Called to Be His Co-laborers

All the testimonies shared at our recent camp meeting soul-winning hour were powerful and encouraging, but one stood out as particularly relevant as we look forward to our Discovering Revelation series across the conference beginning October 2.



Kameron DeVasher

As James shared his testimony on the camp meeting stage, he briefly recounted how he grew up in a non-religious home.

Nevertheless, in his teenage years he became increasingly interested in spiritual things. When he spoke to his mother about his spiritual thoughts, she shared Bible truths she had learned at a series of evangelistic meetings several years earlier in Coldwater, Michigan. It was at this point in his testimony that James off-handedly mentioned how the series his mother attended was preached by the very co-host of that afternoon's soul-winning program, Pastor Mark Howard! As James continued, he explained how the truths his mother shared with him led him to search for more light online where

he discovered Adventist preachers like Doug Batchelor and Mark Finley. Eventually both James and his mother took their stand for the Lord and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church through baptism.

Furthermore, James was on stage that day not only to share his own conversion story but to tell how God had used him to reach another young man named Al, who, by studying the Bible with James, was now ready to get baptized, too. But there's still more to the story! Later that afternoon, Al introduced us to Andre, a co-worker friend of his who he had invited to camp meeting and who just that week had responded to an appeal to give his heart to the Lord and begin preparing for baptism, as well!

You can imagine how eager Pastor Howard was to find James, Al, and Andre

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MICHIGAN
Memo

after the program and to hear more of their amazing testimony. Believe it or not, James's off-handed comment on that camp meeting stage about his mom recounting what she learned from those meetings in Coldwater was the first time that Pastor Howard learned that an evangelistic series he preached 15 years earlier had been a major factor in the conversion of this young man and his mother.

"Successful" Evangelism

Almost any time we discuss public evangelism, the conversation tends to revolve around whether a series of meetings was "successful." But what does evangelistic success mean? What is our objective in evangelism? Is our goal to have a high number of non-Adventist attendees? Do we look at the number of baptisms at the end of the series? Or is the most important metric the efficient expenditure of funds relative to the number of commitments made? While all those are important and certainly worthy of consideration, I would submit that there is a more basic and perhaps even more significant measure of evangelism success—the commitment to conduct a series at all, regardless of measurable "success."

The Apostle Paul told the believers in Corinth that "Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 1:17). While Paul doubtless rejoiced to baptize new believers, he understood that ultimately, he was only accountable for his duty to preach the Gospel. Later in the same letter he explained how "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6). He recognized



Top: (Pictured left to right: Mark Howard, Al, Sherie Christie, Andre, & James): Mark Howard listens intently to James' powerful testimony.

Bottom: James (right) remembers learning Bible truths from his mother who attended an evangelistic series by Mark Howard 15 years ago.

that his primary objective was to faithfully preach the present truth. What people did with it was up to them and often their commitments weren't made until long after he had moved on to another field of labor. But did that make his evangelistic labor unsuccessful? Of course not! Did he lament that evangelism doesn't work? Never! Paul's confidence was not rooted in the power of his presentations nor the immediate response of his audience, but in the fact that "God gave the increase."

Friends, an absence of immediate results does not discredit your efforts to win souls. The same God who "gave the increase" to Paul long after he had moved on, the same God who "gave the increase" to Pastor Howard some 15 years after he preached that series in Coldwater, is the same God

Prayer Focus

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

AUGUST 2
Grand Blanc/Holly
 Daniel Ferraz
Adelphian Jr Academy
Holly ACS Center

AUGUST 8
Clio/First Flint
 Malcolm Douglas
First Flint SDA Elementary
First Flint ACS & Food Pantry

AUGUST 15
Fenton/South Flint
 Donald Sparks
South Flint Food Pantry

AUGUST 22
New Haven/Port Huron
 Curt Dewitt
New Haven Children's Food Pantry

AUGUST 29
Livingston/Waterford
 Todd Ervin
Lapeer/Orion Oxford/Otter Lake - John Contreraz
Lapeer ACS Center

Impact of University Support Network

At many college campuses across the state, students can easily get lost in the daily shuffle of exams and assignments. Adventist students at secular campuses have an added burden; they need to find a like-minded community that will support their spiritual growth and not hinder it.

During my time as an undergraduate at Central Michigan University (CMU), I was blessed to experience a community like this.

On any given Friday evening during my college years, a collection of students, some Adventist and some not, nestled into a cozy basement at Dr. Dawn Nelson's home. Many nights, the smell of home cooked meals donated from various members of Mt. Pleasant Seventh-day Adventist church permeated the room, as students read, learned, and debated key passages from the Bible. Beyond the confines of academics, students yearned for a space to ask profound questions about God, delve into individual spiritual journeys, and grow collectively.

This group had an incredible impact on all of us in many ways. The studies presented each week gave us a great understanding of the Bible. As college students, we were being trained to question everything, so through collective discussion we could delve deeply into God's word on a vast variety of relevant topics. Also, the meetings presented a safe, relaxing, and welcoming place to be at the end of a taxing week. This reality created a great evangelistic tool. It was easy to invite a friend to Bible study in a non-threatening environment. That helped us invite people to church because we were all going the next morning. And since we spent so much time together, we forged friendships that

carried us through difficult times.

The bonds formed within this group were not limited to the confines of our Friday evening gatherings. Outside of Friday nights, we supported one another through the highs and lows of college life. We celebrated achievements, offered a listening ear during tough moments, and prayed together when life became overwhelming. These genuine friendships were rooted in a shared faith and a common desire to grow spiritually, but they blossomed into lifelong connections that extended far beyond our time at CMU. The camaraderie we cultivated created a network of support that endured even as we ventured into different careers and stages of life.

Ultimately, the results were a beautiful example of how contributions from different stakeholders can support a growing ministry. Some students were willing to take leadership roles, lead Bible studies, and invite their friends. The local church was incredible at providing time and resources to ensure student's needs were met whenever possible. I remember Pr. Daryl Bentley picking up his phone to answer Bible questions in the middle of the night for members of the group. CAMPUS, the Michigan Conference's public campus ministry program, was also instrumental in providing resources to the group. They set us up with contacts from other public universities around the state. They offered us training and helped us become

a registered student organization through the university. Pr. Steven Conway, who was leading the University of Michigan's campus ministry program at the time, made multiple trips from Ann Arbor to Mt. Pleasant to spend time and help us to organize.

The group started with just four to five students invited over to Dr. Nelson's home to bring in the Sabbath. At its peak, there were around 20-25 people packed into that basement every week. It was an incredible blessing to me. I saw multiple friends get baptized from the group. I developed spiritually, as a leader, and as a young adult because of the support I got from this group.

The impact of a community like this can go far beyond college years. It can equip students with the tools and confidence to connect with people wherever life leads them. I encourage anyone near a public university to lend support to students who want an experience like this. We should continue to foster environments where students can find the Bible, guidance, and encouragement amidst the chaos of young adulthood and academia. By investing in programs that prioritize the spiritual well-being of both Adventist and non-Adventist students, we can help them navigate the challenges they face and empower them to live out their faith. I've seen how God can move into multiple lives because church members cared enough to support a program like this.

There are students all over the state who are seeking something different than the evil influences that pervade life at a secular university. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world..." I pray that His message continues to shine throughout every campus! 🙏

By Brandon Bryant, a member of the Troy church.

Top Right: "The group started with just four to five students invited over to Dr. Nelson's home to bring in the Sabbath."

Bottom Right: "The local church was incredible at providing time and resources to ensure student's needs were met whenever possible."

"There are students all over the state who are seeking something different than the evil influences that pervade life at a secular university."



Ludington Evangelism Richly Blessed

Ludington, located on the north shore of Lake Michigan, is a small town. Members were encouraged to see excellent community engagement. During the four weeks, nine non-members and their families attended the evangelistic series. Four of the guests attended opening night and every meeting after for a week and a half before becoming sick with pneumonia. Four other guests began attending in the middle of the series, but they also became sick. Finally, one more woman began attending near the close of the series, “for the last four or five meetings,” says Ringstaff, and she has “been studying the Bible and is preparing to be baptized.” The other eight have also kept in touch with Ludington church members and are also participating in Bible studies. Despite the unusual

circumstances that threatened to tear them away, the Lord grasped these families firmly, ensuring they would find the truth for which they were searching.

Several attendees are coming to church as often as possible, and are resolving work issues, so they can attend more frequently, Ringstaff says. They are also coming to prayer meetings.

When it comes to the kingdom of God, every soul touched is an enormous victory. Ludington church understands the significance of every soul, and their planning for the series began months in advance of the meetings, according to Ringstaff. An evangelistic series isn't just about the sermons. There's music to choose, children's programs to plan, and health nuggets to be selected. And, of course, no series should be planned without careful and fervent prayer.

“Please keep churches across Michigan in your prayers as many will be engaged more directly in public evangelism efforts.”

In addition, Ringstaff credits the conference-wide *Great Controversy* mission trip as being a catalyst for turning the community's mind towards Christ. The mission trip was right before the series began, and church members passed out 1,200 *Great Controversy* books, with a flyer tucked into each book, Ringstaff says. He believes that not only did the books pull in attendees for this series, but those left at homes will provide “curiosity” for future evangelistic events—a pull to learn more.

When it comes to any sort of evangelism, much can be said about Total Member Involvement (TMI). When every member is engaged, says Ringstaff, “you have, obviously, more people involved, which means less dependency on

(continued on page 7)

You are invited on Sabbath
September 23 at 10:30 a.m.!

The Battle Creek Tabernacle completed a remodel of the sanctuary and main floor of the church, and we are planning a special service to celebrate.

Please join us as we dedicate our newly remodeled church sanctuary, renew our commitment to Jesus, and rejoice in what He has done for us. Our guest speaker will be Dwight Nelson, recently retired pastor of the Pioneer Memorial Church. We especially invite former Tabernacle members to join us for worship and view the redesigned sanctuary.

The Tabernacle is located at: 264 West Michigan Avenue, Battle Creek, MI.

(Called to be His Co-laborers continued from page 2)

who is ultimately responsible for the success of each of our upcoming Discovering Revelation sites. While we always want to do our best work for the Master, I would urge us all to focus less on what we might regard as *effectiveness* in evangelism and more on what God regards as *faithfulness* in evangelism.

Operation Andrew

With confidence in Christ's responsibility to make our labors successful, let's re-double our efforts even now to reach all those we can with the invitation to hear God's last day message. We're only weeks away from the opening night of Discovering Revelation. This is one of the most critical times to pray for divine appointments to invite people to the upcoming meetings. One such opportunity is coming later this month with Operation Andrew.

Named after the Apostle Peter's brother who was always bringing someone to Jesus, Operation Andrew emphasizes the vital work of personally inviting people to hear the message of truth. This is the time to begin praying in earnest for the friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family members that you could bring to the upcoming series of meetings. Beseech the Lord to give you courage to ask and to give them the spiritual interest to respond positively to your invitation.

We have been told that the combined force of our personal labor is one of the most potent tools for reaching souls. "The secret of our success in the work of God will be found in the harmonious working of our people. There must be concentrated action. Every member of the body of Christ must act his part in the cause of God, according to the ability that God has given him" (*Christian Service*, p. 75)



James shares how he gave Bible studies to Al (left), who is preparing for baptism.

Appeal

There is a lot we don't know when it comes to winning souls. We don't know who is already sensing the pull of the Holy Spirit on their heart. We don't know which presentation will convict the mind of which hearer. We don't know the people in our life who may already be interested in spiritual things. In fact, all we know for sure is that God is ultimately responsible for His work and that He calls us to be His co-laborers. Thus, Scripture outlines our duty in simple terms: "In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; For you do not know which will prosper, either this or that, or whether both alike will be good" (Eccl. 11:6).

I'm looking forward to the miracles God will provide as we partner with Him in laboring for souls. May the Lord richly bless each one of us as we consecrate ourselves to Him and His cause. 🙏

By Kameron DeVasher, Director, Evangelism

(Ludington Evangelism Richly Blessed continued from page 6)

pastoral leadership." This means that "each member becomes a leader in the church, and more things are done." Ringstaff further explains that if he had been the only one to plan the series, it would have been much different. There would have been no greeters, and music would have been thrown together at the last minute.

The pastor would have had to do the health talk as well, which doesn't allow for guests to connect with church members. "Active members," Ringstaff says, "means

more connections." Thankfully, Ludington members are active. The music was carefully selected to match the evening's topic, and two or three sentences were shared to get visitor's minds thinking about the connection. The greeter team was phenomenal, welcoming guests with a smile and a warm handshake. Five members split the health nuggets, so guests were given the opportunity to see church members in active, passionate service.

Every night, half an hour before the meeting began, several

members gathered in the church and prayed for the meeting, specifically for the guests who would attend. "Half of our members, if not more," Ringstaff says, "were active during the series." He believes "the series revived not only the community, but also the church."

He's right! Evangelism reminds us, as we share our faith with those searching, just how important our faith is, and just how important it is to share that hope with others. 🙏

By Judy Ringstaff, Communication



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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

NATURE NUGGET




Piping Plover

Did you know that the Piping Plover is a true beachcomber? These tiny birds spend their summers along the sandy shores of North America including some beaches along Lake Michigan. Despite being only 1.5 ounces, they help to keep beaches healthy and vibrant. They have short, thick bills that are perfect for probing in the sand to find their prey, including insects, small crustaceans, and mollusks.

Piping Plovers have distinctive black bands across their foreheads and a black stripe that runs from their eyes to their bills. They also have orange legs and feet and a black and orange bill. Piping Plovers have a distinctive high-pitched “pip-pip-pip” call they use to communicate with each other, from which their name is derived. They are also known for their unique nesting behavior, as

they construct their nests directly on the sand. To protect the eggs from predators and the hot sun, the parents take turns incubating them and shading them with their bodies. We can help protect the nests and chicks by not using those areas of beaches where they nest.

Despite its tiny size, the endangered Piping Plover plays an important role in the coastal ecosystem. Similarly, in our own lives, we should never underestimate the importance of the small and seemingly insignificant things we do. Our actions, no matter how small they may seem, can have a powerful impact on the world around us. We should also strive to protect those who are vulnerable and in need of our help.

By nurturing and protecting the small and vulnerable like Jesus did while He was on earth, we, too, can help create a better world! 

By Dr. Gordon Atkins, Head Naturalist, Camp AuSable

MONTHLY CALENDAR

August

- 11-13 iShare Weekend Event*
- 18-20 Adventurer Leadership (CAS)*
- 20 Lay Advisory Coordinating Committee*
- 20-23 CAMPUS Boot Camp*
- 25-27 Pathfinder Leadership (CAS)*

September

- 1-3 Stride Missionary Retreat*
- 4 Office Closed – Labor Day*
- 8-10 Adventurer Family Camp – North Woods*
- 8-10 UP Camp Meeting*
- 13-15 GLAA Home Leave*
- 15-17 Pathfinder Camporee – North Woods*
- 15-17 PCM Fall Retreat (CAS)*
- 24 Michigan Conference Constituency*
- 29-Oct 1 Family First (CAS)*

**CAS = Camp Au Sable*