



What Happens When Adventist Education Goes Virtual?

Adventist education is a beautiful thing. An Adventist classroom represents more than books and chalkboards, pencils and paper—it's a training ground. The teacher doesn't just teach math and science, art and reading, but is also an evangelist, drawing from their own relationship with God, and pulling them higher and leading them to a closer relationship with God. The classroom is an evangelistic training center. The students are not only equipped with knowledge that our world deems essential, but also knowledge on how to fulfill the great commission—to go forth and “make disciples of all nations.” (Matthew 28:19)

The Michigan Conference Education Department incorporates three keys when it comes to Adventist education.

First, students are to be brought to the foot of the Cross. In other words, each student should be able to see—through their teachers and through the atmosphere around them—the joy of knowing Christ and accepting his sacrifice. The second is quality at all levels. Parents should not have to withdraw their children from the school because the building was in poor condition or because the teacher was ill-equipped.

Jeremy Hall, superintendent of schools for the Michigan Conference, references Daniel chapter 6 as the model for Adventist education. In Daniel's time, when government officials attempted to find fault or shortcomings with him, they could not. Striving for excellence in all matters, as Daniel exemplified, is the goal of ASPIRE, which emphasizes

“One ASPIRE student recently decided to be baptized. There was no Adventist school nearby, and through ASPIRE, a young one has been drawn to Jesus.”

robust academics in addition to quality at all levels.

The third and final key is to train students in the message and mission of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Graduates of Adventist schools—whether they're in kindergarten, 8th grade or high school—should be equipped to go forth and share the Word. “True education,” says Ellen White, “is missionary training” (*Christian Service*, p. 64). This is the education for which we strive.

This is a beautiful picture—but what happens when COVID-19 hits the world, jolting education from face-to-

By Jim Micheff,
President



“One of the devil’s most successful methods when God warns us of danger is to tempt us to think that, if we really are in danger, we can react fast enough to escape.”

EYES IN THE DARK

When my children were small, we lived in Colorado. My office was only about one mile from our house and one evening, my wife and children came to visit. I needed to finish some things, so two of the children waited to walk home with me.

It was dark by the time we set out. Streetlights illuminated part of the way, but there were no lights on the final stretch of road to our house. When we walked out of the glow of the last streetlight, we realized just how dark it was. We couldn’t see our hands in front of our faces.

We had only traveled a short distance when I sensed danger! What could possibly be causing this sudden fear? My mind raced through the whole scenario of where we were and if there was anything dangerous.

Suddenly a thought went through my mind that sent shivers down my back. *There could be a lion out here watching you.* Immediately I pictured a large, male African lion with a big mouth and a bad attitude. *There aren’t any African lions out here,* I reasoned, *this is Colorado.* Then another thought flashed through my mind: *No, not an African lion...but it could be a mountain lion.*

Instantly I had one great desire... to draw my children close and be in the

safety of our home. I quickly took them by the hand and said, “Let’s see how fast we can go home.” Another thought flashed into my mind, *SING... loud!* We started to sing. The kids were having a great time, but all the way I was praying that God would protect us and see us safely home.

It was so dark, we could barely make out the porch light Gail turned on for us. The kids wanted to let go of my hand and run for home, but I told them we would all stay together. It wasn’t until I shut the door behind us that the feeling of danger subsided, and I felt a measure of safety.

As I looked out the window into the darkness, I wondered what was out there. Whatever it was, it was evil. The kids ran to tell the rest of the family what a great adventure they had coming home. That night as we knelt in prayer, closing family worship, I thanked the Lord for His protection over us throughout the day.

Later, I reviewed the events of the evening. Why did I suddenly sense danger? I wasn’t afraid of the dark. I had walked home many times down that same road. I drifted off to sleep with prayers of gratitude for God’s protection. *Truly the angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.*¹

The next morning I found out why my

senses had been on alert. Within an hour from the time we reached home, my neighbor let their little dog outside. The dog suddenly began barking and ran as fast as it could for the porch. Out of the darkness, a mountain lion pounced on the dog and, with one jump, both disappeared into the night.

As I thought about how the Lord had warned me of the danger and how much He loved and cared for us, my heart overflowed with love and thankfulness to Him for my family’s safety that evening. When we called the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), we were told that lions are generally on the move and that particular one was probably miles away by now.

The neighbor who lost his dog to the lion also had two pet sheep his family had raised. Early in the morning a day later, Joel heard a strange noise outside. When he turned on the porch light, he saw a mountain lion standing over a freshly killed sheep before it jumped over the fence and disappeared.

In the morning the DNR was called again and this time they were very concerned. They said there was probably something wrong with this mountain lion because he was targeting domestic animals. More than likely the lion would come back to claim the kill. When he did the

DNR would be ready. They brought a large steel cage and placed the dead sheep inside. The cage was equipped with a trigger device that would slam the door shut on the lion if he revisited. Everyone was warned to guard their children, take extra precautions, and be inside after dark.

Throughout the day the question on everyone's mind was, "Has the lion been captured yet?" After supper that day I needed to run an errand in town and all my family wanted to go with me. It took a little longer than expected and it was dark by the time we headed for home. We all had forgotten about the lion...until we turned down our driveway. "What about the lion?" the kids asked in unison. I decided not to take any chances and drove the car right next to the front door. Then I got out, ran to the house, opened the door, and everyone ran in. It's surprising the precautions you are willing to take when you know your family's safety is in jeopardy.

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

APRIL 5

Grand Rapids Zomi Co
Pastor SB Cin

Grand Haven/Wright
Pastor Ted Toms

Grand Haven ACS Center
Hastings
Pastor Jeff Dowell

Hastings SDA Elementary

APRIL 12

GR Central/Lowell
Pastor Cory Herthel

Fremont/Muskegon
Pastor Larry Kirkpatrick

Muskegon ACS - Karli's Closet
Grand Rapids Adventist
Academy

APRIL 19

Rockford/Sparta
Pastor Daniel McGrath

Bauer/Wyoming
Pastor Dan Rachor

Bauer ACS
Holland Laotian
Pastor Bounprany Vannady

APRIL 26

Grand Rapids Elwell
Pastor Bernard Rumenera

Grand Rapids Golden Gate
Pastor Yusuf Imam

Holland
Pastor Sean Reed

Holland Adventist Academy
Kentwood
Pastor Carlos Sotomayor

MAY 3

3 Belgreen/Ionia/Portland
Pastor Ryan Counsell

Ionia ACS Center
Ionia SDA Elementary

MAY 10

Cedar Lake
Pastor Jacob Gibbs
Cedar Lake SDA Elementary
Great Lakes Adventist Academy

MAY 17

Alma/Ithaca
Pastor Daniel Jean-Francois

Ithaca SDA Elementary
Ithaca Food Pantry
Gratiot County ACS Center

MAY 24

Big Rapids/Bristol/Reed City
Pastor Garhett Morgan

Ludington/Shelby
Pastor Ron Mills

MAY 31

Edmore/Frost/Lakeview
Pastor EJ Wolf

Frost Food Pantry
Heartland ACS Center
Lakeview ACS Center

JUNE 7

Bad Axe/Port Sanilac Co/
Unionville

Pastor Dick Bullock
Saginaw/St Charles
Pastor Jerryn Schmidt

St Charles ACS Center
Tri-City SDA School

JUNE 14

Glennie/Tawas City/West
Branch

Pastor Josiah Hill
Tawas City ACS Center
Bay City/Vassar

Pastor Taylor Hinkle
Vassar ACS Center

JUNE 21

Clare/Edenville
Edenville SDA Elementary

Midland/Mt Pleasant
Midland ACS Center
Mt Pleasant SDA School

JUNE 28

Estey/Gladwin/Marion
Pastor Donald Sparks
Gladwin ACS



A Shining Face

By Kamil Metz,
Literature Ministries Director

What church do you go to?” Sheela asked in a friendly, light-hearted manner. Sheela, a Youth Rush canvasser, had just introduced some spiritual books to the woman at the door. It was a question Sheela asked routinely, but the woman’s answer proved to be extraordinary.

“I don’t go to a church,” Jane said. “But actually, I’ve been thinking about attending the Seventh-day Adventist church.”

“Really?” Sheela exclaimed, shocked. “I’m a Seventh-day Adventist!” Now it was Jane’s turn to be surprised. “Wow, that’s great! I thought only Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses went door to door.”

After Sheela showed her all of the materials, Jane said, “You know, I have to tell you something. Just before I opened the door, I looked through my window and saw that your face was lighted up and shining. You seemed so happy, and it made me want what you have. I knew there was something different about you. And I just can’t believe that a Seventh-day Adventist came to my door! You are an answer to my prayer. I had been praying that someone would come and talk to me

about religious things. And the shine on your face is great!”

As Jane gave a donation for four religious books, Sheela finally had the presence of mind to ask how it was that Jane knew about Adventists.

“Oh, I’ve known about them for a long time,” Jane answered vaguely. “I’ve been curious about them, and I’ve been reading my Bible. And it seems that what they believe is right!”

Jane accepted the Bible studies that Sheela offered, and Sheela told her of another Adventist family that lived nearby. After praying together, Sheela continued on her way, not expecting to see Jane again.

When her leader heard about the experience, he suggested that they end their evening by returning to Jane’s house and singing for her. So, that evening, a group of seven literature evangelists sang God’s praises at Jane’s door. But the best part was still to come.

Just three days later, on Sabbath morning, Jane came to the local Adventist church! “I’m just amazed,” Jane reported that first Sabbath, “that young people today could be so vibrant and on fire for the Lord, singing and working for Him!”

Praise the Lord! Young people using their talents and energy for God! Church, doesn’t that just excite you? Young people sharing their faith vibrantly and having the privilege of seeing their guests come to church on Sabbath morning changes us all. Living faith breeds living faith.

One of the most profound quotes on the youth ministry is found in the book, *Gospel Workers*, page 210:

“When the youth give their hearts to God, our responsibility for them does not cease. They must be interested in the Lord’s work, and led to see that

“Young people using their talents and energy for God! Church, doesn’t that just excite you?”

He expects them to do something to advance His cause. It is not enough to show how much needs to be done, and to urge the youth to act a part. They must be taught how to labor for the Master. They must be trained, disciplined, drilled, in the best methods of winning souls to Christ. Teach them to try in a quiet, unpretending way to help their young companions. Let different branches of missionary effort be systematically laid

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“At her rebaptism on December 12, 2020, Happiness expressed her thankfulness for connecting with the Bay City church family.”

Bay City Church Finds Happiness

Happiness Marandu was born to a Catholic family in Tanzania. In 2011, she heard God ‘speaking’ to her in a dream to join the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. She didn’t think much about it until her marriage in 2014. At that time, one of her co-workers and close friends invited her to visit the Adventist church.

Happiness’ friend was actively involved in TMI or Total Member Involvement. She says, “I believe she invited me because she knew I like to pray, and I believe in prayers.” At one point, Happiness put her unspoken prayer on a piece of paper and the elders prayed for it.

“I remember that night I had a dream that God is going to bless me with a baby boy. Then at the office the following day, a friend came up to me and said ‘I dreamed about you being pregnant,’” Happiness says. “I was shocked!” She and her husband started attending the meetings at the Adventist church. When the question came, “Are you ready to be baptized?” They both responded, “Yes,” but on the day of baptism, they ran away!

After three months, Happiness got pregnant. Someone from church came to check on them, but they did not appreciate the visit. They didn’t even take the time to thank God for the blessing of their child. When

the baby came in 2015, they named him Solomon. By this time, they had stopped going to church completely.

After a year, Happiness started feeling guilty, her conscience reminding her of her promise to God. Happiness asked God for some signs. One day, a former housekeeper, who is an Adventist, came to her house. While there, the woman fell asleep. As she slept, she dreamed of the two elders who visited Happiness and her husband several months before. When she awoke, she told Happiness of the dream and reminded her of the covenant she made with God.

Happiness was shocked. She tracked down the men from the church and arranged a meeting. At the meeting, the evangelists once again asked, ‘Are you ready?’ Within a short time, Happiness went to the Adventist church and on that day, there was a mass baptism. She wasted no time deciding she wanted to be baptized. In July 2017, she was baptized into the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.

In 2018, Happiness began attending university in the United States and found Bay City Adventist church. One Sabbath as she listened to Pastor Hinkle’s sermon on baptism, she felt strongly convicted that she should be rebaptized. Pastor Hinkle talked to her about Bible studies and organized a

schedule with Tim and Londa Bishop for structured studies every Sunday.

For almost a year they studied together until Happiness was completely ready. The Bible studies had a profound effect on her. “There was so much enlightenment about the Bible which I wasn’t aware of!” Happiness says. “Such things as what happens when we die, the history of the Church, and why Sabbath is the rest day. Now, I understand why God has been following me, looking for me—2011, 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018—and using even other people to pursue me. He spoke to me through different people, dreams, and in many ways. It is just a matter of accepting it.”

At her rebaptism on December 12, 2020, Happiness expressed her thankfulness for connecting with the Bay City church family. Happiness says that Pastor Hinkle and the whole church has become more than a family to her and her son, Solomon. She is also grateful to the Bishops for their sacrifice, their flexibility, love and care to make their Bible study sessions possible.

Pastor Hinkle shares, “Happiness’ commitment to following all that the Bible leads us to do is inspiring. I truly believe God will continue to work through her life powerfully.”

By Melojeane Zawilinski,
Member, Bay City

(A Shining Face)

out, in which they may take part, and let them be given instruction and help. Thus they will learn to work for God.”

We are thrilled that the Michigan conference provides a variety of mission opportunities for our young people, including music ministry, health ministry, children’s ministry, Pathfinder/Adventurer ministry, Bible study ministry, Public Campus ministry, community service ministry,

summer camp ministry, fieldwork, Youth Rush, and the GLOW tract ministry. And in many cases, these ministries also afford young people the opportunity to *lead out*—not just participate.

Like Sheela, a number of young people will join our Youth Rush canvassing program during the summer months and gain the rich experience that it will provide. You can obtain more

information about Youth Rush canvassing at miyouthrush.org.

Do you want to read more stories about young people serving God? Order “The Open Door” from the Literature Ministries department. You can also view video testimonies from our young people by going to YouTube and searching, “Michigan Youth Rush.”

May God help us to keep our young people active in service for Him!

(Eyes in the Dark)

That night at family worship all of us prayed in earnest the lion would be captured. Early in the morning, while it was still dark, Joel called and told me the lion was trapped in the cage. “Praise the Lord!” I shouted in relief. Then I asked about the size of the lion. He didn’t know because he was afraid to go outside. The lion had rattled the cage all through the night screaming and growling incessantly.

I quickly dressed and headed for my neighbor’s back yard. Joel met me as I came around his garage. “Jim, are you sure it’s safe to go back there?” his voice reflected fear. “Of course, it’s safe.” I quickly made my way over to the cage, curious to see just what this mountain lion looked like. As I approached, something caused me to question my own reasoning. Was I in danger? Should I be this close to the cage? *Yes, I’m safe... if the lion could have gotten free it already would have.* I dismissed my apprehension and leaned over with my hands on my knees straining to see the lion.

It was still dark, and even with my nose only inches from the cage it was difficult to make out the forms. As my

eyes adjusted to the darkness, I could make out the dead sheep. But where was the lion? I searched everywhere, but couldn’t find it. Suddenly my eyes connected with two eyes that seemed to glow in the dark. They had been hiding behind the dead sheep. They seemed to radiate the message, “I will kill you if I can!” Instantly I realized I was foolish to be so close to this killer. Before my body could respond to the emergency signal from my brain, the lion sprang and hit the cage right in front of me... and I tripped backward, landing hard!

One of the devil’s most successful methods when God warns us of danger is to tempt us to think that, if we really are in danger, we can react fast enough to escape. But as we linger, suddenly without warning...he springs the trap. Perhaps it comes through the media with an inappropriate picture, or a tune you can’t erase from your memory. It could be any number of tailor-made traps directed to your specific weakness. The Bible says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”² In light of this fact, we can understand Jesus’ warning

to “watch and pray that we enter not into temptation,”³ emphasizing the spiritual danger we are in.

As I cautiously picked myself up, I could hear my children’s excited voices as they came up behind me. But now I better understood the danger. I drew them close to me explaining what just happened and that we needed stay back.

This experience helped me better appreciate Jesus’ admonition when He says, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”⁴

God’s promise is that if we submit ourselves to Him, if we put forth the effort to resist the devil, God will cause him to flee from us.⁵ God wants to draw us close to Him to keep us from falling into the devil’s traps, and if we let Him, He’ll be our eyes in the dark.

1 Psalms 34:7
2 1Peter 5:8
3 Matthew 26:41
4 1Corinthians 10:13
5 James 4:7

PASTORAL TRANSITIONS



Pastor Kurt Dewitt is the new pastor of the Port Huron and New Haven churches.

(What Happens When Adventist Education Goes Virtual?)

face education to a virtual classroom? What about those who live too far away to attend an Adventist school? What happens when it's impossible for families to balance work schedules in order to drive their children to school?

I'd like to introduce ASPIRE—Adventist education gone virtual. ASPIRE stands for “Adventist School Preparing, Instilling, and Redeeming for Eternity.” ASPIRE, led by two teachers, is conducted online. There's no classroom, no school building, simply a computer screen.

While it's “just a computer screen,” it's organized like a traditional school. Ben Zork, principal and teacher of grades 5-8, and Julia Robinson, 1st – 4th grade teacher, hold classes Monday through Thursday from 8:30-3:00. Currently, there are 20 students enrolled in ASPIRE.

Robinson has nine students and Zork has 11. “It's been so much fun to learn new things,” says Robinson. Prior to ASPIRE, Robinson taught at Greater Lansing Adventist School for 21 years. In her online classroom, she incorporates “normal” techniques in teaching, but she's also had to learn new ways of teaching. Even the kids have had to adjust.

“There has to be more communication, and it has to be good communication, between both the student and the teacher,” Robinson explains. There's no

physical proximity. If a student needs help, they can't point to their page and she can't come to their desk. Rather, the student must be able to clearly communicate where they are having difficulties. This is actually a benefit for the students! They're not just learning math and reading, but honing their communication skills—valuable assets for adult life.

In addition to communication, the students are learning technology skills. Robinson says fondly that “the 3rd and 4th graders do tech support for each other!” Despite the classroom being online only, the students are building relationships with one another—just like they would in a normal, face-to-face classroom.

ASPIRE offers another option for those who may struggle to find access to a brick-and-mortar school due to unforeseen circumstances. In Iron Mountain this past year, they were unable to start the school year as intended. ASPIRE filled in the gap and provided the opportunity for the school to move forward with the school year. Currently, the students in Iron Mountain attend school in their physical building utilizing the ASPIRE curriculum.

Hall is happy to see ASPIRE up and running. There are 33 Adventist schools across the state of Michigan, but their influence is limited to a certain range. They cannot take

Adventist education everywhere. But ASPIRE can. ASPIRE is not limited to physical distance. Through virtual space, anyone with internet access can attend ASPIRE. Children from around the world can now have a chance to see Jesus in their education.

One ASPIRE student recently decided to be baptized. Even though there was no Adventist school nearby, this young student was drawn to Jesus through ASPIRE. “That,” says Hall, “is the beauty of Adventist education.”

What's important about thinking outside the box in relation to Adventist education is that any and all ideas must stay inside the teaching blueprint of what God has fundamentally given us. ASPIRE—even though it is online—maintains the principles of what Adventist education is supposed to be.

It took “thinking outside the box a little harder,” according to Hall, for ASPIRE to be created. Not all of us are involved in education. Not all of us are concerned with enrollment trends. But all of us have a sphere of influence. All of us have a personal ministry. Are you discouraged and tired? “Do not grow weary while doing good” (Galatians 6:9). Don't give up. ASPIRE's story is an inspiration for us all to keep on thinking outside the box, and do it “a little harder.”

By Judy Klein,
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MONTHLY CALENDAR

Due to COVID-19, events on the schedule are subject to change.

APRIL

- 4-6 Prayer & Fasting – Pastors
- 16-18 Women's Ministries Leadership Event
- 16 PBE – Division Level
- 25-26 GLAA Academy Days
- 26-30 GLAA Home Leave
- 30-May 2 Marriage Commitment Retreat

MAY

- 1 Conference-wide Evangelism Rally
- 14-16 Pathfinder Fair
- 23 Adventurer Fun Day
- 23-27 Youth Rush Leadership Training
- 28-30 GLAA Graduation Weekend
- 28-30 Hispanic Camp Meeting (virtual)
- 28-30 Youth Rush Seal Program
- 30 Youth Rush Program Begins
- 31 Office Closed – Memorial Day

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NATURE NUGGET

Blue Ice in the Straights of Mackinaw!

By Dr. Gordon Atkins,
Camp Au Sable Naturalist



Photo By: Gordon Atkins

You may have heard it in the news – “Thousands of people have been flocking to Mackinaw City to see the blue ice formations.” It’s happened before, but formation of blue ice is not a sure thing every winter.

So, what does it take to make blue ice? You need pure, clear water—something Lakes Huron and Michigan have lots of. Water with silt or algae in it won’t work. Then you need very cold conditions – no shortage of that in Michigan this winter! The winds must be calm during the freezing process, so that air bubbles don’t get trapped in the ice. The bubbles give the ice a gray color. When all of these conditions are met, the ice forms crystal clear because it contains large, regular crystals.

One more thing is required! In order for us to appreciate the blue color, the ice needs to be thrust up out of the lake

water in to the sunlight. The Straights of Mackinaw are a great place for this to happen because the currents in Lake Michigan push the ice east, whereas the currents of Lake Huron push the ice southwest. Where the two lakes collide, the ice breaks into huge chunks and is thrust up out of water into amazing piles. The sunlight travels through the ice blocks where the large ice crystals filter out the red wavelengths, leaving the blue to be reflected back through the “blue ice”!

The beautiful blue ice we see is the result of extreme cold and the stress of the two ice sheets’ collision. We, too, are periodically exposed to extreme conditions and stress in our lives. What do others see as a result? Do they see the light of God shining through us even during the tough times? Let’s remember the blue ice!