

EDITORIAL
"Where Have All The Children Gone?"

FEATURE
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"New in Ministry"

Memo

INFORMING MEMBERS SINCE 1988

APRIL 2023



Monroe Adventist Food Pantry coordinators Dan and a group of volunteers served over 50 families



receive food and other necessities.



Volunteers load bags into wagons for easy transport to guests' cars

ADVENTIST COMMUNITY SERVICES

PERSONAL PASSION BLOSSOMS INTO CHURCH MINISTRY



Where Have All The Children Gone?

As you sit in your pews on Sabbath mornings and gaze out over the audience, do you notice anything missing? Listen carefully. Do you hear the scratch of crayons in Sabbath coloring books or soft whimpers from a baby behind you?



Sarah Canada

I'll have to admit that I'm seeing fewer and fewer Sabbath bags lying on the floor in our churches. I don't hear as many voices singing in the Sabbath School rooms. I think to myself, "Where have all the children gone?"

I belong to a small congregation in Belleville, Michigan, in the heavily populated area of metro Detroit. You would think we would have lots of families in our churches around these big cities. We are surrounded by homes and families, yet you won't find many of them inside our buildings. As my own precious girls sit alone at prayer meeting or with two or three friends at Sabbath School, I'm beginning to wonder what we should do.

Our Adventist schools are getting smaller and smaller. Sabbath School rooms are combining more and more ages. Pathfinder groups include children from multiple churches. Where have all

the children gone?

It's time for us to take a closer look at our churches. What are we doing to attract young families? Can we invite them to exciting events like church socials, game nights, mission trips, and family-friendly Bible studies? Do we ask children to read the scripture, participate in special music, and present a 13th Sabbath program each quarter? Are we providing creative, well-prepared Sabbath School programs each week? Do we really believe what Mrs. White wrote in *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* that the Sabbath School is more important than day school? Do we see great care being taken in family worship where parents ensure that "their scripture lessons should be learned more perfectly than their lessons in the common schools?" (*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 57).

In my new position as the Michigan

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MICHIGAN
Memo

Conference Children's Ministries director, I am focusing on growing the churches across Michigan. It is our goal to provide you with materials that will grab children's attention and bring them closer to Jesus. We're presenting workshops on Vacation Bible School and Sabbath School to give you the tools you need to provide successful children's programming. Our misdakids.org website is filling up with more materials to help you, and our regular Facebook and Instagram posts can give you encouragement for teaching, and outreach ideas to show love to kids in your church and community.

Cheryl Bernard, our Children's Ministries assistant, and I are currently developing Sabbath School kits, such as the Armor of God, that you can check out to use in your churches. These will not only provide you with an outline of activities to teach, but they will also give you hands-on resources you need for working with children. We are searching through the conference archives to find backdrops, props, felts, and stuffed animals that you can use in your teaching. We are planning to provide life-changing meetings for our kids who attend Michigan Camp Meeting. Care packages have been put together for our little friends who need encouragement. A lending library and weekly tips for teaching the Sabbath School lesson are being planned. We've even designed cute MISDAKids bags with our logo to assist you in carrying your new teaching materials.

As I think about all the resources we're trying to develop, I'm also aware that there's another issue we need to address. I truly believe it is going to take every one of us to bring back the children and their young families. We must work together on community outreach. We must all show up for Sabbath School and prayer meeting. The Sabbath School teachers should remember that this time is "one of

the greatest instrumentalities, and the most effectual, in bringing souls to Christ" (Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 10).

Ellen White also writes that "those who are really seeking for communion with God will be seen in the prayer meeting, faithful to do their duty and earnest and anxious to reap all the benefits they can gain. They will improve every opportunity of placing themselves where they can receive the rays of light from heaven" (Pastoral Ministry, p. 183).

It's time to take a more hands-on approach in our churches. I invite all of you to adopt a child in your congregation or community. Make it your personal goal to pray daily for this individual. Tell them you're praying for them at a specific time each day. Bring small gifts to them at church. Visit them if they're missing. Invite them to an upcoming program if they don't regularly attend. Start praying and start doing something today. Begin with those in your church. Go next to the missing members. Move down the church's interest list. Head out into the community with Vacation Bible School flyers and Sabbath School invites. Begin praying today that God will use you to bring a child to Him.

We will do everything in our power to support your churches. Our ministries are working together so we can have a greater impact. Come to our trainings and seminars to learn creative Biblical methods to reach children. Let's start working together today to bring back the sounds of tick-tock sticks hitting together in the Sabbath School room and children playing in the halls after potluck. In Matthew 9:37, 38, Jesus said, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." Won't you partner with us in laboring to reach God's children? 🙏

Sarah Canada is the Children's Ministries Director for the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

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.

APRIL 3

Grand Rapids Zomi Co

SB Cin

Grand Haven/Wright

Ted Toms

Grand Rapids Korean

JimWon Lee

Grand Haven ACS Center

APRIL 10

Grand Rapids Central/Lowell

Darrel LeRoux

Fremont/Muskegon

Larry Kirkpatrick

Muskegon ACS - Karli's Closet

Grand Rapids Adventist

Academy

APRIL 17

Rockford/Sparta

Garhett Morgan

Bauer/Wyoming

Dan Rachor

Bauer ACS

Holland Laotian

Sean Saengthip

APRIL 24

Grand Rapids Elwell

Bernard Rumenera

Grand Rapids Golden Gate

Yusuf Imam

Holland

Mike Lambert

Holland Adventist Academy

Kentwood

Carlos Sotomayor

Personal Passion Blossoms into Church Ministry

What began as a personal passion for Monroe church members Dan and Mary Adams, has blossomed into a thriving church ministry in southeastern Michigan.

In 2018, Mary worked for the Monroe County Youth Center, a juvenile detention facility. When their local congregation wanted to adopt some families for Christmas, Mary contacted her probation officer friends to find out who really needed assistance over the holidays.

Equipped with five names, Mary took them to the church and members chose families for whom to provide food, clothing and toys. Dan and Mary personally delivered some of the packages. "One of the houses was dilapidated," Mary says. "You could just see the need...and the appreciation for everything we brought. It started a spark in us, and we began praying about what else we could do."

The next year for Thanksgiving, the Adams adopted 10 families for whom to provide a full Thanksgiving dinner. Another church friend joined in their effort. One grateful recipient called the church and talked with clerk Linda Hamstra, thanking Monroe members for providing such an amazing meal. Linda was confused and asked for more information. The person mentioned that Dan had been there and knew he was an Adventist. They just assumed the gift had been from the church. When Linda found out, she told Mary the church would love to support them in their community services endeavors. It was then that plans began formulating for a food pantry ministry.

It began small, at first, with members donating non-perishable food and hygiene products to build up a supply to draw from. Distribution would be once a quarter. Mary advertised on Facebook, in the newspaper and through other food pantries in the area. Church volunteers packed bags full of groceries. The Monroe Adventist Food Pantry was ready. At the first

distribution in November 2021, they served 25 families.

Mary wanted to do more, though. She reached out to local stores and businesses, applied for grants and contacted the Michigan Conference Adventist Community Services (ACS) department to see what assistance they could provide. Limited financial grants from Walmart, Sam's Club, and Kroger began coming in to purchase more food. ACS delivered two refrigerators to the church so they could offer a few perishable items like milk, bread and butter.

At the next distribution in March 2022, they served 25 families. In July, the number grew to over 40. In November, they served 50 families before running out of supplies. They had to turn away 15 others. In just one year, the number of families needing assistance had increased over 200 percent.

An hour before the November distribution began, cars began lining up in the church parking lot and down the main road. Dan organized them into two lines to avoid a traffic jam and walked from car to car, talking with people. It was frigidly cold that day. People were wrapped in blankets, trying to stay warm. They couldn't afford to keep their cars running with the heat on, burning gas as they waited.

"That opened my eyes even more," Dan says. "People are definitely in need. Even the people who didn't get food were grateful. Every single one of them asked me to thank the church for our efforts. They were disappointed they didn't receive anything that time, but not one person pulled out angry."

The food pantry has made a definite impact, not only on the





Top: Monroe Adventist Food Pantry coordinators Dan and Mary Adams (front left) and a group of volunteers served over 50 families at a recent food distribution.

Bottom: Cars line up down the street to receive food and other necessities.

"The food pantry has made a definite impact, not only on the community, but on the Monroe church family. Jim Hamstra, church elder, has noticed members pulling closer together."



community, but on the Monroe church family. Jim Hamstra, church elder, has noticed members pulling closer together. "There's something to focus on," he says, "and it's helping the community in a positive way." Each car receives health and wellness information as seeds for the future, and members offer to pray with the guests.

This ministry has changed Dan and Mary, too. "First of all, it's opened our eyes to a need in the community, then to help more, and mainly to pay more attention to what's going on around us. It has made us more conscious of what we actually need."

In the *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, June 17, 1903, Ellen White wrote:

"While every man has his own burdens to bear, he is not to forget that by helping others, he helps himself. The opening words of Christ's sermon on the mount are an illustration of the principles laid down in his teaching. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' he said; 'for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' . . .

In his life he showed the power of self-sacrifice.

In his work he has given us an example of what our work should be.

Whenever the Lord brings desti-



Volunteers load bags into wagons for easy transport to guests' cars.

tute fields to our notice, and gives us opportunity to help, we are never to neglect the opportunity."

The Adams and their Monroe church family are taking that charge to heart. 🙏

Beth Thomas is the Copy Editor of the Michigan Memo and a member of the Monroe Church.



Establishing the Calling

Behind every congregation is a pastor or team of pastors who tirelessly labor for the good of their members and the community. The pastor's role is a selfless one, requiring both mental and physical taxation. The pastor, says Ellen White, "stands as God's mouthpiece to the people, and in thought, in word, in act, he is to represent his Lord" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 20). The pastoral calling is high and holy, understood by few. It can also be a lonely, challenging ministry, with many new pastors baptized by the fire of experience alone.

Recognizing a need for further support, Michigan's Ministerial Association created a program to assist new pastors as they transition from school or other occupations into their calling as a minister. For decades, New in Ministry has successfully provided mentoring and guidance.

Cody Francis, Ministerial secretary, explains that New in Ministry is a four-year program, broken into eight semesters, with a different topic covered each semester. Pastors who complete all the New in Ministry modules are then eligible for ordination.

He says, "School is more theoretical, theological education, but [New in Ministry] is more tips, and how to do practical ministry."

Twice a year, New in Ministry pastors come to the conference office, spend a number of days together, and process through modules of practical ministry.

Tom Hubbard, associate Ministerial secretary, shares that topics covered include church structure, church function, pastoral care, and evangelism. All are "different facets of ministry, that ... new pastors really need to know," says Hubbard.

When a new pastor is hired, often they are recent graduates, and while they understand the theology, they lack experience in practical ministry: things such as

board meetings, communion, or visitations. Hubbard explains it is not uncommon for a pastor to say, "I'm supposed to do communion this week, but I don't really know how." No one has taught them how.

Of course, when a pastor is hired the orientation process marches through many logistics of practical ministry. But, Hubbard says, "orientation is kind of like drinking through a fire hose, and we figured it would be very beneficial to have a structured follow-up process."

Each pastor's experience is unique. There are often situations or circumstances which cannot be prepared for during the years of schooling. New in Ministry pastors have the guidance of not only the class time, but also of experienced pastors serving in the Ministerial Association. "There's nothing like understanding how much you need [guidance] until you're in that certain position," says Hubbard. "When you know that the training being offered, what's being communicated, is directly applicable to your everyday ministry, you are all ears."

One especially important topic covered is pastoral care, which includes proper rest and time with one's family. "The pastoral ministry is not a 9-5 job," Hubbard says, "and it can be difficult for new pastors to know when to shut off." This will lead to burn-out and fatigue, and their ministry is less efficient, even lethargic, due to lack of self-care. The pastoral family will also suffer. New in Ministry works with the pastors to ensure they are taking care of themselves and their family, so that their time dedicated to ministry is efficient and productive.

All New in Ministry pastors check in with the Ministerial Association monthly, sending short reports of how their effectiveness in ministry



Cody Francis, Ministerial director, talks to New in Ministry pastors on the importance of timeliness.



"When you know the training being offered ... is directly applicable to your everyday ministry, you are all ears."

has progressed, what they have learned, and what they will continue to improve upon in the months to follow.

Francis explains that the Seventh-day Adventist Church believes in the Biblical injunction of 1 Timothy 5:22, which states "lay hands suddenly on no man." He further explains that before ordination, the Ministerial Association wants "[pastors] to be grounded in their calling to ministry and have all the tools for successful ministry." The four years of New in Ministry gives pastors a time to "grow in their ministry" and be "settled in their call."

The ordination service is public recognition of the call to ministry. However, before a pastor is eligible for ordination, surveys are sent out to key leaders in the pastor's church, and the pastor and his wife also meet with the ordination review committee, comprised of the respective district superintendent, the Ministerial Association (department), and the Conference officers. They evaluate how the pastor has grown in his ministry, and the effectiveness of his work. The pastor's calling will be seen in his work and in his church member's reflections upon his service.

After all, the pastor is "engaged in a very solemn, sacred work" (Evangelism, p. 184). Carefully reviewing all aspects of the pastor's ministry before ordination is a way to ensure that one is ready for such a sacred calling.

Twenty-five pastors in the Michigan Conference are currently participating in the New in Ministry program. 🌱

Judy Ringstaff, Communication

Camp Meeting Workers Needed!

Are you interested in **gaining a blessing**, being a blessing, AND **earning some cash** all at the same time? We might have just the job for you! The MI Conference HR Department is looking for children's ministry workers and janitors during camp meeting, June 9-17, 2023.

To be eligible to apply, an applicant must:

- Be 14 years of age or older
- Have confirmed lodging

To apply, please email the HR Dept. at lim@misda.org.

For detailed requirements and job descriptions, please visit the following URL: <https://www.misda.org/CM-WorkForms>.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Safety Officer Volunteer Application

The Michigan Conference is looking for interested Adventist church members to supplement the Safety Team during this year's camp meeting. If you are at least 21 years of age, have an interest, and would like to be considered for such a position, please contact Joel Nephew at jdnephew@misda.org or 517-316-1524.



MICHIGAN
Camp Meeting

Annual Fun Run



Sunday, June 11, 2023
\$20 registration fee

All proceeds go towards the GLAA Worthy Student Fund to enable students to experience Adventist education.

Pre-register by May 22 to receive a memorabilia T-shirt at [misda.org/funrun](https://www.misda.org/funrun)





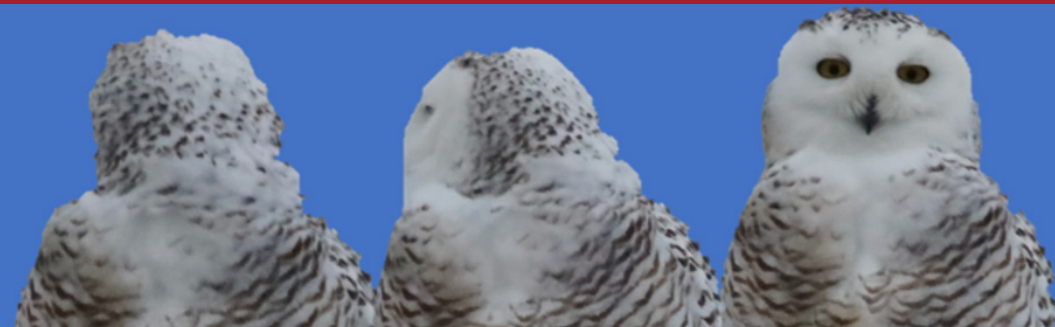
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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

NATURE NUGGET



Flexible Necks

In order to fly long distances, the vertebrae in a bird's back are fused together and attached solidly to its pelvis. While this saves weight and makes it easier for a bird to fly horizontally without its back muscles screaming for a rest, it comes with a cost.

When we turn to look at something behind us, we not only swivel our neck, we also twist our back, thanks to our back vertebrae being jointed, not fused. Since a bird cannot twist its back, they must have a more flexible neck than we do.

This flexibility is accomplished by a bird having more neck vertebrae! Humans, and all other mammals (except sloths) have seven vertebrae in their necks. Yes, even the giraffe has seven neck vertebrae! On the other hand, or should I say "on the other neck," birds have 12 to 25 neck vertebrae.

In this way, many birds like this female Snowy Owl, photographed in the Traverse City area, can swivel its head to look behind without the rest of the body moving. Owls are particularly good at this. While humans can swivel their head about 90 degrees to the left and right, owls can swivel up to 270 degrees left or the right. That means they can turn their head to the left far enough that they can look over their right shoulder. Don't try this at home – it will hurt!

I certainly don't know how many vertebrae are in God's neck. I am really glad though, that God is not constrained by our flexibility and our limited ability to see around ourselves. He is far more capable than that. He has seen our past, He knows where we are this minute, and He can peer into our futures. Based on that forward-looking view, God gives us experiences to help us grow and become capable of surviving and thriving no matter what is ahead of us. 🙏

Dr. Gordon Atkins is the Head Naturalist at Camp Au Sable.

MONTHLY CALENDAR

April

- 1 Pathfinder Impact Day*
- 7-9 Hispanic Marriage Retreat (CAS)*
- 14-16 Women's Ministry (CAS)*
- 21-23 Women's Ministry (CAS)*
- 21-22 PBE Division Level*
- 24-30 GLAA Home Leave*
- 28-30 Church Leaders Workshop (CAS)*

May

- 5-7 Marriage Commitment Retreat (CAS)*
- 7-11 Camp Au Sable Work Week*
- 7 Literature Ministries Empower Workshop*
- 12-14 Pathfinder Fair*
- 21 Adventurer Fun Day*
- 26-28 GLAA Graduation Weekend*
- 26-28 Hispanic Camp Meeting (CAS)*

*CAS = Camp Au Sable