



Refugee and Immigrant Ministries

Michigan is a hub for immigrants and refugees. Dearborn is home to a large Arab population, a number of Burmese have resettled in Grand Rapids, and a cluster of Laotian refugees live in Holland. With these large people groups comes a unique opportunity: instead of going to other countries, the mission field comes to us.



God intervened in the life of Lamphai, a church planter from Laos.

Pastor Bob Stewart, director of Immigrant and Refugee Ministries for the Michigan Conference, explains that some refugees are already Adventist and, due to translation challenges in some of the English-speaking churches, many have started their own branch Sabbath Schools and church groups.

Terri Saelee, who directs Refugee Ministries for the North American Division, explains that much of what her ministry does is church planting. It involves more than a typical American church planting project, however, because refugees are new to the country, culture, and language.

Although there are more needs and expectations, refugee and immigrant church plants are incredibly successful. “Growth,” Saelee says, “is much more rapid than typical church planting.” Members often send missionaries back to their home countries to witness and establish small groups.

“One Laotian woman was brought into the church in a refugee camp in Thailand, and not only is she involved in a church in Holland, but she started churches in Laos, too.”

One Laotian woman was brought into the church in a refugee camp in Thailand, and not only is she involved in a church in Holland, but she started churches in Laos, too. The woman’s name is Lamphai, and her story is interwoven with another Laotian’s story: Saengthong (Saeng) Saengthip.

God Works in Mysterious Ways

Saeng came to the United States as a refugee from Laos in the 1990s. Saeng loved music and sports, and he met Cole Saelee, Terri Saelee’s husband, on a basketball court. The Saelee’s invited Saeng and a few other friends over to their apartment. Saeng was eleven

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“Jesus came to show us what the Father is really like and the way of Salvation which offers the power to realign our priorities with His.”

By Jim Micheff,
President



“THE GIFT”

We give gifts for all kinds of occasions... birthdays, welcomes, farewells, weddings, baby showers, retirements, graduations, Christmas, and sometimes for no special occasion... just because! Of all the gifts you have personally received, is there any one gift that stands out in your memory? There is for me, but ironically, I didn't receive it or give it. It wasn't so much the gift, as it was the process by which the gift was given.

When my nephew graduated from high school, my sister and brother-in-law wanted to give him a special gift to express their love and demonstrate how proud they were of him. At the conclusion of the graduation ceremony, they invited family and friends to a special party in their son's honor. Many of our family came to celebrate.

At the appointed time we gathered, and each family brought a card or gift. Among all the gifts, there was one package that stood out. It was an exceptionally large one with instructions that it was to be opened last. All the younger cousins tried to help Jimmy guess what could possibly be inside the box. After the meal, it was time to open the gifts. With all his younger cousins watching and cheering him on, Jimmy opened each one until there was just one last package to open...the big one from mom and dad.

He carefully opened the box and looked inside. To his surprise it contained another box. This pattern was repeated until he reached a very tiny

box. With a growing sense of curiosity, he slowly opened the box. The box contained three things... two pieces of metal and a note with instructions on where to find the rest of the gift. Many of his younger cousins couldn't understand why he was so excited about two keys. They were not old enough to realize the connection between those keys and something else—the promise of a car.

The note explained that there would be a series of clues in the form of riddles that, if carefully followed, would eventually lead to the opportunity to use his keys. Jimmy was assured that “he who endured to the end” would receive the promised final gift.

Now with a retinue of cousins, aunts, and uncles, and with a growing sense of expectation, Jimmy eagerly set out on his quest. His first clue led him to a large tree on the center campus of the academy. With the help of his cousins, he soon found the hidden note and riddle leading to the next clue. This process was repeated many times. I'm sure there were several moments throughout the adventure when he thought, “I wish they would have just given me the car!” Finally, the clues led him to a parking lot full of cars. Now he had to see which car responded to his keys. However as promised, because he stuck to it, soon he was sitting behind the



“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given...”

wheel of his very first car...a 1978 Plymouth Sapporo.

We have all received many gifts. At the time they were appreciated, but most of them are forgotten in the rush of life. Each year as December approaches, the whole world focuses on gifts. Manufacturers and retail stores promote, advertise, and remind us that this is a time of giving. For many, this time of year brings a refreshing sense of good will and compassion.

The Christmas season reminds us of the greatest of all gifts. Not everyone responds to this Gift in the same way. Some ignore it all together, while others only enjoy hearing about how the gift-wrapped Package was delivered to us in the form a baby at Bethlehem. God's Gift to humanity...Divinity wrapped up in human form. Salvation in a package!

Along with this “Package,” we have received a small gift with a key inside and instructions, with the assurance that if we “endure to the end” and use the key,

it will enable us to receive the final gift of love from Divinity... not a car but something infinitely better—eternal fellowship with God.

The label on the package reads, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).

Very few realized the importance and value of the Gift when it came. There have been 2,000 plus years of telling and retelling the story, but do we even now understand and appreciate its importance?

When Jesus came to this earth, Israel was looking for a King that would provide peace and the comforts of this world. Are we any different? We hear of wars and rumors of wars. We experience famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. People’s lives around the globe are altered because of personal safety concerns along with a world-wide financial breakdown. Don’t we also long for safety and stability in this world? All these problems existed to some extent when Jesus was born in Bethlehem but, surprisingly, Jesus didn’t come to fix or even address these problems.

He came to meet **our greatest need...**to be reunited to the Source of Life. Sin separated us from God and Satan has successfully distorted our picture and understanding of God. Jesus came to show us what the Father is really like and the way of Salvation which offers the power to realign our priorities with His.

After Union forces drove the Confederate army out of Richmond, Virginia, President Abraham Lincoln, sensing a turning point in the Civil War, decided to personally assess the damage and tour what had been the headquarters of the Confederate states. While there, he went to visit the very office of his counterpart Jefferson Davis. As he walked into the Confederate president’s office, he sat behind the desk so recently vacated. From that viewpoint, he looked around the room. Seeing papers on the floor, he reached down and picked some up. It was Confederate money. At the beginning of the war, it was perceived to be worth what was stated on it, but now it was totally worthless.

Satan is leading a rebellion against God’s government. Every time he has engaged in direct battle with God, he has lost. Now this civil war is almost over. God has broken the power of the enemy and has offered to drive Satan and his army out of the headquarters of our hearts. He will personally sit behind the desk of our decision making. All of sin’s promised enticements are like the Confederate money lying on the floor in Jefferson Davis’ office—unable to deliver the value it promised.

God has given us the “car” keys which represent the power of choice. We cannot untangle ourselves from the power

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.



JANUARY 4

Manistique/McMillan
Northwoods/Sault St Marie
Pastor David Austin

Bessemer/Greenland/
Houghton

**Pastors Sean Brizendine &
Ray Holmes**

Bluffview Christian School

JANUARY 11

Menominee/Wilson
Pastor Tom Hubbard

Wilson Jr Academy

JANUARY 18

L’Anse Co/Munising
Pastor Tony Ludwig

Marquette SDA School

JANUARY 25

Iron Mountain/Iron River
Pastor Jim Nephew

Escanaba/Riverside

Pastor Dick Bullock

Escanaba ACS &
Food Pantry

of sin, but we can choose to allow God to free us from it. The power of sin is in the desire and attraction for things that are contrary to God’s law. God breaks the power and practice of sin by taking our desire for it away and replacing it with a desire for heavenly things.

All of this sounds so simple. Almost like a light switch—Jesus comes in, Satan goes out. But as it is played out in our lives, the battle is intense. The intensity is not in the battle between Jesus and Satan. The cross of Calvary was the decisive moment that signaled the outcome of the war. The battle is now over who we allow to control our minds and hearts.

When we encounter Satan in our own strength, we lose every time. When we choose to surrender our will to Jesus, Satan loses every time. We remain victorious until we start to make decisions independently. This process is repeated throughout our life. Perhaps many times, like Jimmy searching for his car, we wish God would just give us the final victory over sin once and for all. But this process must take place while sin is still an option. God’s plan is to teach us to cooperate with Him, relying on His strength, and incorporate His thinking and values into the fiber of our being. This happens one thought at a time until, as promised, we become like God in character.

This is not a seasonal Gift, but one that is essential every moment to initiate and deepen our fellowship with God. The part of this Gift that is yet to be realized is continued intimacy with our Creator and God, free from the presence of sin for all eternity.

As you reflect over last year and make plans for 2022, how has this Gift impacted your life?

The Turning Point

By Judy Klein

Pictured from left to right: Marjie Shade, Dave Fowler, and Brian Shade.

“Fowler’s story reminds us that rough times are not the end—even when it seems our world is falling apart, God may be trying to point us in the right direction. He used COVID, loneliness, and a heart attack to reach Dave Fowler.”

On September 11, 2021, Dave Fowler was baptized at the Kalamazoo church. Fowler had been involved with the church for four years, but chose to be baptized only after a series of events showed him that the church he needed to be part of was the Adventist church.

Fowler was not raised Adventist—in fact, he was a regular member of the local Wesleyan church. He loved his church. Marjie Shade, who worked with Fowler for much of his journey, says that Fowler wasn’t planning to leave his church, but he saw an Unlock Revelation sign and his journey to God and truth began.

In March 2017, Shade decided to plant a yard sign advertising the Unlock Revelation event in Cooper—which is where Fowler lives. When Shade stepped out of her car to place the sign, a mound of snow loomed in her way. Stepping over it, she placed the sign, but when she stepped back, she twisted her ankle and broke her foot. She hobbled back into her car and left, her foot throbbing with pain. The sign stood alone behind the mound of snow.

Fowler saw that sign, and came to the meetings by Kameron DeVasher. “He was really faithful,” Shade comments, “He came for every single meeting, but he kept [attending] his church.”

Fowler attended a second seminar, also by DeVasher. In addition to the meetings, Shade, her husband, and a few friends regularly met with Fowler and studied Doug Batchelor’s *Landmarks of Prophecy* Bible studies.

The Kalamazoo church changed pastors. DeVasher went to the conference office to work in Personal Ministries, and Moise Ratsara became the new pastor. Ratsara held another Revelation Seminar, which Fowler attended.

By this point, Fowler had studied much of the Adventist beliefs, but he refused to accept the truth. Ratsara and Shade both point to Fowler’s attendance at the Wesleyan church. Fowler loved his friends and fellowship at that church, and did not want to leave. Plus, he didn’t want to give up pork.

Shade comments that it was around this time that she attended a soul-

winning training program. “If the fruit isn’t right, just wait,” the leaders advised. Shade took those words to heart and determined to wait until the Lord showed her the fruit was ripe.

Then COVID hit. It was a blessing in disguise. Ratsara says, “COVID was actually our friend.” As COVID hit, churches shut down and people were quarantined to the safety of their homes. For some, though, safety meant solitude.

Fowler had refused to leave the Wesleyan church because of his friends within the church. Yet his friends, says Ratsara, did not reach out to him for a year. “That really impacted him,” Ratsara says. “The turning point with him was when he realized that what he thought was true, was false.” Fowler thought that the church members at the Wesleyan church were his friends—yet not one of them reached out.

Meanwhile, Shade was still praying for Fowler. In a Sunday morning prayer group, she was impressed to reach out to Fowler, says Ratsara. Fowler had suffered a heart attack, says Ratsara, and the doctor told him he could no longer eat pork. The Lord had knocked all of his objections out of the way.

Shade says that around this time, her husband saw Fowler pull out of the church parking lot—and the next day, she called him. Fowler



“After four long years, Fowler fully surrendered to the Lord.”

said that he had been thinking about them, and the Lord had laid it on his heart to come back to church.

Shade responded that he should definitely come to church, but Fowler said he wasn't sure which one. "The Lord wants you in the Adventist church," Shade said, and the next week, Fowler was in the Kalamazoo church.

Ratsara further adds that moments before Shade had called, Fowler had

been praying, entreating the Lord to tell him where he should go. Shade and her husband, Brian, began studying with Fowler again, and after four long years, he fully surrendered to the Lord.

Fowler was baptized on September 11, 2021. Ratsara wishes they had recorded the moment, because Fowler was overjoyed. "It was like a child coming home after so many years." Fowler is now involved in the church's discipleship class.

"COVID was rough on a lot of people, even for us, but the Holy Spirit did not take a break," Ratsara says. Fowler's story reminds us that rough times are not the end—even when it seems our world is falling apart, God may be trying to point us in the right direction. He used COVID, loneliness, and a heart attack to reach Dave Fowler. "Even though [Dave's baptism ultimately] cost me a broken bone," says Shade, "I wouldn't change it for anything."



"The biggest thing about Herbert was that you knew that he loved you and that he loved Jesus. He was a true Christian."

Herbert Jay Salisbury Memorial

On August 7, 2021, Herbert Jay Salisbury, 91, fell asleep in the arms of Jesus. Salisbury was a long-standing member of the Kalamazoo church.

Salisbury grew up on a farm in Cadillac with his younger brother, Richard. Herbert joined the military, and, after only a few months of service, married his sweetheart, Jane. When he was discharged, Herbert found work with the Unifab Corporation in Kalamazoo. "It was the only job he ever had," Richard says, laughing.

Herbert and Jane were very active members at Kalamazoo. Not long after they were married, Jane says, she began to work at the local Community Service Center, or CSC. Herbert joined her full-time after his retirement. "He was very dedicated to the CSC," says Jane. They spent a lot of time there—it wasn't just a Tuesday job for them. They often picked up clothes donations for the center, then sorted, cleaned and switched them out by season.

They drove to other towns to get food

donations for the weekly distribution or canned goods for a Christmas fest. Moise Ratsara, Kalamazoo church pastor, says that Herbert and Jane went out of their way to make sure clients' needs were met.

Herbert was a warm, caring person. "He welcomed any and all," says Ratsara. "Everybody misses him," Jane comments. He was a permanent fixture at the CSC, and while his work at there will not be forgotten, neither will his

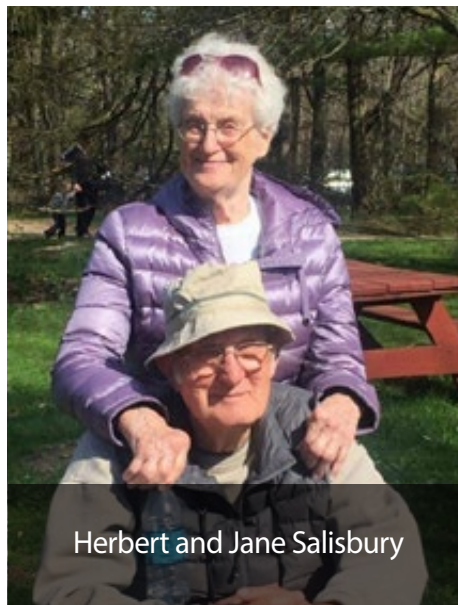
presence at the church.

"How can I best summarize his impact?" Ratsara says. He wasn't an upfront kind of guy, but behind the scenes he "was kind of holding the fort. He would always pray for you; he really cared about who you were as a person," Ratsara shares. Herbert didn't just say he would pray for you, he actually did. What he said was reflected in his prayer life and his actions. He knew what it meant to lean on Jesus.

Herbert and Jane parented two daughters, but lost one in a plane crash. Herbert battled cancer, as well. "He experienced so much," says Ratsara, "but he was always positive, always faithful, always there at church, and very genuine... The biggest thing about him was that you knew that he loved you and that he loved Jesus. He was a true Christian."

Herbert is survived by his wife Jane and daughter Deborah Peshka.

By the Communication Team,
MI Conference



Herbert and Jane Salisbury



Terri Saelee (left), with her husband, Ko Saelee

years old. About a year and a half later, he joined the church.

Saeng loved his church and felt at home there, but there was a deep longing for his people back in Laos. There was no church there at the time, and Saeng felt called to reach out to his people—not only in Laos but among the refugees in America.

The Lord orchestrated events in Saeng's life, enabling him to attend Weimar academy. Saeng says, "As I attended Christian school and became more involved in ministry I became convinced that this was what God wanted me to do." When Saeng graduated, he had "an intense feeling" that he should do ministry—and he wanted to go back to Weimar to finish his bachelor's degree.

His parents had a different idea. They dreamed of their son going to medical school and becoming a doctor. Saeng explains that the custom among his people is for the youngest to take care of his or her parents, and, he says, "they wanted me to make something of myself... It was like their social security."

In the end, Saeng chose the Lord's will over his parents'. His mother, angered by his decision, cried that she would kill herself rather than be dishonored. "Miracles," Saeng said, "did not happen in the way I thought they should." Saeng packed his bags, ready to leave for good, since his family vowed to disown him. He felt impressed to go say goodbye to his mother. His mother again, crying, explained that if he left, he couldn't come back. His mother did more than cry, however. She began vomiting.

Saeng suddenly remembered how his mother had threatened to commit suicide rather than be dishonored. She had overdosed on medication and was in the emergency room for two days. "If I had not obeyed [the Holy Spirit's impression], I think I would have lost my mom," Saeng says.

Saeng finished a four-year degree in just three years, and God called him back to Sacramento to serve as a pastor. While he was there, the Lord repaired his family relationships—his father, mother, and sister all chose to be baptized.

In Sacramento, Saeng met Lamphai and her family. Lamphai and her family soon moved to Holland, Michigan, however. When Saeng was sent to Andrews, he visited the Laotian community in the area. He contacted Lamphai and her family—she and another family attended the English church, and they were even persuading another family to come! The group didn't quite understand everything that went on in the service, however.

Saeng's heart was touched, and he spent the next three years commuting from Andrews to the church in Holland, determined to help. They started a group, and "the group grew and grew," Saeng says. "We had our own church service and once a month joined the English." Saeng also reports that the group "outgrew our classroom twice."

Saeng's time in Michigan ended—but two years later, he felt called to come back to Michigan, so he resigned and returned to continue the church plant on his own. He started a media ministry for Laotians, not only the Laotians in America, but also for those in Laos. "We had so many interests from all over the world that we had to expand even more," Saeng says.

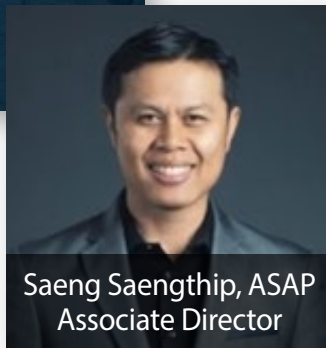
Lamphai and her family were also involved with the ministry. Lamphai invited many families to church—families which are now part of the Laotian church in Holland, Michigan.

Lamphai's Story

Lamphai, like Saeng, was born in Laos. When communism took over, it was not safe for her family to be in the country. Her husband, Vuey, had been heavily involved with US troops, trying to keep communism from entering the country and when their efforts failed, they had to flee. In a refugee camp in Thailand, sponsored by Terri Saelee, they found and accepted the gospel.

When Lamphai and her family arrived in the States, they landed in Sacramento, but they didn't stay long. There was no work nearby. When the family caught wind of work in Grand Island, Nebraska, Lamphai summed up her courage and took her new license in hand, ready to brave the thousands of miles between her and her new destination.

However, when they made it to Grand Island, they discovered there were no longer jobs available. All positions



Saeng Saengthip, ASAP Associate Director

had been filled. It was not the end of the road, though. The family had Laotian friends in Holland, Michigan—and an Adventist boat making company in Holland was hiring.

She and her husband again took to the roads, caravanning towards Holland. The system worked well until the Chicago area, when Lamphai lost track of her husband, whom she was following. Lamphai was stuck, helpless, in the middle of the city. She did not have a cell phone.

She and her children pulled off at a nearby gas station and prayed. She told Saelee that as soon as they opened their eyes after prayer, there was someone walking towards their car. Lamphai also told Saelee, “It’s a good thing I didn’t know then what I know now about the crime level in Chicago.”

When the man walked towards her she opened her window, he asked if she was looking for her husband, Vuey. As soon as the trucker said her husband’s name, Lamphai assumed he had asked him to find her. She explained that yes, she had lost her husband, and the trucker asked her to follow him.

He climbed into his truck and she followed him from one freeway to the other until she saw her husband driving in front of them. She and her children turned to wave thank you, and, as she told Saelee, “the whole big rig was gone.” Only later did she find out that her husband had not told anyone to go look for them. He had only prayed.

They arrived in Holland, thanks to the mysterious trucker

and their faithful prayers. The Adventists at the Holland church welcomed them, and there were jobs available. Lamphai and Vuey immediately began inviting friends to church—they had been leaders in the church at a refugee camp. However, the people they invited didn’t speak English very well, so a separate room was provided so they could worship in their own language.

The group grew, and then Saeng, a young man who been a member of the youth group in Sacramento, showed up. Saelee credits Saeng with helping build at least two churches.

Lamphai and Saeng are not related; They didn’t know each other in Laos. But they share the same heart for ministry. Both Lamphai and Saeng have done everything in their power to reach out to those around them, and both of them have seen the results of their work.

There are many more like Saeng and Lamphai, more who will take a leap of faith, traveling across the country to share their faith, and who will see the results of their work. Yes, there are many, and that includes you. Let Saeng’s and Lamphai’s stories inspire you to work your hardest for the people around you, and trust in God to carry you through.

By Judy Klein

PASTORAL TRANSITIONS



Myung Chun Shin is the new pastor of the Living Word Fellowship and Discipleship Center in Berrien Springs. He previously served as a missionary in Cambodia.



Mike Lambert is the new pastor of the Holland church. He previously served as a pastor in the Upper Columbia Conference prior to his new assignment.



Nathaniel Oregon is the new pastor of the Alma and Ithaca churches. He formerly pastored the Belleville and Tecumseh churches.



Darrel Le Roux is the new pastor of the Grand Rapids Central and Lowell Riverside churches. He pastored the Niles Westside church prior to his recent assignment.

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MONTHLY CALENDAR

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

JANUARY

- 3 Office Closed – New Year’s
- 7-9 Pathfinders Area Coordinators Retreat
- 14-17 Teen Snow Outing
- 14-17 CAMPUS Staff Retreat – Camp Au Sable
- 17 Office Closed – MLK Day
- 23-27 Ministerial Retreat
- 25-30 GLAA Home Leave
- 28-30 Father-Son | Man Camp
- 28-30 Pathfinders Area Coordinators Retreat

FEBRUARY

- 4-6 Adventurer District Retreat – Camp Au Sable
- 5 PBE Area Level
- 18-21 CAMPUS Winter Retreat
- 20-26 Emmanuel Institute
- 21 Office Closed – President’s Day
- 22-27 GLAA Home Leave
- 25-27 Teen Bible Camp

MICHIGAN MEMO is a monthly publication of the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for its constituents. Andy Im, editor; Beth Thomas, acting assistant editor; **Seminars Unlimited**, layout, design, and print. Comments may be submitted by emailing communication@misda.org.

NATURE NUGGET

Crossbills

By Dr. Gordon Atkins,
Camp Au Sable Naturalist



Photo By: Nolan Keyes
Nature Center Intern at Camp Au Sable

Winter in Michigan is interesting in several ways! Some birds migrate south to avoid what some say is “horrible” weather. Other birds stay for the winter and survive on seeds, either from bird feeders, or the seeds that remain on plants that are not buried by the snow. And still other birds migrate from locations further north to spend the winter in “balmy” Michigan!

Crossbills are small finches that sometimes migrate south to Michigan for winter. They follow the cone crop produced by spruce and pine trees. These cones contain the seeds that they need to survive the winter. Getting the seeds out of the cones is a tricky matter that requires a special bill. As their name suggests, their bills do not meet at the tip like most bird’s bills do. Instead, the bills are sharp and curved, and the tips crisscross each other. Not only that, the bills can be moved left to right relative to each other to create a prying motion, which allows them to efficiently extract the seeds from the cones.

There has been a good cone crop in Michigan this year. As a result, there have been a lot of White-winged Crossbills that have arrived this winter, and many are flying further south as the winter progresses. Watch the tops of pine and spruce trees in your area to see if you can spot some Crossbills this winter!

The process of getting food can get a bit messy, so Crossbills have a habit of often rubbing their bills on branches to get the sticky pine sap off. This thick sticky sap, often called pine “gum,” is not very good for their digestion! To counter the negative effect of the pine gum, Crossbills regularly eat clay (often found along the side of roads that are plowed) to help neutralize the sticky gum that gets eaten along with the seeds.

This reminds me of something the Bible repeats many times. No, we don’t need to eat dirt to solve the sin problem! Instead, we need to accept Jesus into our lives so He can “neutralize” sin. That’s a lot better than eating dirt!