SERVING SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS IN THE LAKE UNION SINCE 1908

# HERALD

MAY/JUNE 2026

**LOOK CLOSELY AT THE COVER YOU'RE HOLDING.** It was hand-drawn by one of our talented Andrews University graphic design students, Ryleigh Snow. It's always a treat to collaborate with our dear AU students and discover their fresh take on the topics we cover in the Herald. This year we're celebrating 100 years of summer camp, which began right here in the Lake Union. As it turns out, Ryleigh knows a thing or two about summer camps. And, if you had any doubts about the lasting positive impact of summer camp (does anyone?), you'll want to read her testimony:

*"I've had a connection with camp since I first went in 5th grade for outdoor ed. I was also there for summer camp that year. My parents had both worked at summer camp, and I'd heard their stories growing up.*

*Then I was able to go to summer camp, and I absolutely loved it. I loved the added freedom and responsibility, being out in nature, exploring and meeting new people. The counselors were great. I just felt loved and included.*

*Anytime I would go to camp, or be around people from camp, I just felt loved, and I felt the presence of God there. I was introduced to Him in a more personal way because of camp. So I wanted to make that experience possible for kids as well, which is why I wanted to become a counselor.*

*Being a counselor, I was able to see kids understand, or understand better, the love that God has for them — that they don't have to pretend to be someone else or pretend to be the best. That's one of my most favorite things about camp. I get to love on kids and then watch them realize that all they have to do is exist. They don't have to try. They don't have to earn it. They are simply loved."*

Thank you, Ryleigh. We couldn't agree more. We should love on others, as God loves on us all.

▼ *Ryleigh Snow grew up spending many summers at Michigan's Camp Au Sable, including taking a gap year to intern there. She's pictured here last summer when she had the opportunity to re-establish the craft house at Camp Wawona, located in Yosemite National Park, California.*

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**THE LAKE UNION HERALD STAFF**

P.O. Box 287, Berrien Springs, MI 49103-0287 | 269-473-8244

Publisher....Elden Ramirez, president@lakeunion.org
Editor/Managing Editor....Debbie Michel, editor@lakeunion.org
Circulation/Back Pages Editor....circulation@lakeunion.org
Comm. Specialist....Katie Fellows, katie.fellows@lakeunion.org
Art Direction/Design....Robert Mason, masondesign@me.com
Proofreader....Kaara Harris, kaharris@andrews.edu

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

AdventHealth....Julie Busch, Julie.Busch@AdventHealth.com
Andrews University....Jeff Boyd, boyd@andrews.edu
Illinois....Matthew Lucio, mlucio@ilcsda.org
Indiana....Colleen Kelly, ckelly@indysda.org
Lake Region....JeNean Lendor, JLendor@lrcsda.com
Michigan....Dan McGrath, dmcgrath@misda.org
Wisconsin....Anna Foll, afoll@wi.adventist.org

**LAKE UNION CONFERENCE DEPARTMENTS**

P.O. Box 287, Berrien Springs, MI 49103-0287 | 269-473-8200

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**LOCAL CONFERENCES AND INSTITUTIONS**

**AdventHealth Great Lakes Region:** Monica Reed, president/CEO, 5101 S. Willow Springs Rd., La Grange, IL 60525; 708-245-2211.

**Andrews University:** John Wesley Taylor V, president, Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0670; 269-471-7771.

**Illinois:** John Grys, president; Michael Campos, executive secretary; Doug Reeves, treasurer; 619 Plainfield Rd., Willowbrook, IL 60527-8438; 630-856-2850.

**Indiana:** Vic Van Schaik, president; Mark Eaton, secretary/treasurer; street address: 15205 Westfield Blvd., Carmel, IN 46032; mailing address: P.O. Box 5000, Westfield, IN 46074; 317-844-6201.

**Lake Region:** Abraham Henry, President; Harold Cleveland executive secretary; Kent M. Nichols, treasurer; 19860 South LaGrange Rd., Mokena, IL 60448; 773-846-2661.

**Michigan:** James Micheff Jr., president; Israel Ramos, executive secretary; Michael Bernard, treasurer; street address: 5801 W. Michigan Ave., Lansing, MI 48917; mailing address: P.O. Box 24187, Lansing, MI 48909; 517-316-1500.

**Wisconsin:** Titus Naftanaila, president; Justin Perrone, secretary/treasurer; street address: N2561 Old Highway 16, Fall River, WI 53932; mailing address: P.O. Box 100, Fall River, WI 53932; 920-484-6555.

**Contributors:** Writer guidelines are available online at https://www.lakeunionherald.org/contributor-guidelines/writer-guidelines.

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◂ *North America holds its first Adventist summer camp. Grover Fattic leads an all-boys camp at Townline Lake, Michigan, in 1926.*

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TELLING THE STORIES OF WHAT GOD IS DOING IN THE LIVES OF HIS PEOPLE


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Illinois: 630-716-3505, Indiana: 317-844-6201
Lake Region: 773-846-2661, Michigan: 517-316-1552
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# Who Is Shaping the Next Generation?

## Every generation is shaped by those who influence it.

▲ ELDEN RAMIREZ

Whether we recognize it or not, someone is always discipling our children. The question is not whether they are being influenced, but by whom. Today's young people are growing up surrounded by competing voices. Social media, entertainment, peer culture, and shifting values all speak with constant intensity. These voices help shape identity, define success, and influence decisions often long before a young person is prepared to evaluate them.

As a church, we must ask a clear and urgent question: Who is shaping the next generation?

This is where summer camp becomes one of the most vital ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Summer camp is not simply a place where young people spend a week away from home. It is an intentional environment where influence is guided, relationships are cultivated, and young people grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ. Every counselor, every staff member, and every leader plays a role in shaping the lives of those entrusted to their care.

At camp, influence is not accidental. It is purposeful.

Young people are surrounded by mentors who model Christ-centered living in practical, visible ways. Faith is not presented merely as a concept to be understood, but as a life to be lived. Campers observe how others speak, how they respond under pressure, and how they treat those around them.

And they are paying attention.

They notice authenticity.

They recognize integrity.

They respond to genuine faith.

Long before a message is fully understood, a life is carefully observed.

Scripture affirms this model of influence. "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children" (Deuteronomy 6:6–7). Faith is transmitted not only through instruction, but through consistent, lived experience.

Summer camp reflects this biblical pattern.

In a single week, a young person may spend more intentional time with spiritually grounded mentors than they do in months of their regular routine. Conversations unfold naturally. Questions are asked freely. Trust is established. And in that environment, the Holy Spirit works through relationships to impress hearts in lasting ways.

Ellen G. White captures this principle with clarity in The Ministry of Healing: "The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian." At camp, young people are not only hearing about the gospel. They are seeing it lived before them.

This is one of the unique strengths of camp ministry.

It provides consistent, Christ-centered influence at a time when many young people are navigating confusion and uncertainty. Removed from the constant noise of daily life, they can reflect more deeply, listen more attentively, and respond more personally to the voice of God.

And in that space, decisions are made.

Many who serve the church today can trace their spiritual journey back to individuals who influenced them during their youth. A counselor who took time

to listen. A staff member who offered encouragement. A leader who challenged them to take their faith seriously.

These moments are not incidental. They are formative.

Influence leaves a lasting imprint.

As a church, we are called not only to proclaim truth, but to surround the next generation with individuals who embody that truth. Summer camp allows us to do both. It brings together message and model, teaching and example, truth and life.

It is not simply about programming. It is about people.

As we approach another summer season, we are reminded of the sacred trust placed in this ministry. Every camper who arrives is not just attending an event. They are entering an environment that will shape how they think, what they value, and who they are becoming.

And they are watching.

May we continue to pray for our camps, support those who serve, and invest intentionally in this vital ministry. Because the question before us is not simply whether our young people are being influenced. They are!

The question is whether they are being shaped by voices that lead them closer to Christ.

---

**Elden Ramirez** *is president of the Lake Union Conference.*

# Moving Through Seasons

▲ JASMINE FRASER

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

The natural seasons of life are inevitable, and their rhythms move sequentially. Spring comes, summer follows, and gives way to autumn, which paves the way for winter's charade, right before the appearance of another glorious spring. Just as nature moves through seasons, individuals and families move through distinct, often unpredictable, circumstantial seasons of life. These seasons are not merely biological markers (e.g., birth, childhood, adolescence, marriage, aging, and death). These are seasons of relational, emotional, and spiritual passages that deeply impact lives and over time, shape who individuals and families become. Just as we cannot rush or control the natural seasons, we cannot rush or control our lives as they move through circumstantial seasons of growth and tension, fruitfulness, success, triumph, transitions through crises and disruptions, or even dormancy or seeming failure.

Seasons ebb and flow and have advantages and disadvantages; winter does not mean death, and spring does not arrive by accident. Every season carries both gifts and burdens, as well as opportunities and costs. This is indicated in the covenantal decree that "while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease."

It is encouraging to know that God works through every season—both the natural seasons and the circumstantial seasons of our lives. Whether in the apprehension of the natural season's increment weather, the joyful onset of a wedding, welcoming a child to the family, the tedious moments of parenting, grappling with an empty nest as teenagers go off to college, or the angst of sickness and death, what is most important is to know that God meets individuals and families precisely in every season.

Knowing that God meets individuals and families in every season is not only comforting and healing but also freeing. It is freeing to cast all cares on God, to be still and get to know Him even amid chaos, and to be alert to the declaration of His glory—for which we were made. To be still is letting go or releasing control and anxiety, recognizing God's sovereignty, and trusting in Him.

Even now, as winter and its decay have passed and summer is forthcoming, we move through the freshness and life of spring. Moving through spring is an invitation to embody freedom by simply indulging the senses through the changes in the atmosphere and the new life emerging. It's an opportunity to feast on the array of colors in the environment as plants bud and flowers bloom; to listen to the chorale of birds darting among the trees. It is a chance to walk the shore of the lake or the sea and feel grains of sand beneath the feet and be reminded that God's thoughts toward us are precious and "more numerous than the grains of sand." Spring is the season of restoration and renewal for individuals and families. ■

**Jasmine J. Fraser,** *Ph.D., is associate professor of Discipleship and Religious Education at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.*

# Let There be Light — and Health

Sunlight is daily evidence of our loving Creator. Critical biochemical processes rely on sunshine, including vitamin D synthesis, circadian rhythm regulation, and immune modulation.

▲ MICHAEL QUION

Medical research has associated low vitamin D levels with reduced immune status, poorer bone density, increased heart disease (up to 35%) and cancer death rates (up to 14%), increased risk of developing (and progression) of certain autoimmune diseases, depression, fatigue, obesity and increased blood sugar levels in diabetics.

**How much sunshine is enough?**

The National Academy of Medicine recommends 600 IU (International Units) of vitamin D per day for persons 1-70 years of age and 800 IU per day for those 71 years of age or older. Most people can achieve this with natural sun exposure. It is estimated that exposing the forearms and lower legs to just 3-8 minutes of direct sunlight will lead to about 400 IU of natural vitamin D synthesis by our skin.

For people who are older or of darker complexion, those living in locations further north/south of the equator or with heavy cloud cover, and during the winter season, application of sunscreen and exposure during early morning/late afternoon time frame may require longer time, such as 30-60 minutes exposure.

Sunlight through window glass does not trigger vitamin D synthesis, since UV-B is mostly blocked.

The risk of skin cancer is real. If it is likely that you will be exposed for over 45 minutes, you should use skin protection such as seeking shaded areas, wearing a wide brimmed hat, UV protective clothing or skin applications (read directions on re-application throughout the day). If you develop sunburn, the risks rise above benefit.

Consult with your medical provider if you take prescription medication, have a family history of skin cancer (like melanoma), have chronic medical conditions, or are considering vitamin D supplements. These factors may increase the risk of injury, skin sensitivity, cancer, and others.

**A daily prescription for multiple health benefits**

Take a 30–45-minute brisk outdoor walk shortly after sunrise (preferably before 10 a.m.) to support vitamin D; add a moderate exercise benefit; invigorate your body and mind with fresh air, and set your circadian rhythm, signaling the brain to suppress melatonin during the day and release it, for better sleep, when the sun sets. Use this time for a prayer expressing trust and gratitude to our Creator God. End the walk by drinking a tall glass of water. You've just started the day with five of the eight pillars of good health.

"I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10 NKJV) ■

**Michael Quion,** *MD, is co-director of health ministries for Michigan Conference.*

# A Little Book that Changed a Nation

▲ DENIS KAISER

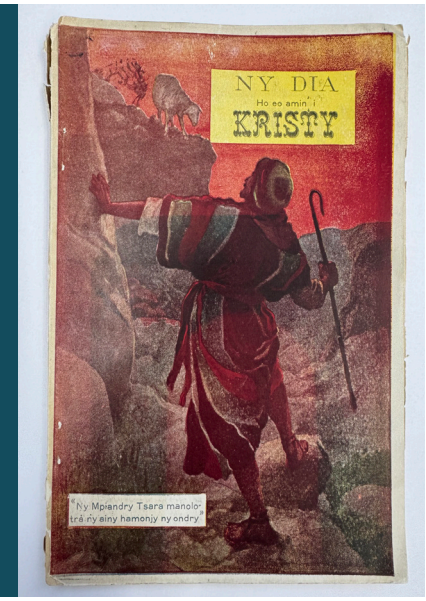
In the years following World War I, a native of Madagascar who had served in the French army returned home. While living in Antananarivo, he met a friend, André Rasamoelina, a public-school teacher. The former soldier carried with him a small but remarkable book—an English copy of *Steps to Christ* by Ellen G. White.

The book itself had traveled far. It had been passed from an American soldier to a French soldier and finally to this Malagasy veteran. During the war, Adventists had distributed special Army and Navy editions of *Steps to Christ* among soldiers in military camps. Unknown to those who shared it, this little book would become the seed of the Seventh-day Adventist work in Madagascar.

When Rasamoelina read *Steps to Christ* in 1919, he was deeply moved. He later called it the most wonderful book he had ever read. Convinced that others needed access to its message, he immediately began translating it into Malagasy. With encouragement and financial promises from friends, he completed the translation in the spring of 1921.

Around that time, while traveling by train between Tamatave and Antananarivo, André met a young man named Tuyau, who had just returned from Mauritius. There, Tuyau had attended evangelistic meetings led by Paul Badaut, a Seventh-day Adventist missionary. Before parting, Tuyau gave André a leaflet with the address of the Adventist mission headquarters in Mauritius.

André soon wrote to Badaut requesting literature. When the materials arrived, he made a striking discovery: *Steps to Christ* was published by the Seventh-day Adventists. This led him to write to the General Conference Home Missionary Department in Takoma Park, Maryland, asking for more literature.




In 1922, church leaders recognized the growing interest in Madagascar and asked Marius Raspal, a missionary serving in Mauritius, to visit the island. André later recalled meeting Raspal unexpectedly after being told, "A European is looking for you at the Hôtel de France." Raspal stayed with André's family for 12 days, during which they studied the Bible earnestly. The message, especially the third angel's message, took deep root in André's heart.

Raspal returned in 1924, and the Malagasy manuscript of *Steps to Christ* was finally printed. On June 22, 1925, it appeared under the title *Ny Dia Ho eo Amin'i Kristy*. The following year, after months of missionary labor, Raspal dedicated the first Seventh-day Adventist church in Antananarivo—marking the beginning of an enduring work born from one small book.[1] ■

1. Robert Gerber, "The Advent Message in Mauritius Island," *Review and Herald*, Mar. 2, 1922, 10; A. V. Olson and R. Gerber, "Comité de l'Union Latine réuni à Gland, du 7 au 15 février 1922," *Revue Adventiste*, Mar. 15, 1922, 78; A. V. Olson, "L'Union latine," *Revue Adventiste*, May 16 and June 1, 1922, 116; W. E. Read to Arthur L. White, Oct. 26, 1938; A. Rasamoelina, "Beginnings of the Work in Madagascar," *Missions Quarterly*, Fourth Quarter 1955, 5–6; Jean Zurcher, "Madagascar: Members Celebrate fiftieth Anniversary," Apr. 13, 1978, 16; Mildred Lee Johnson, "Madagascar: Mystery Island," *Youth's Instructor*, May 28, 1957, 16.

**Denis Kaiser** *is an associate professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.*

# The Night the Tent Lifted

Do you remember...your first camp meeting? Mine was the summer of 1977. I was baptized on Jan. 1 that same year.

▲ LESA BUDD

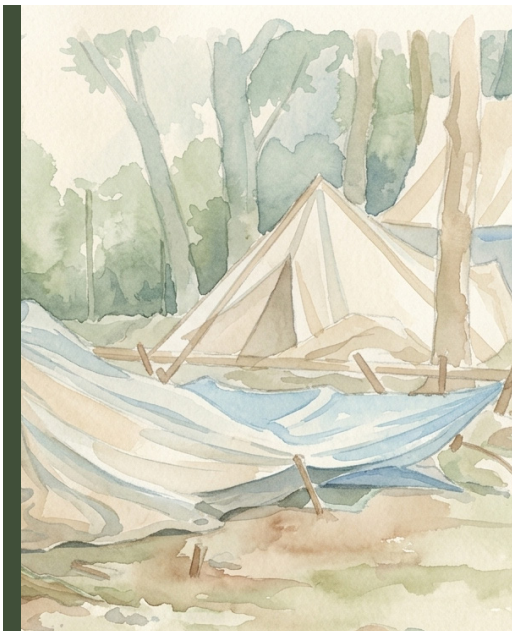
Although I had never been camping before, a new four-man tent was purchased and pitched at the Portage, Wisconsin, campground shortly before the sun set that first Friday night.

I was a little anxious with the unfamiliar aspects of it all, but filled with an expectation of what a wonderful heavenly experience this first camp meeting would provide for me, my 3-year-old daughter Sasha and my 4-year-old nephew Pete.

My tent was near the main meeting area, and as the music began that evening, I tried to get my two little ones to settle down for bed in their sleeping bags. But they were excited. I guess they were feeling the peace and joy of camp meeting too...even the air felt happy.

When I thought they were asleep, I went to the edge of the main tent listening as H.M.S. Richards Sr. spoke. Using only his Bible he shared about God and His great love for us. I can still picture him and how the Holy Spirit filled the place and my heart.

'Dear God, Thank You for Your faithful pastors. What a blessing You've given us through them. Please continue to bless them as they share Your love and truth with us.'



Later that night, to add substantially to my first camp meeting experience, a bad storm came through Portage. While the kids slept peacefully, I sat up in my sleeping bag watching the sides of my tent breath heavily in and out until it lifted straight up, then back down on top of me. I sat with both hands in the air holding it as high up as I could and wondering, "Now, what do I do?" The storm wasn't stopping.

Then a stranger's voice called in asking if I was OK and telling me to bring the kids and come into their motorhome. It was a neighbor.

'Dear Lord, Thank You for Your family members who show kindness to those around them. Bless those who are quick to help. Please remind me to be kind to those in need.'

And as God would have it, Sabbath morning dawned bright and clear. Though my tent was dampened, my soul was not. As we walked past a cabin, a young man named Brad sat playing his guitar and singing. His music filled the morning and me with the feeling 'this must be what Heaven is like'.

'Dear God, Thank You for the beautiful sounds of Camp Meeting. For voices and songs that lift us up to You and our eternal home. May our songs of praise bring joy to Your heart.'

As you enjoy this year's Camp Meeting through the messages, music, activities, children and youth, family time, food and friends, remember how God has blessed us in the past and continues to bless us today, and thank Him. ■

**Lesa J. Budd** *is the prayer coordinator for the Wisconsin Conference.*

As you enjoy this year's Camp Meeting through the messages, music, activities, children and youth, family time, food and friends, remember how God has blessed us in the past and continues to bless us today, and thank Him.

# Nada que temer

▲ *Carmelo Mercado*

"No tenemos nada que temer del futuro, a menos que olvidemos la manera en que el Señor nos ha conducido, y lo que nos ha enseñado en nuestra historia pasada" (Notas biográficas de Elena G. de White, 216 (1902).

Recuerdo muy bien la ocasión en que recién llegado a las oficinas de la Unión del Lago como el nuevo vicepresidente de la Unión el director de comunicaciones de la misma, Gary Burns, me preguntó en cuanto a la idea de tener una columna en español en la revista *Lake Union Herald*. Le respondí que para mí, escribir en español no era tan fácil como hacerlo en inglés, pero que sí lo haría con la ayuda de Eunice Isabel Dupertuis, una profesora de lenguas en la Universidad Andrews. La primera columna apareció en el mes de enero de 2005 con el título "Crear nuevas conexiones".

Considero que ha sido un gran privilegio el poder escribir artículos para nuestro pueblo hispano durante veinte años. Ahora deseo informales del inicio de una nueva etapa en mi vida. Después de pasar mucho tiempo en meditación y oración, mi esposa, Rosanne, y yo hemos decidido jubilarnos. Esto se hará efectivo el primero de junio de este año. Además, ese mismo día celebraremos nuestro cuarenta aniversario de matrimonio. Hacemos este anuncio con cierta tristeza porque hemos llegado a tener un gran aprecio y cariño por los hermanos y pastores de esta Unión, y nos da pesar despedirnos de ellos. Pero, a la vez, tengo la confianza de que Dios continúa guiando a su iglesia.

Al terminar esta etapa de la vida, quiero expresar mi gratitud a la profesora Isabel Dupertuis por el excelente trabajo realizado al editar mis artículos. Quiero agradecer también a las diferentes asistentes administrativas que he tenido a lo largo de los años, en especial a mi asistente actual, Carmen Ávila, a quien aprecio por la forma en que organiza los detalles que requieren atención. Agradezco, además, a Magaly Torres, nueva directora asociada de ministerios multiculturales. Gracias a su pasión y amor por la misión, la Unión recibió de Lily Endowment más de un millón de dólares para atender a los niños que asisten a nuestras iglesias. Por último, agradezco a los coordinadoroes y pastores por su trabajo tan excelente y sigo orando para que se mantengan valientes y sometidos a la voluntad de Dios.

He meditado mucho acerca de lo que Dios me ha enseñado en los últimos cincuenta años de ministerio y en qué puedo compartir con ustedes. En resumen, les paso las siguientes lecciones:

**Mantener los ojos en Cristo** – A través de los años he visto cómo el enemigo ha tratado de desviar mi atención hacia los errores de la iglesia. La realidad es que sí ha habido y sigue habiendo equivocaciones porque, como humanos, no somos perfectos. Yo mismo he cometido errores en mi relación con Dios y con ciertas personas a quienes he ofendido. Doy gracias a Dios porque, a pesar de nuestros errores, nos guía al arrepentimiento y nos sigue usando por medio del Espíritu Santo.

**Seguir en la misión** — Nuestro Señor nos ha dado una misión: compartir las buenas nuevas con toda criatura. El mundo sigue en caos como lo predijo el Señor en su Palabra, y como mensajeros de Dios, es menester que la Iglesia Adventista comparta el mensaje de los tres ángeles para que se conozca la esperanza bienaventurada que tenemos.

**Buscar la unidad** – Al poco tiempo de mi llegada a la Unión, nosotros, como administradores, tuvimos que dar ciertos pasos para mantener la integridad de la iglesia, lo que generó preocupación entre muchos hermanos hispanos. En la columna del mes de septiembre de 2005 mencioné y sigo afirmando en la actualidad, lo que se encuentra en 1 Corintios 1:10: "Os exhorto ...que no haya disensiones entre vosotros ...sino que estéis completamente unidos en la misma mente y el mismo parecer". Veo en la

actualidad que para algunos existe cierta desconfianza hacia la autoridad de la iglesia debido a especulaciones infundadas. A través de los años he observado cómo trabajan los administradores en todos los niveles y les aseguro que tienen la mejor intención de guiar a nuestra iglesia para que cumpla con su misión. Sin embargo, solo puede hacerlo si tanto los laicos como los pastores trabajan unidos con ellos.

**Apoyar a los jóvenes y las damas** – En el año 2005 organizamos el primer retiro de jóvenes a nivel de Unión para jóvenes solteros, llamado *Encuentro*. Luego, en el año 2006, organizamos el primer retiro de damas titulado "Rosa en el jardín de Dios". Estos dos eventos me ayudaron a apreciar por primera vez el potencial de los jóvenes y de las damas de nuestras iglesias. Deseo animar a los líderes de las iglesias a que aprovechen sus talentos y energía para tener mayor impacto en las comunidades alrededor de sus iglesias.

**No temer –** Siento mucha tristeza al ver cómo la administración actual de este país ha asumido una posición anti-inmigrante y ha encarcelado a una cantidad de personas que han venido solo para darles un mejor futuro a sus familias. Esta postura tiene el potencial de separar a familias e incrementar el temor de quienes aún no tienen la ciudadanía estadounidense. Sin embargo, a pesar de lo que está pasando, me anima saber que Dios nos ama y nos dice que en este mundo solo andamos como "peregrinos" (Hebreos 11:13-16), y que nuestra ciudadanía está en el cielo de donde vendrá nuestro Señor (Filipenses 3:20).

Nunca pensé que, desde que me bauticé siendo adolescente hace casi sesenta años, que llegaría a este momento sin que Cristo hubiera regresado. Pero aun así, tengo fe en Dios porque sé en quién he creído. Casi al final de su vida, la hermana White dijo: "No tenemos nada que temer del futuro" porque nuestro capitán está al timón del barco. En el libro de Apocalipsis, Jesús termina su mensaje a la iglesia diciendo: "Sí vengo pronto." Y Juan el apóstol responde a esa promesa: "¡Amén! ¡Ven, Señor Jesús! Que la gracia del Señor Jesús sea con el santo pueblo de Dios". ■

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**Carmelo Mercado** *es el vicepresidente de la Unión del Lago.*

▲ *Mi esposa Rosanne y yo en 2020*

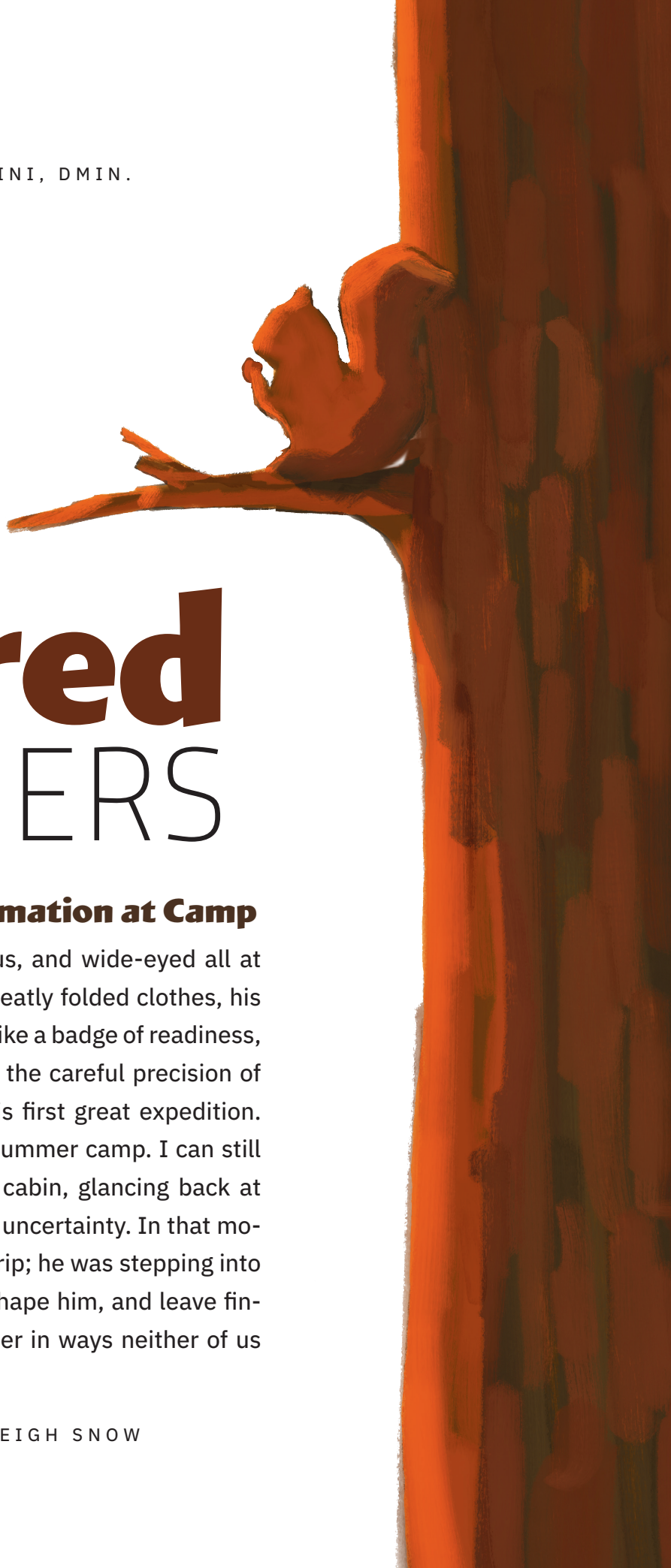
▲ *En nuestra luna de miel en 1986, en Maui, Hawaii*

▲ *En la iglesia Pioneer Memorial durante el cierre del séptimo Congreso de Jóvenes Hispanos Lake Union Conectate en 2023*

Katie Fellows

► *En el 2025, orando durante la celebración del aniversario 80° de la fundación de la Conferencia Regional del Lago.*

BY ROGELIO PAQUINI, DMIN.



# Sacred SUMMERS

## A Century of Faith Formation at Camp

There he stood, excited, nervous, and wide-eyed all at once. His backpack bulged with neatly folded clothes, his water bottle swung from the side like a badge of readiness, and his snacks were packed with the careful precision of a young explorer preparing for his first great expedition. It was my son's very first trip to summer camp. I can still picture him stepping toward the cabin, glancing back at me with a mixture of courage and uncertainty. In that moment, he was not just going on a trip; he was stepping into a world that would stretch him, shape him, and leave fingerprints on his faith and character in ways neither of us could yet imagine.

DESIGNED BY RYLEIGH SNOW

Fast forward a few years. The same boy who once clutched his sleeping bag with anxious anticipation returned to camp with a very different posture. He was no longer a nervous first-timer; he was a leader. That summer, he was responsible for the water activities at Big Lake Camp in Oregon, guiding younger campers through the same experiences, challenges, and joys that once shaped him. Watching him step into leadership—confident, capable, and compassionate—it felt like witnessing the full circle of spiritual formation in motion.

The transformation is striking, but for those familiar with Adventist children's and youth ministry, it is not surprising. Within our children and youth ministry ecosystem, few experiences function as powerfully, or as consistently, as a rite of passage quite like summer camp. It is the place where timid children discover courage, where friendships form around campfires, where faith becomes personal, and where future leaders often take their first steps toward service.

But this raises an important and unavoidable question for parents, pastors, and youth leaders alike: What lasting impact does summer camp actually have on a young person's faith, development, and leadership trajectory? Beyond the fun, the games, and the weeklong excitement, does the experience truly shape who they become?

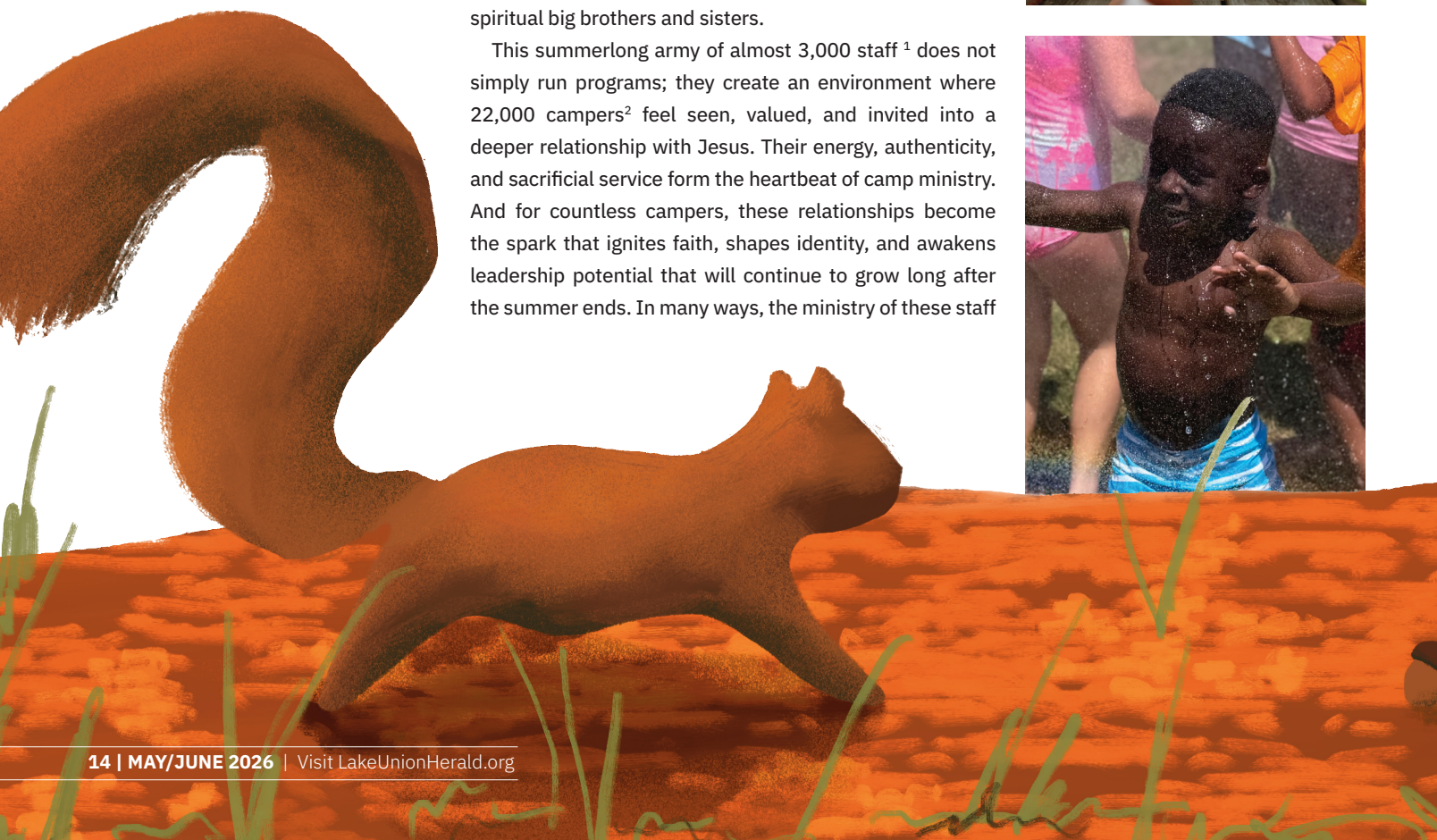
What began generations ago as a simple outdoor retreat has grown into one of the most enduring and influential ministries in the Adventist Church. For at least one week, sometimes longer, campers step into a community intentionally crafted for spiritual growth, relational connection, and personal discovery. Every summer, thousands of children across North America have packed their bags, hugged their parents goodbye, and headed to their local Adventist summer camp.

## Where Faith and Confidence Begin to Grow

From sunrise worships to late-night cabin conversations, every moment is designed to nurture faith and build confidence. Campers are surrounded by a dedicated team of teenagers and young adults who commit their entire summer to serving them. These young leaders sing with them, pray with them, play with them, worship with them, and walk beside them through every challenge and triumph. They become mentors, role models, and sometimes even spiritual big brothers and sisters.

This summerlong army of almost 3,000 staff [1] does not simply run programs; they create an environment where 22,000 campers[2] feel seen, valued, and invited into a deeper relationship with Jesus. Their energy, authenticity, and sacrificial service form the heartbeat of camp ministry. And for countless campers, these relationships become the spark that ignites faith, shapes identity, and awakens leadership potential that will continue to grow long after the summer ends. In many ways, the ministry of these staff





members becomes the quiet catalyst for spiritual journeys that last a lifetime.

The preparation is enormous. The planning is intense. The effort is sacrificial. Parents rearrange schedules, pastors rally support, and young adult staff give up their entire summer to serve instead of working for higher pay. Camps recruit, train, pray, and prepare for months. All of it—every meeting, every safety drill, every worship outline, every late-night cabin check—demands time, energy, and heart. So, we must ask the honest question: Is it worth it?

This is not a question of logistics or tradition. It is a question of impact. And as the evidence continues to show, the answer is far more profound than we often realize.

## What Young Adults Remember as the Turning Point in their Faith

According to a study we conducted last year across the North American Division for a future *180° Symposium* article, young adults were asked to reflect on their spiritual journeys and identify which activity had most significantly contributed to their faith development. The list of options was broad and familiar: Sabbath School, Pathfinders, mission trips, Bible studies, and more. Yet one response rose above all the others with striking consistency. The most common answer was clear and unmistakable: summer camp.

In a ministry landscape filled with programs, curricula, and initiatives, it was the week at camp, the songs, the mentors, the worships, the friendships, the sense of belonging, that young adults pointed to as the single most impactful spiritual experience in their formative years. This finding does not just affirm the value of camp; it underscores its unique role as a catalyst for lifelong faith.

Before we explore the spiritual impact of summer camp, it is important to recognize that the benefits extend far beyond worship services and cabin devotionals. A growing body of research shows that the summer camp environment itself-- structured, relational, adventurous, and unplugged--provides measurable emotional and psychological advantages for children and adolescents.

For example, an article published in *Children's Health* reported that children facing emotional or psychological challenges showed notable improvements after attending camp. Researchers observed increases in personal confidence, stronger self-esteem, and a clearer ability to identify personal goals. In other words, the camp setting did not just entertain them; it helped them grow.[3] Research highlighted in the *American Camp Association's National Impact Study* shows that camp environments help young people build confidence, resilience, and key life skills, offering a setting that supports mental health and personal growth.[4] Additional studies examining camp as a mental health intervention have found that children and adolescents experiencing emotional or psychological challenges often show measurable improvements in personal confidence and goalsetting after participating in camp programs.[5]

Another study conducted shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic offers even more striking insight. During a time when rates of anxiety and depression among young people were

**1926**
Grover Fattic leads the first Adventist Boys Camp in Michigan

**1927**
Harriet Holt directs the first Adventist Girls Camp in Wisconsin

**1944**
Camp Wagner founded in Cassopolis, Michigan

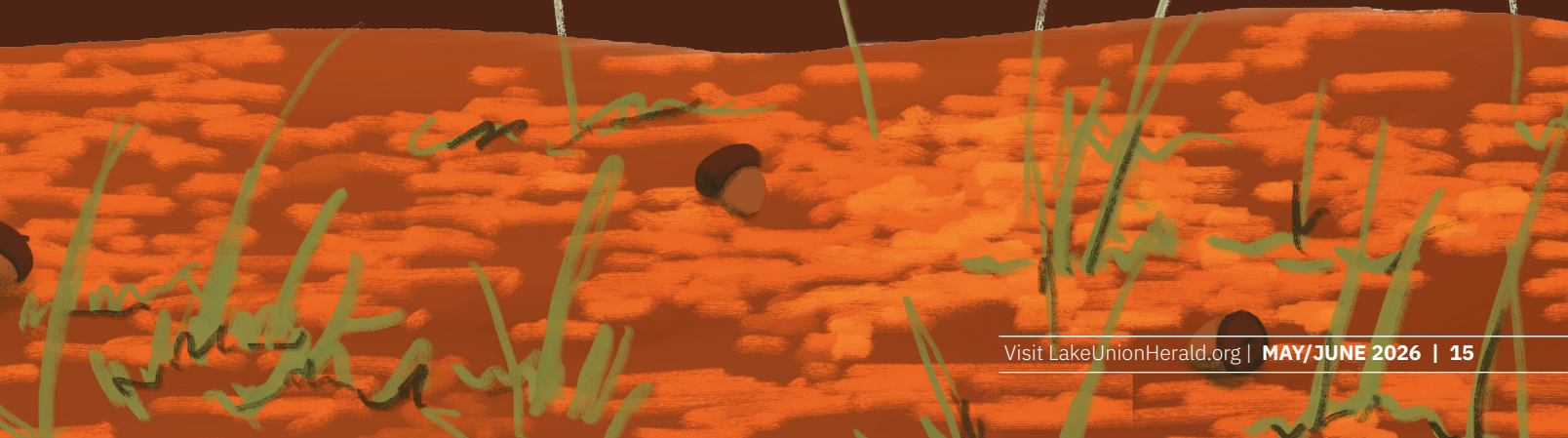
**1947**
Camp Sagola founded in Crystal Falls, Michigan

**1949**
Camp Au Sable founded in Grayling, Michigan

**1950**
Camp Wakonda founded in Oxford, Wisconsin

**1961**
Timber Ridge Camp founded in Spencer, Indiana

**2001**
Camp Akita founded in Gilson, Illinois



**1,811**
**Campers**

**Lake Union 2025 Camp Statistics**

**294**
**Staff Hired**

**115**
**Scholarships**

**59**
**Baptisms**

**141**
**Volunteers**

**1,036**
**Family Campers**

reported as dramatically rising, researchers examined the effects of a two-week summer camp experience. The results were significant: Campers demonstrated a marked decrease in anxiety symptoms after camp compared to their pre-camp assessments.[6] One study reported that after just two weeks of overnight summer camp, participants demonstrated notable decreases in anxiety compared to pre-camp levels, suggesting that camp can serve as a meaningful support for youth mental health during times of heightened stress.[7] The relational support, outdoor activity, and structured routine of camp created a stabilizing environment that helped counteract the emotional toll of the pandemic season.

Taken together, these findings highlight a powerful truth: Summer camp is not merely a recreational escape; it is a developmental catalyst. Long before we even begin discussing spiritual formation, the evidence shows that camp strengthens mental health, builds resilience, and equips young people with tools for personal growth.

## Why Camp Creates Space for Spiritual Decisions

On the spiritual side, summer camp offers a uniquely fertile environment for faith development and a deeper connection with God. Away from the noise, routines, and digital distractions of daily life, campers step into a space where spiritual practices are woven naturally into the rhythm of each day.[8]

One of the most visible and celebrated outcomes of Adventist summer camps is the number of baptisms and spiritual recommitments that take place each year. For many campers, the decision to follow Jesus is born out of the relationships, worship experiences, and spiritual conversations they encounter throughout the week. These moments become milestones; spiritual markers that shape their identity and guide their future choices.

For the staff, the impact is just as profound; sometimes even more so. Serving at summer camp becomes a season of spiritual stretching, personal discovery, and leadership formation that few other ministry environments can match.

*Deepened Faith and Calling:* Staff members often describe their summer at camp as a turning point in their walk with God. The daily rhythm of worship, service, and community living pushes them to rely on God in new ways. As they mentor campers, lead activities, and navigate challenges, many experience a deepening of their personal faith and a clearer sense of God's calling on their lives. Camp becomes a spiritual laboratory where their gifts are tested, refined, and affirmed. Working at summer camp can become a pipeline for church future church employment.

*Leadership Skills Development:* Beyond spiritual growth, camp provides a rich training ground for leadership. Staff learn to manage groups, resolve conflicts, communicate effectively, lead worship, plan programs, and work as part of a mission-driven team.

They gain confidence, resilience, and practical ministry experience that translates directly into church leadership, academic success, and future careers. For many young adults, camp is the first place where they discover they *can* lead, and that their leadership matters.[9] In this way, summer camp forms not only the faith of campers but also the character and calling of the young adults who serve them. It becomes a dual-impact ministry, shaping two generations at once.

## One Week Can Shape a Lifetime

Summer camp does not just entertain kids for a week. It launches journeys. It plants seeds of calling that often grow quietly, steadily, and unexpectedly over time. In the rhythm of worship songs, the laughter around campfires, the challenge of new adventures, and the gentle mentoring of young adult leaders, something sacred takes root.

And sometimes, just as I witnessed in my own son, it transforms wide-eyed campers into confident, compassionate leaders. The same child who once arrived unsure and nervous becomes the young adult who guides others, serves with purpose, and steps into leadership with a sense of mission. Summer camp becomes the place where identity is shaped, faith is strengthened, and the next generation of leaders begins to emerge.

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**Rogelio Paquini,** *DMin., is the youth & young adult ministry MA program director at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.*

CELEBRATING

YEARS OF SUMMER CAMP

# Andrews University

## SUMMER EXPERIENCES

Andrews University is excited to offer three summer programs for students ranging in age from kindergarten through university. Participants will have the opportunity to learn about God's creation, build community and grow their discipleship skills. Based in beautiful Southwest Michigan, the programs will allow students to learn about the region alongside a thoughtful curriculum led by caring professionals. We invite you to join us for a summer filled with engaging and rewarding experiences. Together we can seek knowledge, affirm faith and change the world.

**The Crayon Box Children's Learning Center**

The Crayon Box is offering an educational day camp experience for children entering kindergarten through the age of 12. The theme for 2026 is "ZOOM IN! to God's Amazing World."

Each week will include a theme that invites campers to notice the small wonders, big ideas and amazing details of God's creation.

"The Crayon Box provides a safe, joyful and faith-centered setting where children can spend their summer vacation exploring, learning and thriving through on-campus adventures, campus field trips and special visits from off-campus programs like zoo and wildlife directors," says Kristy Conklin, camp director.

The camp will be held from 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, with before-camp and after-camp care

available. Enrollment is open online. Space is limited and forms are due by May 18, 2026.

**Explore Andrews: Early College Experience**

The Andrews University Early College Experience is an in-person summer program for rising high school juniors and seniors as well as incoming freshmen. The initiative is part of the Explore Andrews program, which is designed to help students find a desired academic plan as well as career and life goals through intentional support and personal advising.

"Come join us for three weeks of learning and fun on the campus of Andrews University. Each student will take one 3-credit hour college course in addition to participating in seminars, activities and local travel," says Aaron Moushon, assistant dean for Undergraduate Education and Explore Andrews Program director.

"Students can choose from one of the following general education courses: College Writing, World Civilizations, Communication Skills and Scripture."

Applications are open now. The deadline to apply is June 30, 2026.

**IGNITE Discipleship Program**

IGNITE, a three-week summer discipleship experience hosted at Andrews University, will take place from July 26–Aug. 14, 2026. The program is created for high school and college students who want to grow deeper in their relationships with God. In addition to offering academic credit, IGNITE is designed as an intentional space for spiritual growth, mentoring and community. It is a place where faith can take root, friendships can grow and purpose begins to feel real.

"IGNITE is an opportunity for students who desire a deep relationship with God to grow in that relationship," says Alanna Rodríguez Merlos, director of the program and the Andrews University Discipleship Center. "It helps them understand their Adventist identity and what it looks like to have a daily walk with Christ that can endure hardship and uncertainty."

Additional details can be found on the program website.

## The Crayon Box Children's Learning Center

**June 1–Aug. 20, 2026**
Andrews University, Marsh Hall
https://www.andrews.edu/services/crayonbox/summercamp/
summercamp@andrews.edu
269-471-3350

## Explore Andrews: Early College Experience

**July 27–Aug. 14**
Andrews University
https://www.andrews.edu/exploreandrews/earlycollege/
explore@andrews.edu
269-471-3382

## IGNITE Discipleship Program

**July 26–Aug. 14**
Andrews University, Discipleship House
https://www.andrews.edu/audc/ignite/
discipleshipcenter@andrews.edu
269-471-3617

CELEBRATING

YEARS OF SUMMER CAMP

# Camp Akita

## ILLINOIS

Before the campers arrive at Camp Akita, there's a stillness that settles over the grounds. The lake sits glassy and calm in the early morning light. Cabins are freshly cleaned, bunks are made tight, and somewhere in the lodge someone is testing the microphones for worship. Staff gather in circles to pray over the season ahead, asking God to move in ways we can't yet see.

Then the buses arrive. The cars roll in. The quiet disappears in an instant.

Suddenly the air is filled with the sounds of laughter, rolling suitcases, and the unmistakable buzz of campers realizing they've finally made it to camp. Counselors welcome new faces into cabins that will feel like home by the end of the week. Old friends reunite like no time has passed. The zipline hums to life, the horses are saddled, and the camp songs start echoing across the fields. And just like that, another summer begins.

But if you could zoom out for a moment; far beyond a single week, a single summer, or even a single camp. . . you'd see something remarkable.

For 100 years, God has been doing something extraordinary through Adventist camping ministry in North America. Across forests, lakes, mountains, and fields, young people have been stepping away from their normal routines into spaces where it becomes easier to hear the voice of God. Away from the noise of everyday life, hearts open. Questions are asked. Faith begins to take root.

And again and again, campers discover something powerful: Jesus was never far away.

Sometimes that realization comes during a quiet moment at the lake, watching the sunset paint the sky orange and gold. Sometimes it happens during worship when a song hits a little deeper than expected. And sometimes

comes in the middle of a conversation with a staff member who listens without judgment and reminds a camper that God still sees them. Those are the moments we live for at Akita.

This summer, our theme is "Never Too Far," inspired by the powerful promise found in Romans 8:38–39, that nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of Jesus.

Not our mistakes.

Not our fears.

Not the distance we sometimes feel between where we are and where we wish we were.

Nothing.

And that truth sits at the very heart of what camp has been about for the past century. For 100 years, camping ministry has been a place where young people discover that no matter where life has taken them, no matter what questions they carry, and no matter how far they feel from God, they are never too far to come home. That's what we hope every camper experiences when they step onto the grounds at Camp Akita this summer. Whether it's their first time at camp or their fifth, our prayer is the same: that somewhere between the laughter, the adventure, the worship, and even the moments of chaos, they encounter the kind of love that changes everything.

A love that has been reaching campers for 100 years. And a love that reminds us all that we are never too far.

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**Stacey DePluzer** *is associate youth director for Illinois Conference.*

## Camp Akita Dates:

**Cub Camp** *(ages 7–9)*: June 21–28

**Junior Camp** *(ages 10–12)*: June 21–28

**Tween Camp** *(ages 11–14)*: *June 28 –July 5*

**Teen + Specialty Camp** *(ages 14–17)*: *July 5–12*

**Family Camp** *(all ages)*: *July 12–19*

**CAMP AKITA**
1684 Knox Rd. 1200 N, Gilson, IL 61436
www.campakita.com | youthdept@ilcsda.org
309-876-2060

CELEBRATING

YEARS OF SUMMER CAMP

# Timber Ridge Camp

## INDIANA

Timber Ridge Camp has always been a part of my life. From participating in Adventurer campouts since before I can remember to attending summer camp from age 10 onward, I came to realize that TRC is the best place to be. TRC holds a beauty that I am yet to find anywhere else. Christ-centered friendships are formed. Decisions to follow the Lord are made. And real relationships with Jesus are cultivated.

I knew from the moment I became a camp-staff-in-training when I was 14 that someday I wanted to work at camp. I desired other children to have the same life-altering experience I had. I began to look around at the staff members I admired, taking note of their best qualities, really trying to learn how to have Jesus' light shine through me.

In 2021, I was given the opportunity to be a lifeguard. The waterfront was the perfect place for me. Every camper went there, so I learned as many of their names as I could. I learned how to connect with the campers, leading them to feel loved and safe to open and share when they needed to. But beyond creating connections, I learned what a privilege it is to be a staff member as I watched my faith grow alongside the campers.

The following summer, I chose to work in the Nature Center. I learned the importance of having a why for working at camp and reminding myself of that why often. In ministry, it can be easy to get so caught up in what you are doing to serve that you forget to think about why you serve. But, that why is way more important than anything you could do.

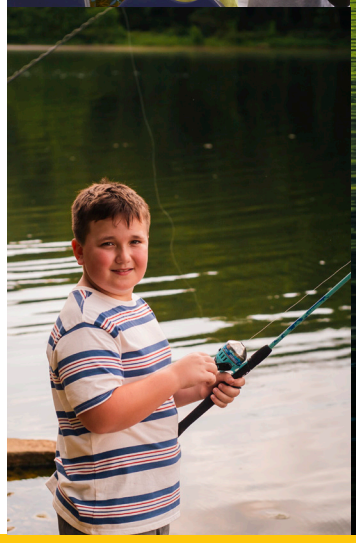
For the summers of 2023 and 2024, I was the waterfront director. I learned how to have fun with the

campers while also keeping them within the guidelines. I really began to see how to lead a group of people with faith as the foundation.

I wasn't able to return to camp in 2025, and I thought 2026 was going to be the same. However, God opened the door for me, and I am going back to camp this summer. With humility and total awe in the Lord, I have accepted the offer of assistant camp director.

Over the years, God has turned TRC into my place of growth. That is where I gave my heart to Him, where I found my soon-to-be-husband, where I experienced my greatest character growth, and where I will be experiencing my greatest leadership opportunity. At the moment, I don't know exactly how God will use me this summer, but through my waiting and wondering, He reminds me, "...And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8).

*After many years spent as a camp staffer,* **Alanna Taylor** *is looking forward to serving as Timber Ridge Camp's assistant director.*



## Timber Ridge Camp Dates:

**Single Mom's Retreat:** June 10–14

**Blind Camp:** June 14–21
*(sponsored by Christian Record Services)*

**Cub Camp** *(ages 7–10)*: June 21–28

**Junior Camp** *(ages 10–13)*: June 28–July 5

**T'ween Camp** *(ages 13–15)*: July 5–12

**Teen Camp** *(ages 15–17)*: July 12–19

**Family Camp** *(families)*: July 19–26

**TIMBER RIDGE CAMP**
1674 Timber Ridge Rd,
Spencer, IN 47460

www.indysdayouth.org/summercamp

812-829-2507

CELEBRATING

YEARS OF SUMMER CAMP

# Camp Wagner
## LAKE REGION

Are you ready for the ultimate summer adventure—where faith meets fun, and every day feels like a new level to conquer? Well, it's time to level up! Get ready to power up your spirit, build real friendships, and experience God like never before! The program provides a refreshing escape from the pace of everyday life and introduces campers to a safe, uplifting rural environment where faith and fun go hand in hand.

Escape the ordinary... enter the extraordinary!

Leave behind the noise of the city and step into a world filled with fresh air, wide-open spaces, and non-stop excitement. Camp Wagner isn't just a campsite; it is a home away from home where memories are made and lives are changed. What are you waiting for? It is time to register now.

Imagine this... campfires, laughter and unforgettable memories. Peaceful nights, no loud cars and buses so quiet you can actually hear God speak and see His handy works with skies full of stars so bright it takes your breath away. It's time to unplug and recharge.

The camp also offers a wide range of high-energy activities designed to keep campers engaged and excited. From swimming and skating to laser tag and go-kart racing, each day is packed with opportunities for fun, teamwork, and building lifelong friendships. These experiences not only entertain but also help campers develop confidence, social skills, and a sense of belonging.

At its core, Camp Wagner is committed to spiritual impact, and we want to see every camper level up in your faith walk with Jesus. This year's theme, Super Daniel Bro., brings the Bible to life like never before! Step into the story of Daniel and discover what it means to stand

strong, trust God, and live boldly. Through dynamic worship, interactive lessons, and intentional mentorship, campers are inspired to grow in their personal relationship with God. For many, this experience becomes a turning point, leading to decisions for baptism and a deeper commitment to Christ.

Registration is now open, and families are encouraged to sign up early for what promises to be a life-changing summer.

## Camp Wagner Date:

**Camp** *(ages 8–16)*: **July 12–26**

**CAMP WAGNER**
19088 Brownville Rd.,
Cassopolis, MI 49031
www.lrcyouth.com

CELEBRATING

YEARS OF SUMMER CAMP

# Camp Au Sable

## MICHIGAN

I hate snapping turtles. Every time I jump into Camp Au Sable's beautiful lake, the ugly face of a huge snapping turtle is all that appears in my mind's eye. It was no different this warm June afternoon. I smiled at all the girls in my cabin as we piled on to Camp's shiny red boat. My gaze fell on one particular camper, Jessica*.

Her eyes didn't meet mine, nor did she smile. She slumped in her chair, insecurity written all over her face. As three of my campers piled on to the tube and bounced across the waves, my heart broke for her. She didn't have shampoo or conditioner when she came. She didn't have a brush or even toothpaste like all the other girls. She only had one blanket. She hadn't brought any knowledge of Jesus with her to camp either.

I snapped out of my thoughts as my girls tugged on my arms and begged me to get on the tube. Finally, I succumbed to their pleading and, with shaking arms, grabbed onto the handles. As the boat violently lurched forward, I flew into the lake. I could just imagine the snapping turtles with their evil smiles and swimming toward my helpless, exposed feet. So I screamed. It was louder than I have ever screamed before. In a panic, I clambered onto the boat, reaching for the arms of safety that would save me from my mostly imaginary fears.

All my girls were laughing hysterically. Their eyes twinkled in the sun, and their laughter skipped across the waves. *All* of them were laughing! Even Jessica! It was like the dam had broken and laughter tumbled out of her! Throughout the rest of the week Jessica was a completely different girl. Her fear seemed to have vanished too, and I could see joy radiating from her. She had seen Jesus in a new way that I never would have expected.

I never imagined that facing my biggest fear would have brought a smile to Jessica's face.

Maybe seeing me face my fears was exactly what she needed to face her much bigger, all-encompassing fears. What a privilege it was to show Jesus to campers who had never seen Him before.

Throughout the rest of the week, Jessica showed a desire to get to know Jesus. She started to participate in activities, smiled and laughed often, and asked me questions about God. I never would have guessed that my actions, silly as they were, would impact Jessica in such a way, but God has mysterious ways of working. I don't know where Jessica is, or what her home was like when she went back at the end of the week, or if I will see her at camp again this summer, but I do know that God can do amazing things, in the most unexpected ways when we choose to surrender our lives fully to Him. So, I encourage you to go face your fears. You have no idea who it may impact.

**Camper's name changed to protect privacy*

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**Selah Garcia** *is a sophomore elementary education major at Southern Adventist University. This summer will be her fourth working at Camp Au Sable, and she will serve in leadership as the Girls' Village director.*

CAMP AU SABLE

## Camp Au Sable Dates:

**Adventure/Junior** *(9–11)*: June 7–14
**Tween Camp** *(12–14)*: June 14–21
**Teen Camp** *(14–16)*: June 21–28
**Family Camp 1:** June 28–July 5
**Family Camp 2:** July 5–12
**Family Camp 3:** July 12–19
**Family Camp 4:** July 19–26

## Camp Sagola Dates:

**Junior Camp:** July 12–19
**Teen Camp:** July 19–26

**CAMP AU SABLE**
2590 Camp Au Sable Drive, Grayling, MI 49738
www.campausable.org
office@campausable.org
989-348-5491

**CAMP SAGOLA**
2885 State Hwy. M-69, Crystal Falls, MI 49920
info@campsagola.org
313-333-6129

CELEBRATING

YEARS OF SUMMER CAMP

# Camp Wakonda
## WISCONSIN

I've been coming to Camp Wakonda for as long as I can remember. I grew up here: running through the trails, sitting by the campfire, and feeling the crunch of pine needles beneath my feet. This place isn't just "camp" to me. It's home.

It's also where I gave my life to Christ. I was baptized here, surrounded by the beauty of God's creation. There's something about being in nature away from the noise, breathing in the stillness that makes it so much easier to feel His presence. Here, you can't help but notice His fingerprints on everything.

The whole reason I keep coming back to work at summer camp is to help youth find their way to God. I want them to know they are loved, wanted, and seen. I want them to feel His loving arms wrapped around them, no matter where they are in life. As staff, we begin every class with prayer because we believe God should be at the center of all we do. Each morning at line call, we share memory verses: words filled with God's guidance and love to remind everyone that He is everywhere and in everyone.

Not every camper is at the same place in their walk with God, and that's OK. Each person has their own unique journey, and God patiently waits for us when we wander. But this year felt different. I witnessed a spiritual stirring among many campers their; hearts softened, and faith began to take root. Several arrived uncertain about their beliefs yet left camp baptized or feeling a renewed calling to draw closer to God.

Seeing the impact summer camp had on these young lives has made my heart swell. Faith truly grows under these pines. Like the trees that stretch upward toward the light, our faith reaches higher as our roots sink deep

into God's truth. When you leave camp, you don't just carry your belongings: you carry a deeper connection to the One who made it all.

Because I've lived it. I've been that person sitting under the trees, unsure of what God had planned for me, and I've felt Him meet me here. My baptism was just the beginning. Every summer since has been another step in my walk with Him, and now I get to help others take theirs. As long as God allows, I'll keep coming back to these pines, watching seeds of faith take root, and celebrating as they grow toward the Son.

"Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." (Colossians 2:7 KJV)

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**Hannah Bergeon** *is returning to camp for her fourth summer on staff at Camp Wakonda; it will be her third summer as the Girls' director.*

## Camp Wakonda Dates:

**Cub Camp** *(ages 7-9)*: June 28 - July 3
**Tween Camp** *(ages 10-12)*: July 5-10
**Teen Camp** *(ages 13-16)*: July 12-17
**Family Camp** *(all ages)*: July 19-26

**CAMP WAKONDA**
W8368 County Hwy E, Oxford, WI 53952
www.wakonda.org | zpayne@wi.adventist.org

JULY 22-25 [ENGLISH]
JULY 31-AUG. 2 [HISPANIC]

Illinois Camp Meeting

# EXPERIENCING THE LORD OF HOPE

**Matt & Josie Minikus**

**Adrian Murray**

**Elden Ramirez**
Hispanic Camp Meeting

**LOCATION**
Camp Akita
1684 Knox Rd 1200 N,
Gilson, IL 61436

The year 2025 marked the Illinois Conference celebration of 25 years of Camp Akita. This year, we join our sister conferences in celebrating an even larger milestone: 100 years of summer camp ministry. For a century, generations of young people and families have encountered God in the outdoors through summer camps like Akita. For over a decade, Camp Akita has hosted our camp meetings as well.

It will be a festive time once again at our two camp meetings this summer. Our main camp meeting will be held July 22–25, followed by our Hispanic Camp Meeting from July 31–Aug. 2. Both gatherings offer an opportunity to step away from the noise and busyness of daily life and reconnect with God and one another in the beauty of God's creation.

This year's camp meeting theme is **"Experiencing the Lord of Hope."** In a time when many people feel overwhelmed by uncertainty, the theme invites campers to rediscover the deep and steady hope found in Christ. Through worship, study, fellowship, and recreation, campers will be encouraged to not just talk about but experience the kind of hope that sustains faith through all the seasons of life.

During the week, Pastor Ira Bartolomé will serve as the devotional speaker, helping set the spiritual tone for each day. Prof. Glenn Russell will lead several seminars designed to deepen faith and provide practical spiritual insights. On Friday evening, Illinois Conference President John Grys will address our campers, sharing words of encouragement and vision for our conference family. On Sabbath, Adrian Murray, director of mission and ministries at AdventHealth North Pinellas in Florida, will serve as our featured speaker. Matt and Josie Minikus will join us as special musical guests ("musicianaries" as they call it!), providing worship through music throughout the weekend.

For the Hispanic Camp Meeting, Elden Ramirez, president of the Lake Union Conference, will serve as the main speaker. The Ramirez family will also be providing the music, creating a meaningful time of worship and fellowship for our Hispanic members and guests.

Camp Akita is waiting for you! Our veteran campers know that camp meeting is just as much about enjoying the climbing tower, zipline, jet skis, swimming, and peaceful walks in nature as it is about listening to speakers and enjoying the music. Friendships are renewed, families reconnect, and new memories are made each year around the campfire, on the waterfront, and in the worship pavilion.

Whether you come for the spiritual renewal, the fellowship, or simply a few days surrounded by God's creation, camp meeting at Camp Akita offers something special for everyone. We hope you will join us this summer as we celebrate a century of camp ministry and experience the Lord of Hope together.

# JUNE 1-6

## Indiana Camp Meeting

# THREADS OF GRACE:

## THE FABRIC OF FAMILY

**Ty Gibson**

**Pavel Goia**

**Vic Van Schaik**

**Minner Labrador**
Hispanic Camp Meeting

**Seneque Edmond**
Haitian Camp Meeting

**LOCATION**
Indiana Adventist Academy
24815 IN-19,
Cicero, IN 46034

Our 2026 camp meeting will follow the Indiana Conference year-long theme – Threads of Grace: The Fabric of Family. As the author of all love, God offers hope, healing, and restoration to broken relationships and provides guidance and strength so that we can experience true joy and peace in the home. Our camp meeting seminars, sermons, and activities will be built around this theme of restoring and building relationships with others.

Held on the campus of Indiana Academy, camp meeting seminars will highlight such topics as family life, family financial planning, natural remedies, prayer ministries, religious liberty, cultural insights into Christ's life and ministry and more.

Children's programming, designed for toddlers through teens, will provide enriching Bible presentations and plenty of recreation and fellowship. Additionally, family-oriented activities are scheduled throughout the week.

The first conference-wide gathering will be held on Sabbath, May 30 for our Spanish-speaking families. Dia de la Hermandad is a vibrant time of worship and fellowship.

Our weeklong camp meeting event will begin on Monday evening, June 1, and conclude on Sabbath evening, June 6.

Additionally, our fourth annual one-day Haitian gathering will meet at the Cicero Church on Sabbath, June 6.

Indiana Camp Meeting is always a special week of fellowship, encouragement, and inspiration. Make plans today to join us!

JUNE 25-JULY 4 [ENGLISH]
SEPT. 3-7 [HISPANIC]

Lake Region Camp Meeting

# MULTIPLY BY MISSION

**LOCATION**
Camp Wagner
19088 Brownsville St.,
Cassopolis, MI 49031
ircsda.com

In just a few weeks, we will gather once again on the sacred grounds of Camp Wagner for camp meeting 2026 under the theme, Multiply by Mission. This theme is more than a slogan. It is a divine call to action. It reminds us that we are not simply saved to sit, but sent to serve; not just called to believe, but commissioned to build the kingdom of God.

Rooted in Matthew 28 and Acts 2, Multiply by Mission reflects both the command of Christ and the evidence of a Spirit-filled church. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus gives His final instruction to His disciples: to go into all the world, make disciples, baptize and teach. This Great Commission is not reserved for a select few. As a conference, as a church, and even as individuals, we are all called to surrender ourselves fully to God and say, "Lord, use me."

When we accept that call, Acts 2 shows us what happens next. The Holy Spirit is poured out. Lives are transformed. The church begins to multiply. Not by human effort alone, but by divine empowerment. Notice that the early believers were united in purpose, bold in witness and committed to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. And as a result, thousands came to know Him.

The goal of Camp Meeting 2026 is to ignite that evangelistic fire within every heart and to remind us that we are disciples called to make other disciples.

You are invited to join us as we come together in worship, fellowship and the Word of God. Our prayer is that each one of you will experience a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit and leave the campgrounds empowered to go and do the work of the Lord.

Because when we say yes to the mission, God brings the multiplication. And that is the true blessing of Multiply by Mission.

# JUNE 12-20
# SEPT. 11-13 [U.P.]
# MAY 22-24 [HISPANIC]

## Michigan Camp Meeting

# WITH A LOUD VOICE

Israel Ramos

Paul Douglas

Stephen Bohr

Jim Micheff

Ryan Hayes

Steve Conway

**LOCATION**
Great Lakes Adventist Academy,
7477 Academy Rd. Cedar Lake, MI
48812

**CONTACT**
Stephanie Howard
slhoward@misda.org
misda.org/camp-meeting

In Revelation 14, God has a special end-time message for earth given through three angels, or messengers. This message is described as "the everlasting gospel" that must be given "with a loud voice" (v. 6). The message of the angel is to fear God, reflect His character, and understand the times in which we are living. It is noteworthy that the "loud voice" of the angel mimics the voice of God "like the sound of loud thunder" (v. 2). In this passage we find that proclaiming the Gospel is an act of godliness. In fact, the messenger seeks to be like God so much so, that he mimics God in the very way the gospel is proclaimed, with a loud voice—the theme of this year's camp meeting.

On opening night, our president Jim Micheff will share the Friday evening message. Our featured speaker for the first weekend will be Stephen Bohr, president of Secrets Unsealed. Each morning, Pastor Steven Conway of the Troy Seventh-day Adventist Church will share on spiritual growth and healthy relationships drawing from decades of ministry and global outreach.

Ryan Hayes, professor of chemistry at Andrews University, will give the mid-morning messages from Monday to Friday. Hayes is known for using science to point audiences to God's design in creation. Starting Wednesday evening, Elder Paul H. Douglass will bring decades of global leadership experience as treasurer and chief financial officer of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's world headquarters.

Our prayer is that the voice of God invested to His remnant church through the proclamation of His everlasting gospel will be proclaimed with a loud voice.

Hispanic Camp meeting will take place at Camp Au Sable from May 22 -24 and our Upper Peninsula Camp Meeting will take place from Sept. 11-15.

# JUNE 19-27

## Wisconsin Camp Meeting

# TASTE OF HEAVEN

Shane Anderson

Lesa Budd

Eric Flickinger

Esther Knott

Richie Halverson

Titus Naftanaila

Nadine Thomas

**CONTACT**
920-484-6555 or
608-296-2126

**LOCATION**
W8368 County Hwy E,
Oxford, WI 53952

Wisconsin Camp Meeting is a great spiritual retreat, offering inspiring worship and fellowship at the beautiful Camp Wakonda. The event will take place on June 19-27, and the theme is "Taste of Heaven."

While we live our everyday lives on this earth, God invites us into something far greater than the ordinary. We are called to experience life as a foretaste of heaven, where God's presence is real, personal, and transformative. Amid daily routines and responsibilities, we are reminded that heaven begins now when we choose to walk closely with God and allow His Spirit to shape our thoughts, actions, and purpose.

This heavenly foretaste is experienced most deeply when we gather to worship with fellow believers. In worship, we are united across differences, lifting our hearts together in praise, prayer, and gratitude. These moments of shared faith reflect the eternal worship described in Scripture and strengthen our connection with God and one another, reminding us that we are part of something much larger than ourselves.

As we live and worship in this way, we are also called to extend the invitation of God's kingdom to others. Our lives become a living testimony, inviting friends, neighbors, and communities to experience the hope, grace, and love found in Christ. By reflecting heaven through our words and actions, we help others catch a glimpse of God's kingdom and discover the joy of belonging to Him.

We are excited to welcome a dynamic group of Spirit-filled leaders who will inspire, challenge, and encourage us throughout Camp Meeting 2026.

Our evening speakers will include Richard Halverson, director of church growth and revitalization for the Southern Union; Titus Naftanaila, president of the Wisconsin Conference; Eric Flickinger, associate speaker for It Is Written Television; and Shane Anderson, pastor of Pioneer Memorial Church. Each will bring a powerful message rooted in Scripture, vision, and a passion for God's mission.

Our midweek gatherings will be enriched by Esther Knott, interim assistant to the president for mission and culture at Andrews University, and Dr. Nadine Thomas, a licensed, certified life coach, who will offer practical insights and spiritual encouragement for personal growth, leadership, and whole-life discipleship.

Beyond the messages, Camp Meeting 2026 will offer moments of joy, renewal, and celebration through a special concert, a baptismal service, the annual Hallelujah Hustle, inspiring worship experiences, and meaningful fellowship. Together, these elements will create a sacred space for reflection, connection, and spiritual renewal.

We look forward to sharing this unforgettable experience with you—thank you for planning to join us for Camp Meeting 2026.

AdventHealth

▲ *Tom Truver and his wife, Cecille Truver, are pictured with Ashley Silmon and her father, Scott Silmon, in front of the new, more durable micro pantry structure outside the emergency room at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Bolingbrook.*

# Hospital Micro Pantry Delivers Wholeness to the Community

**Addressing basic needs is core to AdventHealth's promise to help people feel whole. At UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Bolingbrook, one way this commitment comes to life is through a micro pantry, a 24/7 resource placed outside the emergency room that provides non-perishable food and essential items to about 200 patients and neighbors each week.**

Cecille Truver, the hospital's director of imaging, patient transport and volunteer services, highlights this initiative as a vital lifeline.

"When people leave the ER during the day or at night, sometimes they aren't able to visit the grocery store," she said.

For Truver, the pantry is more than meeting a critical gap. It's a tribute to her heritage and her parents, whom she watched feed people experiencing homelessness in the Chicagoland area.

**A community partnership**

While a micro pantry has existed at the Bolingbrook hospital in the past, Truver realized it needed a revamp. Inspired by a local library model, she and her husband, Tom Truver, connected with the Silmon family, the pantry's builders. Sharing a similar faith-based mission, the Silmons volunteered their time and talents to construct a new, durable structure for the hospital.

"This is a beautiful example of partnering with the community to extend our mission," said Mike Nunn, chief operating officer at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Bolingbrook. "This pantry is a blessing to many in need and a visible reminder that our mission doesn't end at our doors."

**A shared commitment**

The initiative is supported by AdventHealth team members and local donors. Each week, various units across the facility take turns to ensure the resource is clean and well-stocked.

"It's heartwarming to see our community care for each other," Cecille Truver said.

Rebecca Davis, the hospital's clinical chaplain manager, oversees the pantry.

"AdventHealth's mission is to extend the healing ministry of Christ, who understood the interconnectedness of physical, mental and spiritual well-being," she said. "Supporting this work means caring for the whole person."

**A lasting impact**

Truver has spent 37 years at AdventHealth and contributed to the opening of the hospital in 2004.

Her husband, who is retired, now volunteers at the facility and participates in a local feeding program. Together, they continue to make a meaningful impact.

"This work is not just about health care," shared Truver, "It's about family, community and faith."

**Ama Akoto-Boateng** *is senior corporate communications specialist at AdventHealth.*

UChicagoMedicine
AdventHealth

# Scholarship Offered for Theology and Education Students

Andrews University
World Changers Made Here.

**The Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is once again offering its annual Scholarship for Theology and Education, providing critical financial support to students pursuing undergraduate degrees in theology or teacher education at Andrews University. Applications for the 2026–2027 academic year are open until May 20, 2026. They must be submitted through the official Lake Union application form. [ https://bit.ly/4bVLjb4]**

Rodney Palmer, chair of the Department of Religion & Biblical Languages and associate professor of religion, said this initiative is important because there is a growing need for more pastors and educators. "The Lake Union scholarship lowers barriers," he explained, "so students called to the ministry of teaching and pastoring can complete their training without being derailed by finances."

Established to invest in the next generation of pastors, educators and faith-based leaders, the scholarship aims to strengthen churches and schools throughout the Lake Union territory. At Andrews University, its impact is felt both academically and spiritually.

"Financial support through the Lake Union Scholarship enables future pastors and teachers to engage more fully in their coursework, mentoring relationships and hands-on practicum experiences, as well as local church and school involvement across the Union," Palmer says. Through these relationships with Lake Union congregations and schools, students gain a clearer understanding of local needs and develop the skills and experience necessary for effective service.

This scholarship is open to members of congregations within the Lake Union Conference who demonstrate financial need and meet Andrews University's admission requirements. Applicants must be formally accepted into either a theology or teacher education program at Andrews University; students who change majors after acceptance become ineligible. In addition, applicants are required to submit one letter of recommendation from a high school, homeschool or academy teacher. Theology recommendations should be emailed to religion@andrews.edu, and education recommendations should be sent to sedinfo@andrews.edu by June 15, 2026. Students must also be able to pass required background checks for field experience placements.

Recipients are eligible to receive up to $7,500 per semester, totaling up to $15,000 annually, for a maximum of four years. Continued eligibility requires maintaining a minimum GPA of 3.0, demonstrating satisfactory professional conduct and remaining in good academic standing. A limited number of scholarships are awarded each year. Applicants are first reviewed by Andrews University, and eligible candidates are then ranked by their local conferences, with final selections made by the Lake Union Scholarship Committee.

A key component of the scholarship is its service commitment. "While there is not a formal requirement, graduates must be willing to work for at least four years after graduation within the Lake Union territory," Palmer explains. "This commitment makes the scholarship a true partnership, in which the church invests in students and graduates then invest their gifts back into the church's mission. It also strengthens staffing, continuity and the long-term health of Lake Union congregations and schools." ■

**Priscilla Wiafe** *is a University Communication student writer.*

Katie Fellows

▲ *The Scholarship for Theology and Education was established to invest in the next generation of pastors, educators and faith-based leaders in the Lake Union Conference.*

Alvin Goulbourne Jr.

▲ *Pastor Debleaire Snell (middle, right) presented Toson Knight with an award for his impact on vulnerable youth in Detroit. Several of Knight's mentees from Detroit were in attendance to affirm his leadership.*

# Breath of Life honors Detroit mentor Toson Knight at Oakwood University Church

**On Feb. 7, 2026, Breath of Life Ministries honored Detroit mentor and youth advocate Toson Knight with its Distinction Award, recognizing his extraordinary commitment to mentoring young people and his work through Caught Up Mentoring.**

Breath of Life Speaker/Director Debleaire Snell presented the award, celebrating Knight's impact on vulnerable youth in Detroit, during the worship service at Oakwood University Church in Alabama. With Knight and several of his mentees standing next to him, Snell told Knight, "We are so excited and grateful to have you here with us, and to have some of these young men who are the real-time fruit of your labor standing before us." He added, "We are rooting for you here in Huntsville and we're thankful for what God is doing."

Knight, founder and president of Caught Up Mentoring, said that his burden for ministry grew out of his own difficult upbringing. Raised in Highland Park, Michigan, he said he was kicked out of 11 schools before his life began to change at Oakwood University, where mentors invested in him and gave him a new direction. "When I left, I had this burden on my heart that I need to go and do what somebody else did for me," said Knight, who now works as a high school administrator. He told the congregation that after watching many of his friends go to prison or lose their lives, he felt called to help change the trajectory of other young men facing similar circumstances.

The service also gave students mentored by Knight an opportunity to testify. One student described how Knight brought order and stability to his school. Another said Knight's encouragement taught him not to say, "I can't do it." A third offered perhaps the strongest testimony, saying that before meeting Knight, he believed only "two roads" lay ahead of him: "jail or death." Instead, he said, Knight helped place him on a new path, away from violence and toward opportunity, purpose and faith.

Moved by the testimonies, Snell told Knight: "This is why we thank God for you my brother and what you do." He continued, "It's why we got to do the work that God has called us to do because too many people don't realize that there is a more excellent way in Christ Jesus." ■

A full version of the award presentation is available here: https://bit.ly/4rZ1YR2

*Herald staff*

"WHEN I LEFT, I HAD THIS BURDEN ON MY HEART THAT I NEED TO GO AND DO WHAT SOMEBODY ELSE DID FOR ME."

# Detroit Korean Church Celebrates 50 Years of Faith and Mission

**The Detroit Korean Seventh-day Adventist Church celebrated a significant milestone—50 years of faith, service and mission to the Korean community, as well as the greater Detroit area. Approximately 100 people, including both church members and guests, gathered for the anniversary service on Dec. 6, 2025, to offer thanks for God's guidance and blessings on the Detroit Korean church.**

Founded in 1975 as a small, self-supporting ministry, the church soon organized as a united congregation later that same year.

**A Celebration Marked by Gratitude and Praise**

The anniversary program featured multiple guest speakers who have served the Detroit Korean church over the years. Pastor Bong-ho Kim, the church's second senior pastor, served as the main speaker, while Pastor Wan-joo Yang, the church's third senior pastor, delivered the afternoon message. Both pastors attended in person to give thanks for God's providence and grace that have guided the congregation throughout its history.

A particularly meaningful moment came when Chang-sook Jung, a deaconess and the only remaining founding member of the church, offered a special prayer of thanksgiving during the service, reflecting on God's faithfulness from the earliest days of the congregation to the present.

The program also included a slideshow highlighting key moments from the past 50 years, reminding attendees of God's sustaining grace through every season of the church's journey. In addition, video congratulatory messages were shared from former pastors, as well as from the presidents of the Michigan Conference and the Korean Association of Seventh-day Adventist Churches in North America, offering words of encouragement and affirmation for the congregation's continued mission. ■

*Michigan Communication department*

# Lake Region Conference Elects President to Serve Remainder of Term

**A specially convened committee met on Feb. 22, 2026, to elect Abraham Henry to serve as president of the Lake Region Conference. In harmony with the conference's constitution and bylaws, the group met to fill the existing vacancy within the Lake Region Conference, which is in the Lake Union territory.**

The delegation, composed of the surviving members of the previous quadrennial nominating committee and the current Lake Region Conference executive committee, met in a spirit of prayer and careful deliberation.

Henry had been serving as interim president since January. With this action, he now transitions from interim service to the duly elected office of president for the remainder of the present term, which concludes at the next regularly scheduled constituency session in August.

"I am honored and excited to lead in this new capacity," said Henry. "As someone who has served in the great Lake Region for the past six years, I look forward to mobilizing our members for mission—to be loving, serving, teaching and preaching as we work together and watch God expand the field."

Before joining the Lake Region Conference, Henry served in the Central States Conference as senior pastor of the New Beginnings Church in Wichita, Kansas. Prior to moving to Kansas in 2016, he served within the Lake Union as pastor of Illinois Conference's New Jerusalem Seventh-day Adventist Church and as Lake Region's Pathfinder executive coordinator.

During Henry's undergraduate years, he majored in theology and minored in Biblical Studies at Oakwood University. He subsequently earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in communication from City College of New York and a Master of Divinity from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. He completed the Doctor of Ministry degree, with a concentration in strategic leadership, from Claremont School of Theology, and a Master of Business Administration with a concentration in human resources.

"Dr. Henry has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to the mission of the Church. I am confident that the Lord will continue to guide and strengthen him as he leads during this important season in the life of the Conference," said Elden Ramirez, president of the Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, who chaired the committee in accordance with the constitution and bylaws.

The Lake Union Conference invites members throughout its territory to join in prayer for Henry, his family, and the Lake Region Conference as he assumes this sacred responsibility and continues advancing the mission entrusted to the Church. ■

*Lake Region Conference communication with* ***Herald*** *staff*

# "Operation Andrew" Sparks Baptismal Growth at South Bend First

**For the pastors of South Bend First Seventh-day Adventist Church, a sobering reality could no longer be ignored. In St. Joseph County, home to 282,000 residents, fewer than 1,800 identify as Seventh-day Adventists—less than one percent of the population. This awakening compelled them to re-imagine mission. What followed was a renewed commitment to make Christ known throughout St. Joseph County.**

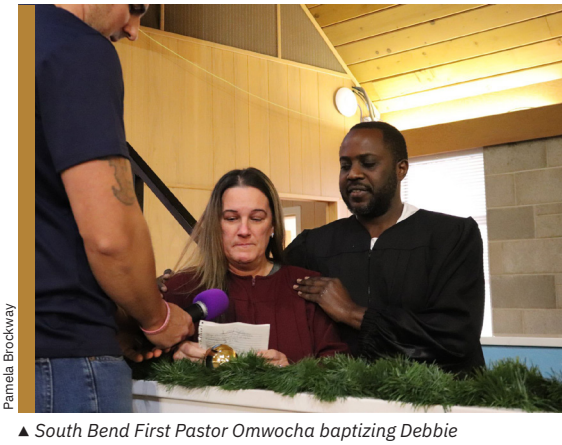
In response, the church forged a growing relationship with the General Conference Institute of World Mission, led by Oscar Osindo. Through visits to South Bend, the Institute's leaders shared their lived experiences and missiological insights on cultivating a culture of mission, rather than merely running evangelistic programs.

Under the guidance of Associate Pastor Omwocha Nyaribo, a participant in the mentorship program of the Andrews University Center of Community Engagement, the church launched a bold new initiative in 2025: Koinonia Circles. The objective was clear and deliberate—to strengthen relational discipleship within the church while intentionally reaching outward into the community.

The shift meant the church moved from being a church with small groups to becoming

Pamela Brockway

▲ *The "Seeking Hikers" small group*



Pamela Brockway

▲ *South Bend First Pastor Omwocha baptizing Debbie Horvath, in Dec. 2025*

## THE LONG-RANGE VISION IS AUDACIOUS YET FAITH-ANCHORED: TO BAPTIZE MORE THAN 2,000 PEOPLE BY THE YEAR 2028.

a church of small groups. For eight months, leaders and members prayerfully and carefully designed the framework and implementation of the Circles. On Sept. 6, 2025, Koinonia Circles were officially launched.

To support and extend the impact of Koinonia Circles, Nyaribo initiated Operation Andrew, under the theme: "We Have Found Jesus—Come and See." On Sept. 20, 2025, the initiative was formally launched by Vic Van Schaik, president of Indiana Conference.

Operation Andrew is a member-driven mission movement structured around the REACH framework: Recognize. Engage. Act. Connect. Help.

At its heart lies a simple conviction: every believer is called to reach their neighbors, families and friends—not as a project, but as people loved by God. Members were invited to extend hospitality and say with authenticity, "We have invited Christ into our lives—come and experience Him with us." Neighbors were invited into Koinonia Circles and worship services, while digital outreach through social media campaigns extended the invitation to online communities as well.

The long-range vision is audacious yet faith-anchored: to baptize more than 2,000 people by the year 2028.

That vision moved from aspiration to testimony on Dec. 20, 2025, designated as a baptismal Sabbath. In the weeks leading up to that day, members reached out intentionally—to coworkers, family members, classmates and friends.

On that Sabbath, 10 individuals were baptized, and 10 more requested baptism early in the new year after missing the date. One story stood out powerfully: Jeremy Hovarth, newly baptized, reached out to his family. That single act of faith resulted in the baptism of his mother, siblings, and nieces and nephews.

Many in the sanctuary wept as testimonies unfolded. Dawn shared how God had delivered her from years of drug addiction and alcoholism. Mandy, who began Bible studies in September 2025 while smoking a pack and a half of cigarettes daily, testified that she no longer smokes. Jeff, a colleague of Jeremy, shared his journey with renal cancer. Diagnosed 18 months earlier and given five years to live, he chose baptism with a clear hope: "When Jesus comes, I will live forever."

Yet this moment did not come easily. For 10 consecutive weeks, church members rose at 5 a.m. daily to pray specifically for Operation Andrew. Elders gathered every Monday at 6 a.m. to intercede together for unity, humility and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Nyaribo is convinced that this is the true secret of the movement. "If the church remains centered in Christ and focused on mission," he said, "then—by God's grace—the goal of 2,000 baptisms will not be a ceiling, but a starting point.'

With the continued partnership of students from the Andrews University Religion department and seminarians, the harvest is expected to exceed the prediction. ■

**Omwocha Nyaribo,** *with Herald staff*

Pamela Brockway

▲ *Baptismal candidates taking their vows*

Pamela Brockway

▲ *Vic Van Schaik, president Indiana Conference and Jeremy Horvath, a South Bend church small group leader*

▲ *The International Center for Trauma Education and Care, based in Andrews University's School of Social Work, in partnership with the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary's Center for Community Change, has developed specialized programs and guides to help churches and communities address instances of traumatized members. A recent series of training programs at the St. Joseph Church helped both young and old to learn how to deal with trauma in spiritually and emotionally constructive ways.*

# Andrews Trauma Education Helps Heal and Train Congregations

**Members of the St. Joseph Seventh-day Adventist Church welcomed the Andrews University International Center for Trauma Education and Care for sessions on trauma awareness and management training, on Sept. 12-13, 2025.**

The training sessions, led by Andrews University Social Work Professor Dustin Young, had approximately 40 attendees, with several coming from Andrews or other local churches. Young described the training she and her colleagues provide as looking at how trauma impacts all areas of life through the lens of trauma being a response to one or multiple specific events.

"One of the things that we're focused on when we work with churches is that trauma also impacts how you connect with others and how you connect with God," said Young. "Churches are very much aligned to be able to support hurting people."

With an already established community network in churches, the goal of the trauma training is to first build awareness of possible trauma. "Don't turn anyone into a therapist unless they're already a therapist, but it's really that awareness of what trauma can look like, sound like, worship like and fellowship like," Young shared. After the building of awareness, respectful conversations can occur amongst members to identify what can provide the most adequate care for those dealing with spiritual, emotional or physical trauma.

Kevin Brown, an elder at the St. Joseph church who also works with the International Center for Trauma Education and Care, added, "I feel like as a church, it's important that we have purpose to [our social interactions], and it becomes more than just a social club." He went on to say that during the trauma training, he heard profound advice on how to help address and heal from trauma. "If you want to be a place for healing, community is perhaps the most broad-based aspect of healing that people who have trauma can benefit from," said Brown.

Young and Brown shared that trauma within church communities can often be triggered by something said or not being said enough. Some people have reported being triggered by messaging in sermons or other speeches in church services, sometimes due to a passage being misused in the past or the message just touching a nerve with a prior experience. Young shared that many have expressed that some of the topics and content discussed in trainings have not been discussed appropriately in religious settings.

"I often hear comments of, 'I haven't talked about this ever' or 'I've never heard this talked about from the pulpit in a way that isn't shame-based, secretive, or sin-focused," said Young. "We often take the approach that 'I believe this is how God has designed us to protect ourselves in a sinful world,' and then it can get in the way of healthy functioning as well."

After the three weekend sessions at the St. Joseph church, 10 participants opted into a six-week online cohort, where they met virtually on Mondays to build upon prior trauma training lessons. Young explained that similar training and cohorts have been held in the past for emergency medical services professionals, academic groups and other communities besides churches around the United States and in a few continents. These groups can apply for grants from the Center for Community Change, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists or other organizations to pay for the costs of programming.

To learn more about the International Center for Trauma Education and Care and to request one of their available trainings or other resources, you can visit their website, www.andrews.edu/cas/socialwork/traumacare/index.html. ■

**Andrew Francis** *is a recent graduate of Andrews University.*

▲ *A community social worker will support Bolingbrook Police Department officers through a de-escalation and trauma-informed approach, reducing call volume for the Bolingbrook Fire Department.*

# AdventHealth Bolingbrook Expands Community Care Through Police Partnership

**On Feb. 17, 2026, the Village of Bolingbrook board of trustees unanimously approved a resolution for a new licensed social worker for law enforcement response. This innovative and forward-thinking partnership with UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Bolingbrook gives a licensed social worker the ability to respond to and follow-up on calls involving mental health concerns, crisis intervention and vulnerable populations.**

The community social worker will support Bolingbrook Police Department officers through a de-escalation and trauma-informed approach, reducing call volume for the Bolingbrook Fire Department.

This role, in the works for years, is expected to enhance the connection between healthcare, public safety and community resources.

Michael Carpanzano, Bolingbrook trustee, acknowledged the role of UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Bolingbrook "for looking well beyond their four walls, and joining this very proactive approach to care for our community!" ■

*AdventHealth Communication with* ***Herald*** *staff*

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# Lake Union Vice President Carmelo Mercado Reflects on 50 Years of Ministry

**As Carmelo Mercado prepares to retire June 1, 2026, after 50 years of service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Herald editor Debbie Michel interviewed him. The following conversation has been edited and condensed.**

**You've served the church for 50 years. Does it feel like 50 years?**

Does not. Does not feel 50 years. Not at all. I'm surprised that the time has gone that fast because so much has happened in 50 years.

In '74, I went as a student missionary to Bolivia because my intent was to work with a clinic. I was a pre-med biology major, and I was going to replace someone there because I was bilingual and pre-med.

**So how did Bolivia change things?**

Before I left, they changed the call because they closed the clinic. So, they asked me if I would be willing to pastor a church in Santa Ana de Yacuma. And when I looked at that, I said, "Well, I guess I'll do that, but that's not what I planned."

But we went there for a year, and it was a fabulous experience. I did Bible studies. I baptized like 15 people. When I saw the baptisms, I said, "I think I want to do this." I just felt God's call. I fell in love with the people and I fell in love with the work.

**So when you came back, you knew ministry was the direction?**

Yes. I came back to Andrews and said, "I want to be a pastor," even though I wasn't a religion major. I had a minor in religion. I talked to Carl Coffman, who was chairman of the religion department, and said, "I want to be a pastor."

Indiana was the conference that said they needed my help because they were having evangelistic meetings in East Chicago, Indiana, at the Spanish church there.

**What do you remember from those early years in ministry?**

East Chicago was a good experience. We baptized some people from that too. Then I went to seminary, graduated in '79, and from there they assigned me to the Gary district, mostly working at Hammond.

Hammond was a good experience because I learned how to work with people. I made a lot of mistakes and knew right away that I had to listen and talk with people.

One story that stands out is how I met Roseanne and her family.

A request came in for Bible studies from *It Is Written*. A fellow from the Spanish church who had been baptized gave the request to me.

I went and visited the home. They were interested, and I offered them Bible studies. That was Roseanne's parents, and her. They were Catholic charismatics. For a while they didn't even know I was Adventist or a pastor. I just said, "I'm willing to give Bible studies."

Then I invited them to church. Roseanne and her parents were part of that. I eventually baptized them in January of '82.

The best thing that happened to me personally, I think, was that I met Roseanne and her parents and gave them Bible studies and baptized them too.

▲ *While pastoring in Indiana, Carmelo gave Bible studies to Rosanne and her parents. The family joined the church and Carmelo married Rosanne.*

**When did your relationship with Roseanne become more personal?**

That same year, my mom died. While I was in New York planning the funeral, I got a letter from Roseanne. We weren't dating, but she wrote and said, "I'm so sorry that you lost your mom."

I was so touched by that letter. I fell in love with her then.

Later on we started dating. Our first date was a Valentine's banquet. Eventually I proposed to her, and in 1986 we got married.

**Not long after that, you went through a terrible accident. Did that experience shape you?**

Yes. Six months after I got married, we got into a terrible car accident.

We were on our way to the Indiana Conference Christmas party when a truck hit me on my side. I was severely injured. I spent a month in intensive care in Indianapolis. They had to operate at least twice because I kept bleeding. At the time the doctor said, "I don't know if he's going to make it."

The churches were troopers. The elders said, "We'll take care." And for me, I think it deepened my sense that this was God's work. I had been spared. I wanted to keep serving.

**Over the years, what burden stayed with you the most?**

Unity was always a factor for me. Working together because God says that we may be one. But we talk the talk and don't walk the walk necessarily unless we do it together.

That's why some of the things that stand out to me are the bilingual youth congresses, Conéctate, and racial reconciliation programs.

With the youth congresses, I wanted them intentionally bilingual, especially for second-generation [youth] and those who are more prone to English than Spanish. My thought was that we needed to do something for the young people who feel left out.

And I wanted the young people to run the program.

**What about later, when your role expanded into multicultural ministry?**

That was huge for me. The idea that multicultural would now be the domain here — we used to be Hispanic coordinator, but we expanded into multicultural.

To see people come together, work together, pray together and enjoy each other — that's the thing I'd like to see.

It's not us and them, but we.

Another thing that stands out is when we got the Hispanic pastors and churches from both Lake Region and Illinois together in Chicago. There had been resentment, problems, and competition. I remember that first meeting with the pastors was very difficult.

But we said, "This is God's work." We kept meeting, kept eating together, kept talking, and by the end of those meetings one of the pastors who had been so against it said, "Pastor, I'm so sorry we're finishing this off. This has been wonderful."

**As you look back, what do you hope people remember?**

I hope we can learn to be creative, to think a little bit outside of the box. I hope we can learn to do what we feel impressed by the Spirit to do.

I don't ask for anybody to say thank you. I stay in the background. I don't like the attention. I just want to do what God wants me to do.

Love the people. Love the work. Love the people, whether they be from this culture, this background, whatever. Just love the people.

Ultimately, we're all going to be in heaven together as one family. So why not prepare ourselves for that heaven to come by making a little bit of heaven here?

▲ *While a student at Andrews University, Carmelo went to Bolivia as a student missionary. This experience would alter his career plans.*

# MILEPOSTS

## OBITUARIES

**COLLINS, Ila** (Nelson), age 88; born March 16, 1937; died Nov. 15, 2025, in Port Charlotte, Fla. She was a member of the Cedar Lake Church in Cedar Lake, Mich. She is survived by her son, Terry Collins; five grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; and two great-great-grandchildren. Memorial services were conducted by Giancarlo de Miranda, and inurnment was in National Cremation Society Port Charlotte Cemetery, Cedar Lake, Mich.

**MCALLISTER, Inez Joan** (Akin), age 93; born Sept. 21, 1932, in Hartford, Mich.; died Jan. 25, 2026, in Fort Wayne, Ind. She was a member of the Fort Wayne First SDA Church in Fort Wayne, Ind. She is survived by her husband, Merwyn "Mac" McAllister; sons, Brett M. McAllister, Bradley K. (Nelda) McAllister; daughter, Peggy L. (McAllister) (Bruce) Skiles; sisters, Lois Hinkle, Lynne Langwell; five grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. Memorial services were conducted by Pastor Ramon Ulangca and internment was in Reams-Norton Cemetery, Cassopolis, Mich.

Within the Lake Union, the officiating pastor or church communication leader is responsible for submission of information to this column. Forms are available in print format, or they can be filled out and submitted directly online. Milepost forms are available at www.lakeunionherald.org. Conference addresses and phone numbers are listed in the masthead on the inside front cover.

# CLASSIFIEDS

## EMPLOYMENT

**Union Adventist University** seeks candidates for a nursing faculty position. This is a full-time exempt position responsible for preparing undergraduate students to successfully complete the Union BSN curriculum and pass the National Council State Boards of Nursing Exam. Excellent benefits package that includes tuition assistance for dependents. Apply at uau.edu/employment.

**Union Adventist University** seeks applicants for religion program director and professor to begin teaching fall 2026. Candidate must be ordained or commissioned to the ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church or on a track. Responsibilities include serving as program director for the religion program, oversight of the SALT program, and teaching classes. Please see the job description and apply at uau.edu/employment.

**Strong Tower Radio** has a job opening for an engineering director. Prior broadcast engineering experience a must. Having a general radio telephone operators license preferred. Work is mainly at the STR headquarters in Cadillac, Michigan, but will involve travel. See StrongTowerRadio.org for complete job description or contact us at 231-468-2087.

## EVENTS

**September 6-10, 2026:** Visit the Lincoln sites in Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois while enjoying daily worships, videos, and lectures on American, Adventist, and Lincoln history. For more information, contact Jesse Landess at (765) 722-0644

**Hone your fundraising skills** at the 2026 Missional Philanthropy Conference at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, July 14-16. Learn from nationally recognized experts in education, healthcare, corporate foundations, and nonprofit work. Registration is open through July 1 at southern.edu/philanthropyconference.

## SERVICES

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## CALENDAR OF OFFERINGS

**MAY**

2 Local Church Budget
9 Disaster & Famine Relief (GC and NAD)
16 Local Church Budget
23 Local Conference Advance
30 Local Church Budget

**JUNE**

6 Local Church Budget
13 Aomen's Ministries (NAD)
20 Local Church Budget
27 Local Conference Advance

# May & June

## ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

GENERAL EVENTS

**May 1–3:** *Spring 2026 Graduation*
**May 22-24:** *Andrews Academy Graduation*
**June 1–Aug. 20:** *The Crayon Box Children's Learning Center: Zoom In!*

## ILLINOIS

**May 2:** *Women's Ministry Retreat, Camp Akita*
**May 15-17:** *Adventurer Family Camp, Camp Akita*
**May 22-24:** *Hinsdale Adventist Academy Graduation*
**June 3-10:** *Mission Akita, Camp Akita*
**June 19:** *One-day Youth Rally, Central Hispanic Church, Chicago*

## INDIANA

**May 1-3:** *Pathfinder Fair, Timber Ridge Camp*
**May 15-17:** *Adventurer Family Weekend, Timber Ridge Camp*
**May 22-24:** *Indiana Academy Graduation*
**May 30:** *Hispanic Fraternity Day, Indiana Academy*
**June 6:** *One-day Haitian Camp Meeting, Cicero Church*

## LAKE REGION

**May 1-2:** *Illiana Youth Federation, Indianapolis Emmanuel Church*
**May 15-17:** *Health & Wellness Retreat, Bair Lake Bible Camp, Jones, Michigan*
**May 16:** *Michiana Youth Federation, South Bend*
**June 28:** *Adventurer Fun Day, Camp Wagner*

## MICHIGAN

**May 1-3:** *Marriage Retreat, Camp Au Sable*
**May 3-7:** *Camp Au Sable Work Week*
**May 15-17:** *Pathfinder Fair, Camp Au Sable North Woods*
**May 19-21:** *ASPIRE Graduation*
**May 22-24:** *Andrews Academy Graduation*
**May 22-24:** *Great Lakes Adventist Academy Graduation*
**May 22-24:** *Battle Creek Academy Graduation*
**May 24:** *Grand Rapids Adventist Academy Graduation*

## WISCONSIN

**May 1-3:** *Pathfinder Fair, Camp Wakonda*
**May 9:** *Adventurer Fun Day, Milwaukee Central*
**May 17-21:** *Wakonda Work Bee*
**May 22-24:** *Wisconsin Academy Graduation*
**May 28-30:** *Hispanic Brotherhood Day, Alverno College Pittman Theatre, Milwaukee*

## LAKE UNION

**May 31:** *Lake Union Constituency Session, Pioneer Memorial Church*

Events listed were scheduled to proceed at press time. Please call ahead or check event websites before making plans to attend.

## Sabbath Sunset Calendar

| | May 1 | May 8 | May 15 | May 22 | May 29 | June 5 | June 12 | June 19 | June 26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Berrien Springs, Mich. | 8:44 | 8:51 | 8:59 | 9:05 | 9:12 | 9:17 | 9:21 | 9:23 | 9:24 |
| Chicago | 7:49 | 7:56 | 8:04 | 8:10 | 8:16 | 8:22 | 8:26 | 8:28 | 8:29 |
| Detroit | 8:31 | 8:39 | 8:46 | 8:53 | 9:00 | 9:05 | 9:09 | 9:12 | 9:13 |
| Indianapolis | 8:38 | 8:45 | 8:52 | 8:58 | 9:04 | 9:09 | 9:13 | 9:15 | 9:16 |
| La Crosse, Wis. | 8:07 | 8:16 | 8:23 | 8:31 | 8:37 | 8:43 | 8:47 | 8:50 | 8:51 |
| Lansing, Mich. | 8:38 | 8:46 | 8:54 | 9:01 | 9:07 | 9:12 | 9:16 | 9:19 | 9:20 |
| Madison, Wis. | 7:58 | 8:06 | 8:14 | 8:21 | 8:27 | 8:33 | 8:37 | 8:40 | 8:41 |
| Springfield, Ill. | 7:52 | 7:59 | 8:06 | 8:12 | 8:18 | 8:23 | 8:27 | 8:29 | 8:30 |

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# Protecting Children at Summer Camp

▲ JENNIFER GRAY WOODS

*I am a camp counselor at our conference's summer camp; do mandatory reporting laws apply to me?*

Yes, summer camp counselors are usually considered mandatory reporters.

Mandatory reporting laws require individuals in particular roles to report suspected abuse or neglect to designated authorities. While mandatory reporting roles vary by state, some common reporters include teachers, pastors, health care workers, social workers, and others who are engaged in watching children.

Mandatory reporting laws are designed to protect children and vulnerable adults from continued abuse and prevent further harm by encouraging disclosure. Complying with mandatory reporting laws shows that our churches and other organizations are accountable for prioritizing the safety of our kids. Because our summer camps are entrusted with the care of our youth, this responsibility is paramount.

It is essential that our summer camps and other youth programs understand and comply with their legal and ethical reporting obligations. Staff members and volunteers should be properly trained to identify potential indicators of abuse or neglect—such as unexplained injuries or bruises, significant behavioral changes, unusual fearfulness, poor hygiene, excessive hunger, inadequate clothing, or untreated medical concerns—and to clearly understand the appropriate reporting procedures.

However, it is not the job of a mandatory reporter to investigate or confirm that there is abuse or neglect occurring. That is the role of the investigating authorities. This means that even if someone isn't completely sure, it is wise to err on the side of protecting the child by reporting. Mandatory reporters are protected by law if they, in good faith, report suspected abuse or neglect that later is not substantiated by the authorities.

Failure to report suspected abuse or neglect is not only a legal violation but also a serious moral concern. Protecting children and other vulnerable individuals is central to our mission and values. When concerns go unreported, it can undermine the church's ministry effectiveness, erode trust within the community, harm its reputation, and expose the organization to significant legal liability.

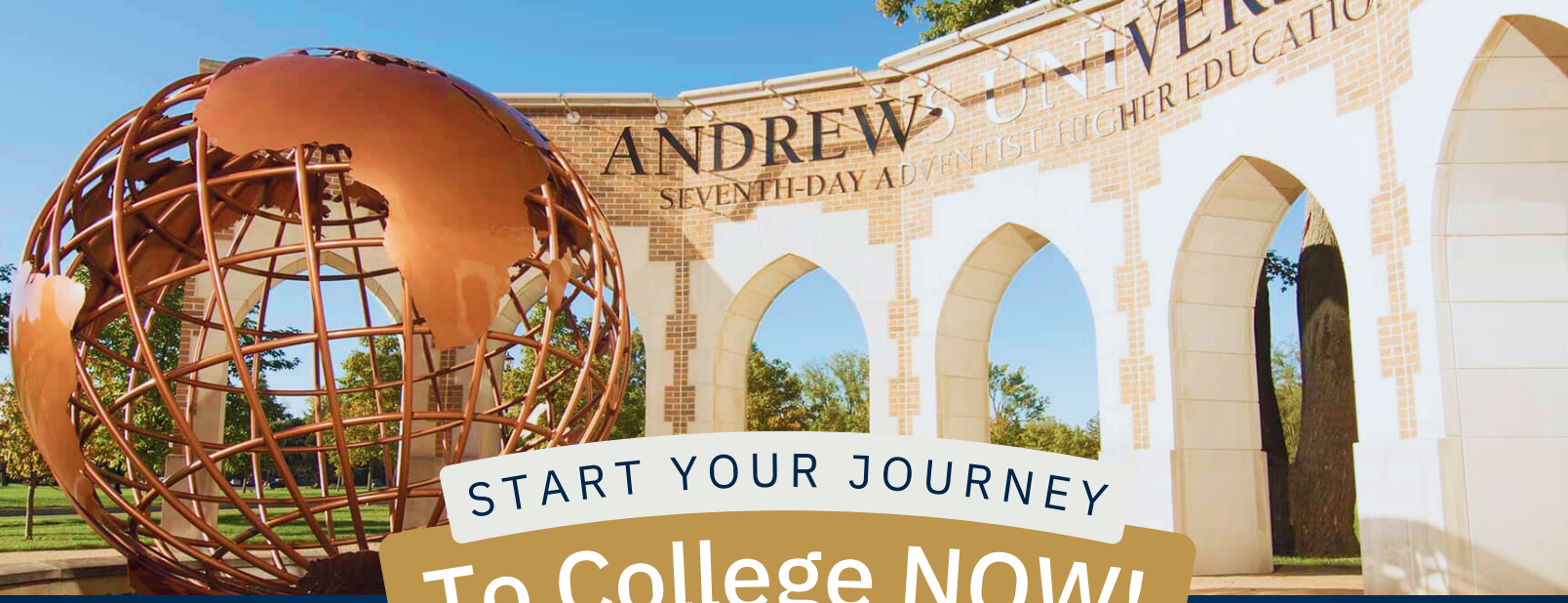
The following are some steps ministries can take to ensure compliance with reporting laws:

- Educate staff and volunteers on reporting laws and their responsibilities.
- Establish clear written reporting policies along with information on how to identify suspected abuse.
- Create systems to support and track the reporting process to help encourage accountability.

Failure to comply with mandatory reporting laws can lead to serious and far-reaching consequences, including leaving children and other vulnerable individuals at continued risk of harm. By understanding both the purpose and responsibility of mandatory reporting, staff and volunteers are better equipped to safeguard those entrusted to their care and uphold the safety and integrity of our church ministries. ■

For more information you can visit: https://adventistrisk.org/en-us/safety-resources/solutions-newsletter/2017/april/how-to-recognize-and-prevent-child-abuse

**Jennifer Gray-Woods** *is the Lake Union legal counsel, as well as its Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director.*

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# A Calling Worth Answering

Youth ministry is my favorite area of service, but my first love will always be Pathfinders. Through this ministry I developed a relationship with God, joined the Adventist Church, and discovered a passion for nature and helping others.

This marks my 14th year in Pathfinders and my 11th year serving in summer camp ministry. Many people don't realize how life-changing these programs are. I've seen kids grow in character, behavior, and even academically just from being in a space where they feel respected and supported.

It's a beautiful thing to be poured into and then pay it forward. Youth of all ages crave acceptance and a safe place to belong. Sadly, many don't have that at home. That's where youth ministry steps in. During COVID, we even hosted a junior camp on Zoom so the kids could still experience connection and community.

Some older generations struggle to understand the challenges youth face today. Yes, the struggles are different, but they're still real. When we ignore or dismiss them, we do harm. Young people deserve to be heard and treated with respect. Accountability matters, but relationships must come first.

How we speak also makes a difference. Proverbs 15:1–2 says, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise adorns knowledge but the mouth of the fool gushes folly."

Youth ministry also means teaching practical skills, such as survival, nature awareness, food preparation and community service. But let's be honest: Being a young adult in youth ministry isn't easy. Conversations with other young leaders, AY leaders, Pathfinder directors and youth pastors, often reveal the same struggles: poor communication with older members and being dismissed or gossiped about for being "too young to understand."

It's discouraging when your ideas are shut down or your character questioned while you're trying to make a difference. In those moments, we remind ourselves, "We are not here for them. We are here to serve the youth in the capacity God has called us to."

One phrase I live by is: "Do not let your feelings determine your salvation." Your feelings are valid, but don't let emotions guide your decisions. And remember, even Jesus was criticized and misunderstood. If He endured that, why should we expect better?

Youth ministry may not come with a paycheck, but it's fulfilling in ways money can't measure. It's a calling. So, if you're feeling that call, will you answer? Or are you going to let one person, or even group of people in the church who are not showing the fruit of the spirit be the reason for not taking part in the harvest? ■

**Kailyn Williams** *is a student at the Seventh-day Theological Seminary at Andrews University and serves as the Camp Wagner executive coordinator assistant.*

# Sharing Hope at Blind Camp

"Lorvens, what would you think about working at Timber Ridge Camp this summer?" This seed planted in Lorvens Pubien's mind by his academy dean didn't lie dormant for long. "I didn't have any plans for summer work," Lorvens recalls.

"I hadn't worked at a camp before, but I had been a camper. I had been to Timber Ridge for a school event, too, so it wasn't totally new territory. As a junior and serving as Indiana Academy's Student Association pastor, I had experience planning activities, especially worship and praise services, so I decided to follow up on my dean's suggestion."

Now, looking back on nine weeks spent working at Timber Ridge Camp in south-central Indiana, Lorvens is amazed at how much activity and learning he packed into last summer. "I acted in plays, led out in worship and praise, was paintball director, organized and supervised sports activities, taught a ukelele class, and more," Lorvens recalls. "Probably what stretched and taught me the most, though, was Blind Camp."

About 50-60 blind campers were the first group to arrive. Instead of welcoming youngsters, Lorvens found himself interacting with campers considerably older than himself. "The blind campers range in age from early 20s to late 60s. I have some experience working with the visually impaired," Lorvens explains, recalling time spent with his grandfather. "But working with so many blind campers and helping to keep them safe and engaged while enjoying themselves really demanded a lot of attention and creativity."

Lorvens had to help his campers navigate steep hills and uneven terrain at Camp Timber Ridge. Golf carts provided some assistance but we could have used more. Lorvens used clock face numbers as points of reference. "This helps the blind campers with eating, locating things on the table, objects outdoors, or even with directions for walking," Lorvens explains. "I would say, 'at 11 o'clock' or 'at 5 o'clock' and that generally worked well."

One of the challenges Lorvens hadn't anticipated was getting the blind campers to quiet down and focus on scheduled activities. "Many of these campers come back year after year," Lorvens explains. "They come from all over the United States and understandably are very excited to reunite with their friends. Often, they just want to talk and catch up!"

Some of the campers have special needs, and Lorvens learned to address those, too. "Some have learning difficulties, ADHD, and similar challenges," Lorvens notes. "My mother is an educator, and since about age eight, I assisted in her classrooms. I tutor now at Indiana Academy, so both of those roles helped me in assisting my campers. I also learned how useful calming devices can be."

Two Old Testament verses particularly speak to Lorvens. "These verses continue to help me this year as a senior and president of the Student Association at Indiana Academy," Lorvens explains. "Joshua 1:9 says, 'Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.' And Jeremiah 29:11 offers great assurance."

Lorvens holds this hope for all his campers: "May they remember that these promises are theirs to claim as well." ▪

**Beverly Matiko** *is a retired English and Communication professor. She enjoys continuing to interact with students and others through her writing.*

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