



## A New Idea Sparks Change

It was 1872 when Goodloe Harper Bell came to Battle Creek Sanitarium to recover from an illness. During his stay at the sanitarium, he began tutoring some of the local children. It went well—and from there, he opened a one-room school. Adventist Education had come to Michigan. That one-room school in Battle Creek was the first Seventh-day Adventist school.

From these humble beginnings which, like the rest of Adventism, have deep roots in Michigan, Adventist Education has grown to become the largest protestant educational system in the world.

Michigan—where Adventist history is as abundant as pine trees, where early reformations took place, where education was originally one room schoolhouses and scattered tutors—has come a long way from those early days. We can only praise the Lord for His blessings, for without Him, all that we have would be nothing.

Michigan's Adventist Education system has grown to an organization with 35 diverse schools. Some have just one room and one teacher, others are multi-teacher organizations. Our conference is also home to one boarding academy and three senior day academies.

Although there has been a decline in numbers over the past decades, K-12 enrollment in Michigan stands at 1,500 children, with about 100 teachers conference wide.

Michigan Conference Superintendent of Education Jeremy Hall reports that for the past couple of years, enrollment has dropped across the state. When the COVID-19 pandemic rocked the world and forced everything—including school—to go online, Hall and his team knew that something had to be done. "You don't waste a crisis," Hall says.

The COVID-19 crisis was a blessing in disguise because it propelled the Education team to think outside of the box. "Our enrollment numbers were calling us to do something different," Hall says. It was out of this crisis that ASPIRE (Adventist School Preparing Instilling and Redeeming for Eternity) was born.

ASPIRE is an online synchronous school room, for grades 1-10. The program process began late, in Spring 2020, but the same God who saved a thief dying on a cross is not restricted by 11<sup>th</sup> hour planning. Two full-time teachers were hired and they kicked off the school year with eighteen students between grades 1-8.

According to Hall, this school year

*"The COVID-19 crisis was a blessing in disguise because it propelled the Education team to think outside of the box. Our enrollment numbers were calling us to do something different, Hall says. It was out of this crisis that ASPIRE... was born."*

growth is up by 118%, with ASPIRE's enrollment at 56 students, two more full-time teachers and an expansion to ten grades.

ASPIRE's successful first school year was not a sign for Hall and his team to sit back and say they had done enough. They plowed forward in faith, instead. With approval from the Michigan Conference president and the Lake Union, they expanded the grades. ASPIRE now teaches grades one through ten. Of the 56 students, 18 are enrolled in high school.

But the Education Department isn't planning to stop here. As they continue to work with the Lake Union and the North American Division, they will be adding the 11th grade for next year, with plans that within two years, they can become a senior academy, serving grades one through twelve. Hall says there is a demand for ASPIRE to become a senior academy,

*(continued on page 7)*

By Jim Micheff,  
President



*“The only motivation for life that is lasting is love for God. Love doesn’t exist apart from God. Love gives purpose and meaning to life. Without purpose, life is an endless pursuit of boring and meaningless activity.”*

## UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Recently I had an up-close experience with Covid. My symptoms were mild, but I did have a low-grade fever for 14 days. During that time, due to cloudy thinking caused by the fever, all interest in anything was gone. I had no desire to eat, read, watch, or even communicate. I was existing, but without purpose. What gives life meaning? When God created us, He had a definite plan and purpose for humanity.

In his younger years, Solomon, known for his wisdom, believed that the purpose of life was to enjoy all its benefits. He put all his energy into obtaining everything he wanted. What he discovered, however, is that people change as they age. Wrinkles, hair loss, muscle tone, flexibility – these all alter appearance. Talents and skills diminish over time, too. The saying, “The older I get, the better I used to be,” becomes a reality. All of these can affect the way we experience happiness.

In his closing years, Solomon confessed that self-focus not only failed to provide happiness; it drained him of meaning for living. He realized those things did not bring fulfillment unless used to bless others. His pursuit in pleasing self inhibited him from fulfilling the purpose of life God ordained – loving service for others.

The only motivation for life that is lasting is love for God. Love doesn’t exist apart from God. Love gives purpose and meaning to life. Without purpose, life is an endless pursuit of boring and meaningless activity.

God has been revealing His love to us systematically from the very

beginning. Satan has been misapplying and confusing every good thing God does so that the truth about God and His love is either hidden or maligned. But God’s love cannot be suppressed forever and at some point, it will shine through.

God is self-sustaining. He isn’t dependent on anyone or thing. He isn’t trying to acquire or get something from His creation. He supplies their needs, not the other way around. He doesn’t take advantage of His creatures. His sole desire is to share His love with them. The very nature of love does not focus on self but others.

“My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). Knowledge of what?

God reveals His unconditional love to us in many ways. He uniquely describes His love by identifying with human passion and a real personal experience in the book of Hosea. The greatest, most powerful of all human relationships exists within marriage. This is the most intimate relationship two humans can have. It provides the opportunity for the strongest of all emotions. It also provides the opportunity for the deepest sorrow – rejection of love. God uses a real-life marriage relationship to help humans understand their relationship with Him.

As the story begins, the Israelites consistently ignored and rejected God’s love. They didn’t recognize God as the source of their blessings and misinterpreted the things He did for them. They mistakenly thought they were responsible for all the good things of life.

The Lord gave Prophet Hosea some unusual instructions. “Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the LORD” (Hosea 1:2, NKJV).

Hosea’s wife, Gomer, may not have been promiscuous at the time of their marriage but she had a weakness in that area. She had wandering eyes, looking for attention and recognition that would add perceived value to her life.

The Bible identifies Hosea as the father of their first child but doesn’t specifically say the next two children are his. This leaves the possibility that she was unfaithful, and the children were fathered by someone else, as is suggested in Hosea 1:2, 9.

The scripture says she bore him a son. In the Bible, names convey character traits or important deeper meanings. God wanted to relay a special message so He had Hosea call his son Jezreel, saying, “I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu.” Jehu had carried out God’s command to exterminate Ahab’s family but not because of love or zeal for God. He was motivated by a selfish desire to establish his own kingdom. God sent the message that He will judge the motive behind the action. God warned them – as well as us – that because their hearts were far from Him, just going through the motions of religious ceremony was worthless.

Again, the Scripture says she conceived and bore a daughter. God had Hosea name her Lo-Ruhamah (No-Mercy). “I will no longer have mercy on Israel.” The message was a warning that the

door of opportunity to accept God's offer to return would soon close.

After Lo-Ruhamah was weaned, Gomer conceived and born a son. God named him Lo-Ammi. "You are not my people, and I will not be your God." Through this name, God acknowledged they had rejected Him. That isn't a common name to be sure, but I've met a young man named Lo-Ammi. I asked him how his parents gave him that name. He was eager to share that even though the name means Not-My-People there was a promise attached to it. God promised to accept as His children all who turn to Him.

Gomer was discontented and more interested in meeting her own emotional and material desires than being a wife and mother. When she married Hosea, she pledged herself to him but because she loved herself more than her husband, she was willing to exchange everything she had, including her body and affection to get what she wanted. This eventually caused her to leave Hosea altogether.

"Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone" (Hosea 4:17). What could Hosea do? What could God do? Love doesn't force!

Gomer had taken her husband's unconditional love for granted and took advantage of the opportunities to pursue her own dreams. In time, she was also taken advantage of by others, rejected by her lovers, and finally reduced to poverty and slavery. Her self-respect and dignity were gone. Covered in shame and disgrace, she was considered worthless. This is a description of our carnal nature. We are slaves to sin, chained to it by a power we cannot break.

"How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? ...My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred" (Hosea 11:8).

God instructed Hosea to buy Gomer back and love her as he did before. This was impossible for Hosea to do on his own, but with God all things are possible. God loved Gomer through Hosea. Following God's direction, Hosea bought her back but did not try to force Gomer to love him. He gave her time to decide if she would choose to willingly give him her love and affection, but he promised to love, provide, and protect and care for her as he had before. They would not be able to experience intimacy as husband and wife unless she fully committed her love and loyalty to Hosea.

To know God is to love Him. Satan does not want us to experience the love of God. He creates two ditches on both sides of love...one so wide that anything goes and is accepted—all spirit and no law. The other is so narrow it suffocates the love of God with legalism and self-righteousness—all law and no spirit. God's love is balanced between the spirit of the law and the letter of the law. Love becomes the motivation behind the action. God's unconditional love is the only motivating power that enables us to willingly submit our affection and loyalty to the Master.

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



**APRIL 5**  
Grand Rapids Zomi Co  
Pastor SB Cin

Grand Haven/Wright  
Pastor Ted Toms

Grand Haven ACS Center

Hastings  
Pastor Jeff Dowell

Hastings SDA Elementary

**APRIL 12**  
GR Central/Lowell  
Pastor Darrel LeRoux

Fremont/Muskegon  
Pastor Larry Kirkpatrick

Muskegon ACS

Karli's Closet

Grand Rapids Adventist  
Academy

**APRIL 19**  
Rockford/Sparta  
Pastor Garhett Morgan

Bauer/Wyoming  
Pastor Dan Rachor

Bauer ACS

Holland Laotian  
Pastor Bounprany Vannady

**APRIL 26**  
Grand Rapids Elwell  
Pastor Bernard Rumenera

Grand Rapids Golden Gate  
Pastor Yusuf Imam

Holland  
Pastor Michael Lambert

Holland Adventist Academy

Kentwood  
Pastor Carlos Sotomayor

"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore, with lovingkindness I have drawn you" (Jer. 31:3).

God picks us up from the scrap heap of life to restore value in us with His love. The only thing God desires in return is our affection, love, and loyalty. The Bible doesn't say, but the implication is that in the end Gomer chose to respond to Hosea's love. Just as Hosea gave Gomer time to choose, God gives us time.

After Paul experienced the unconditional love of God, he wrote these encouraging words directed to all who responded to God's invitation for reconciliation:

"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know (experience) the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (love). Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power (love) that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever, Amen." (Eph. 3:14-22, emphasis supplied).



Garhett Morgan preaching from the boxing ring.



Attendees signed their name on the boxing ring to solidify their commitments.

# Man Camp “Fighting Like Jesus”

By **Brayden Kunkel**,  
Student, Cadillac Church

Brayden attends Northview Adventist School. He is 11 years old.

**M**an Camp is an annual event held at Camp Au Sable in Grayling, Michigan. This is my second time going. I can describe it in three words: fun, Fun, FUN! Everyone got matching shirts with the theme that said: How Real Men Fight. 1 Cor. 9:23-27. This was my brother Brody’s first time going to Man Camp. He said, “I loved the Nature Center the most, and loved to play the games at night.”

When we walked into the “sanctuary” at Camp Au Sable there was a really cool boxing ring set up. We all signed the corner posts and prayed, asking God to help us fight as Jesus did.

Pastor Harris told me, “One young man was so excited because his dad had REALLY accepted Jesus this weekend.” My uncle, Austin, was Brody’s and my chaperone. This was

his first Man Camp too. He said, “Man Camp was amazing! Camp Au Sable did an outstanding job planning activities for the men as well as fighting for every man to be closer to Jesus.”

Pastor Chad Bernard said, “Approximately 250 men from all over the USA came for this weekend, as far south as Florida and as far west as California. Because the theme was ‘How real men fight,’ we were challenged to fight for each other through prayer, reading our Bibles and spending time together.”

Those who went from my school were Brody, Ezra, Christopher, Andreas and myself. We had lots of fun together! We went sledding, played foosball and ate yummy foods in the cafeteria. I also really enjoyed the outdoor Sabbath activity called,

“Upgrade.” My friend Ezra said, “I had a lot of fun with my friends, and I was so happy I won a sled.”

Pastor Garhett Morgan, the pastor of Bristol, Reed City, and Big Rapids Seventh-day Adventist Churches, was our speaker for the weekend. He told funny stories of when he was a little boy that helped us focus on Jesus. He said, “Man camp is a place where we encourage men of all ages to reject distraction and focus on the real fight ‘The Great Controversy’. The war for this world has already been won. Christ has conquered, but we each need to make a decision who will be the Lord of our lives.”

I learned so much about prayer and made a commitment to fight like Jesus. I am planning to go next year and hope to see all my friends there.



Spencer (left) gave his heart to Jesus at Man Camp.



Prayer is an essential part of Man Camp.



“When our churches are united in winning souls for Jesus, many of the problems we thought we had, solve themselves, as we spend our time and resources wisely.”

## Growing Michigan: Pastors Reflect on Recent Ministerial Event

A few times a year, ministers and Bible workers from all across the Michigan conference come together to reflect on their work, receive training, and practical advice from fellow pastors and workers.

In January, Pastors Kameron DeVasher and Mark Howard shared with the pastors and Bible workers how to implement the GROW cycle into their local churches. Below you will read the reflections of two Pastors, Pastor Jorge Diaz and Gahrett Morgan, on the first ministerial retreat of 2022.

### By Pastor Jorge Diaz III

In the last couple of years, we have been living in interesting times and have seen rapid changes within our society. As a result of these evident challenges, I have been approached often by people asking, “Has our church’s evangelistic labor become something of the past?” And I boldly say, “No!” Jesus called every believer to embrace the Great Commission as described in the Gospels and acknowledged that we are not to rely on ourselves, apart from God, to fulfill the task amidst its expected opposition. In that commission, Christ promises to be with us “always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)

As His chosen representatives, we have the solemn privilege and responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel to the world. If the church’s mission is

understood correctly, the individual contribution of every believer is evident. We are told that, “The church of Christ is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. Its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. And the obligation rests upon all Christians. Everyone, to the extent of his talent and opportunity, is to fulfill the Saviour’s commission. The love of Christ, revealed to us, makes us debtors to all who know Him not. God has given us light, not for ourselves alone, but to shed upon them.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 81)

While GROW Michigan is not new for some, its biblical emphasis is significantly essential in these last days. For the GROW “cycle of evangelism” to have greater success in soul-winning, it is vital that every pastor and church member work together on prayerful planning and evaluating all phases of this five-step cycle. The basis of this evangelistic process is taken from Jesus’ teachings within an agricultural context. In the agricultural cycle, the crop cannot harvest itself, nor can a successful harvest be achieved by giving special attention to only one phase of the cycle while ignoring the others.

I recently participated in the winter ministerial meetings held at Camp Au Sable where pastors Mark Howard and Kameron DeVasher were the main

presenters. Personally, I’m grateful for the work the Lord has been doing through our conference’s evangelism team. Both presenters shared many practical suggestions based on Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy that assured my heart that indeed there isn’t anything impossible for God! His desire is for all of our churches to thrive as we proclaim Present Truth.

It is my prayer that we keep our gaze squarely on the Master Evangelist! He will teach and empower us to effectively further the Gospel in ways beyond our expectation. But, in order to teach us, we must spend time in prayer and study of His Word. We must remain engaged in local evangelistic efforts and participate in the different training opportunities prepared by our Michigan Conference ministries.

I look forward to seeing how the Lord strengthens our evangelistic efforts in our local district, as my current church district leaders and I draw together a discipleship plan that incorporates each phase of the GROW cycle of evangelism. And I pray the same for you, as you “go forth!” in the Name of Jesus!

■ **Pastor Jorge Diaz III attended the meetings via Zoom. He is the pastor of the Benton Harbor Spanish, Eau Claire Spanish, and South Haven churches.**

## By Pastor Garhett Morgan

Our conference ministerial meetings do more than just build camaraderie among pastors, they equip us to work together. This winter's training session revisited the precious truths of our Adventist message, and reminded us all of the power and relevancy that they still hold. The effectiveness of the Word of God in our churches depends on one thing—actually sharing it with others. The challenge did not fall on deaf ears, as pastors and Bible workers discussed the challenges our church is

facing in these unprecedented times.

I sincerely appreciated the practical tips shared by Pastor Mark Howard and Pastor Kameron DeVasher. Too often we can become discouraged that our local churches simply aren't ready to win souls to Jesus, and we focus on trying to fix these inward problems in our own strength. We were reminded that one of the greatest solutions to our churches' issues is focusing on seeking and saving the lost. When our churches are united in winning

souls for Jesus, many of the problems we thought we had, solve themselves, as we spend our time and resources wisely. The cycle of evangelism still works, if we work it, and the tools that are given through the GROW Michigan initiative will prove valuable to any church that implements them.

■ **Pastor Garhett Morgan attended the meetings in person. He is the pastor of the Rockford and Sparta churches.**



“If your church disappeared today, would anyone other than the members even notice?”

## Would the Community Notice Your Absence?

If your church disappeared today, would anyone other than the members even notice?” I read this in December from the Adventist Community Services offering appeal, and I can truly say, “YES.” Why? This past August, we started a food pantry, and we were open the first Tuesday of every month to distribute non-perishable food items to those in need. On opening day in September, 26 families received food. In October, we distributed food to 39 families, and in December, 53 families received food.

Unfortunately, in the month of November, there was a major COVID outbreak, and we had to shutter the church for three weeks. My husband died on November 9 from Covid during that period, but even that

did not deter me from reaching out to the community. What better way to get through grief than to do the Lord's work by reaching out to others? Serving others has blessed me, and I continue to be blessed.

We also started a sewing ministry when our school shut down in 2019. Several nursing homes received lap quilts from the dedicated women of our church at that time. In December of this past year, we filled nearly 190 Christmas stockings for nursing homes in the area. One of the ladies donated several beautifully knitted hats and scarves for children or grandchildren. What a blessing it is to be involved in outreach!

**By Vickie Trombley,**  
Member, Pittsford Church



One of the quilts knitted by the Pittsford church members.



Volunteers hand out food to those in need.

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## (A New Idea Sparks Change)

as the tenth graders of this year are now able to continue with ASPIRE next year and ultimately through grade 12. There are other families not currently enrolled in ASPIRE who have also expressed interest.

ASPIRE has aided in preventing other Adventist schools from shutting down. In the fall of 2020, the Pine Mountain Adventist school was struggling. They had lost a teacher due to a medical issue, and without the teacher, the school would have been forced to close had it not been for ASPIRE. All the students would have most likely gone to a nearby public school.

ASPIRE was there to help. Ben Zork, ASPIRE principal, and the Education team worked together to hire two facilitators. Six students enrolled and the facilitators and Zork ran an ASPIRE satellite.

The children came to the school building every day, logged onto their Chromebooks, and did school as normal, except their teacher was online. The facilitators assisted with technical issues and kept the children on task. The best part? “All six students,” says Hall, “were from a non-Adventist home.”

Stop and think about that. Without ASPIRE, those students would have gone to a public school. But with ASPIRE, the six non-Adventist students were given a chance to see Jesus through Adventist Education.

That’s what Adventist Education is all about: leading students to the foot of the cross. “The work of evangelism has to happen in the classroom,” says Hall. Without this, Adventist Education is not successful.

ASPIRE has already seen the fruit of her labor. One student who lived over an hour and a half from the nearest Adventist school was able to receive Adventist education through ASPIRE, and was baptized as a result.

And as for Pine Mountain, ASPIRE “bridged the gap,” says Hall, “it kept the school running.” Pine Mountain is running as usual this year, with fifteen students—over a 100% increase in enrollment, thanks to ASPIRE!

That, truly, is the blessing of ASPIRE. You can be anywhere and still have access to Adventist Education. “ASPIRE is pulling students out of the public schools,” Hall says. This new program could help reverse students from leaving Adventist education and going to the public schools.

Alex Winkler, an ASPIRE student, says he enjoys the “ASPIRE experience [because] is it a community of people. We get to communicate and talk to each other,” he says. “If we don’t understand something, we are able to ask the teacher or our classmates for help.” When thinking about ASPIRE, it is important to understand that this a live classroom, just like any other classroom, except it’s online.

Alex’s parents, David and Serena, share their son’s appreciation for ASPIRE. “The ASPIRE program [provides] an Adventist online classroom experience that still receives some of the benefits of in-person Michigan Conference youth and education programs. We love that...our son is receiving Bible-based instruction and is still able to build friendships and interact with like-minded Christian young people.” It is indeed a different set up, but ASPIRE is providing the essentials--the essentials that every other Adventist school supplies.

These essentials are, simply, bringing students to the foot of the cross, training young people in the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and equipping young people to take the message to a dying world.

ASPIRE is in its second year of operation and has grown from 18 students to 56. It has expanded its grade range by two years and would like to continue expanding in the years to come. None of this would be possible without the Lord’s guidance.

Sometimes doing the same thing for years works. Sometimes things need to be revised or modified. ASPIRE’s story is an inspiration for us. Perhaps we have things in our lives that we have held on to for too long. Let’s examine ourselves and see if there is anything the Lord may want us to change.

**By Judy Klein,**  
Admin Assistant, Communication

## TRANSITIONS



**Judy Klein** is the secretary for the Communication and Adventist Community Services departments.



**Seth Roberts** is the assistant director for the Literature Ministries Department. He has led Youth Rush programs in Michigan since 2019.



**Stephanie Howard** is the administrative assistant for the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries departments and also assists with camp meeting. She formerly served at Great Lakes Adventist Academy as the Food Services supervisor.



**Nathan Polk** is the pastor of the Grand Ledge and Holt churches. Prior to Michigan, he attended Weimar University where he completed his degree in theology.



**Victor Vaughn** is the new pastor of the Belleville and Tecumseh churches. He previously pastored the Lapeer, Orion-Oxford, and Otter Lake churches.



**Garhett Morgan** is the new pastor of the Rockford and Sparta churches. Prior to his new assignment, he pastored the Big Rapids, Bristol, and Reed City churches.

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# MONTHLY CALENDAR

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

## APRIL

- 1-3 Hispanic Marriage Retreat
- 8-10 Women's Ministry Retreat
- 15-17 Women's Ministry Retreat
- 15-16 PBE Division Level
- 25-May 1 GLAA Home Leave
- 29-May 1 Marriage Commitment Retreat

## MAY

- 1 VBS Workshop  
Conference Office
- 1-5 Camp Au Sable Work Week
- 13-15 Pathfinder Fair
- 22 Adventurer Fun Day
- 27-29 GLAA Graduation Weekend
- 27-29 Hispanic Camp Mtg  
Camp Au Sable
- 29-June 3 Youth Rush Leadership Training
- 30 Office Closed – Memorial Day

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## NATURE NUGGET

### Boreal Chickadees

By Dr. Gordon Atkins,  
Camp Au Sable Naturalist



PC: Dr. Gordon Atkins

I recently led a birding trip to the Sax-Zim Bog in central Minnesota. One of the goals for that trip was to get a good look at Boreal Chickadees. This winter has been a good year for them at the bog, and sure enough, we saw them!

Boreal Chickadees are browner than the highly-contrasting Black-capped Chickadees we usually see at our feeders in Michigan. There are a few “Boreals” in the western U.P. of Michigan, but it is often hard to observe or get good photos of them. Boreal Chickadees get their name from the habitat where they live—the Boreal forest, a conifer belt stretching over half of Canada from coast to coast.

A few Boreal Chickadees venture south to Minnesota and the U.P, but are nearly always found in conifer

forests. One of the interesting features of this bird, which lives in a place with short summers, is how fast their growth and development is. Five to seven eggs are laid, which hatch in as few as 13 days and are ready to fly from the nest in as few as 16 days. That’s 29 days from start to finish!

Whether we grow up quickly or slowly, whether we live only a few years like a chickadee or much longer, it is very important for us to consider how we use the time we have: time to stay healthy, time for family, time for church, time for our community and country, and most importantly, time for God. I pray that our time with God is not a hurried affair, like the development of a Boreal Chickadee, but a valuable part of our daily life!