



Bolivian canvassers sing and worship together before going into the field.

Sharing Hope in Bolivia

Esta bien?

I know maybe 10 Spanish words and none of them were helping me much. I was in the middle of South America, accompanying a student literature evangelist (LE) who didn't speak English, and being transported from street to street by a driver who I could only communicate directions to using hand signals.

How'd I end up here?

A few days prior, I had arrived in Cochabamba, Bolivia, with David Pano, Michigan Conference's Literature Ministries director, and Emily Duffield, business manager for SOULS West, an evangelism training

school in Arizona. We were there to train a team of Bolivian student LE's to canvass in a different way than they'd been taught before. Partnering with the Central Bolivian Mission's Publishing department, we wanted to explore ways to improve their canvassing training methods.

The idea for the trip originated in a series of conversations between Pano and the officers of the Central Bolivia Mission in early 2021 about how they could improve their evangelistic training. Pano, a native of Bolivia, left South America for the United States over a decade ago, but has

"We began to hear the powerful testimonies of how God was using each student to reach souls for his kingdom."

still kept in touch with his college classmates, a number of whom now fill administrative roles within the Bolivian Union.

"Since coming to the United States," Pano shared, "I've learned a lot from our church's organizations about how to conduct our evangelistic work more effectively. I want to make these resources available to conferences overseas, so they can benefit from

By Jeremy Hall,
Education Superintendant



“During a time when so many are questioning what is being taught in the public schools, Adventist Education is an amazing and powerful outreach ministry that can reach families for Christ and keep our churches young and vibrant.”

A DUSTY SAXOPHONE AND ADVENTIST EDUCATION

Have you ever had a Christmas gift that was a complete and unexpected surprise? I’m sure that has happened to all of us a time or two. However, with Christmas wish lists, we often have some idea about what we will receive.

My wife, Donna, tends to be a real expert at knowing what gifts to give people. This last Christmas, she gave me a gift I already owned but had forgotten about. When I rediscovered it, it brought a depth of experience and opportunity that I had not realized was possible.

When I was in 8th grade at Adelphian Junior Academy (AJA), Carolyn Adams started a school band. I don’t remember how it happened, but I wanted, or was assigned, the saxophone. The school had an alto sax that I was trying to figure out. One young lady had an old, beat-up tenor saxophone that was too big for her to play comfortably. Mrs. Adams asked if I would be interested in switching to the tenor sax and have the other student play alto because the size was smaller. I agreed to the change, and my Dad purchased the old tenor for \$95. The rest is history—sort of.

I only played the tenor saxophone during my time at AJA. When I went to Great Lakes Adventist Academy (GLAA) my junior year, I played the baritone saxophone. After that, I never picked it up again, and hadn’t planned on playing it again, frankly. It wasn’t that I didn’t enjoy playing. I just lost interest, and other things took priority.

I pursued vocal music and a little bit of guitar, but my old tenor saxophone sat dormant and unused—decaying, smelling badly, and collecting dust. Until Christmas 2021, when my wife sat me down on the couch and gave me back my old tenor sax, completely refurbished, in a brand-new case!

It’s hard to describe my racing thoughts when I opened that brand new case and saw my old, neglected sax. Honestly, I wasn’t very excited. Life is busy, and I wasn’t sure I would even enjoy playing it again, since it had been nearly 30 years.

Our friend, Sarah Jacokes, plays beautifully at church, and I enjoy listening to her music. Before I received my Christmas gift, I mentioned to her that I still had my old tenor saxophone. She and Pastor Jeff Dowell, who also plays, asked to take a look at it. Notwithstanding their encouragement, I just didn’t have the desire to bring it out. It wasn’t a priority for me anymore and I wasn’t sure I wanted it to be one again. It almost felt like I had never played at all. And besides, it really wasn’t in “playing” shape.

Now here it was in front of me and functionally brand new again. For those of you who know instruments, getting one completely refurbished is a very expensive venture. All these thoughts played in my head as I examined my old, neglected friend.

As a teenager I didn’t care much about the history of my saxophone. Now I have been fascinated to discover that my vintage sax was probably made in the late 1930’s, has a unique tone because of the era, and is actually a quality instrument made from that time. My mouthpiece is also very rare, having only been made from 1939-1944. All these years, I didn’t realize what I had.

A few months have passed since I received this special gift, and what can I say? During the 25 years, we have been married, this is the greatest Christmas gift my wife has ever given me. I enjoy playing my saxophone again when time allows, and I have come to realize what a special gift it really is. Music is such a beautiful thing and, in the stresses of life, playing my sax has been a therapeutic experience. What used to be a beat-up old saxophone is now rejuvenated and alive.

Why am I sharing all of this? Because I have not been able to ignore the



powerful spiritual lesson that has come to me through this journey of rediscovery, and yes, even regret.

I have been rebuked by the realization that, just like my old tenor saxophone, I have, to a degree, taken for granted the beautiful truths we hold as Seventh-day Adventists. I think many others could say the same. Of course, I haven't completely abandoned our spiritual pillars. It is not like I ever got rid of my old, musty saxophone. I kept it in my basement through all the moves we have made over the years. My mom (Thanks, Mom!) never got rid of it when I was away at college. Though it was still part of me, somehow it had lost its appeal. It was important enough, though, that I did not get rid of it.

That sounds a lot like the Laodicean condition to me: lukewarm. Isn't that the prophetic position we are in right now as God's remnant people? In the church by name, keeping our membership, having the doctrines encased somewhere safe, never getting rid of them, when they are actually lying dead and unused. The words of Jesus in Revelation 3 are clear; He would rather that we were cold than lukewarm. It is so true. When we're thirsty there is nothing worse than a lukewarm drink. When it is hot we need something cool and when it is cold we need something hot!

I am struck even as I write these words that it would have been better to have given my sax to someone else who would have used it, than to selfishly let it sit unused and broken in my basement for nearly 30 years! Thank God for second, third, fourth...even seventy times seven chances!

What are we doing with the beautiful gifts God has us for these last days? We are the Laodicean church, His Remnant, and we are struggling with this condition. Currently, God is blessing the Michigan Conference with a wonderful tithe increase. The challenge is that overall participation in relation to church ministry since COVID began has plummeted! Lord, help us!

We need to be shaken awake to raise our individual temperatures. Individual heat will swell to corporate flames that will finish this work and hasten Jesus' coming. Now is the time to reach out to our friends and co-workers and share Jesus with them. We need to ask God to open opportunities to share the gospel and spend the relational capital we have built with our colleagues.

During a time when so many are questioning what is being taught in the public schools, Adventist Education is an amazing and powerful outreach ministry that can reach families for Christ and keep our churches young and vibrant. We, as a church, need to follow the counsel God gave through Ellen White: "Where there are those who assemble to worship God, let there be schools for the children." (*Review and Herald*, July 2, 1908)

In a world filled with warped and satanic views of God's creation, there is a system of education that holds the biblical standard high. Even closer to home we, as

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.



MAY 2

Belgreen/Ionia/Portland
Pastor Ryan Counsell
Ionia ACS Center & Ionia SDA Elementary

MAY 9

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

MAY 16

Alma/Ithaca
Pastor Nathaniel Oregon
Ithaca SDA Elementary
Ithaca Food Pantry
Gratiot County ACS Center

MAY 23

Big Rapids/Bristol/Reed City/
Ludington/Shelby
Pastor Elijah Ringstaff

MAY 30

Edmore/Frost/Lakeview
Pastor EJ Wolf
Frost Food Pantry
Heartland ACS Center
Lakeview ACS Center

individuals, need to rediscover Adventist Education as a choice for our own children. We need to pull Adventist Education back to the forefront of our mission, rather than taking it for granted, or letting it lay dormant.

We have amazing institutions, from one room schools, multi-teacher elementary schools, and day academies, to Great Lakes Adventist Academy, our senior boarding academy. Now with our technology facilitated school, A.S.P.I.R.E. Academy, there is no boundary or geographical limitation to prohibit young people from being a part of Adventist Education. There are choices available, and our schools offer something unique to fit the needs of each child.

If we want leaders to replace us, should time last, we desperately need our schools to survive. Were it not for my experience at AJA, and later at GLAA, I would not be where I am today. Adventist Education still works.

I am grateful that, thanks to my dear wife and the encouragement of others, I rediscovered my saxophone and can play it again. Unfortunately, I will never be able to play as well as I could have if I had not let it sit for so long. I can start anew, however, and that is the beauty of the Gospel and the forgiveness of Christ. There is also still an opportunity for us to truly awaken from our Laodicean condition and take advantage of the beautiful truths we find reflected in God's Word. We must not let them lie dormant—not only because there is a world to save, but because we need saving. The Adventist Church is not a club, it is a commission, and a great one.



Cedar Lake pastor, Jacob Gibbs, leads a small group study on Friday evening.

How to Win Souls in Your Living Room

By Judy Klein,
Communication Assistant

Cedar Lake, MI—Pastor Jacob Gibbs and his wife, Emily, have been hosting a small group in their home, with about twelve non-Adventist attendees.

Three years ago, right before COVID-19 sent the world cowering into their homes, Gibbs felt impressed to begin a small group in Cedar Lake.

Gibbs is no stranger to small groups. In 2006, he went to Australia and studied under Johnny Wong, author of the book *Business Unusual* and a leading authority on small group ministry. During his year stay, Gibbs saw amazing results from the small groups. Wong's group, Gateway, started in 2003 with the goal to plant a church every three years. Gibbs reports that Gateway is now on their fifth church plant, even seeing significant growth in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gibbs points out that these groups weren't just growing and fizzling out, but the baptism retention rate was unusually high. He explains that people grow, and if "they don't grow into the Lord, they will grow into the world." Small groups give new and old members alike a place to grow into the Lord, instead of the world.

This model of evangelistic ministry is very Biblically based. Gibbs references Acts 2:42, where they ate together, prayed, and studied. These are the three elements necessary for a small group. Serve a meal, fellowship, pray and study

together—there's nothing unusual about that, other than the results.

"Small groups play a part in every single part of evangelism," says Gibbs. Small groups sow the seed, they help with harvesting (commitments are more likely to be made in a small group setting) and, of course, they help with preservation. According to Gibbs, the small group equips new members, enabling them to turn around and win souls themselves, strengthening their own spiritual walk. He further comments that, "if there was one ministry you could do that would organically have every phase of the cycle of evangelism in it, it would be small groups."

Gibbs references Biblical examples such as Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, dividing the children of Israel into small groups in Exodus 18. The apostles and early Christian churches met and worshipped in small groups. "[There are] constant references to small groups in the book of Acts," Gibbs says. Even early Adventism utilized the small group. Gibbs explains that when Adventism began, there was not enough money for large campaigns, so small groups were used, not as a replacement, but as an equal. In some places, where Adventists had begun with just a small number, they grew up to 400 people.

Gibbs believes that we should utilize small groups as did the early Christians and early Adventists. "People hear a

lot about small groups," he explains, "but they don't see the fruit of it." He has seen the fruit of small groups, both in Australia with Wong, in the Upper Peninsula where he used to pastor, and now in Cedar Lake.

Two people were recently baptized into the Cedar Lake church, and they have been attending the small group, which meets weekly on Friday nights. One of them will even begin teaching the group soon. The small group has given them an opportunity to grow their own faith and spirituality through leadership and fellowship with like believers. Gibbs also mentions that it is a good idea to have small group meetings on Friday nights, as this will give new believers something to do in the beginning Sabbath hours. Without this, new members can sometimes fall back into old habits out of uncertainty of how to keep the Sabbath.

Gibbs reports that he has about three or four Adventists who attend on a regular basis, and about twelve seekers—persons searching for something spiritual.

Small groups are an evangelism opportunity that doesn't require a campaign. It doesn't require thousands of dollars, banners, and speakers. What it does require is a few souls who wish to reach other souls, a living room, prayer, and a few extra Bibles—things all of us have within reach.

To start a small group, you need to

establish a core group of like-minded spiritual people who will work with you, and with your seekers who come to the group. Next, you need seekers. Gibbs explains that small groups are not just social—they are missional. Your core group needs to understand that. He will pause his small group if there are no new faces. “If there are no seekers, Adventists tend to just go into social mode and the dedication to holiness and spirituality can plateau,” he says.

If there aren't new faces or non-Adventists attending your small group regularly, you and your core group need to sit down and find more people. What happens if your guests begin bringing friends? Are you supposed to have a medium sized group of thirty or more crammed into your living room?

No. The principal, according to Gibbs, is gaining by losing. Once a group has outgrown its smallness, it is time to split. It can be sad, but, as Gibbs says, “not all growth is enjoyable.” Splitting also encourages new leaders—

leadership who is not the pastor. “They think I need to be there for them to be successful—but it doesn't need to be that way,” said Gibbs. If your pastor leaves unexpectedly, your small group should be able to continue without them. If you leave unexpectedly, your small group should also be able to continue without you. That is why having a core group is so important: losing one person does not cause the whole group to shatter.

Gibbs explains that sometimes groups become pastor dependent, when this should not be the case. Splitting to make more small groups begins the evangelism process all over again. He also assures that “if a seeker has been with you for six or seven months they'll understand [the change].”

In addition, when you split your large group into two small groups, don't keep the best leaders for yourself. Send them away to develop their own skills and leadership by themselves. God will replenish your need, and doing so grows both your faith and that of your

developing leaders. Splitting a group also encourages seekers to come to church to see friends they have made during the time spent at the small group.

Gibbs believes that some may have left the church had it not been for the small group ministry. He urges everyone to read *Business Unusual* and to visit rightlytrained.org for training and more information. There are many pastors, including Gibbs, who would be willing to mentor you in your journey as a small group leader.

Our work is not to work for ourselves, but for the Lord. Let this be a calling for you to open your home and your heart to those around you who are searching. “Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon Him while he is near” (Isa. 55:6). The Lord is near, and there are seekers. Why shouldn't they find Him in your living room, by your fireside, while eating in your dining room? Let your home be a place where seekers can come to find the Lord. May your influence and your work for the Lord win many souls for His kingdom.



The transition from a neutral high school library to the church fellowship hall didn't impact attendance. Most of the attendees pictured above are guests.

“When the evangelistic meetings began, in the local high school library, there were sixteen guests in attendance on opening night.”

God Blessing Evangelism Efforts in St. Charles

As I was following up leads from the St. Charles church, I came across a Bible Study Offer lead that had been neglected for about 7 or 8 months. When I met Richard at the door, I apologized that it had taken so long for him to receive his Bible studies. After about three studies, he invited me in, and we transitioned to in-home studies. When we were about seven or eight studies into the

Amazing Facts lessons, our evangelistic meetings began in St. Charles.

My plan, of course, was to invite Richard. When I went to his house that week, he pulled out a flyer he had received in the mail and wondered if it was through our church. When I told him yes, he said he would come check out the meetings.

He came faithfully every night for

the first six nights, then, he invited a friend. From nights seven through eleven Richard and his friend attended faithfully. However, for nights twelve through sixteen, Richard was gone on an out-of-state trip. However, his absence did not impact his friend's attendance. In fact, he kept coming, and even invited another friend!

These three men weren't the only

(God Blessing Evangelism Efforts in St. Charles)



St. Charles evangelism meetings in the local high school library.

guests attending. When the evangelistic meetings began, in the local high school library, there were sixteen guests in attendance on opening night.

On night seventeen of the meetings, we transitioned from

the high school library to the church fellowship hall. The move did not hinder attendance. We were blessed to have twelve guests attend (not including children). Nightly attendance has fluctuated, but we are praising the Lord that so many have had the opportunity to hear the truth. Of the guests attending, there have been no decisions for baptism, but we have had decisions to keep the Sabbath, and some of the guests have begun attending church.

There is no doubt that God’s hand has been over the meeting. We have not had to cancel a single night due to inclement weather, even though school has been canceled four times during the course of the meetings. God arranges the weather to come on the nights we are not having meetings!

Please lift up the St. Charles SDA church as we continue to minister to our community and those attending the meetings.

By Jerryn Schmidt,
Pastor, St. Charles

PASTORAL TRANSITIONS



Garhett Morgan is the new pastor of the Rockford Three Angels and Sparta churches. He previously pastored the Big Rapids, Bristol, and Reed City churches.



TRANSITIONS IN LEADERSHIP



Sarah Canada is the new Children’s Ministries director for the Michigan Conference. She has a degree in elementary education and has served as a teacher and with various positions at the local church level—VBS director, Adventurer/Pathfinder teacher, and children’s Sabbath School teacher. She enjoys using creative programming to bring children to Jesus.



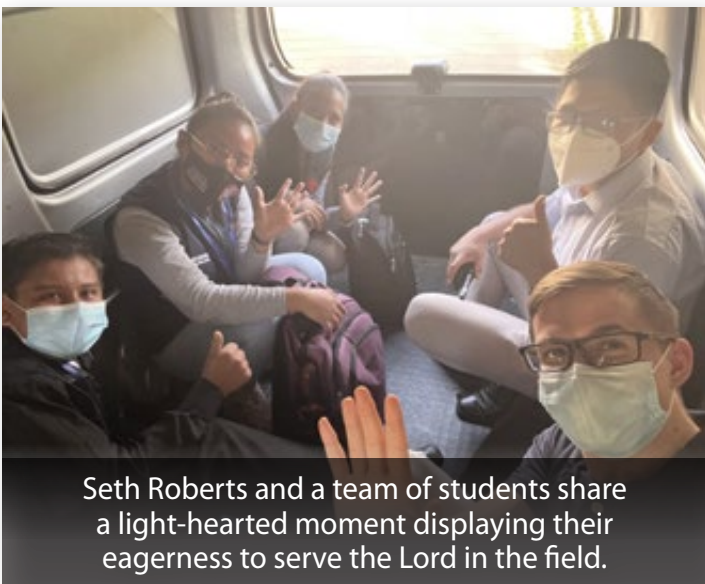
Anthony Mantague is the new Assistant Director of Literature Ministries for the Michigan Conference. He previously served with Messiah’s Mansion as a Bible prophecy instructor and taught religion classes at Oklahoma Academy. Anthony is passionate about the sanctuary message and bringing the Adventist message to communities in Michigan.

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(Sharing Hope in Bolivia)



David Pano and Emily Duffield train Bolivian students how to canvass effectively.



Seth Roberts and a team of students share a light-hearted moment displaying their eagerness to serve the Lord in the field.

what we have learned and built here.” Pano shared about the Michigan Conference’s Emmanuel Institute for lay training, and the Youth Rush structure for student canvassing training. Intrigued, the Central Bolivian Mission’s leaders traveled to Michigan to learn more.

After their visit to Michigan, the Central Bolivia Mission officers arranged with Pastor Esteban Vera, the Mission’s Publishing Director, to prepare a group of new student LE’s that a team of leaders from Michigan could train according to the methods used in our Youth Rush programs.

There was just one problem: There was no funding available to make the project a reality. With limited options, the Literature Ministries department turned to an innovative tool they had used for a number of years to fundraise for

various mission projects: the Canvassing for Missions initiative, where Youth Rush students can elect to donate 100% of their earnings from one canvassing day in the summer to a specified mission project.

During the 2021 Youth Rush program, Pano presented the Bolivia project to the students. Including some additional donations from other sources, over \$4,000 was raised to make the Bolivia project a reality.

As a result of the preparatory work done by Michigan’s Literature Ministries department and the Central Bolivia Mission, David Pano, Emily Duffield, and I travelled to Cochabamba, Bolivia, in mid-December 2021. We arrived to a very warm welcome by the local church leadership and, after a restful weekend, began the work of training a team of 16 new canvassers how to reach their community for Jesus.

We ran into some challenges in our work, primarily the language barrier. Unlike David, who speaks Spanish fluently, both Emily and I faced a significant obstacle when communicating with the students. While we had varying degrees of success in working around it (including having a translator on-site for the bulk of our time there), we found it quite difficult to train canvassers in the field. Over time, we learned to observe body language, identify key phrases, and quiz students after each interaction about what took place, in order to effectively provide training feedback.

As the days carried on, we began to see a slow but steady improvement in the canvassing ability of the students, as they applied their training and learned how to meet the needs of the community. As we worshipped together each morning, we began to hear powerful testimonies of how God was using each student to reach souls for His kingdom.

By the time the three-week program came to an end, it was clear that all involved had experienced a rich blessing in their work. As Emily put it, “The greatest blessing I received from the [Bolivia] trip was being able to genuinely bless and invest in the 16 young people we trained there. It was fun to see them improve in their canvassing skills, but seeing their joy in being able to reach others for Jesus was the most rewarding part of all.”

By Seth Roberts,
Assistant Literature Ministries Director

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MONTHLY CALENDAR

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

MAY

- April 29-May 1 Marriage Commitment Retreat
- 1 VBS Workshop
- 13-15 Pathfinder Fair
- 15 Lake Constituency Meeting
- 22 Adventurer Fun Day
- 27-29 GLAA Graduation
- 27-29 Hispanic Camp Meeting
- 30 Office Closed – Memorial Day

JUNE

- May 29-June 3 Youth Rush Leadership Training
- June 5 Youth Rush Program Begins
- June 6-11 GC Session
- 10-18 Camp Meeting
- June 12-18 Adventurer Camp at Camp Au Sable
- June 19-25 Junior Camp at Camp Au Sable
- June 19-22 NAD Ministerial Convention
- June 20-21 Office Closed
- June 26-July 2 Tween Camp at Camp Au Sable

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NATURE NUGGET

Alligators!

By Dr. Gordon Atkins,
Camp Au Sable Naturalist



PC: Dr. Gordon Atkins

Is it an alligator or crocodile? The answer is alligator! You can be certain of this identification because of its blackish color as opposed to greenish brown. The snout is wide and rounded at the end rather than more pointed, and the lower teeth do not protrude above the upper jaw like crocodiles' do. Alligators are most often found in fresh water like this one, whereas the American Crocodile lives in brackish or salt water.

One of the many interesting facts about alligators is that a female alligator determines the gender of her offspring. Unlike humans and most mammals, where gender is determined by the presence or absence of a Y chromosome, alligators' gender is determined by the temperature of the eggs during

incubation!

The mother alligator lays her eggs and covers them with a thick mound of rotting vegetation, which generates the heat needed for development. If the mom looks around the local pond and sees more male alligators than needed, she removes vegetation from the nest to make it cooler. Cool eggs are more likely to become female, whereas warmer eggs are more likely to become male.

The Bible clearly indicates that while our current life and eternal life are gifts from God, our Christian character is shaped over time by our experiences. Sometimes fiery trials come our way, but staying faithful to God through those tough times can mold our character for the better!