



BUILDING A HOUSE FOR THE LORD!

“I know you! You’re the preacher from those wonderful *Unlock Revelation* meetings with billboards all over Michigan!”



The new Grand Blanc church

Praise the Lord! Grand Blanc Church celebrated its first Sabbath in its new church building December 29, 2018! After 17 years of praying, and the seventh try, we finally have a place of our own to worship God and use as a Center of Influence in the Grand Blanc area!

In April 2017, Daniel Owusu and Pastor Daniel Ferraz saw a spacious, green 1.62-acre plot for sale at \$399,500. Four buildings nestled in a nice subdivision, surrounded by the Warwick Hills Golf & Country Club, on S. Saginaw Street, on the way to the center of Grand Banc. When Daniel and pastor arrived, Vicki Tye, owner for the last three years, exclaimed, “I know you! You’re the preacher from those wonderful *Unlock Revelation* meetings with billboards all over Michigan!” Marla Slep, a friend of hers, didn’t miss a 2016 *Unlock Revelation* meeting and invited Vicki to attend. She attended church and potluck once. After seeing the property, members from

our building committee, led by chairman Syd Smith, recommended that unless the Lord gave us a sign, it would take too much work and expense to get a church building on that site.

Signs From the Lord!

Some months later, Vicki and Carol, the owners, met with our building committee and stated, “We really want *you* to build a church on our property! So, we’ll reduce the price by \$75,000!” Then Randy Minto, the realtor, attended church four or five times - potlucks, too, and Communion. After hearing a sermon, he pledged \$5,000 to our building fund! Well, that got our attention! Two of the four buildings had potential to be remodeled as a church, (one a gym and the other a 50’ x 48’ block building with a new roof). There is a large six modular unit that, with some work, could be converted into Sabbath School rooms, kitchen and dining room, and temporary meeting hall for the Grand Blanc Spanish Group. The potential looked promising!

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“What an amazing God we serve who leads us providentially at every stage of life, including orchestrating ideal marriages!”

GOD’S PERFECT TIMING

My life began in Flint, Michigan where I was born into an amazing family, with wonderful loving parents, and an older brother that quickly became my best friend. As a young child, I was privileged in ways I never fully realized growing up. I attended the South Flint Church, a warm and family-oriented congregation, where many memories were made that I still cherish today. In fact, it was there I was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church at the age of 13. I attended First Flint Christian School and Adelpian Junior Academy before eventually going to Great Lakes Adventist Academy, where I graduated. Afterwards, I attended Andrews University for two years before transferring to Southern Adventist University, where I graduated with a degree in accounting.

My transfer to Southern brought some major changes in my life. I figured it was time for me to start growing up and becoming responsible. After finally choosing my major, I was able to focus on my future, which included finding the woman God had in mind to share my life with.

It was at Southern that I met my wife, Cheryl, who is truly my “better half.” She is beyond anything I could have ever asked or imagined. What an amazing God we serve who leads us providentially at every stage of life, including orchestrating ideal marriages! I think of

His words in Scripture where He states, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye” (Psalms 32:8).

Cheryl and I married in 1999 after graduating from Southern. We settled in Atlanta, Georgia. Cheryl began teaching at a local Adventist school, where I also served as school treasurer. This enabled us to work together in service for the Lord. I began working as a staff accountant with RTM, Arby’s largest franchisee at the time. God certainly blessed and, after an intense amount of studying and preparation, I was able to obtain my CPA while employed there. I learned so much at RTM, which guides me even to this day.

The birth of our first son, Aaron, in 2002 opened our eyes and gave us a different perspective on life. We obtained an even clearer picture of God’s love for us as our heavenly Father. We also realized our need to depend on God to navigate us through our parenting journey. He has and continues to refine us as parents. We received another blessing with the birth of our second son, Benjamin, in 2005.

In 2006, RTM sold their Mrs. Winners Chicken and Biscuits brand to an investor group and I transitioned with the new company as their director of accounting. Life was extremely busy, as I was in charge of managing the sale of the brand, transitioning through it, and then

moving the accounting to an outsourcing group.

Not long afterwards, I had the privilege of participating in a *Share Him* evangelistic series in India. The Lord blessed and we had several baptisms after the reaping series. It solidified in me what life was truly about, a personal intimate relationship with Christ, serving Him in order for others to be in the kingdom. I was convicted that if there was ever an opportunity to serve in missions, whether it be for one day in the United States or out of the country for a longer period, we need to just pray and ask the Lord to open the way. He will provide, if it is His will.

After returning from this mission trip experience, I knew something had to change in my life. We began praying for the Lord to lead us in a new direction. I wanted to be where the Lord wanted me to be, whether it was to stay in the corporate world or to work more directly in ministry. It was during this time that our third son, Isaac, was born in 2007. God began lining up a path for us that would lead us in ways we could never have imagined.

God led us to Cicero, Indiana in 2009. I accepted a position as the boys’ dean and Bible teacher at Indiana Academy. For the first time, I experienced the pure joy that comes when we fully surrender our lives and our will in His hands. God

blessed in so many ways in that move that I could spend the whole article on that transition alone! I was able to serve with some wonderful people that gave me invaluable experience in what it takes to run a boarding academy.

While serving in Indiana, the Lord led us to accept a call to Weimar, California. I served for eight years as vice principal and registrar at Weimar Academy, with the last five of those as chief financial officer of Weimar Institute as well. We loved our time there working for the Lord and saw many miracles along the way. We were able to travel and increase our passion for mission work through many mission trips and health initiatives, like *Pathways to Health*. We were also part of a local church where I was able to serve as church treasurer.

Once again, the Lord prompted us to “return to your Father’s house” in June of last year, when I accepted a call to be treasurer of the Michigan Conference in October 2018.

In looking back on my journey, I recognize how privileged I was and yet how a privileged life does not translate to a surrendered and fulfilled life. I see how God has been faithful every step of the way, preparing me for each part of my journey and calling for that surrender to Him. I also see how gracious and long-suffering God has been with me while He waited for me to “get it.” When that light finally came and I decided to surrender it all, pleading for the Holy Spirit and trusting solely in Him, I truly experienced the joy He gives and the blessings He pours upon us. That was when I understood it was not about me,

but about Him and reaching others for Him.

God has blessed this Michigan Conference in so many ways. As I am reminded of the faithful saints that have gone before us and the ones that are serving alongside of me, I am highly encouraged. It is also evident everywhere you look that He is coming again soon. God could have reached His goal in saving sinners without our help, but He knows true happiness will come to those who are a part of His great work. He knew that as we give of our time and means to help others, we not only bless others, but in the process, we become conformed to His image. That is the life He lived on this earth, and the life He wants us to live.

“God could have reached his goal in saving sinners without our help, but He knows true happiness will come to those who are a part of His great work.”

My prayer is that as a people, we will not take for granted what God has blessed us with, monetarily or spiritually. It is not how full our coffers are when assessing whether we are ready for the work He has for us, but how empty we are of ourselves. God will provide as we remain faithful to Him. His wealth is not measured in cattle but in hills (Ps. 50:10). He is ready to pour out His Spirit in measures that will quickly finish this work. May we remain faithful to His Word, surrendering daily and earnestly seeking His Spirit to fill and guide us as we press together to finish this great work He has given us.

Treasurer



PRAYER FOCUS

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

FEBRUARY 4-8

Benton Harbor/Coloma/ Hartford
Indonesian
Pastor Gerhard Erbes
Hartford Community Services

FEBRUARY 11-15

Otsego/Paw Paw
Pastor Michael Taylor
Gobles Junior Academy
Otsego Community Services
Conference Budget Review/Campus
Retreat

FEBRUARY 18-22

Burlington/Coldwater
Pastor Bayani Pastrana
Burlington Community Services
Teen Bible Camp

FEBRUARY 25-MARCH 1

Ann Arbor/Plymouth
Pastor Bryan Choi
Ann Arbor Elementary
Ann Arbor Community Services/
Plymouth Community Services
Sabbath School/Personal Ministries'
Retreat

“Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry.”

–Psalms 88:2



2018 MISSION TRIP HUAQUILLAS, ECUADOR

On December 12, 2018, thirty-seven individuals gathered in Ecuador for a life changing two-week journey together. The Michigan Conference Evangelism Department, in partnership with *Quiet Hour Ministries*, organized its first mission trip. Its purpose? To create an opportunity for the Michigan constituent family to experience a front line mission that would create an excitement for mission and outreach in their own home churches and communities. Those who participated can attest that it was a truly inspiring experience.

Huaquillas, Ecuador is a mid-sized city near the border of Peru. It is not known for its tourism attraction, and mission trips there are rare. There are eleven Seventh-day Adventist churches in Huaquillas, and although those eleven churches share only one pastor, they are very actively involved in evangelism. Four of those churches have been newly planted in just the past few years! We witnessed firsthand how effective a church can be when they are guided by a godly pastor but the work itself is led and executed by devoted lay members. It was our privilege to serve eight churches for two weeks that yielded eternal results.

The Michigan Conference is passionate about *Grow Michigan*, which embraces

the full Evangelism Cycle through Christ's Method Alone (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143) within every church. This is more than a program or an initiative, but rather an ongoing culture that leads to regular, systematic soul-winning and total member involvement. There are five key components to the cycle: (1) Preparing, (2) Planting, (3) Cultivating, (4) Harvesting, and (5) Preserving. Because we followed the Biblical model for the trip, the Lord blessed as promised. Many months before we arrived, mission workers were sent to labor along side eager members to prepare the soil and plant the seed. They launched community events and outreach, train-



ing for members, Bible studies, literature distribution, and other initiatives. We were grateful to labor with them side by side, and we soon saw amazing results due to much selfless work and prayer. We witnessed the power of God moving through the local church, which is His most effective agency on earth.

Each morning, our team, led by our ground workers, Pastors Wes Peppers, Cory Herthel, and Darryl Bentley, had worship together and discussed the plans for the day. Team members also received training on how to model the work done in Ecuador back in their own churches upon returning home. They learned things such as: The cycle of evangelism, biblical church structure, how to develop a great commission culture in their church, the role of the pastor and members, how to witness one on one, and more.

Each day, three construction teams worked on various projects organized by the local churches. These teams completed church bathrooms, a baptistry, and an outside concrete floor for various church functions. It was inspiring to work alongside the locals who became very creative when common tools (for us) were unavailable. The new baptistry was used that same weekend to baptize individuals who made decisions for Christ during the evangelistic meetings!

Another important element was the medical clinics held in a different church every day. The conditions were hot, long and often uncomfortable, but hundreds of people came to have their physical needs met, and it was a blessing to be the hands and feet of Jesus in their lives.

The clinic consisted of glucose testing, vitals, eye testing and free glasses. Patients were able to meet with a nurse and/or physician and had access to medications and medical supplies. Benevolent resources such as new clothing, school supplies and more were also distributed. As patients waited, pastors, church elders and Bible workers offered prayer and counsel, and most patients gladly accepted. In just five days, over 700 people were served and

approximately \$150,000 of medical service was provided. More than 300 patients requested Bible studies and are being followed up on by the local church members. Literature and invitations for the evangelistic meetings were also distributed at the clinics, and many attended the meetings from those personal invites.

The climax of the trip was the evangelistic meetings. Each evening, a team member gave a health talk followed by an inspiring message of Biblical truth by another team member. Meanwhile, other members led Vacation Bible School (VBS) with enthusiastic church and community children. At the conclusion, we were blessed to witness 30 baptisms with 25 more currently preparing to soon follow. Many others will continue in Bible studies.



For a few of our team, this was a first-time experience. Some had never been out of America while others had never preached or led out in VBS before. Discomfort was a daily occurrence, but no one complained. There was a sweet spirit as we witnessed God using us every moment and saw lives being transformed. Every obstacle became a call to prayer. No matter how tired we got, the Spirit of God gave us the strength for a greater purpose than ourselves.

There are many other things that could be said, but the most important is this:

Whether you are in your hometown in Michigan, or you go across the world, remember that there are those who need you to be Jesus to them. It is not a one-time witness that God desires, but a life-style of service, sharing truth, and calling people to follow Him. Our lives as Seventh-day Adventists should continually be surrendered to Christ's pleas for self-sacrificing workers, for that is Christ's example to us. While we witnessed God bring great success, a great work continues by the lay people in Ecuador to maximize the harvest and preserve it. The cycle of evangelism continues there, and Jesus calls you to embrace that cycle by actively laboring for Him and the lost in your church and community.

We invite you to experience your own transformation through one of our upcoming mission trips, including Cuba from March 11-22, 2020. Call the Evangelism Department at (517) 316-1560 and plan to attend our information session at Michigan Camp Meeting 2019 if you are interested!

Wes and Marion Peppers, Michigan Conference Evangelism Department



ELWELL CHURCH COMPANY

On December 22, 2018, Elwell Church was formally organized as a company of the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. For the ceremony Elder Jim Micheff, Jr. was invited to speak at the event, and his sermon was "Nothing is impossible if..." The occasion was blessed with the presence of Elder Joel Mugabo Mpbwanimana, who is the North American Division (NAD) coordinator for all Kinyarwanda-Kirundi-Swahili speakers' groups, companies and churches across United States and by Professor Terri Saelee, who also is the Director of Adventist Refugee and Immigrant Ministry Department for NAD. The moment of the signature of members was led by Elder Royce Snyman, Ministerial Director of the Michigan Conference, Elder Bob Stewart, and Elder Daniel Scarone. In the afternoon, after the potluck there were some short seminars led by Elder Royce Snyman, Elder Daniel Scarone, Professor Terri Saelee and by Joel Mpbwanimana. This is the first time—that we recollect—that a company is starting to function with 327 adult members plus children. Pastor Bernard Mugarukira Rumanera, originally from Congo, and who speaks Kinyarwanda-Kirundi, Swahili, French, and English, has been appointed as the pastor of this congregation. Let's remember in our prayers this growing congregation in Grand Rapids.

Daniel Scarone, multi-ethnic director of the Michigan Conference

(continued from front page)

We go forward, but with conditions

Then the building committee asked the business meeting to consider buying the Saginaw property for \$324,000, with the following conditions: Voted at church business meeting; Voted by Michigan Conference Executive Committee; Township Zoning to allow a church; a good appraisal; secure a loan from North American Division (NAD). The purchase agreement was drawn up and signed! We began to dream of no more rent, or set up and tear down, our own Grand Blanc Church sign instead of the “wimpy” (as the pastor called it) old banner. At our August 23, 2017 business meeting we voted to go forward, trusting in the Lord for all the conditions to be met. Elder Leroy Bruch and Dan Garcia signed for the conference and local church respectively, and we closed December 14, 2017!

The Honor of God

In a sermon, Pastor Ferraz appealed for all members to be involved any way they could; fundraising, working, and praying. “We all need to be committed, not so much to a building project,” he said, “but to the saving of souls and the honor of God!” Pledges and money keep coming in, praise the Lord! The most beautiful thing to see was how we pulled together Sunday after Sunday, 49 Sundays in 2018 in fact! Children, ladies and guests worked together in teams of up to 20, led by prayerful Syd Smith. Working on site, remodeling building #2, has brought us closer together and provided excellent witnessing opportunities with contacts who helped. Jan the association president, says the neighbors love us, and that they are so happy with our progress and how we are improving the looks of the property.

What the Lord Has Done!

The support and guidance from the Michigan Conference has been great! Members and non-members have raised over \$150,000 so far. Kevin Barrett from MAP presented us with \$20,000, and members

are still raising funds. We all rejoiced at our first Sabbath in our new church! New chairs and P.A. system, everything fresh, new and welcoming! We were at capacity with 80 people, 18 were guests, neighbors or friends. Marla was there and has attended again since! Even Vicki, the

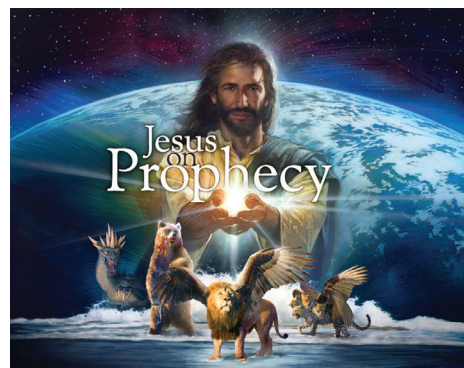


previous owner came with her daughter, son-in-law and grandson! Everyone was blessed, encouraged and excited by what the Lord has done through us. We still have Phase #2 and #3, remodeling the modular, and converting the gym into a larger sanctuary as we grow, by God's grace! To all who donated funds, family and friends who faithfully helped us week after week, to everyone who prayed for us; we want to thank you from the bottom of our heart. Together, we learned to seek and recognize the Lord's guidance. He energized us and gave us courage to move forward through every obstacle and difficulty victoriously and harmoniously! We still have a lot to do, but we know that the Lord has led us thus far and He will continue to lead us, “to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20, 21, KJV).

New Grand Blanc Church Address:

9127 South Saginaw Street
Grand Blanc, MI 48439

Grand Blanc Building Committee



JESUS ON PROPHECY

Is your church participating in “Jesus on Prophecy” (previously named Prophecy Unfolds), the conference-wide evangelistic effort beginning September 23?

We invite you to attend a special training and resource weekend at Camp Au Sable March 15-17 that will give you the tools to prepare your church for an inspiring harvest.

Who should attend?

- Church elders
- Speakers and/or coordinators
- Personal ministries directors/team members
- Members planning to help with the meetings
- Those considering being involved in other capacities

When: March 15-17 (Friday evening to Sunday morning)

Where: Camp Au Sable

Cost: \$60 per person (housing and meals provided)

Contact: Evangelism Department at (517) 316-1560 or Marion Peppers at (256) 452-2612, mpeppers@misda.org

NEWS BRIEF



Have you ever been discouraged when a promising Bible study interest falls away? Have you ever wondered why those you study with won't commit to Bible truth? Does your local church Bible study ministry need new life? If so, plan to attend *Taking Up the Sword*, March 1-3 at Camp Au Sable. This weekend will focus exclusively on training for effective Bible study ministry, both individually and as local church families. For more information and registration, call Stephanie at 517-316-1578 or register online at: <http://bit.ly/SSPMWS>.



Public Campus Ministries is holding a retreat at Camp Au Sable from February 15-17. Adventist young professionals and students attending public colleges will be in attendance, along with some of their classmates, friends, and colleagues. For questions regarding the event, please contact Miranda at: mlentz@misda.org. Be sure to keep them in your prayers!



FEBRUARY 9TH, 2019
DISTRICT 6
YOUTH RALLY

District 6 is holding an inspirational Sabbath on February 9 for all youth and youth leaders in the area. The Sabbath's speaker is Pastor Chad Bernard and activities include powerful preaching, seminars on winning young people for Christ, robust discussion, and friendship building activities. The event will be held at the Saginaw SDA Church beginning at 9:15 am. For more information, contact Ethan Booms at: (989) 414-0659.

TRANSITIONS

OFFICE

Allie Gayle is the new secretary for the ministerial department.

Mona Hickman is now the assistant director for Association Properties in addition to her previous responsibilities.

Kasey McFarland has transferred from Women's Ministries secretary and is now secretary for Planned Giving and Trust Services.

Joel Nephew is the Association Properties manager in addition to being the director for Stewardship and Planned Giving and Trust Services.

Chelli Ringstaff is the new director for Adventist Community Services and Disaster Response.

Wendy Welch is the new Women's Ministries secretary.

PASTORAL

Jorge Diaz has taken the position of pastor for the Chikaming, Benton Harbor Spanish, and South Haven Seventh-day Adventist churches.

MICHIGAN CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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MONTHLY CALENDAR

February

- 2 Pathfinder Bible Experience Area
- 4-7 NAD Presidents Retreat
- 6-10 GLAA Home Leave
- 10-15 Blind Camp - Camp Au Sable
- 14 District Superintendents
- 15-17 CAMPUS Retreat -
Camp Au Sable
- 17 Lay Advisory Budget Review
- 18 President's Day - Office Closed
- 19 MI Executive Committee
- 21-24 Teen Bible Camp
- 24-26 Prayer and Fasting
- 27 Camp Meeting Directors

March

- 1-15 Camp Meeting Registration
Begins
- 1-3 Sabbath School/Personal
Ministries Workshop -
Camp Au Sable
- 2 Pathfinder Bible Experience
- 5-7 New in Ministry
- 8-10 Marriage Commitment Retreat-
Camp Au Sable
- 10 Daylight Savings Time
- 12 District Superintendents
- 14-24 Great Lakes Adventist Academy
Spring Break
- 15-17 Jesus on Prophecy -
Camp Au Sable

NO LONGER A GAME

Ben Garcia, Jr., Senior, Great Lakes Adventist Academy

That group of kids seems nice when they're praying,
Yet most don't know what they're Bibles are saying.
Appearing good and holy, to them matters more,
than Jesus, whose waiting at their hearts closed door.

They put on smiles, they put on masks,
But they still ignore the One who asks:
Why, my children, whom I love so dearly,
Do you hide, trying to avoid being seen clearly?
Are you ashamed of Me? Ashamed of your sin?
Because either way, you cannot hope to win.
Please choose to follow, please choose to be free.
Please give Me an answer, please come home to Me.

And I will hide you under My wing,
And forever to you I will cling.
But the kids still say no, and as He turns to go,
The tears He sheds, like a river flow.
They go on pretending, in a cycle unending,
And on their sinful nature they keep on depending.
But there are a few who give replies,
That dry the tears in the Master's eyes
They leave their earthly pains in the past,
And enter into joy that is oh so vast.
By and by the others will see,
that only in Jesus can you truly be free.
So they open their hearts door, to let the Master in once more,
And give him the things that made life a chore.
Their masks fade away, but their faces stay the same,
The difference is that it is no longer a game.