



Nothing to Fear

This is the tenth installment of a multi-part series taken from Bob DuPuy's book, *Nothing to Fear: The Story of Seventh-day Adventism in the Dakotas*, published in 1983.

CHAPTER 4: A New and Important Field - Part 2

On August 6, 1884, Tenney arrived in Fargo, Cass County, and immediately sized up the situation. Writing to the *Review* four days later, he listed some hindrances to his work that are not unfamiliar even a century later.

"It is almost impracticable to work in the country on account of the scattered conditions of the inhabitants. The farms are very large generally, and houses far between. The winters are long and bleak, and the people are intensely bent on getting rich. But that God has a people here and a great work to be done, we have no shadow of doubt. Whatever the obstacles are, they may be overcome by the exercise of proper energy and the wisdom which comes from above."⁹

Unable to find any regular Sabbath services being conducted in the mission, Tenney took steps to unite the interest and efforts of the scattered believers by organizing the North Dakota district of the Minnesota Tract Society, with himself as director and his wife, Elsie, as secretary. Tenney urged all Adventists in the territory to send in their one-dollar membership fee, entitling them to obtain tracts for free distribution. Observing that North Dakotans wanted reading material for the long winters, and had the money to pay for it, Tenney urged interested individuals to take up the canvassing work, selling Adventist books and periodicals.¹⁰

Tenney then turned his attention to public and private evangelism in Fargo and other towns accessible to the Northern Pacific and its feeder lines, working among the "Americans", while Martin M. Olsen, who had helped establish the work in South Dakota, worked among the large numbers of Norwegians and other Scandinavians.¹¹

On Sabbath, December 6, exactly four months from his arrival in Fargo, G.C. Tenney, with the help of Minnesota Conference President O.A. Olsen, convened the first general meeting of the church in North Dakota. At this three-day session, the Fargo church, first in North Dakota, was organized and all of the approximately seventy-five Adventists in the state, one-third of whom were recent results of the labors of Tenney and Olsen, were invited to join.

To give the new church a missionary emphasis, a tract society was formed at Fargo, as were two local societies at Larimore (Grand Forks County) and at Watson (Cass County) where, apparently, small pockets of Seventh-day Adventists lived.

In his year-end report to the *Review*, Tenney said that three or four canvassers were at work in the territory, and sounded a very optimistic note regarding the prospects of a permanent work in northern Dakota.

Apparently called away by his Minnesota Conference leaders to labor in other areas, Tenney had to neglect urgent invitations from Ellendale (Dickey County) where he had planned to spend the winter.¹²

At the close of 1884, the slim trail of evidence upon which this history is based, evaporates altogether, reappearing six months later when, at the twenty-fourth annual session of the Minnesota Conference, Tenney and Olsen presented the churches at Fargo, Reynolds (Grand Forks County), Michigan City (Nelson County), and Hamlin (Sargent County) for admission to the conference. With the exception of Fargo, we know almost nothing of the origin of these churches or of the fate of the groups at Watson and Larimore.

Also at this session, a new president was elected for the Minnesota Conference, George C. Tenney, leaving Martin Olsen as the only Adventist minister in North Dakota for more than a full year.¹³

An attempt to analyze these first successful attempts at establishing the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North Dakota, to ascertain methods, to evaluate strengths and weaknesses, is as irresistible as it is difficult. Bits and pieces of the personalities of the men in this first evangelistic team surface in contemporary records and give us a few clues, however, as do reports by others who witnessed the events.

George Tenney appears to have been a well-organized individual with a great concern for establishing a firm foundation from which to operate; he saw the necessity of strong local churches as well as a cohesive, effective, unifying conference structure. While active in public evangelistic work, he showed concern for the individual missionary activity of church members, prodded gently on the matter of the financial support of the work, and sought to broaden his base by encouraging work among the Scandinavians, by urging literature evangelists and members in general to circulate reading material for the long winter, and by giving attention to thorough follow-up and member visitation.¹⁴

He also showed vision in bucking certain trends in the evangelism of the day. Originally planning to make Casselton (Cass County) his home, upon arriving Tenney surveyed the situation and chose Fargo instead, perhaps seeing in the larger town a more adequate conference headquarters.¹⁵ Evangelists of that time, and of later years in North Dakota also, tended to shy away from the larger towns, considering them to be strongholds of sin and worldliness, preferring to work in the rural areas and smaller towns. (As late as 1905, the constituency of the North Dakota Conference rejected a recommendation of its plans committee that the city work "phase of our State receive special attention during the ensuing year.")¹⁶

The popular wisdom of the day was that evangelism could not be conducted during the winter. Tenney heartily disagreed with this notion but may never have gotten a chance at winter evangelism; he was called out of North Dakota when the cold season began.¹⁷

Even in his theology and preaching, Tenney may have been somewhat of a maverick for his time. The Minneapolis General Conference of 1888, in which the doctrine of righteousness by faith came into prominence in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, was still four years in the future when Tenney wrote an article for the *Review* in which he championed the notion that a Christian could have the assurance of his acceptance by God and his salvation by trusting in the Bible's promises. Although not a radical stance today, it was a challenging idea in a time when many evangelists believed that a little doubt about one's acceptance was a healthy motivating factor to obedience.¹⁸

From Minnesota Conference President O.A. Olsen, we get our only report of the methods Tenney and Olsen used. He reports that the meetings held were small, but at every place there were some converts.¹⁹

This is apparently where the special talents of Martin Olsen came in. The records seem to indicate that Olsen was a more quiet, a less spectacular minister, who excelled in personal work on a one-to-one basis. From his early years in North Dakota, we often encounter reports of "Brother Olsen" doing follow-up work after an apparently unsuccessful evangelistic series. Later reports often tell of churches organized in these areas. Perhaps this accounts in part for the sudden appearance of the Hamlin, Reynolds, and Michigan City churches, the latter two of which were presented by Olsen at the 1885 Minnesota Conference session, and may well have been Scandinavian churches for which he labored.²⁰

While lessons drawn from the scanty records of a century ago must be drawn carefully, elements of this earliest work contain parallels valuable to understanding the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from that time to the present.

09. *Ibid.*, August 19, 1884, 537.

10. *Ibid.*, December 23, 1884, 812.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*, July 28, 1885, 476.

14. *Ibid.*, August 19, 1884, 537; December 23, 1884, 812.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *North Dakota Conference Session Record Book, I*, containing session minutes from 1902 to 1919, 56. A survey of the reports of labor in those early years readily demonstrates the tendency to favor rural areas over cities.

17. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, *op. cit.*

18. *Ibid.*, October 7, 1884, 634.

19. *Ibid.*, January 13, 1885, 29.

20. *Ibid.*, July 28, 1885, 476.

Next time from *Nothing to Fear*:

Chapter 5, "The Work is Onward" - Part 1 by Robert K. DuPuy

Dakota Campmeeting



HOPE

JUNE 9-12, 2021

FEATURED SPEAKERS:
CHRIS HOLLAND
STAN PATTERSON
RICHIE & TIMARI BROWER

WITH MUSIC GROUP:
THE EMMANUEL QUARTET

Register online at: www.dakotaadventist.org

The Invitation

Recently I sat in on a class at Dakota Adventist Academy and listened as two pairs of students courageously engaged in debates. Topics had previously been submitted for selection by students, intentionally chosen as issues they felt strongly about. Their teacher then randomized the topics, gave assignments and set dates. In some cases students would end up debating a point they personally believed in. In others, it was upon them to research and understand the opposite perspective from the one they personally held. In either case, they had time to prepare and were expected to engage with understanding and conviction.

As I sat in class, I realized a couple of things.

First, human beings are opinionated.

Second, it is easy (perhaps natural) to be strongly opinionated about an issue while having very little knowledge of the other side. This was in no way a reflection of the students. They were prepared. They did great. Instead it was a reflection of myself as I pondered the debates and thought about the variety of topics held during different class times.

The students shared their research. They kept to an organized format, sharing time. They allowed time for questions from their “opponent” and listened attentively to each rebuttal.

In the end, I'm pretty sure their main take-away from the event was a massive amount of relief that the assignment was finally behind them. I don't know to what level it changed their own perspectives. I wonder if anybody was swayed by listening to the other side. I wonder if having a structured, researched and civil discussion was beneficial simply by exposing the debaters and observers to different perspectives.

More than anything, I wonder how we as a people (insert family, church, country, etc. here) become so divided, opinionated, and irrationally convicted that our side is absolutely right and the other side is irrevocably wrong.

And that makes me wonder how the average person is expected to find the truth of things in the midst of all of the “debates” firing over our heads as we sit in our trenches.

And that makes me wonder how it is that we can have assurance of the things that matter most - the truths about God, life and love.

And THAT was the background noise in my mind when I read the second chapter of Proverbs later that day.

My Son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you,
making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
yes, if you call out for insight
and raise your voice for understanding,
if you seek it like silver
and and search for it as for hidden treasures,
then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.
-Proverbs 2:1-5, ESV

I am struck by this invitation. The invitation to listen and seek. The invitation to stop waiting in every conversation for my turn to say what I think for the hundredth time. The invitation to spend time in the Word searching not for a text to back up my next debate, but simply and humbly searching for the knowledge of God’s heart. The invitation to set my opinions down and open my mind and heart to His.

Worship Thoughts by Pr. Robert Carlson.

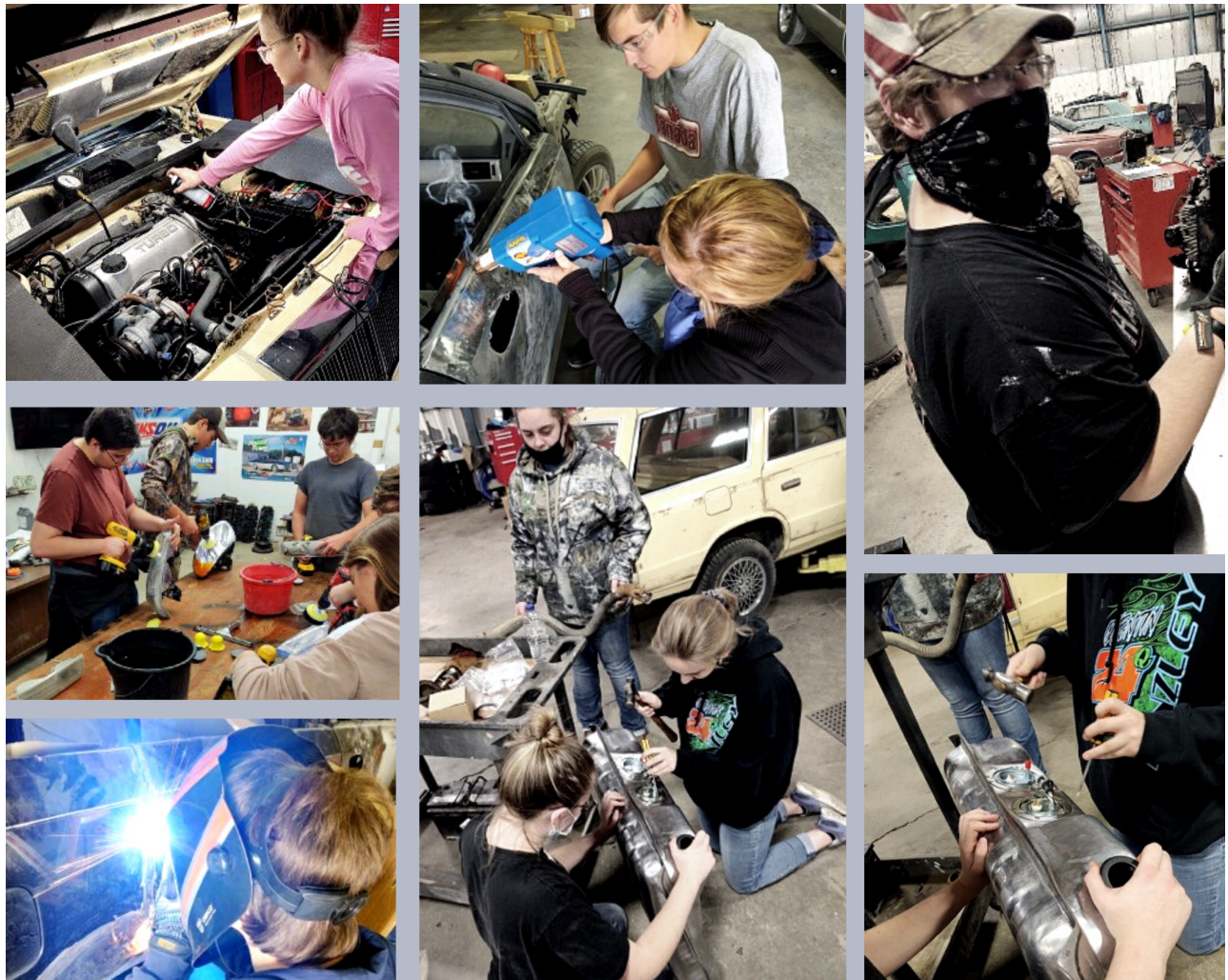
Big School Options, Small School Feel, Learning Higher

When it comes to choosing a high school, people consider many different aspects. For some it is all about academics or dual-credit classes, some feel that sports or music make or break a school, but there are some that choose a school based on their friends.

I am pleased to say that Dakota Adventist Academy can satisfy each of those requirements as well as offer many more reasons to be a part of our school. I am not going to list all the classes we offer but highlight a few things that make us stand out.

The practicality and interaction of the students in auto class allows them to prepare to work in a mechanic’s shop. Students get experience in vehicle maintenance performing the work instead of watching someone else do it. Some students have their own vehicles to work on, while others practice skills on school vehicles and class projects. Even if a student only takes one year of auto class, they can competently change their oil, change out tires, check fluids, and perform many other regular vehicle maintenance procedures.

Dakota Adventist Academy is looking out for young people’s future by providing them with more than academics, more than practical classes, and more than friendships. Our constant prayer is that we are providing them with a God-filled environment to learn in. We are planning to expand our student body in the next year, come be a part of this awesome journey!



Article by Tracy Peterson, recruiter. Photos by Ryan Peterson, vocational teacher.

Hurdsfield Church Memories

When my father was a child, there was a small Hurdsfield church. Dad would tell of Grandpa taking the family to church (Grandpa wasn't an Adventist), dropping them off, and then going to the bar to play cards. After church, Dad would run up to the bar to get Grandpa to come pick up Grandma and Dad's sisters.

In the summer of 1943 a tent evangelistic meeting planned to be held in Hurdsfield. Many of the community people were upset that these meetings were going to be held. The night before the meetings were to start, a windstorm came through town and destroyed the tent.

Even though Grandpa wasn't an Adventist, he was upset about the rumors going around that the destruction of the tent was God's will. He took off for Jamestown, found a large tent, brought it back to Hurdsfield and with the help of many, got the tent set up and the meetings went forward without a hitch. The meetings were held for several weeks and there were many baptisms, increasing the membership of the church.

There's something special about this story. Dad had just graduated from the Academy that spring and worked the farm with Grandpa. He attended the meetings. At the time, one of his younger sisters was dating my mother's older brother. So Mom would come to the meetings with her brother and Dad and his sisters attended them, too. Dad said after the meetings that Dad, Dad's sister, Mom's brother and Mom would go uptown and have ice cream. Besides all of them being baptized, Mom and Dad started dating and the rest is history. (Dad's sister did not marry Mom's brother.)

My Grandpa wasn't baptized. He supported my Dad and all but one of his six sisters attended Sheyenne River Academy and some of his sisters went to Union College. My grandparents lived across the street from the little Hurdsfield Church. I believe it was in the 1970's when my Grandpa walked over to church and later was baptized.

With so many new members joining the church, they moved an old church a little down the slope from the Church, which became the new church school. There were over 20 children attending the school. However, as time went on the church school became smaller and smaller. My fifth grade year the Hurdsfield Church joined the Goodrich Church in setting up a new Church School in Goodrich.

The last year the Hurdsfield Church was open, there were four students. My older and younger sisters, my cousin, and me.

As Hurdsfield members passed away, or moved to be near their children out of state, the attendance was smaller and smaller. The Hurdsfield Church closed its doors for about seven years around the time of my teen years - mid-1960's. An evangelistic series of meetings was held at the Hurdsfield Community Center for a few weeks and then ended the series in Harvey. There were several baptisms, some who asked about reopening church. So the church reopened for several years, but only in the summer due to many members going away for the winter. Eventually, the members that came back for the summer, weren't coming back anymore. The Hurdsfield Church closed its doors, but didn't disband until 2008.

There were many members in the little church. At one time, the little town of Hurdsfield had seven churches. Slowly, the churches started closing due to so few members left. For several years, the only church still operating was the Catholic Church, which closed a couple years ago due to the small membership.

The Hurdsfield Church and Church School were sold and the buildings burned down. It is hard to drive by the empty lot that holds so many memories.

Article by Rita Weisz, former member of the Hurdsfield Seventh-day Adventist Church.



HURDSFIELD CHURCH HISTORY

by Bernice Wiesz

In June 1943 a young ministerial intern, Neal Becker, and his wife, Rosa Lee, came to Hurdsfield to hold tent meetings. Baptisms were held in August and October. On December 18, 1943 we were organized as a church body by Elder G. E. Hutches, Conference President, with 21 members.

In 1951, with God's guidance and leading, we decided that our children needed to be in church school. God has been good and we are proud of what this school has accomplished. We have sent forth from this little school one doctor, five nurses, five teachers, two secretaries, two musicians in our work, one social worker, two auto body repairmen, several farmers and others.

In 1970, we voted to disband due to many members moving away to educate their children. However, we always had a dream that somehow this church would open again. In February, 1975, Elder Lyndon DeWitt was driving by the church one day, and a voice spoke to him, "You must come here and hold meetings." He heard the same voice on his return trip. In two weeks, the meetings opened. Elder DeWitt was assisted by Pastor Dave Schwartz. As a result of these meetings, we organized again on May 2, 1975 with 40 members. We again had a church school with McClusky and Goodrich.

Our hearts are filled with praise. "To God be the glory. Great things He hath done."

Pastors of the Hurdsfield SDA Church:

Neal Becker	Avery Dick	David Schwartz	Mel Walgren
Edwin Kungel	George Sherbondy	Lowell Rideout	Arthur Hiebert
John Knipschild	Bernyl Mohr	Dennis Kaiser	Roy Morris
Kurt Kurz	David Young	Mike Porter	Darrel Lindensmith
Gideon Hochstetler	Robert Janssen	Stanley Teller	



Wasemiller Accepts Role of Children's Ministries Field Director

Dakota Conference youth directors Ricky and Brooke Melendez recently interviewed Kelli (Vigil) Wasemiller. They would like to welcome Kelli as Dakota Conference's new children's ministries field director.

Hi Kelli! We are so excited to have you back in the Dakotas. What brought you back?

My husband interviewed in several different locations, but Rapid City, SD, was the perfect fit. Moving in the midst of a pandemic was a bit crazy so we decided it was a good time for me to transition from teacher, back to student. I'm currently completing my Masters in Ministry Leadership with an emphasis in Human Services online through the University of Northwestern.

Tell us the three most important things we absolutely have to know about you.

1. I love Jesus
2. I hate snakes
3. That's all I got 😊

You're the new children's ministries field director. What does that mean?

It means I'm the point person for everything kids, ages 0-12! I want to help create opportunities for every young person in the Dakotas to have an encounter with Jesus.

Why are you so passionate about children's ministry?

Because I'm a child of God! Our young people are the life blood of our church and we need their enthusiasm and energy in our lives. Kids repeatedly minister to my heart and teach me about the love of Jesus. Sometimes we think that we need to be teaching and ministering to them all the time and forget to step back and let their spiritual wonder and awe minister to us.

What is your dream for children's ministries in the Dakotas?

Think for a moment about your favorite childhood memories in regards to church and Jesus...what highlights come to mind? More often than not, it's church game nights, singing around a campfire, church picnics, etc. It's moments of fellowship and relationship. It's not the fancy VBS decorations, cutting edge Sabbath School curriculum, or perfect pitch praise songs. It's loving relationships. My prayer is for each child in the Dakota Conference to grow in their relationship with their church family and in their relationship with God.

Where can people contact you if they want to connect with you?

Email is ideal for me!
kellivigil@gmail.com

Any final thoughts you would like to tell the our conference constituents?

I love Ephesians 3:20-21 in the Message translation. It says, "God can do anything, you know - far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us."

Let's start dreaming big Dakotas, I'm excited to watch God work!



get-together | fargo

friday | 6:30pm worship | saturday | all day, beginning at 10am
@ red river sda church | ages 13 -18 | march 19 & 20 | 2021



ABC Located at Dakota Conference in Bismarck

Tuesday - Thursday: 3:00 - 5:30 pm (If you happen to be in town during other hours, please stop by. We will try to accommodate.)

Friday: ABC & office closed

Regional Meetings

2021 has brought a new year and with it a change in how Regional Meetings are run. The Conference has changed the event's format and will be alternating locations each year.

Regional Program Schedule:

- Sabbath School
- Church
- Potluck Lunch
- Afternoon Seminar Sessions on Church Life

Scheduled dates:

- March 27, 2021 - Dickinson, ND
- April 17, 2021 - Fargo, ND
- October 9, 2021 - Aberdeen, SD
- November 13, 2021 - Sioux Falls, SD
- December 18, 2021 - DAA

- Spring 2022 - Jamestown, ND
- Spring 2022 - Dickinson, ND
- Fall 2022 - Rapid City, SD
- Fall 2022 - Aberdeen, SD

- December 2022 - DAA
- Spring 2023 - Fargo, ND
- Spring 2023 - Jamestown, ND
- Fall 2023 - Sioux Falls, SD
- Fall 2023 - Rapid City, SD
- December 2023 - DAA

When your church regional is scheduled we ask that you:

- Help promote the event.
- Plan to close your church for the day (unless you are the hosting church).
- Ask your members to bring food dishes for potluck.
- Encourage members to stay for the day and participate in the events planned.
- Send the name of your church's children's ministry coordinator to the Dakota Conference.

Please know that anyone is invited to attend any regional meeting.

Regions and Churches:

For clarity and simplicity sake, the names of regionals have been changed to reflect the hosting city. No favoritism is implied.

Dickinson Regional - meeting location at Invitation Hill Adventist Church:

Participating churches: Beulah, Bison, Bowman, Grassy Butte, Invitation Hill, Richardton, Watford City, Williston

Bismarck Regional - meeting location at Dakota Adventist Academy:

Participating churches: Bismarck, Bottineau, Dakota Adventist Academy, Goodrich, Mandan, McClusky, Minot, Turtle Lake

Jamestown Regional - meeting location at Jamestown Adventist Church:

Participating churches: Bowdon Country, Cleveland, Edgeley, Harvey, Jamestown, Manfred, New Home

Fargo Regional - meeting location at Fargo (south) Adventist Church:

Participating churches: Fargo, Grand Forks, Red River, Wahpeton

Rapid City Regional - meeting location at Rapid City Adventist Church:

Participating churches: Custer, Hermosa, Hot Springs, Rapid City, Spearfish

Aberdeen Regional - meeting location in Aberdeen to be determined:

Participating churches: Aberdeen, Bowdle, Ellendale, Kulm, Lehr, Mobridge, Pierre, Tolstoy, Watertown

Sioux Falls Regional - meeting location at Sioux Falls Adventist Church:

Participating churches: Huron, Hurley, Mitchell, Sioux Falls, Yankton

Dickinson Regional Invitation:

DICKINSON REGIONAL 2021



MARCH 27 – 10:00am MST
Invitation Hill Adventist Church
10730 Highway 10, Dickinson, ND

ENCOURAGING AND EQUIPPING THE MEMBERS OF THE DAKOTA CONFERENCE

A fellowship meal will follow the worship service prior to the afternoon seminars. Please bring a potluck dish to share.

SABBATH AFTERNOON SEMINARS

Sabbath, March 27, 2:00pm



CHURCH HEALTH CHECK-UP

Elder Mark Weir / President



CONNECTING YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS WITH THE CHURCH

Prs. Ricky & Brooke Melendez / Youth & Young Adult Directors



DOLLARS & SENSE

Mark Seibold / VP of Finance



PEOPLE WITH WILLS LIVE LONGER

Elder Charles O'Hare / Associate Trust Director



"RAISING THE DEAD": RELEASING RESURRECTION POWER IN YOUR CHURCH

Elder Mark Piotrowski / VP of Administration & Educ. Superintendent



THE DYNAMIC DUO: PASTORS & ELDERS IN MINISTRY

Elder Mark Weir / President



WOMEN'S MINISTRY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Paulette Bullinger / Women's Ministry Director



YOU LOST ME: WHY YOUNG ADULTS AREN'T INTERESTED IN CHURCH

Elder Mark Weir / President



HORSES HIGHLIGHTING HIS WORD: FOR AGES 5-12

Natalie Weir & Alexandra Short



YOUTH HANGOUT: FOR AGES 13-17

Prs. Ricky & Brooke Melendez / Youth & Young Adult Directors

Dakota Conference Calendar

Offering schedule is in purple.

March -

- 12-14: Men's Retreat in Medora, ND
- 13: Adventist World Radio
- 19-20: Global Youth Get-together Weekend in Fargo, ND
- 21: Executive Committee at the Conference Office
- 17: Deadline to register for MAUC Church Ministries Convention
- 20: Local Church Budget
- 25-28: MAUC Church Ministries Convention - Virtual
- 27: Dickinson Regional (10am MST)
- 27: Dakota Challenge

April -

- 1: Dakotans Pray (7pm)
- 3: Local Church Budget
- 5: Conference Office Closed
- 10: Education Sabbath
- 10: Hope Channel International

For more scheduled events, please see the calendar on the Dakota Conference website: www.dakotaadventist.org/events

Blessed & Kept

May today be a day of victory for you.

Every day brings with it fresh challenges and temptations.

May you face them and overcome.

May the strength of the spirit of God move through you as you move through and past the temptations of the day.

In scripture the phrase The Lord of hosts is often used to connote the incredible power of God. The God who is commander and leader of hosts of angelic armies.

The Lord of hosts has promised to be with you; to help you and guide you into sanctification.

May you remember today that the Lord of hosts fights for you.

Your battles are not only your battles.

May you fight remembering that you do not fight alone.

May you enter the battles of the day with the confidence of a lion battling a rabbit.

Not because of you but because of the hosts of angels behind you and the God who commands them to secure your future.

And when your strength is failing, may you be overwhelmed by the truth that battle has already been won.

May you enter the Sabbath rest knowing you have fought the good fight by letting the Lord of Hosts fight your battles for you.

Written by Casey Bartlett.

To follow Casey's Podcast *Blessed & Kept* click [here](#).

March 11 Dispatch Photo



If anyone has local church news or stories to share, please send event information, news suggestions and/or articles and pictures to: j.dossenko@gmail.com

Dispatch Mission: To build a climate of encouragement and blessing through the sharing of witnessing and evangelism activities. If you have news to share or would like to be added to the **Dakota Dispatch** mailing list, please email Jodi Dossenko at j.dossenko@gmail.com. Bison [Copyright](#)

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- [!\[\]\(d0fe824e371dd316453cda01cf34ca98_img.jpg\) Dakota Youth and Young Adults / Camps](#)
- [!\[\]\(d1a2681fe7bfd4d9525bb4cc91a3e465_img.jpg\) Dirt Kicker Charity Run](#)
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