

DAKOTA DISPATCH

Sharing the unchanging love of Jesus in a changing world.



Nothing to Fear

This is the seventeenth 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 6: In the Providence of God - Part 1

If ever an award is given for the unlikeliest missionary, Philip Reiswig will probably get it.

Arriving in Russia from South Dakota in November, 1883, Reiswig, who had traveled at his own expense, was now out of money and had to sell his good pair of boots to pay his fare to the Crimean Peninsula, his destination.¹

All that Reiswig had left was his faith in God and a trunkful of Adventist tracts and magazines.

Penniless, sixty-seven years old, almost blind, and handicapped by a speech impediment, Philip Reiswig seemed ill-equipped for successful evangelism. But it was just these liabilities that proved to be his greatest advantages.

According to the law of the Orthodox Church - controlled State, it was illegal to preach openly, so Reiswig went to the marketplaces in the German colonies in southern Russia, asking people who passed by to read to him from the pamphlet he held out to them.

When people, from courtesy, obliged the old man, he made some remarks about the passage, and if the reader showed any interest Reiswig would let him keep the leaflet.

In his spare time, Reiswig visited in the homes of the people, and called on the Lutheran pastors. By 1886, thirteen people were keeping the seventh-day Sabbath as a result of Reiswig's labors, some of the first Seventh-day Adventist converts in Russia.

In this manner, evangelistic work by Seventh-day Adventists in Russia was begun for the first time by lay evangelist Philip Reiswig, missionary from Milltown, Dakota Territory.²

Many of the thousands of German-Russians who began to fill the Dakota Territory in the last half of the nineteenth century had at least some acquaintance with the methods and message of Seventh-day Adventists, as we have seen. The Sabbath question had particularly become an issue as hundreds of Russian *Subotniki* who observed the seventh-day Sabbath were exiled for their beliefs to the Crimea, where many of the German settlements were located.³

A people whose lives had been molded by the religious ferment of the area in which they had lived, the German-Russians were unusually openminded in religious matters and strongly inclined to accept new teachings when they were based on the Scriptures, for which they had great respect.

The earliest account of work among the German-Russians in Dakota is a pair of letters written to General Conference President James White in 1878 by Eldon H. Pullen from Howard, (South) Dakota in which Pullen described the differences among several groups of the Germans.

One group of Baptists particularly attracted his attention, because, in common with Seventh-day Adventists, they "take the Bible alone as their guide, and claim that we should render implicit obedience to its teaching and requirements. They are temperate, holding to many of the views and practices of our people. They discard the use of alcoholic drinks and require applicants for church membership to dispense with the use of tobacco. They also practice feet-washing ."

At Milltown, Pullen attended a meeting of this Baptist group and was invited home with one of them, probably Jacob Reiswig, who homesteaded on the James River at Milltown early in the 1870's. Unable to communicate because of the language barrier, Pullen and his host took out their Bibles and went from text to text on the subject of the Sabbath. At the close of the study the Baptist said, "the seventh day is the true Sabbath, and men ought to keep it."

The next Saturday, Pullen returned and learned that his host and the man's wife, mother and stepfather had all decided to begin Sabbath observance.

In church the next day, the new Sabbath-keeper introduced the subject and, "the entire day was devoted to discussing it... I could not understand anything that was said," reported Pullen, "but helped what I could by referring the new-found friends of the Sabbath to proof-texts. As a result of the debate, four men decided in favor of the Sabbath." Returning later with additional help, Pullen discovered that seventeen men had begun observing the Sabbath at Milltown. One new believer was being bitterly opposed by his wife and by his father, who disinherited him and refused to even enter his home because of the disgrace he had brought on the family name.

Pullen also visited a group of four Sabbath-keepers at Lone Tree (Bon Homme County) who had learned of it from literature in the German language. Two members of this group visited the settlement where Pullen was distributing tracts and held two meetings, one lasting till two a.m. and the other all night. After the two meetings, twenty-five people had decided to begin keeping the Sabbath and others were interested.

The new Sabbath-keepers sent a message to the General Conference through Pullen asking for a German-speaking teacher or minister to be sent to instruct them, and for tracts and workers to be sent back to Russia to tell their relatives of this new truth they had discovered. Two of them offered to accompany Pullen and work among the German settlements in Dakota if tracts in the German language could be obtained.⁴

1. "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, *op. cit.*, 1348; Adeline Reimche, "The Organization of the First German Seventh-day Adventist Church in America" (unpublished article, 1982) 6; Jacob J. Reiswig, "Family Folklore," (unpublished reminiscences, c. 1962), 14; *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 6, 1883, 700; January 13, 1885, 30. The SDA Encyclopedia gives Reiswig's age as 60 when he first went to Russia; Adeline Reimche lists his age as 67, based on 1880 South Dakota census records which give his age as 64 at that time. The SDA Encyclopedia and Jacob Reiswig connect the incident of Philip Reiswig selling his boots, with his first trip to Russia; Adeline Reimche attributes it to his second trip based solely on her speculation that since Reiswig had some money at the time of his first trip (from the sale of his farm), that it must have happened on his second trip, after the money had run out.

2. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, *op. cit.*

3. "Sabbath," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, *op. cit.*, 1116.

4. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 2, 1879, 4,7.

Next time from *Nothing to Fear*:

Chapter 6, "In the Providence of God" - Part 2 by Robert K. DuPuy

A Father's Role

On Sunday we celebrate fatherhood in this country. What is a father's role today? In the following article Erma Bombeck (a syndicated columnist who described suburban home life from 1965 – 1996) tells the story of a little girl who loved her daddy but wasn't sure what dads did:

"One morning my father didn't get up and go to work. He went to the hospital and died the next day. I hadn't thought that much about him before. He was just someone who left and came home and seemed glad to see everyone at night. He opened the jar of pickles when no one else could. He was the only one in the house who wasn't afraid to go into the basement by himself. He cut himself shaving, but no one kissed it or got excited about it. When it rained he got the car and brought it around to the door. When anyone was sick, he went out to get the prescription filled.

"Whenever I played house, the mother doll had a lot to do. I never knew what to do with the daddy doll, so I had him say, 'I'm going off to work now,' and threw him under the bed. [After the funeral] I went to my room and felt under the bed for the daddy doll. When I found him, I dusted him off and put him on my bed. He never did anything. I didn't know his leaving would hurt so much."

What is a father's role? Research shows that fathers play a crucial role in the cognitive, social, and emotional development of their children. Fathers have a positive influence on their children when they are engaged, available, responsible, approachable and helpful. But it doesn't stop there. It has been demonstrated that a father's influence on their children's spiritual development is irreplaceable.

For example, it has been observed that no matter how faithful a mother's church attendance is, if a father doesn't attend only 1 child in 50 will become a regular worshiper. One study revealed that if a child becomes the first to attend church 3.5% of the time the household will follow. If the mother, 17%. However, if the father becomes the first there is a 93% probability everyone else in the household will follow.

With statistics like this you can understand why it's a tragedy that more and more men are opting out of church life today. There's also no question that this lack of participation is strongly associated with the current trend of church closures – anywhere from 5 to 10 thousand each year. Since the Pandemic, Barna Group's president, David Kinnaman, anticipates that as many as 20%, or 60,000 Protestant churches could close by the end of

2021. The Heavenly Father has assigned men an indispensable role, both in the home and the church. Men, no one but us can fill that role. To the best of our ability, let's not allow our children, or grandchildren to wonder today what daddy does.

Thoughts by Pr. Dave Moench, pastor of the Huron / Mitchell church district.

End of Year

The month of May is always a flurry of activities in any school. The Rapid City Seventh-day Adventist School went on a few field trips, hosted a Social Studies Fair, and topped the year off with graduation. Upper grades played frisbee golf and hiked Black Elk Peak while lower grades made tie-dye shirts and went to Reptile Gardens. The whole school rode the 1880 train.

The Social Studies Fair was patriotic and featured the United States. Each lower grade student presented a state, while each upper grade student presented a famous American in the form of a living wax museum. Graduation was a special evening celebrating both kindergarten and 8th grade graduates. God has blessed our school "exceedingly abundantly more than we can ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20-21). We cannot wait to see what our next school year will bring.



Back to Normal

“We are so glad to be able to come to a Campmeeting where things feel normal again.” The sentiment was expressed by a first-time visitor to the Dakota Conference. A return to what felt like a normal religious social gathering without the requirement of facemasks was, to some, both a literal and figurative breath of fresh air.

Things indeed were back to normal.

As normal, speakers came and shared generally well received messages. The saints were encouraged and blessed.

As normal, offerings were collected, and moneys were raised to help continue the various ministries of our Conference.

As normal, the weather invited itself as an obnoxious guest, who was nonetheless graciously tolerated.

As normal, children participated in classes where they learned and played, connecting and reconnecting with friends.

As normal, there was beautiful, uplifting music.

And as normal, God showed up.

But did I?

Seven years ago, I witnessed God show up in the youth department at Campmeeting. He was speaking not just to, but through the young people. The Spirit was breaking, and reforming lives. A group of young pastors were confronted with the reality of how much they did not know about God. It was beautiful. It was life-changing. That single week has made a larger impact on my life than any other period of time.

I love telling that story. But lately I have adjusted how I view it, and how I talk about it. I used to think that God showed up that week. But lately I have begun to see it differently. God didn't show up that week. He shows up EVERY week. The difference THAT week was that we were looking for Him. The more we celebrated and lifted up what we were seeing, the more visible it became. God: moving, being, acting, changing... as normal.

Those who were there seven years ago created an expression to describe what we experienced that week. We called it “the new normal”. We lived in expectancy that God is always present (Deuteronomy 31:6) and that His “normal” is to always be doing something new (Isaiah 43:19). God showing up is normal. God doing a new thing is normal.

Then why don't I see it more often? Is it because I am simply not looking for it? Would God move more mightily among us as a people if we genuinely expected Him to? What did I miss this year at Campmeeting simply

because I was either not looking for it, or because I was so comfortably sated by the routine that I missed seeing that He is doing something new? What was this year's Campmeeting experience like for the Spirit of God? Did He have the same takeaways that I did?

For now, Campmeeting is over. We will have to wait and see what happens next year. In the meantime, we can all concentrate on getting back to normal.



Article by Elder Rob Carlson, Dakota Conference administrative assistant and soon to be DAA Bible teacher and chaplain. Photos by Elder Mark Piotrowski, Dakota Conference VP of administration and education superintendent.

2021 Campmeeting Sessions are available for viewing

on the [Conference website](#) and [YouTube channel](#). Click on the links or use the following address:
www.dakotaadventist.org/campmeetingarchives

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

Dakota Conference Calendar

Offering schedule is in purple.

June -

- 16-20: Cub Camp (ages 8-10) at Flag Mountain
- 19: Local Church Budget
- 20-27: Junior Camp (ages 11-13) at Flag Mountain
- 26: Worthy Student
- 27: Dakota Executive Committee at Conference Office (10am)
- 27-Jul 4: Teen Retreat (ages 14-17) at Flag Mountain

July -

- 1: Dakotans Pray via Zoom (7pm)
- 3: Local Church Budget
- 5: Conference Office Closed for Independence Day
- 10: NAD Women's Ministries
- 14-18: Cub Camp (ages 8-10) at Northern Lights
- 17: Local Church Budget
- 18-25: Junior Camp (ages 11-13) at Northern Lights
- 24: Dakota Challenge
- 25-Aug1: Teen Retreat (ages 14-17) at Northern Lights

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

Blessed & Kept

Psalm 6

May the cries of your heart reach the heavens.

May you receive assurance that the God who knows what it is to anguish hears you.

Though you may not receive an answer to your question, "how long, God?"

May the divine presence sit with you in the dark winter of your soul.

May your pain be a seed of trust, planted in the darkness, buried where it no longer feels right to trust in the promises of God.

May your tears water the dry ground of your soul, giving your seed of trust deep roots.

May the comfort of the divine presence be enough as you wait for the harvest.
May you wait patiently for the day when you will trust again; when you will have joy once more.

Written by Casey Bartlett.

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

June 17 Dispatch Photo



Photo taken by Jeana Eszler overlooking the Missouri River in Burleigh County, North Dakota.

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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