

Dakota Messenger

DAKOTA CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Nothing to Fear

Mark R. Weir, President



"New": the word is filled with both excitement and uncertainty. A visit to a new restaurant should be exciting, but it carries some unknowns: What's on the menu? Will it taste good? Is it expensive?

After we graduated from Union College, Judy and I packed up our small home and journeyed to our first pastoral assignment in Crookston, MN. Like the new restaurant this assignment carried both excitement and uncertainty: Will I be a good pastor? Will the people welcome us? We came to love the people; because people are at the heart of pastoral ministry.

Through those intervening years I have had the privilege to meet and know so many different people. From pastoring in the Minneapolis and Seattle areas, to transitioning to an academy Bible teacher/campus chaplain, returning to pastoral ministry, to conference ministerial director, and ultimately returning to the Midwest and joining the Dakota Conference family. People have been the best part of the journey.

I am humbled by the trust recently placed in me by our Dakota Conference family. I believe the role of president is to serve the saints. My time in the Dakotas has been short, but I have come to respect many things about the people: dedication, perseverance, honesty, straight-forwardness, faithfulness, generosity, (and excellent cooking!). As I have visited many of our churches and schools, I have appreciated the warm welcome, the encouragement and the willingness of people to serve - attributes that make our conference special. I sincerely look forward to visiting each Dakota church, because these are the best places to interact with you, our members.

As I reflect on the last year, I want to acknowledge Elder Neil and Jacquie Biloff. What they have done to strengthen our conference is incredible; we owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude. Their wisdom, dedication and clear focus will be missed. As we move forward, I desire to build on the solid foundation that has been established.

There are things I want to promise each of you. First, there will be no secrets and we will do our best to avoid surprises. I desire that our conference family be fully aware and fully informed. Communication with this conference family is a high priority; we can only function well when we have all the necessary information.

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Second, I am here to serve. In the world at large, people want to rise to the top of a pyramid; but that is not the model for a Christ follower. For many years I have shared with local church leadership teams the idea that we need to operate based on the inverted pyramid: Jesus was the Savior, but He was also the Servant-in-Chief. The further down you go, the smaller the pyramid becomes because there are fewer and fewer people tending to more and more responsibilities. The further down you go, the more people you serve, instead of more people serving you. It is a servant model; and now, as President, I will strive to model the concept of servant-in-chief.

I look forward to continuing to serve here in the Dakota Conference. We have an excellent office staff, dedicated pastors and teachers, and conscientious members who generously give of their time, talents and resources. The strength of this conference are the people reading this - our members. It is to our members that I want to be faithful with the privilege entrusted to me. Please pray that God will grant me the wisdom and discernment that I will need. I do not know what our tomorrows bring, but I do know we serve a great and powerful God; and because of that, we have nothing to fear.

The Revival Continues

Ricky & Brooke Melendez, Youth and Young Adult Directors



The past few months have been filled with excitement for the future of youth and young adults in the Dakotas. Summer camp ended on a high note, the last week of camp being at full capacity. Celebration abounded as many families gathered to watch children dedicate their lives to Jesus through baptism.

Overall, 6 weeks of Dakota camps hosted 107 campers, 24 full-time summer staff, 2 staff-in-training, 129 re-dedications to Christ, and 35 baptisms or re-baptisms. What an incredible summer!

Over Labor Day Weekend, the Flag Mountain Camp Committee and their families hosted a small work bee to do some much-needed camp maintenance. The exterior of both cabins were deep cleaned and two new coats of stain/sealant were applied, resulting in a beautiful new appearance. Much work remains and we hope to host larger work bees in the future.

The beginning of October marked the 5th year of Family Worship at The Lodge, Dakotas' annual young adult retreat near Havana, ND. It was a divine and intimate weekend of worship; participants enjoyed Christian fellowship. Attendance was minimized due to Covid, but all present found the experience fulfilling. We are thankful this event could continue and hope to return to full capacity for the 2021 retreat.

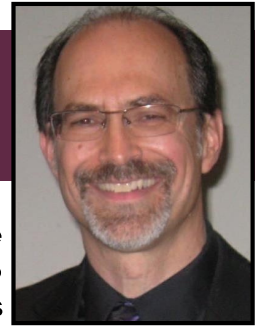
2020 has thrown many curveballs and difficulties as we continue to try to adapt to the "new normal." We are so grateful for the ability to host a few in-person events with the help of some masks, a lot of hand sanitizer, and many helping hands to make sure safety is a priority. We are planning for some virtual events that will be available to our youth, young adults, Pathfinder and Adventurer leaders, and continue to pray for more opportunities to safely gather together in the future. Please keep the young people of our conference in your prayers as we see them grow into mature disciples of Christ and continue to bring the transformation of the Kingdom of God to this world.



Flag Mountain Camp, photo by Caleb Haakenson

Hope Springs Eternal

Mark Seibold, VP of Finance and Interim VP of Administration



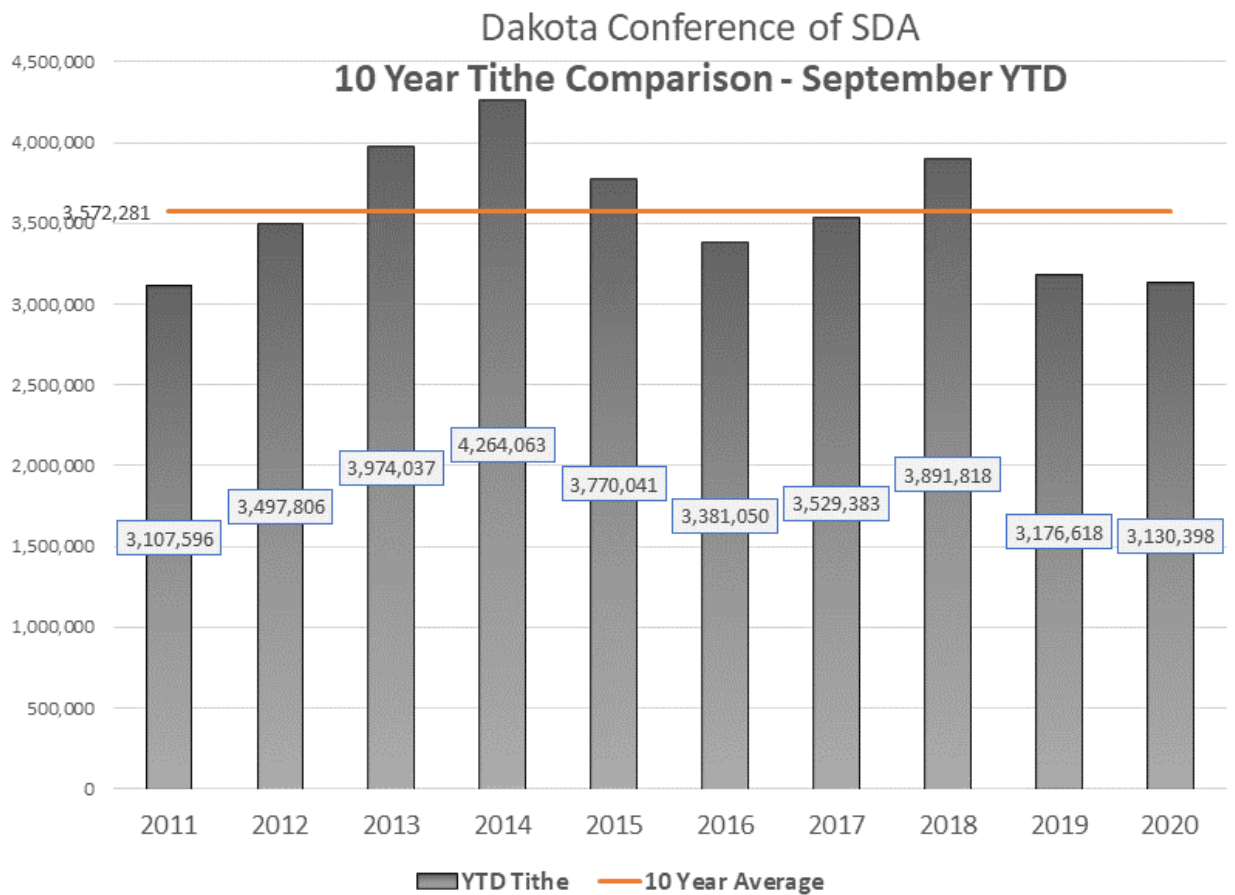
I've been hearing it often: 2020 is a year most people would like to forget! Hope springs eternal, and most believe when 2021 arrives, it has to be better! Hard to disagree with that sentiment, but we also accept that living in the present means dealing with present challenges.

Like many organizations - and individuals - Dakota Conference is experiencing the "fallout" of this year's pandemic. The timing is unfortunate, as this follows a year that saw two main regional industries, petroleum and agriculture, struggle with falling commodity prices and poor growing conditions. Tithes in 2019 (as well as non-tithe income) dropped dramatically from 2018, and 2020 tithes YTD through September (graph below) are now slightly behind even 2019. The effect is that conference reserves and working capital are at their lowest in many years.

Along with our K-12 Board and Executive Committee, we'll be assessing our expenditures and making recommendations on preserving the fiscal integrity of your conference. Until current trends improve, we will need to identify areas of savings and make adjustments to operate within current financial realities. We will keep you, our constituents, advised on these developments as they unfold as we strive to discern God's intentions for the mission of Dakota Conference.

Whatever the future holds, remember that we serve a God who has a plan for His church, and whatever the circumstances of today, He is guiding us through to the goals He has established.

Why *shouldn't* hope spring eternal?



Office Changes

Jodi Dossenko, Communication Director



The office has seen many changes since the last Messenger was delivered.

- **Neil and Jacquie Biloff** have retired after serving fifteen years in the Dakota Conference. They will be missed.
- In addition to her current role as trust services assistant, **Julie Brude** has taken on the responsibilities of membership clerk. She will work with church clerks and pastors regarding church membership and attendance.
- **Jodi Dossenko** has been promoted to communication director and continues to keep her role of education secretary.
- **Lynette Miller** is transitioning into development director, a role she has been sharing with Sharon Heinrich for the past couple of years. Lynette will continue to manage the Adventist Book Center as well as work with building and liability insurance.
- Vice President of Finance **Mark Seibold** will also serve as interim vice president of administration until a replacement has been found.
- **Mark Weir** has accepted the call to be conference president. He will serve as interim education superintendent until a replacement can be named.
- **Judy Weir** is now part-time treasury assistant. She receipts all funds sent to the office. (see Judy's photo below)
- Administration is searching for a receptionist/administrative assistant. Interested individuals can contact Mark Seibold.



The **Youth & Young Adult Department** is seeking to find all of our public school students, age 5-25 (older if you are attending school), living in or outside the Dakota Conference.

If you are one of these students, we'd love to connect with you. We want you to know you are not alone! There are people at the Dakota Conference and Seventh-day Adventist Church to support, listen, and minister to you as you navigate life in a changing world. We'd love to meet you and see how we can better reach out to those not directly tied to the Dakota Adventist system. You are part of our family. Please connect with us at: dakotayouthandyoungadults@gmail.com

If your young family member falls into the above category and may not see this article, PLEASE reach out to us as well. We want to connect with all of our Dakota youth no matter where they are. Thank you!

Grace and Peace, Ricky & Brooke Melendez



The Same, but Different

Tracy Peterson, Dakota Adventist Academy Recruiter



Dakota Adventist Academy has always started with Registration Day, but this year the execution was different due to the “Corona Cloud”. Parents pre-scheduled drop off times so only four families would arrive at a time. This schedule enabled students to register and settle in with no wait time, and it turned out to be a blessing.

“Social distance” has been the name of the game in regard to arrival on campus, both at the start of the year and after every home leave. 72 hours of distancing has enabled staff and students to move on and become a family unit. To help accommodate that, Camp Week started a day late. When buses were loaded to go to Northern Lights Camp, students and teachers were able to behave as family and everyone was happy to socialize normally!

A DAA school year is usually punctuated with outings: Mid-America Union Conference (MAUC) Leadership Conference, volleyball tournament, field trips, off-campus outings on Sundays, and other functions. This year many events have been cancelled which limit student travel. MAUC held a “virtual” leadership conference where students enjoyed interacting with other young people across the Union. Staff and students have been able to enjoy outdoor activities off-campus: Sabbath afternoon hikes at Double Ditch or Cross Ranch State Park allow for a change of scenery. Cancelled Regionals have allowed time for other fun activities such as an additional boys’ and girls’ club retreat weekend.

Student Association sponsored activities, Fall Picnic and Fall Party were a great success. High winds did not allow for a fire, but not to worry: Mr. Peterson brought a propane burner, so s’mores were still on the menu!

Week of Worship’s theme was “But God...”. Our speaker, Pastor Peter Simpson, shared from both life experience and the Bible to showcase the power of those two little words. Many listeners could relate with their own “but God” moments.

As I reflect on DAA’s first quarter, I know our students are thankful for the opportunity to go to school in a familiar setting: Rarely having to mask and distance adds to our family atmosphere. In spite of the changes around us, we are able to maintain some normalcy, face to face learning, time with friends, and bit of fun along the way.



Boys' Club Retreat, photo by Colter Roffler

DAKOTA CONFERENCE
26TH ANNUAL MEN'S RETREAT
dakotaadventist.org

A SON OF THE FATHER
 MARCH 12-14, 2021

SPEAKERS:
 Jony Hajaj
 Larry Priest
 Mark Weir

ROUGH RIDER HOTEL
 301 3RD AVENUE
 MEDORA, NORTH DAKOTA

PHOTO BY CHRYSAL RITTENBACH

32nd Annual Women's Retreat

Paulette Bullinger, Women's Ministry Director



The 2020 Dakota Conference Women's Retreat was held October 9-11 at the Abbey of the Hills Inn and Retreat Center in South Dakota. The Abbey's setting is one of beauty and peace. God blessed the weekend with beautiful weather and the ladies enjoyed the groomed walking trails around campus. Despite the challenges of Covid-19, the retreat was well attended. Extra precautions were taken by the Abbey staff and retreat committee to make sure everyone remained healthy. Attendees enjoyed a weekend of friendship, fellowship and spiritual renewal.

Every year the retreat committee collects donations for the Woman to Woman Project. This year's project was for the Beacon Center, a shelter in Watertown, SD. The center has been committed to bringing support, hope and healing to those facing significant life challenges. Ladies were asked to bring donations of: cleaning supplies, dish and laundry soap, dryer sheets, bleach, garbage bags, diapers, and non-perishable food items. A collection was taken on Sabbath which resulted in a generous cash donation. Laurie Danforth, president of the Beacon Center, called and expressed her appreciation for the women's retreat donations. The center serves a five-county area and households of all kinds.

Save the date for Dakota Conference's
33rd Annual Women's Retreat.

September 24-26, 2021
Baymont Inn & Suites in Mandan, ND

Speaker: Suzie Sendros

Photo by Paulette Bullinger



THE DAKOTA DISPATCH

a biweekly e-newsletter of conference and academy information whose mission is to build a climate of encouragement and blessing through the sharing of witnessing and evangelism activities.

SIGN UP BY VISITING:
dakotaadventist.org
>Communique
>Dakota Dispatch

¡Te apreciamos y estamos orando por ti!
Contáctenos en la Oficina de la Conferencia si hay algo que podamos hacer para ayudar.

Trust Department

Charlie O'Hare

Left to Right:

Julie Brude, Trust Assistant

Cindy Miller, Trust Director

Charlie O'Hare, Associate Trust Director



Your Trust Department continues to prepare Wills, Power of Attorney, and Health Care Directive documents for Dakota Conference members. Covid has caused many to be more mindful about the need to have these documents in place, but we should always have a Will in place as we do not know what the future holds.

James tells us, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit'- yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.'" James 4:13-15. Please contact us for more information about the services we provide.

The Mission is Essential

Lynette Miller, Development Director



In a world of constant change, the development office stands firm for an unchanging God. Christian Education continues to be one of life's best investments. We continue to be blessed by a community of individuals who care about our school and students. Whatever circumstances bring students to DAA, they leave with friendships that will last a lifetime and into eternity.

As time passes, I am convinced more than ever that Dakota Adventist Academy's mission is essential. This generation desperately needs the opportunities DAA offers: to be mentored by Christian role models, to learn God's plan for humanity from Scripture, and to make a personal connection with Jesus!

The August/September newsletter went out to approximately 2,200 households. It highlights activities and events happening at Dakota Adventist Academy along with news from our alumni members' lives.

Due to COVID, Alumni Weekend was cancelled. This decision was disappointing but after due consideration, your Alumni officers felt the health and safety of our students must be the priority. All honor classes that were scheduled to be recognized this year will be recognized next year, along with 2021 honor classes.

October typically features a special Sabbath offering for the Secondary Endowment. As part of this event students and faculty from Dakota Adventist Academy visit churches and help present the worship service. Given the limitations of this year, students and staff could not travel, so, a special digital program was created and provided to all churches and shown on Sabbath, October 31.

Even though we are not together, please continue to support this essential mission with the financial faithfulness you have shown in the past. We don't have to be together to support each other. Please look for the Fall Appeal letter in your mailbox, inviting you to become a part of our support team! As always, please continue to keep Dakota Adventist Academy in your prayers.

Dakota Conference

OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

7200 N Washington Street
Bismarck ND 58503-6301
www.dakotaadventist.org



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BISMARCK, ND

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

CALENDAR

November

- 07 Southwest Regional - CANCELLED
- 07 DAA Fall Festival - CANCELLED
- 14 Southeast Regional - CANCELLED
- 16-19 MAUC Year-end Meetings - Virtual
- 23-29 DAA Thanksgiving Home Leave
- 25-26 Conference Office Closed - Thanksgiving

December

- 06 Executive Committee - Office (10am)
- 18 DAA Celebration of Praise Weekend - TBD
- 19 Central ND Regional - TBD
- 20-3 DAA Christmas Home Leave
- 23-24 Conference Office Closed - Christmas
- 31 Conference Office Closed - New Year's Eve

January

- 13-29 MAPS Testing - Dakota Conference Schools
- 18-21 Pastors' Meetings - Conference Office

President, Evangelism, ASI, Interim Education Superintendent

Mark Weir

Admin Assistant, Receptionist

TBD

Communication, Education Assistant

Jodi Dossenko

Development, ABC Manager

Lynette Miller

Maintenance Services

Marlin Miller

Youth Dir, Camps, Pathfinders, SS

Ricky & Brooke Melendez

VP of Finance, Interim VP of Admin

Mark Seibold

Associate Treasurer, Trust Director

Cindy Miller

Treasury Clerk

Judy Weir

Associate Trust Services Director

Charles O'Hare

Trust Services Adm Assist, Conf Clerk

Julie Brude

Field Officers

Adventist Community Services

Bob Forbes II

Disaster Relief Director

Phyllis Alexander

Men's Ministries Director

Randy Rubbert

Ministerial Director

Merlin Knowles

Prayer Ministries Director

Barry St. Clair

Women's Ministries Director

Paulette Bullinger