



Dakota Messenger

DAKOTA CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Facing Our Future

Mark R. Weir, President



"No one can be certain what tomorrow will bring. We plan. We prepare. We anticipate that our tomorrows will be remarkably similar to our yesterdays. Most generally, it is only over the course of time that we finally realize how much things have changed.

It was the last paper I had to write for college. I did not want to write it. I did not need the score to pass the class, but the professor (who I worked for) insisted that I write it so my grade would not be recorded as "incomplete." So, I got creative. Each page of the 10+ page paper had a slight reduction in margin size on both sides of the paper. From page one to page two, it was hardly noticeable. The same from page two to page three. Because of my "creativity" I wanted the professor to read it in my presence, so I waited patiently as he did so. About page six is when his head suddenly jerked up, and he looked at me with a very questioning look. I could not contain my laughter. By the time he reached the end of the paper, there was way more white space on the sides of the paper than written material in the center. I share that story for a simple reason. Changes that are happening slowly are easy to miss initially, but those changes ultimately lead to significant differences. And it is those differences that need to be addressed.

I am a firm believer in the value of our Adventist educational system. I would not be where I am today except for the influence of a 7th and 8th grade church-school teacher. My goal was to play basketball at UCLA, and an Adventist Christian education did not fit into my plans. As a compromise with my mom, I agreed to go for two days of 7th grade until the public school began. In those two days that teacher profoundly impacted my expectations, my attitude, and my life trajectory.

This story can be repeated by many of you. Frequently I hear stories of memories and treasured friendships. Those common connections have helped to shape us and bind us together. Yet are our children and grandchildren going to have the opportunity for those same connections, lifelong friendships, and lifechanging moments? I wonder.

I have spent time over this past year getting to know the people across our Conference through visiting churches and schools, and through surveying our pastors, teachers, Executive Committee

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members, K-12 Board members, and head elders. These people provided me with an abundance of valuable information and insight and have stated that our Academy is very appreciated. Our people have shown this through their generous giving and support. Dakota Adventist Academy is a school to be proud of. And yet, there are very few students from within the Dakota Conference who attend. Many families do not choose to give their children the adventure of academy life, of lasting friendships and life-changing experiences. Why? Are these academy relationships no longer valid or relevant? Is academy life and a boarding school experience no longer important?

My personal conviction is that the need for deep, lasting relationships, and the bonds that are made in academy are greater today than ever before. I realize that my convictions are not held by all. Over the years, fewer and fewer of our families seem to think that what happens in an academy setting is important: the Christian influence on a daily basis, the teachers that pray for each student and do whatever it takes to help them succeed, the growth and development that come from leadership opportunities on campus and faith sharing opportunities in our churches.

The actual number of Dakota students attending Dakota Adventist Academy is extremely small. Why is that? We each may have our own answers to that question. We as a Conference are endeavoring to find answers, and even more important, address the issues that may be causing challenges. We must address what actually is, not simply act on what we wish was.

Some of you may have had unfortunate experiences in grade school, church, or academy. I am sorry for the hurt you carry. We can each tell stories of teachers, situations, leadership, unfairness, and poor decisions that color our lives. I certainly know that I can. Yet I do not want to be held hostage by that or assume the worst about others because of something unfortunate that happened to me. We are all human, and that guarantees that mistakes will be made, misjudgments will happen, foibles will occur. Yet even with those hurtful times often there are still many good memories, there are the blessings of lifetime friends, and ways that God uses you to make a difference in the lives of others. I want that for each of our kids. Our teachers are doing more than teaching math, history, or English lessons. They are helping develop character as well as pointing their students toward a relationship with Jesus, which will make a difference for eternity.

When we think about the future of the Dakota Conference, I want that future to include an Academy. For that to be a reality means that all of us must be a part of that future. Yes - there is cost aspect, but there are funds to help. Yes - there is a commitment aspect, but most good things in life require a commitment. Yes - there is a trust aspect, but get to know the teachers and staff.

Facing our future: This is about our children, but ultimately, this is about our church. A church without young people is not likely to remain a church for very long.

2021 Regional Meetings

Theme: All In

Northwest Regional in Dickinson: March 27

Participating Churches: Bison, Bowman, Beulah, Invitation Hill, Richardton, Watford City, & Williston

Northeast Regional in Fargo: April 17

Participating Churches: Fargo, Grand Forks, Red River, & Wahpeton

What to look forward to:

Sabbath School

Church

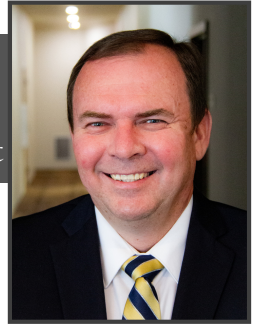
Potluck Lunch

Afternoon Seminar Sessions on Church Life

Supper

Aiming Higher

Mark Piotrowski, VP Administration & Education Superintendent



Adventist Education is growing and thriving in the Dakota Conference. It has been a joy for me to visit our schools in the past month and see firsthand how students' lives are being impacted and transformed in our classrooms. I want to express my thanks to our parents and guardians for their support. We are also blessed to have a dedicated group of educators who have had to improvise and adapt to the new realities that the pandemic has created. Our educator team has excelled in their efforts to continue teaching in this set of circumstances. They are being used powerfully by the Lord to impact the lives of our youth. Recently, I heard a story about one family who decided to withdraw their child and to place them in another school. After a few weeks the student caught a ride back to our school where they used to attend and showed up at the front door. When our teacher asked her why she was back she said that she missed the special atmosphere and care of the teacher in her classroom at our school. Suffice to say the student's parent is making arrangements to enroll their child back at our school. At another school, all students in the upper grades' classroom, except one who is already baptized, are receiving Bible studies with the pastor. That speaks in part to what the Lord is doing through the educational ministry here in the Dakotas. Precious eternal decisions are being made each day in our schools' classrooms. Future leaders are being prepared for service each day.

The Adventist church exists for a special purpose that is biblically grounded and guided by the counsels of the Spirit of Prophecy. Christian education's aims are higher, seeking to restore the image of God in students and to prepare them for service in this life and the next. Its aim is to return to God's original purpose in creating humans. Adventist education shares this spiritual and redemptive goal with other Christian schools. But a third aspect makes Adventist education unique: It is our church's end-time mission to the world. We are living on the precipice of time.

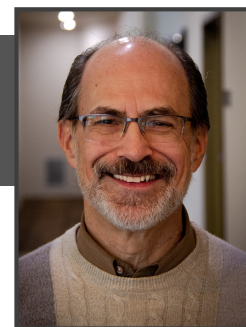
George Knight observed that the denomination's two schools in 1880 became 16 schools in 1890, rapidly expanding to 245 in 1900, more than 600 in 1910, and 2,178 by 1930. Adventist mission, he says, grew exactly the same way, showing "a growth curve that goes nearly straight up beginning in the 1890s. Both the birth and the expansion of Seventh-day Adventist education were stimulated by the explosive fuel of apocalyptic mission as the denomination sought to educate the coming generation of young people not only about that apocalyptic mission but [also] to dedicate their lives to it (George R. Knight, "Education for What? Thoughts on the Purpose and Identity of Adventist Education," *The Journal of Adventist Education*, October/November 2016, 6-12). We see the same dynamic at play some 140 years later. We hold dearly to the truth that our mission and our education ministry have the one and the same purpose and the Holy Spirit is using our schools in a powerful manner to fulfill that objective. We read from the inspired pen: "I was shown by the angel of God that an institution should be established for the education of our youth, I saw that it would be one of the greatest means ordained of God for the salvation of souls" (Ellen G. White, *Christian Education*, 24). What a glorious aim.



Adventist Education

Looking Back, Looking Ahead

Mark Seibold, VP of Finance



As noted previously in this column, Dakota Conference has been experiencing declining financial trends, intensified by economic factors the last two years. As a result, spending conference reserves became necessary - a contingency that, while good to have, is difficult to restore. This also contributed to non-compliance with General Conference financial requirements. Given these factors, treasury took an unprecedented look at longer term spending in major cost categories, analyzing the effect on the conference's overall financial picture.

After payroll, which has been reduced year over year since 2018, the largest single expense is Dakota Adventist Academy subsidy. Due to rising costs and generally declining enrollment, this expense has required periodic increases over the past several years, as seen below:

DAA Subsidy as a Percentage of Tithes 2012-2020



Year	DAA Regular Subsidy	DAA Special Subsidy	Total Subsidy	Tithe	% of Tithe
2012	\$ 160,800	\$ 540,000	\$ 700,800	\$ 5,315,180	13.18%
2013	\$ 200,400	\$ 589,000	\$ 789,400	\$ 5,854,021	13.48%
2014	\$ 240,000	\$ 560,000	\$ 800,000	\$ 6,306,942	12.68%
2015	\$ 240,000	\$ 660,000	\$ 900,000	\$ 5,520,706	16.30%
2016	\$ 240,000	\$ 537,000	\$ 777,000	\$ 4,992,212	15.56%
2017	\$ 240,000	\$ 630,000	\$ 870,000	\$ 5,357,714	16.24%
2018	\$ 240,000	\$ 690,000	\$ 930,000	\$ 5,556,896	16.74%
2019	\$ 240,000	\$ 690,000	\$ 930,000	\$ 4,782,960	19.44%
2020	\$ 1,170,000		\$ 1,170,000	\$ 5,055,445	23.14%

Notes: 1. Regular & Special subsidies were combined for 2020; includes provision to bring DAA borrowing current. 2. Figures do not include development wages

This trend has contributed to the general decline in the availability of cash, investments, and conference working capital since 2012:

Dakota Conference Cash/Investments/Working Capital

Fiscal Year Ending	Available Cash	Investments	Liquid Funds: Total Cash + Investments	Actual Working Capital*	Percentage of Recommended Working Capital
2012	\$ 1,606,212	\$ 946,338	\$ 2,552,550	\$ 2,700,541	130%
2013	\$ 1,351,590	\$ 1,082,352	\$ 2,433,942	\$ 2,451,901	101%
2014	\$ 1,456,919	\$ 1,423,756	\$ 2,880,675	\$ 2,890,796	100%
2015	\$ 499,409	\$ 1,654,491	\$ 2,153,900	\$ 2,401,566	83%
2016	\$ 958,982	\$ 1,577,187	\$ 2,536,169	\$ 2,693,693	94%
2017	\$ 1,092,274	\$ 987,339	\$ 2,079,613	\$ 2,191,673	89%
2018	\$ 603,328	\$ 731,281	\$ 1,334,609	\$ 1,617,132	76%
2019	\$ 539,541	\$ 505,752	\$ 1,045,293	\$ 1,130,177	60%
2020	\$ 1,586,773	\$ 273,574	\$ 1,860,347	\$ 1,634,733	71%

Note 1: 2020 Cash includes one-time \$624,900 PPP Funds (COVID Grant)

*Total Assets - Total Liabilities

Note 2: Percent of recommended working capital reflects the % of conference reserves as compared to NAD policy.

A sampling of other conferences with academies reveal that all use a considerably smaller percentage of tithe to support their secondary boarding school(s):

Boarding Academy Subsidy Comparisons: FYE 2019

Conference	Tithe	Subsidy	%	Notes
1	\$ 18,174,773	\$ 484,624	2.67%	Split between a boarding & a day academy
2	\$ 10,618,520	\$ 500,000	4.71%	\$385k from tithe; balance non-tithe
3	\$ 10,754,778	\$ 750,000	6.97%	Doesn't include additional 1% capital appropriation
4	\$ 9,191,113	\$ 643,400	7.00%	5% tithe + 2% non-tithe
5	\$ 4,499,877	\$ 450,000	10.00%	Per 2019 contact w/ conference treasurer: Approximate
Dakota	\$ 4,782,960	\$ 930,000	19.44%	Development Dept compensation not included

Of possible reasons for this disparity, the most relevant is that Dakota is one of the lowest-membership North American conferences supporting a boarding academy.

But this analysis also raised other questions, including: Why is enrollment declining, and why do so few Dakota Conference high-school age students currently attend? Can we reinvigorate our academy with a new strategy for attracting students - and if so, what would that look like? Those of us who have been a part of this conference for more than a few years recognize that our school has periodically experienced financial challenges. At these times, members tend to ask a basic question: Is there still a future for Adventist secondary boarding education in the Dakotas? To best assess these concerns and plan for the future of DAA, these questions - and more - must be addressed. The issue becomes how to best meet this critically important challenge.

Plan of Action

Last fall, as the K-12 Finance Committee was presented with the preceding information, it was recognized that the conference could not afford to subsidize DAA at current levels, and that immediate and significant action was required to provide the conference financial relief.

About this time DAA was blessed with a substantial estate gift. Based on urgency, recognized needs and availability of this windfall, a three-part proposal emerged from the finance committee and was ultimately approved by the K-12 Board of Education:

1. Effective January 1, 2021, Dakota Conference would reduce DAA subsidy to approximately half of the 2019 level, allowing the conference an opportunity to begin rebuilding cash and reserves.
2. The entire gift would be used for DAA operations. The policy requiring a portion be placed in endowment was suspended for this gift. This would compensate for the reduced subsidy for at least ten months and provide continued funding while a third part of the plan would be implemented:
3. An independent marketing plan proposal would be solicited to explore the feasibility of a new strategy for enrollment growth. In addition, the conference and academy would create a survey to learn from members, particularly those with high-school age students, possible reasons for not patronizing DAA. In addition, development would be assessed for potential ways to increase effectiveness.

Recently received, the professional marketing plan includes direct mail, email, video, website, and digital marketing components. Given the ultimate cost, an updated presentation was made February 10 on behalf of the Finance Committee to a joint meeting of the K-12 Education Board and Executive Committee, where the marketing plan was overwhelmingly approved.

If you wish to financially support this effort, send checks payable to Dakota Conference, memo "DAA Marketing Plan". Please pray for your conference and academy leadership as we move ahead on this important project to establish a successful future for our academy.

DAA Perceptions Survey

Jodi Dossenko, Communication Director



To gain a better understanding of why more Dakota families are not selecting Dakota Adventist Academy for their student's education, we need your help. To this end, we have created a survey in an attempt to discern perceptions regarding the current program. You are invited to add your voice by taking part in this anonymous survey. To participate, go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DAAperceptions>

To complete the survey with a smart phone or device:

- Open the camera app.
- Focus the camera on the QR code found to the right.
- Follow the instructions on the screen to complete the action.



Please share this information with anyone willing to participate; more information will help establish what can be done to provide a stable future. With your help, we can work toward a brighter future for Dakota Adventist Academy.

What Will They Find at Camp?

Ricky & Brooke Melendez, Youth and Young Adult Directors



DAKOTA ADVENTIST CAMPS



WONDER 2021

FLAG MOUNTAIN

cub camp, ages 8-10 | June 16-20 | \$200
junior camp, ages 11-13 | June 20-27 | \$275
teen retreat, ages 14-17 | June 27-July 4 | \$275

NORTHERN LIGHTS

cub camp, ages 8-10 | July 14-18 | \$200
junior camp, ages 11-13 | July 18-25 | \$275
teen retreat, ages 14-17 | July 25-Aug 1 | \$275
family camp | Aug 5-8 | price varies per family



Dakota Campmeeting 2021



HOPE

JUNE 9-12, 2021

FEATURED SPEAKERS:
 CHRIS HOLLAND
 STAN PATTERSON
 RICHIE & TIMARI BROWER

WITH MUSIC GROUP:
 THE EMMANUEL QUARTET



2021 Dakota Campmeeting Reservation
 June 9-12, 2021

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Names of people sharing your room: _____

Total number of mattresses needed: _____

Make checks payable to "Dakota Conference".
Send full payment with reservation to Dakota Conference.
Full time reservations take precedence over daily stays.
Reservations may be made online: www.dakotaadventist.org

Dorm Room - standard room, includes beds/mattresses only.
Linens, towels, and personal toiletries are NOT provided.

Dorm Room - Full Time: \$100/week

Dorm Room - Daily: \$35/day

Refrigerator - \$25 (upon availability)

Campground with hook-up - RV/Campers/Tents

Campground - Full Time: \$50/week

Campground - Daily: \$18/day

Campground without hook-up - Tents/Self-Contained RVs

Campground - \$10/week

Dakota Conference

OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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www.dakotaadventist.org



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CALENDAR

February

27 MAUC Pathfinder Bible Experience

March

4 Dakotans Pray - Zoom (7pm)
7 K-12 Board Meeting - Office (10am)
12-14 Men's Retreat - Medora, ND
19-20 Global Youth Get-together Wknd - Fargo, ND
21 Executive Committee - Office (10am)
25-28 MAUC Ministries Convention - Virtual
26-4 DAA Spring Break/Home Leave
27 Northwest Regional - Dickinson, ND

April

1 Dakotans Pray
5 Office Closed
10 Education Sabbath
12-22 MAPS Testing - Dakota Conference Schools
17 Northeast Regional - Fargo, ND
23-25 Academy Days - DAA

President, Evangelism, ASI
Mark Weir

VP of Admin, HR, Education Supt
Mark Piotrowski

Admin Assistant, Receptionist
Rob Carlson

Communication, Education Assistant
Jodi Dossenko

Development, ABC Manager
Lynette Miller

Youth Dir, Camps, Pathfinders, SS
Ricky & Brooke Melendez

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Cindy Miller

Treasury Clerk
Judy Weir

Associate Trust Services Director
Charles O'Hare

Trust Services Admin Assist, Conf Clerk
Julie Brude

Maintenance Services
Marlin Miller

Field Officers

Adventist Community Services
Bob Forbes II

Disaster Relief Director
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Ministerial Director
Merlin Knowles

Prayer Ministries Director
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