

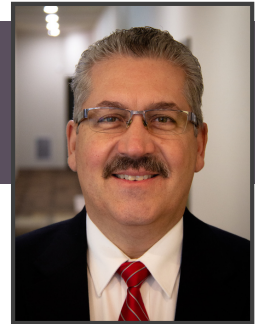


Dakota Messenger

DAKOTA CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Belonging

Mark R. Weir, President



I believe that built into the heart of every person is the desire to fit in somewhere. God created us as social beings with a yearning to connect with others in meaningful ways. Whether you are a social butterfly or more reclusive, we all still need some amount of human interaction. As more research is gathered regarding the impact of COVID-19, I think that we will find that the isolation and separation we have experienced as a society will prove to have been difficult for many and devastating for some.

Is there a place God designed where people of all circumstances and situations can connect with one another? I believe there is - that place is the church.

I am a firm believer in the importance of the local church. As I travel around our conference and interact with various church families I attempt to reiterate the same message every time - the most important part of the Dakota Conference is the church family. It is within the context of this family where friendships are established, where meaningful service can happen, where encouragement can be found, and where the sense of being a part of something significant and life-changing occurs. I am a firm believer in the importance of the local church.

But, why? Why should anyone bother to be a part of a local church? Why should we get up on Sabbath morning when we are tired? Why should we go through the motions of appearing happy when we may not appreciate all that is going on? Why should we subject ourselves to people who sometimes say and do hurtful things? Why? Simple, because I can still be a blessing to others.

Wait a minute, you may say. I have needs. I have wishes. I have preferences. I want things done a certain way. I want to sing the music I like. I want to be done by noon. I want... Have you noticed a certain word being used a lot? That word is "I". Belonging isn't just about me; it is about being a part of something bigger than me and being open to what God may want me to see or experience differently. So, what does this have to do with belonging?

Years ago, a popular catchphrase was the ME generation. I don't hear that expression used much anymore, but the idea is still very prevalent. Being a Christian is not about me. It is about being a part of the body of Christ and therefore, all believers belong to one another. We have the privilege and responsibility of ministering to one another.

There are at least fourteen times we are instructed to "love one another" in the New Testament. Loving each other should be one of the defining characteristics of the church. I realize that it can be very hard at times to love some of the saints. I realize that when you don't feel warmth extended your way it can be hard to continue on.

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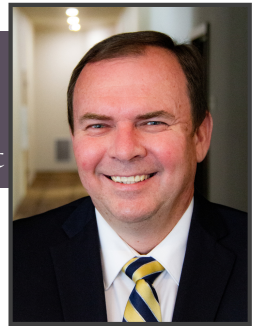
An elder in one of my former congregations was upset about ideas I had regarding the church. One night at a board meeting he stood up and publicly resigned as he was walking out the door. For over a year he would still come to church, intentionally exit out the door where I was greeting people, pause while I extended my hand to greet him, look at me and my outstretched hand, and then proceed to walk on past. It did not feel good. But how I felt was secondary to the fact that I was called to love him. Period.

In addition to the call to "love one another" there are many other "one another" phrases we find in the New Testament. Encourage one another, bear one another's burdens, care for one another, and so on. This tells me that the purpose of the church is about the other person, not me. It is about the community of believers, not me. It is about growing and serving together, not me. It is about what we can give, not what we can get. Our example is Jesus. In spite of the challenges He faced, it was His habit to meet on Sabbath with the people of God, even as some of them were plotting how to kill Him. He came to serve and share, and He did that as a part of a community.

Belonging. It implies commitment. It indicates a group I trust in. It is a body of people who assists when I am in need and provides a place where I can help others when they are in need. That is what the church was meant to be.

Calling the Called

Mark Piotrowski, VP of Administration & Education Superintendent



"...He called you out of the darkness into His wonderful light." - 2 Peter 2:9, NLT

One of the greatest gifts that God gave us in this world is His Church. You may have not ever thought of the church being so valuable but somewhere along the Christian journey we all come to realize how fortunate we are to have the church in our lives.

The Biblical Greek word we translate as "church" is *ekklesia*. It's a dynamic word that contains great potential for helping us rediscover God's purpose for us. Locked inside this term is the DNA of how the church ought to be viewed by believers.

Actually, *ekklesia* doesn't exactly mean "church." After the Church was launched in power on the day of Pentecost, the first believers didn't create a new term to describe who they were. They rather borrowed an existing term from the common vernacular, already invested with meaning and understanding. *Ekklesia* means "assembly" or "gathering" or "congregation". The word refers to a body of people, not to a building. Interestingly, our English word for church is derived from the German "kirche", which generally refers to the building itself. Do you see the difference? One is a place and the other is people. One is brick and mortar and the other is flesh and blood. **For a disciple of Jesus Christ, the church is not a place you go to but it's something you are.** You don't go to church; you are the church. **The Church is inseparably linked to Christ Himself.** As a matter of fact, Jesus spoke of the church as His own body. If you want to get rid of the church, you also need to get rid of Jesus. You can't have one without the other. To imagine that our Lord thinks of His people in this way is awe inspiring and transformational.

The idea of the church being made up of imperfect persons often causes discouragement. But rather than making us despair, the fact that Jesus started the church with imperfect, broken people should make us marvel at God's incredible grace. He's proud of how His grace is beating through your imperfect-but-redeemed life and through the church (have you ever read Ephesians 3: 10-11?).

Some believe that the organized church is not important, that being a mere believer without being tied to the church is what counts. However, the early church did indeed gather - and gathering together implies and always leads to some form of organizing. To pretend that the church doesn't need to be organized is like arguing that society doesn't need to be organized. Because community is inevitable, organization is inevitable. Hence the church is a visible, organized, structured entity that God gave us. We are admonished from the pen of inspiration: "As we near the final crisis, instead of feeling that there is less need of order and harmony of action, we should be more systematic than heretofore. All our work should be conducted according to well-defined plans" (Selected Messages, vol. 3, p. 26).

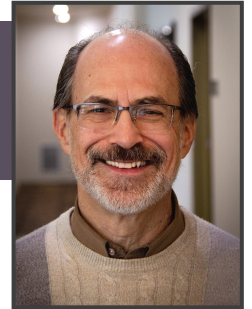
So back to the definition of the essence of God's church or *ekklesia*. It is clearly a part of God's design for how we should interact while we're on this planet. It has a special place in our lives as we journey to the

Kingdom of Heaven. Come to think of it, Heaven is a community too. The only one who wants us to believe that we are better off alone is our enemy. If you really think about it, it's actually a very clever tactic. The DNA of the church is discipleship (being called) and mission (called out) in the context of community (ones). In discipleship, Jesus and the Holy Spirit lead us to the heart of the Father. In mission, the heart of the Father sends us out in the power of the Spirit and the love of Jesus.

Both must happen together in community. We need them intertwined and crossing together, like a double helix bound by beads of community. Are you a member of His Church? Do you fulfill your responsibilities faithfully? Can His Church count on your support? Do you make use of all the opportunities the church affords you to grow in your walk with Christ? Let us determine to fulfill our calling where God has placed us. Let us keep our eyes on our Captain of salvation (Hebrews 2:10), who will take us safely into the harbor of protection when He comes to take us on a celestial flight to the Kingdom of glory.

Treasurer's Report

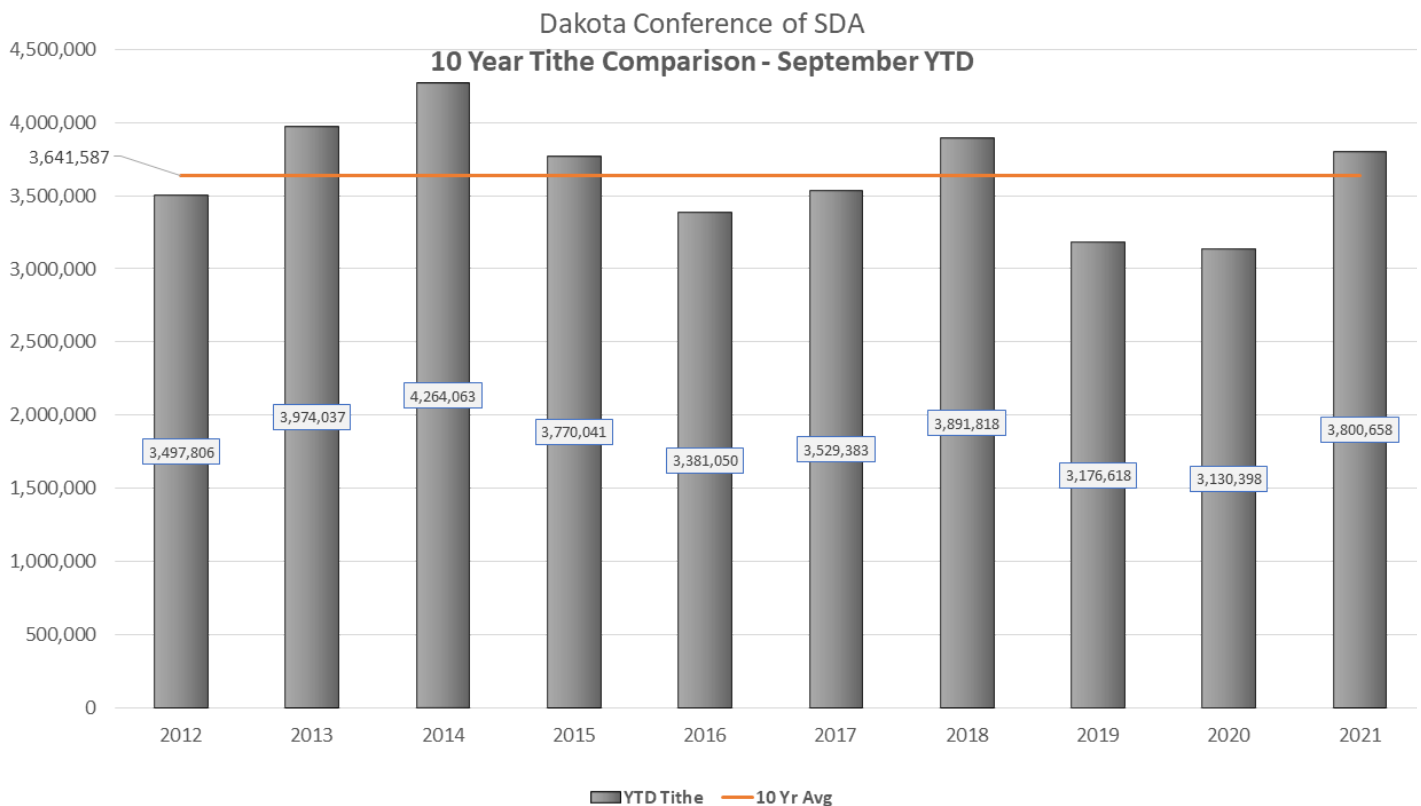
Mark Seibold, VP of Finance



Most of our regional members are familiar with the term "Dakota Challenge" from hearing it at their local church offering call, or from seeing it on their tithe envelope. While familiar with the term, are members well acquainted with the applications?

As opposed to general tithes (where a percentage goes to higher level organizations), Dakota Challenge is a monthly offering where all donations are used for conference-specific outreaches. These include Dakota Adventist Academy (45%), Evangelism (20%), Elementary Education (15%), Youth Camps (10%), Dakota Native Ministries (5%), and Dakota Cemeteries (5%). Dakota Challenge donations have averaged \$128,500 annually over the last three years, though we have seen an unfortunate declining trend.

As many of you are aware, demographic changes in the Dakotas are affecting church membership of all denominations. As the "greatest generation" passes, younger people move into our region but they more frequently do not replace their parents or grandparents in church attendance. This trend has, and will, affect giving in our conference. In essence, the church operates, in some ways, above the tithe - which makes Dakota Challenge a "home directed" category that is much more crucial moving forward in promoting our Dakota mission outreaches. So when the next Sabbath offering you hear is for Dakota Challenge, please remember to give generously!



Dakota Summer Camps

Ricky & Brooke Melendez, Former Camp Directors



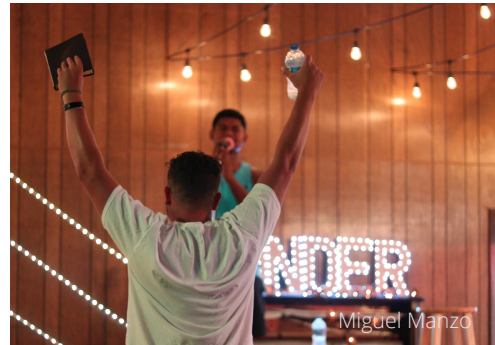
Summer camp 2021 was one for the books. In the span of six weeks, a total of 162 campers registered, with eighty-two at Flag Mountain Camp and eighty at Northern Lights Camp. Eleven baptisms were celebrated throughout the summer.

The theme for camp this summer was “Wonder” which focused on returning to a spirit of awe and amazement of the Godhead. It is well known that this past year has been exceptionally trying in more ways than one, and it seems as though bad news, division, and hardship is around every corner.

Campers were invited to ponder the possibility of a new reality: What if we lived in wonder of a good and beautiful God? What if God was actually inviting us into collaboration with Him - inviting us to be part of the wonder in the world?

The year 2021 has been an absolute demonstration of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Child-like wonder has reawakened in the hearts of Dakota youth, allowing them to see the world through the lenses of goodness and redemption.

Summer camp truly has been the highlight of the year. Campers and staff sang, played, worshiped, exploded some confetti, and dared to dream of a world brought to life again, vibrant with the color of the gospel. Ask your camper or a child you know about their experience this summer, and prepare to hear something WONDERful.



Fun facts from the 2021 camp season: 

- 71** brand new campers attended
- 91** were returning campers
- 26** were not from Adventist families
- 11** campers were baptized
- 44** people volunteered
- 20** was the staff's median age
- 6,252** meals were served
- 21** staff members worked a combined total hours of **24,124**

Pastors Brooke and Ricky Melendez have served in the Dakota Conference over the last eight years in the capacity of church pastors, campus ministries, and most recently youth and camp directors. Though they have accepted positions in the Rocky Mountain Conference and moved on, the impact they have made on Dakota's youth will live for years to come.

Employees on the Move

Jodi Dossenko, Communication Director



Zak Adams (left) has decided to add duties to his full-time stay-at-home-dad job and join the staff at Dakota Adventist Academy. He will serve as assistant boys' dean as well as teach photography and graphic design classes. The Adams family of seven is not new to the campus as his wife Jovannah has been DAA's English and pottery teacher for the last year. Before moving to the Dakotas, Zak was the vice-principal and art teacher at Holbrook Indian School in Arizona. In his spare time Zak enjoys carpentry and archery.



Rob Carlson (right) has been hired as Dakota Adventist Academy's chaplain and upper grades' Bible teacher. He and his family of four have served the Dakota Conference in a pastoral capacity for over a decade and are excited to transition to Academy staff. Carlson has a Masters' Degree in Divinity and is looking forward to using it to enrich the student body.



Pastor Vernon Herholdt (left) and his wife Melanie have recently joined the pastoral team at the Bismarck Adventist Church. Herholdt grew up in South-Africa and worked as a police detective and then moved to HR before studying theology at Helderberg College. Vernon, Melanie, and their two sons emigrated to the United States in 2017. The Herholdts are happy to be in the Dakotas and have adopted the motto, "Where God leads, we follow".



Jaelyn Pickett (left) has joined the Dakota Conference office team as the receptionist and administrative assistant. As a DAA graduate and former Minot church member, Jaelyn is no stranger to the Dakotas. She brings a wealth of technology and customer service skills. Along with her many duties, Jaelyn will be assisting with background checks, Campmeeting preparation, ministry retreat registrations, and will be the primary voice answering the phones.

Ron Reese (right) has accepted the upper grades' teaching position at Brentwood Adventist Christian School in Bismarck, North Dakota. Ron and his wife Sylvia moved to Bismarck last year to be closer to family and he immediately began working at Brentwood as the teacher's aide. Years ago, Ron started a teaching career and taught in multi-grade schools for 11 years. He then spent the last 25 years working as a nursing assistant in nursing homes, hospitals, and in behavioral health. In his spare time, Ron enjoys writing - be sure to watch for his stories in upcoming issues of the *Guide Magazine* and *Primary Treasure*.



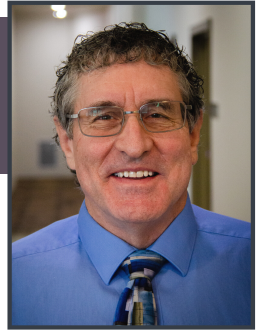
TJ Roberts (left) is the head teacher at Sioux Falls Adventist Elementary School in South Dakota. He and his wife Osiris have one child with another on the way. Their family comes to us from the Upper Columbia Conference in Idaho where TJ taught grades 5 and 6 as well as upper grades science classes. His hobbies include spending time with family, football, fishing, hiking, camping, and other outdoor activities.

Pastor Sarel & Ronica Smit (right) recently moved from the Bowdon Country / Harvey / Manfred church district to fill the year+ vacancy at Watford City / Williston. Their daughter Twainé left for college this fall. The Smit Family has transitioned from a farming district to the oil fields and are enjoying the new scenery and scope of what lies ahead for them in ministry.



Trust Department

Charlie O'Hare, Trust Director



At a recent seminar on financial planning I attended, I learned something very important about Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs). The presenter's counsel was to convert your Traditional IRAs to Roth IRAs as soon as you can. His reasoning is this: Tax rates are lower now than they have been in decades and there is no reason to believe they are ever going to be lower, but every reason to believe they are going to be higher, probably much higher. By converting your Traditional IRAs to Roth IRAs now, you will be paying much less in taxes. Once the conversion is made, and the taxes are paid on your Roth IRA, you never pay taxes on those Roth IRA funds again as they are not taxed when withdrawn during retirement. This is not true for funds withdrawn in retirement from Traditional IRAs as they are taxed at the tax rates in place at the time they are withdrawn. I encourage you to consult with your financial planner to determine if this is the best strategy for you.

DAKOTANS PRAY

is now scheduled weekly

Thursdays at 7:00p CT

Meeting ID: 895 8855 6393

Passcode: 885424

Call in: 253.215.8782

Zoom:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89588556393?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89588556393?pwd=ZDhqaxNrnUJjJdXczR0JFNjVDTE9xdz09)

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In disposing of your property by a Will to your relatives, be sure that you do not forget God's cause. Dakota Conference Trust Services exists to aid our members in the preparation of legal documents that follow the Biblical principle of stewardship.

For more information, contact your Dakota Planned Giving & Trust Services Department.

701.751.6177

trust@dakotaadventist.org



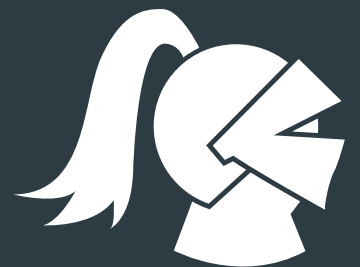
Planned Giving
& Trust Services

A TASTE OF HEAVEN

DAA/SRA/PVA All School Reunion

OCTOBER 7 & 8 2022

If you are a former student, faculty member, or just a friend, make plans now to attend a special Alumni Weekend honoring ALL classes. Look forward to events like the Alumni vs. Student volleyball & basketball games, return of the Golf Scramble, and more!



Answers to Perceptions, Pt. 1 - Academy Spirituality

Mark R. Weir, President

Last spring the office promoted a questionnaire to learn our church family's thoughts regarding Dakota Adventist Academy, our Conference school. Over 3,000 people were given the opportunity to express their perceptions. While I wish we had received a 100% response rate, be assured we are processing the information we did receive and are evaluating it carefully.

DAA has served our conference families for many decades. Though I am not a DAA graduate, I am a firm believer in the value of Adventist Education. I am not ignorant or unaware that there are those in our midst who feel differently, but I believe we have something of value to offer. I spent part of my career in an academy setting and I fully recognize that there are issues to be addressed. What does that make me? An advocate for our Academy, as well as a person with a pragmatic streak and a desire to be realistic.

Over the course of the next several months I will endeavor to share responses to the most pressing issues that came from the survey. I realize that I will be sharing my perceptions, in an attempt to address the perceptions contained in the survey - and "perception" is the key word. Most of the survey respondents did not have firsthand knowledge of current happenings at the school. While the perception is still valuable and worth considering, it did indicate that we need to do a much better job of communicating the many good things taking place at DAA.

We recently polled students and their parents from the past five years where we found that over 95% of the responses were positive. Yet many families completing the office's perceptions survey seem to have a much different perspective. Let me briefly begin to address one - spirituality on campus.

Spirituality is often a difficult subject to define. What promotes a spiritual atmosphere? Worship in the dorm? Service activities? In my decade as an academy chaplain, the biggest factor were the students themselves, particularly the seniors. Strong, courageous, confident disciples of Christ dramatically impacted the spiritual tone of the school. If there were a number of these spiritual leaders in the senior class, the year was much more positive. Without them, a different tone was set.

While faculty and staff play a key role, they must work within the confines of the students' current level of growth and spiritual development. To promote growth, a pastor has joined the staff this year to serve as upper grades' Bible teacher and school chaplain. I realize this is only one small part of the spirituality equation, but it is an important part.

We ask that you keep the Academy in your prayers as we address the perceptions and concerns of our Dakota Conference family.

Dakota Conference 27th Annual Men's Retreat

Growing in Christ

Speakers:
Jony Hajaj
Ed Dickerson
Mark Weir

For more information
& to register use the
QR code:



MARCH 11-13, 2022

**Rough Rider Hotel
301 3rd Avenue
Medora, North Dakota**

Dakota Conference

OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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Bismarck ND 58503-6301
www.dakotaadventist.org



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CALENDAR

November

- 13 Sioux Falls Regional
- 15-18 MAUC Year-End Meetings - Lincoln, NE
- 18 MAUC Executive Committee - Lincoln, NE (9am)
- 24-25 Office Closed - Thanksgiving

December

- 12 Executive Committee - Conference Office (10am)
- 13 Deadline for Church Nominating Committee Reports
- 17-18 Celebration of Praise & Bismarck Regional - DAA
- 19-2 DAA Christmas Homeleave
- 23 Office Closed - Christmas

January

- 13-28 MAPS Testing - Schools
- 17 Office Closed - Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 23 K-12 Board of Education - Conference Office (10am)
- 24-27 Pastors' Meetings

February

- 2-5 Union College Music Festival
- 16-20 DAA Homeleave & Union Basketball Tournament
- 21 Office Closed - Presidents' Day
- 24 DAA Ski & Recreation Day
- 25-27 DAA Academy Days

President, Evangelism, ASI

Mark Weir

VP of Admin, HR, Education Supt

Mark Piotrowski

Admin Assistant, Receptionist

Jaelyn Pickett

Communication, Education Assistant

Jodi Dossenko

Development, ABC Manager

Lynette Miller

Youth Director

TBD

VP of Finance

Mark Seibold

Associate Treasurer

Cindy Miller

Treasury Clerk

Judy Weir

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

Phyllis Alexander

Men's Ministries Director

Randy Rubbert

Ministerial Director

TBD

Prayer Ministries Director

Barry St. Clair

Women's Ministries Director

Paulette Bullinger