

The (Very Scary) Next Door



The sky was a murky gray and the rain was heavy, soaking everything, including Canaan Francisco, a Youth Rush canvasser working in the Kalamazoo area. His books were wet, his shoes were wet, and the plastic bag he had slung over his books pooled water and poured onto his shirt, drenching him even more. To make things even worse, a woman was screaming obscenities four apartments down. It was Francisco's second day canvassing, and the whole experience was unnerving.

Francisco was canvassing with his friend, Johannah Anderson. "I just knew that we were going to have to canvass her," Francisco says. The combination was terrible: rain, inexperience, and screams. "I found myself wondering," he says, "What

kind of place am I in? What am I doing here?"

Anderson and Francisco continued working towards the woman and canvassed everyone they saw. When they neared her, she knew that she was next. She snapped, "No, don't come near." All the canvassers had done was smile and say, "Hi."

They skipped the woman and went to the next door. But Francisco didn't feel right—he felt impressed that he

"That is the power of a Youth Rush literature evangelist like Francisco. They tread on through the storms of rain to meet that one person."

needed to go back and ask the woman "just once" if he could pray with her. They went back and interrupted her screams. "Please," Francisco asked, "Can we pray with you?"

Francisco reports that as soon as the words left his mouth, the woman's face softened. "Her face went from anger

to gentleness," he says. The woman shared that she was going through a rough period. All three of them held hands and prayed. When they had finished, the woman thanked them—they had come at just the right time. "I was feeling so hurt, so bad," she told Francisco.

(continued on page 7)



Francisco (fourth from left) stands with team members in the Chicago suburbs.

By Jim Micheff,
President



“The devil hasn’t given up on his attempt to usurp worship from God. He wasn’t successful with Jesus, but he has been very successful with the rest of us.”

THE FOUNDATION OF WORSHIP (PART I)

The center piece of the Great Controversy is worship. What is worship? Some may think of worship as some activity carried out at church or some other place. It’s true that we corporately come together to worship and may privately go to a quiet place to have personal time with God, but worship is more than just an activity.

When Jesus started His ministry, He went to a secluded place to pray. Satan followed Him there and confronted Him with three powerful temptations. Satan’s strategy was to question Jesus’ identity and try to get Him to prove who He was by using divine power, independent of His heavenly Father. As a human, Jesus submitted Himself to the limitations of humanity and was dependent on the will of God.

Satan knew Jesus hadn’t eaten for 40 days and needed food to stay alive. So, his first temptation focused on getting Jesus to use His divine power to do what humans cannot do to provide for an essential need—use divinity to convert stones to bread. His second temptation centered around presumption and misusing and misapplying scripture to deviate from God’s purposes. But his third temptation unmasked the real issue in the Great Controversy—worship—and showed the connection between all three of Satan’s attempts to get Jesus to fail. Jesus’ response was, “Away with you Satan! For it is written, *you shall worship the Lord your God and Him only you shall serve*” (Matt. 4:10).

The devil hasn’t given up on his attempt to usurp worship from God. He wasn’t successful with Jesus, but he has been very successful with the rest of us on earth.

The Bible tells us that the last final battle of this world will be over worship. The third angel of Revelation 14 gives the warning “... *do not worship the beast or*

“Satan tries to numb the mind and appeal to the emotions, then get us to break God’s laws by seducing and enticing our carnal desires.”

his image.” Very few would knowingly worship, so Satan must dupe people into it. He is even now doing all he can to set us up to fall into, or keep us in, his trap of deception. The first angel gives the formula for true worship. “*Fear God, give glory to Him...*” because... “*the hour of His judgment is come... and WORSHIP HIM...who made...*” (emphasis supplied).

To fear God involves understanding our relationship to God as Creator, Lord, and Savior. As we experience the love of God in salvation, we surrender ourselves to Him. Reverence leads to

a desire to obey God. Irreverence is a disregard for God’s authority and leads to disobedience. Giving glory, or living for Him, involves cooperating with Him to remove the rebellion and restore in us the character of God.

In this last message, God inserts a sense of urgency with the words, “because the hour of His judgment is come.” Sin separates us from God. The time and opportunity for that barrier of sin to be removed is about to come to an end. Satan and his angels are not going to be destroyed merely because of their rebellion. They will be destroyed because they rejected the mercy of God which allows forgiveness and change of heart. Their door of opportunity has closed. Jesus clearly warned that it’s possible to close the door of mercy prematurely by death or by rejecting the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that soon Jesus will finish His work as High Priest, and when He does the process of removing sin will end. This will leave all those with sin to perish with the devil and his angels in the final destruction of the world.

The core and foundation of worship is love for God. Reverence is the highest form of love we can give God.

Paul puts it this way, “*I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God (opportunity for salvation), that you present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship*” (Rom. 12:1, NASB). To present your bodies a living sacrifice involves fearing God (reverence) and giving

glory (submission) to Him. True worship involves the *giving of our entire self, our thoughts, and emotions, to God's use. All of life is an act of submission—an act of worship.* This one act identifies who's side we are on—Christ's or Satan's.

How? Paul explains that our lives are an expression of our worship when he says, *“And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect”* (Rom. 12:2). Christian lifestyle and behavior all become a living demonstration of our worship. That means that dress, adornment, entertainment, music, diet, finances, etc. are all expressions of worship and point to the God or god of our choosing.

John warned, *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world”* (1 John 2:15, 16).

Lifestyle and behavior issues is where theology and religion meet reality. So, it is not surprising that this is where we all become bogged down in the battle of surrendering self to God. Our only hope for victory here is in submission for when we do the Bible promises, *“It is God who works in us to will and do of His good pleasure”* (Phil. 2:13).

Jesus shared some important insights on worship with the Samaritan woman at the well. “True worshippers,” He said, “will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him” (John 4:23, 24). Then He said God is “Spirit.” As an infinite spirit being, God is not subject to the same limitations as finite material beings, and is not so much concerned with visible places and forms of worship as He is with the spirit in which men worship Him. It's not where but how one worships that counts. God can read the content and motives of the heart. He is looking for those who will worship Him in spirit and truth.

To worship in “spirit and truth” means to have an attitude of reverence, and in all sincerity and with the highest faculties of the mind and emotions, apply the principles of truth to the heart. Without that all other expressions of worship are false.

With the Holy Spirit's help we must learn the principles of truth from Scripture and, by applying them in our lives, He will bring us into harmony with God. True worship appeals to the higher nature, the reasoning power of the brain, and is principle-based. False worship appeals to the lower nature, the seat of emotions and feelings. It's adulterated by selfishness and resonates with our own carnal feelings and emotions.



Every Monday morning, the Michigan Conference staff meets for worship and prayer. Here is the list for the following dates. Please join us as we pray for these churches and ministries.

SEPTEMBER 5

Buchanan/Chikaming
Buchanan ACS
Chikaming ACS
Berrien Springs PMC
**Pastor Dwight Nelson,
Jenifer Daley, Ben Martin,
Rodlie Ortiz, & Lindsey Pratt**
Andrews Academy
Ruth Murdoch Elementary
Pioneer Memorial CS

SEPTEMBER 12

Michiana Fil-Am/St Joseph
Pastor Roy Castelbuono
South Haven
Pastor Jorge Mata
Benton Harbor/Coloma/
Hartford Indonesian
Pastor Gerhard Erbes
Hartford Indonesian
Pastor Adrie Legoh
Fairplain Food Pantry
Berrien Springs Village
**Pastor Ron Kelly, Michael
Hess, Dennis Page, Michael
Kusarawana**
Village Adventist Elementary
Berrien Springs Village CS

SEPTEMBER 19

Andrews Korean
Pastor Sang Gyu Seo
Niles Westside
Pastor Alex Rybachek
Niles Adventist School
Niles Malawi Michiana -
Pastor Symon Kumwenda
Niles Southside
Pastor Isaac Kubvoruno
Harbor of Hope
Pastor Taurus Montgomery
Harbor of Hope Food Pantry
Edwardsburg/Glenwood -
Pastor Alex Niculaescu
Edwardsburg ACS

SEPTEMBER 26

Stevensville
Pastor Bryce Bowman
Dowagiac/Eau Claire
Pastor Tom Shepard
Eau Claire SDA Elementary
Eau Claire ACS
Berrien Springs Living Word
Pastor MC Shin
Neighbor 2 Neighbor

Satan tries to numb the mind and appeal to the emotions, then get us to break God's laws by seducing and enticing our carnal desires—all the while trying to make us think we are following God. Jesus was referring to this type of worship when He said, *“These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matt. 15:8, 9).

There are many components to private and corporate worship: singing, praising, preaching, praying, giving, etc. But without reverence and submission, one is only going through the motions. The foundation of true worship is a reverent love so strong you will obey and honor God. God is looking for those who will worship Him in spirit and truth...has He found that in us?



Mark Bakker provides Joey Reitsema with a Strong Tower Radio sharing card.



Brian and Marjie Shade sharing the Strong Tower Radio magnet that was produced at their request.

Radio Powered by the Everlasting Gospel

By Kam Ferguson,
Development director,
Strong Tower Radio

The Holy Spirit continues drawing people to Jesus through radio, effectively using this tool with those who surrender to His leading. At a recent Strong Tower Radio (STR) event, Mark Bakker shared that he introduced the station to a new friend in a profound way. It was 2020, COVID-19 was in full swing, and Mark went to the Grand Haven, Michigan, pier for a morning walk.

After walking a bit, Mark noticed someone sitting near the end of the pier and walked over to initiate conversation. Fitness enthusiast Joey Reitsema was resting after her marathon training run. By the end of their conversation, they had exchanged contact information. Early on in their friendship, Mark told Joey, "If you want to know about me, listen to Strong Tower Radio," and handed her an STR sharing card! What an introduction!

Joey did listen, and is still listening. What is she hearing? Powerful, lifesaving truth in various formats such as Amazing Facts' Bible Answers Live, messages from Michigan and Lake Region Conference pastors on STR's Fresh Manna, uplifting music that glorifies God, children stories, evangelistic series, and special STR programs. These all have the singular purpose of broadcasting the everlasting gospel in the context of the Three Angels' Message, 24/7/365.

STR began with God's guidance as one small, full time radio station in Cadillac, Michigan. That was all that founder and president, David Bolduc and his wife Bethany, had in mind. Yet as Proverbs 16:9 tells us, "Man makes

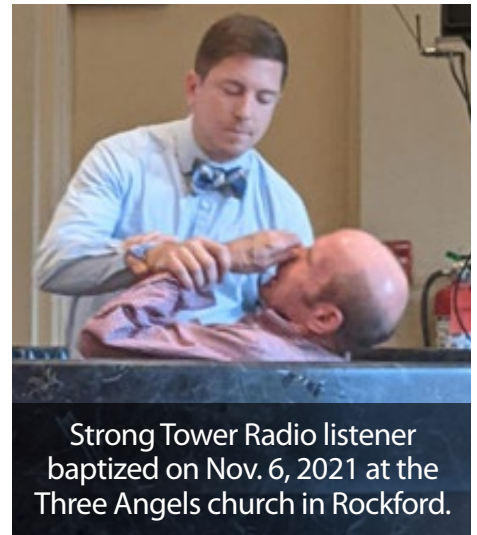
his plans, God directs his steps." God directed STR to obtain more signals, and we currently operate 15 stations with permits for seven more to be developed within the next two years!

From its 2007 inception, STR has depended on God to sustain the ministry. He does this through both listeners and Seventh-day Adventist church members' prayers and financial support. With annual operating costs of over \$600,000 and coverage of 3.7 million potential listeners, STR is one of the most economical ways to reach people with the everlasting gospel at \$.016/potential listener.

Most recently, STR began broadcasting on its 15th station, 93.1 FM, WMPA, in Grand Haven. This ongoing miracle continues to unfold, as God initially brought this signal to STR in a private sale. The seller wanted a non-public sale to a broadcaster that would not compete with their other station. We came to the closing date and for the first time, God did not provide the balance of funds needed to complete the purchase! He instead moved upon the seller to offer an interest free lease arrangement and provided more time for God's people to bring the remaining funds to complete the purchase! Glory to God!

The Holy Spirit continues to move upon hearts to sustain STR as He reaches souls through the broadcasts of the everlasting gospel. Coral was one of those precious souls. Ready to end her life, she was drawn to the radio dial while driving home from work. She searched for something better and found STR on 90.7 FM, WBHL.

Listening introduced her to Jesus, gave her hope and a hunger for Him. She soon began attending the Gladwin church, taking Bible studies, and gave her life to Jesus in baptism. Praise God! She continues to grow in her walk with Jesus and loves to share. Coral recently began Bible studies with another STR listener who has started attending the Gladwin church.



Strong Tower Radio listener baptized on Nov. 6, 2021 at the Three Angels church in Rockford.

In the past few months, at least three Strong Tower Radio listeners have joined the Seventh-day Adventist church after they began listening to STR, and more are walking through the doors of churches like Clare and Irons, crediting STR with their interest.

This is just some of the fruit of those who are prayerfully supporting STR. As you see lives changing, may your support also grow and spread to others that this work may continue and have even greater impact upon Michigan and the world!



Community members gather for dedication.



Pastor Malcom Mills, Irons church pastor, during the dedication ceremony.

“Vowing to never go into debt, and with \$11,000 in hand, the church set out to build a new home for their community center.”

Irons Church Dedicates New Community Center

The Irons church hosted an open house and dedicated their new community center on July 10. The new 3,000-square-foot building will provide a home for the church’s Community Services ministry, as well as a center of influence for the area.

Nearly eight years ago, Irons members stepped out in faith and broke ground on the center. Since then, the congregation has seen the community pull together to complete the center.

A Legacy of Assistance Continues

Lake County, where Irons is located, is a landlocked area in west-central Michigan. According to statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau, it’s the second poorest county in the state, and the only county in Michigan where most households earn less than \$38,000 a year.

Since the 1960s, the Irons Community Center has served individuals in need. News reports from throughout the center’s history detail a strong community presence, rising to the occasion when needs were presented in the community. One such report from the Manistee News-Advocate on October 24, 1973, states that after a “tragic house fire” left a family of 10 children homeless, “Our neighbors from the Seventh-day Adventist Church came to the rescue with donations of clothing and bedding.”

The community center was established in a defunct Grange Hall built in the 1890s. However, as the building aged, it became apparent to church leaders that the once suitable building no longer served their needs. Stepping out

in faith, the Irons church shut down the old center. Vowing to never go into debt, and with \$11,000 in hand, the church set out to build a new home for their community center.

A series of miracles since that decision propelled the church’s vision forward. “The money just kept showing up!” says Nancy Przedwojewski, one of the community center’s leaders. A realtor donated prime real estate. Professor Martin Smith and the School of Architecture at Andrews University drew the plans for the building at a fraction of the standard rate. Contractors worked as money for projects came in, and later, contractors donated their labor and paid for materials. In 2021, a generous donor supplied nearly \$16,000 worth of goods for a gigantic community yard sale. Donations, grants, and other in-kind donations were also a major part of the project. Combined, Przedwojewski estimates the value of all the donations tops \$450,000.

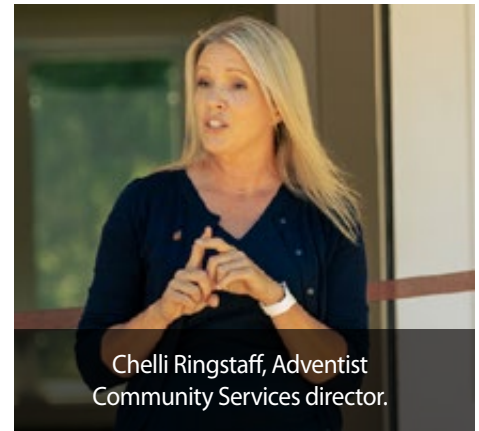
Community Pulls Together for Center

The rural community has rallied around the community center in a variety of ways.

Several businesses and individuals around Northern Michigan donated their time and services while the center was built. These businesses include electricians, concrete finishers, heating/cooling companies, plumbers, sign makers, carpet companies, septic plumbing contractors, landscapers, roofers, and siding companies.



“There are always things that we can be doing as a law enforcement agency that can establish a better relationship with the community, says Lake County Sheriff, Richard L. Martin.



Chelli Ringstaff, Adventist Community Services director.

In addition, community leaders have extensively supported the center.

Richard L. Martin, Lake County Sheriff, says his department plans to support the center by mentoring youth and providing safety training. “Being the sheriff is not just about law enforcement,” he says. “There are always things that we can be doing as a law enforcement agency that can establish a better relationship with the community. We all live in this community, and we need to make this community better.” In addition, Martin

(continued on page 6)

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(Irons Church Dedicates New Community Center)

says that the center will be valuable to the community. “I think there needs to be a focus, a meeting place, [for] people from all areas of...the community. Now that we have this building, and the people behind this building...we can find something that is going to be of value for everybody in this community.”

Rachel Gillespie, Community Nutrition Instructor at the Lake County Michigan State University (M.S.U.) Extension, says they plan to offer lifestyle, nutrition, and other food-related classes for people of all ages at the community center. “We are planning on offering nutrition programs at the community center,” she said.

Przedwojewski says that Spectrum Health and the Michigan Department of Health (District 10) are also planning on offering programs at the community center.

“If we are community services, we need to serve the communities we are in. This building is really a gift for the whole community,” Przedwojewski said during the center’s dedication.

Chelli Ringstaff, director of Adventist Community Services for Michigan, says she is looking forward to working with the new center. “I’m so grateful for all of the love, care, and hard work that Irons has poured into starting their new community service center,” she said. “I’m eagerly looking forward to seeing the new relationships this ACS center will forge within the community—the Lord is going to be working alongside Irons as they minister.”

Moving Forward

Community center leaders have made several plans to reach the surrounding area.

The center will support the community with a food pantry



Church and community leaders cut ribbon, declaring community center open. L-R: Edna Olds, Estate of Robert Olds; Nancy Przedwojewski, Irons member; Tressa Taylor, Food Pantry Manager; Rick Leach, HVAC contractor; Chelli Ringstaff, Michigan Conference ACS director; Chris Gluck, electrical contractor; Malcom Mills, pastor, Irons Church.

and lifestyle classes. They also plan to focus heavily on youth ministry in partnership with other community organizations.

As for future ideas, Przedwojewski says leaders are considering offering more programming, including daytime programming for senior citizens, grief recovery assistance, parenting classes, and more. “In God’s work, there is no place for sitting on the sidelines,” she said.

Przedwojewski hopes that they will be able to lead their community to something more profound. “They all know we’re doing good in the community. But I want them to know something deeper. I don’t care if they come to church—what I want is for them to meet the Lord. I want them to find some peace in life because of a relationship with God. That is my ultimate goal.”

By Samuel Girven,
Cadillac member

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TRANSITIONS IN LEADERSHIP



John Contreraz is the new pastor of the Lapeer, Orion-Oxford, and Otter Lake churches.



Juan Carlos Grajales is the assistant pastor at the Lansing church.



Jorge Mata is the new pastor of the South Haven, Eau Claire Spanish, and Benton Harbor Spanish churches. He previously pastored the Grand Haven Spanish, Sparta Spanish, and Pearl Spanish churches.

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(The (Very Scary) Next Door)

Anderson and Francisco offered her Bible studies, and she excitedly accepted. When Francisco explained that she could either get them through the mail, or have someone come to her house and study with her, the woman eagerly exclaimed, “I want people to come to me. I want to hold their hands and pray!”

When they finished talking, they held hands again and prayed. Francisco gave her *Happiness for Life (Steps to Christ)*.

As Francisco reflects on this moment, he realizes how God truly orchestrates moments and events in everyone’s life. “What if I had just walked on by, and didn’t ask for prayer?” He asks, “Where would her anger have taken her? Would she have hurt herself? God used me, through a prayer, to bring peace to her and calm her storm.”

No one but God knows what would have happened to this woman if Francisco had listened to himself—his irritation at the rain, his fright of the woman’s screams, or his desire to not bother someone who was upset.

“Even when it is raining,” says Francisco, “there can be showers of blessing. I think God just has a divine appointment every day, and we just have to endure and carry on and be willing to step out—it’s not like we are going to melt!” he says, laughing.

Hardship will not melt us. Francisco isn’t the only canvasser this summer who has learned this lesson. David Pano, Literature Ministries director for the Michigan conference, reports that this Youth Rush summer has been unusually hard. “[I’ve been] in the work in Michigan for many years, and I haven’t seen so many challenges.” Some program participants have struggled with health challenges, including COVID, and there has been family loss. “Students and leaders,” Pano says, “are facing more challenges to be in the program, and to stay in the program.”

‘But despite the hardships, the rain, the screaming, and the sickness, Pano reports that there are amazing stories. There are hundreds of thousands of stories, in fact, because the program students have knocked on over 95,000 thousand doors—that’s 95,000 thousand opportunities for a soul, or a family of souls, to be reached. “We are seeing results,” says Pano. “You see people coming to church, desiring to learn more about Jesus and the Sabbath and Adventism. We are meeting people who are already keeping the Sabbath.”



Samuel Calvelage, with the Indiana Youth Rush program, keeps record of books distributed.

The Youth Rush program in Warren has been working with Arab communities. There is a Michigan Youth Rush program in Indiana, a partnership between the Indiana and Michigan conference in an attempt to revive Youth Rush in Indiana. The Kalamazoo program traveled to unreached Chicago suburbs to share the Word. Roughly 18,000 pieces of literature were distributed—2,400 of which were *The Great Controversy*, an essential book for the end-times. The three Youth Rush programs, based in Warren, Kalamazoo, and Indiana, collected a combined number of over 315 Bible study contacts.

It’s not just books—it’s Bible studies, health contacts, VBS contacts, people coming to church, students laboring in the field realizing that the Lord can and will use them, if they are willing to be used.

That is the power of a Youth Rush literature evangelist like Francisco. They tread on through the storms of rain to meet that one person. They listen to the Lord, and turn back, to that one door, where perhaps a woman is screaming, or the windows are dark as if no one’s home, and they knock anyway. They don’t stop until they share the light the Lord has given them, and then they thank the Lord, and knock on the next door. They face challenges—rain, rude people, and vicious dogs, but they keep on, because behind the next door is a soul who may be ready to hear about Jesus.

“It’s clear for us to realize” says Pano, “the reason why [we] face challenges is because of the next door—because there is something better waiting at the next door.”

Most of us don’t devote a whole summer to knocking on doors. Some of us only knock on doors once in a while. But the Lord uses us in other ways, too. Whether we’re knocking on real doors or serving the Lord in other ways, there will still be challenges that threaten to tear our focus away from the mission, away from “the next door.” Don’t let the challenges or the experiences of the last door stop you—rather, let them remind you that something better is coming. There is a soul waiting for you at the next door.

By Judy Klein,
Communication

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

MONTHLY CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

- 5 Office Closed (Labor Day)
- 9-11 UP Camp Meeting
- 9-11 Adventurer Family Camp
- 11-15 Golden Years Retreat
- 14-18 GLAA Home Leave
- 16-19 Pathfinder Camporee
- 19 Pastor | Teacher Convention
- 23-25 Family First Retreat
- 30-Oct 2 PCM Retreat at Camp Sagola
- 30-Oct 2 TLT Squared

OCTOBER

- 2-5 LIFT
- 7-9 Mother Daughter Retreat
- 7-9 UP Marriage Retreat at Camp Sagola
- 9-13 Camp Au Sable Work Week
- 14-16 Lay Advisory Retreat
- 19-23 GLAA Home Leave
- 21-23 ACS Retreat
- 27-30 Rest & Renew Retreat

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NATURE NUGGET

Eastern Milk Snakes

By Dr. Gordon Atkins,
Camp Au Sable Naturalist



PC: Dr. Gordon Atkins

If you have been to Camp Au Sable in the summer, you know that we keep a few of the local reptiles in our nature center. We let most of them go within 60 days of being caught so they don't lose their natural instincts and because they hibernate for the winter.

One of our "guests" this summer was an Eastern Milk Snake, a common non-venomous snake and member of the king snake family. They migrate from drier areas where they hibernate in winter to moister areas in the summer. That is why most of the sightings of milk snakes are in spring and fall when they are traveling. They are usually very docile around humans, so they make a great pet at the nature center.

Here in Michigan, most milk snakes are dark tan and brown in a very beautiful and regular pattern. In Florida they are orange, and in some locations, they are yellow, black and red! Yikes! That's the coloration of the very venomous coral snake! In fact, the saying, "red touches yellow, kills a fellow; red touches black is a friend to Jack" does not always work

to distinguish these milk snakes from coral snakes.

Another common counterfeit by milk snakes is their resemblance to pygmy rattlesnakes. I can attest to that! In Florida I once announced, "Oh look, a milk snake!" But when I picked it up, I saw the rattle and realized it was a pygmy rattlesnake! What a counterfeit! So, where do milk snakes get their name? Tradition has it that they suck milk from cows! They DO NOT. Adult milk snakes like dark places and eat mice. They are often found in barns by farmers when they come to milk the cows and that's where they got their name.

All these falsehoods and counterfeits associated with the Eastern Milk Snake make me think of Satan who is the master of falsehoods and counterfeits. His first counterfeit and lies began when he appeared in the form of a serpent to Adam and Eve. He has been doing it ever since. Pray that we recognize the workings of Satan, the Devil, so we are not deceived!