



## MISSION DRIFT: EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

*“Adventist education may have drifted off dead-center mission, but could it be that the customers of Adventist education have drifted off dead-center mission too?”*

If you could travel back to the time right before we had our first Adventist school, what might you have contribute to that discussion? You would have the advantage of knowing what our schools look like now. Would you be in favor of starting an Adventist school or would you speak against it? What warnings or encouragement might you give? It would be fun to tell the naysayers, by 2019 we will have 7,579 schools worldwide with a total enrollment of over 1.8 million students? Those numbers would be difficult if not impossible to fathom in the 1800s. The real advantage would be in sharing the struggles that we are facing. Declining enrollments, soaring tuition and the lure of free public education, to list just a few. If we could start over, would there be a way to avoid our challenges today?

Mission drift is a phenomenon that can occur in any organization, large or small.

The subtle and slow movement of any organization off dead-center mission is very common. It rarely occurs from direct or nefarious internal leadership guidance. It is more likely to be slow and occur over generations, with the results finally being noticed when there is a crisis. Then a determined and focused re-alignment occurs, and the organization may or may not achieve success based upon the timing of the correction.

Adventist education may have drifted off dead-center mission, but could it be that the customers of Adventist education have drifted off dead-center mission too? I would propose that it is both and the only way to correct our “drift” is to move together onto the original mission focus.

What is the mission of Adventist education? “True education is the preparation of the physical, mental, and moral powers for the performance of every duty; it

*(continued on page 6)*



*“Many of us are under the popular but erroneous belief that intellectual acquirement is the purpose of Adventist education.”*

## EDUCATION REIMAGINED

Recently there has been an emphasis on righteousness by faith across our territory. Historically, many believe that this doctrine was emphasized and developed into Adventist theology in the late 1800s and early 1900s surrounding the famous messages of A.T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner. Some note that during this time, Ellen White began to emphasize this topic more in her writings, especially in her classic *Conflict of the Ages* series, which includes *The Desire of Ages*.

What may surprise some is that parallel to this critical period in Adventist theology was Ellen White’s development of Adventist education. In fact, what is notably outstanding is that her body of work on education took place from 1886 to 1903—a very significant era in Adventist theology in which some believe that the church was struggling with an identity crisis! Her work began with a series of articles that formed *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (originally, a booklet entitled *Selections From the Testimonies Concerning the Subject of Education*, and later the book, *Christian Education*). Her classic work on the topic, *Education*, followed in 1903 and *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* in 1913. Even *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, a book published in 1923 is a collection of seventy-four articles that are chronologically arranged from 1872 to 1915.

What does this mean? For Ellen White, Adventist education was not just a *system*, it was a *theology*. “To restore in

man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life” (*Education*, p. 16-17). Education is as theological as redemption. “In the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one, for in education, as in redemption, ‘other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ’ ” (Ibid., p. 30). Because love is the basis of redemption, it is also the basis of true education. Because redemption implies the fall of humanity, the purpose of education is to restore the image of God in humanity—the student as well as the people the student will serve in the future. Because righteousness can only be obtained by faith, Ellen White dedicates an entire chapter to faith in her book, *Education*.

Although these statements seem docile at first glance, they become extremely radical when their implications are unpacked. For example, “true education does not ignore the value of scientific knowledge or literary acquirements; but above information it values power; above power, goodness; above intellectual acquirements, character” (Ibid., p. 226). This belief that intellectual knowledge and scientific acquirements are on the lowest end of the importance spectrum can be a hard philosophical pill to swallow for many educators, parents, and

students. Many of us are under the popular but erroneous belief that intellectual acquirement is the *purpose* of Adventist education. However, for Adventists, the purpose of education is much more drastic. “In true education the selfish ambition, the greed of power, the disregard for the rights and needs of humanity, that are the curse of our world, find a counterinfluence” (Ibid., p. 225).

To summarize, Ellen White had a theology of education. From her perspective, the purpose of education was salvific in at least two specific ways: with love for God as a foundation it develops godliness in the students, and with love for mankind as a foundation it uses service as a tool by which others encounter God and are saved. Love for God and man is exercised in the context of faith. The role of faith in education is complex and thorough. It has the radical belief that the student’s success in life and career is not dependent on outside circumstances or even personal talents, but on God’s faithfulness. And this eliminates academic competition where students are pressured to compare themselves with their peers and perform better than others in an effort to obtain a more secure future. The result of this kind of education reaches God’s ideal for His children which is godliness—God-likeness. Thus, righteousness by faith is obtained from education’s perspective.

Why is this important? Adventist education is God’s means of teaching us a more complete picture of what righ-

teousness by faith really means. In many cases, the common understanding of righteousness or perfection is the elimination of sin in the life of the Christian. However, this is a limited understanding of perfection—it means that and so much more. In the context of education we discover that when God created man, He created him with the purpose of being like Him. This meant that even though Adam was already perfect as a physical, mental, and spiritual individual in the image of God, he was to continue to grow in his perfection. “All his faculties were capable of development; their capacity and vigor were continually to increase” (Ibid. p. 15). God’s purpose for Adam, in his physical, mental, and spiritual perfection at creation required an eternity of time to accomplish as well as an infinite ability to grow in quantity and quality. Thus, Adam in his perfection was to continue to grow in capacity (quantity) and vigor (quality) forever. Adventist education is designed to teach us that (1) we cannot even understand what perfection/godliness is even if we were like Adam prior to his fall, (2) in our fallen human nature what was once impossible to understand is now also impossible to accomplish as we’ve become subject to death, and (3) God gives us a foundation to build our faith that God can do the impossible in us. “Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children, godliness—God-likeness is the goal to be reached” (Ibid., p. 12). According to Adventist education, this is righteousness by faith.

Ellen White had a theological and missional perspective on education. Her perspectives were to guide the church in its understanding on critical theological concepts like the law of God, faith, the nature of God and man, revelation, and others. They were also a missional response to the cultural, philosophical, and educational trends of her time. From 1891 to 1895 she expressed her opinions on the schools of the land—specifically

the University of Michigan. One of her biggest concerns was that the teachers had “prostituted” their powers of God-given knowledge, offering them as a “contribution” to the devil (*Selected Messages*, Vol. 3, 231-244). She had such a significant problem with the method and content of what was being taught in the public school system during her time that she was moved to make missional advances that were extreme in their appearance to many people then and now. In this context and with this message she said that Adventist students—properly fitted under the true system of education were to enter these universities as missionaries to mission fields to provide an influence against the undercurrent of the secular system of education.

Although public campus ministry plays a major role in helping us retain many of our Adventist young people who would otherwise be lost to the church during their time at these colleges, Ellen White’s purpose for establishing an Adventist public campus ministry was to make a missional impact on our nation’s largest unentered mission field—the concrete jungle of the public university. It should be the purpose of Adventist education to prepare young people to live out the message of righteousness by faith as missionaries globally, including on the public college campuses of our land.



## PRAYER FOCUS

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

### JULY 22-26

Belgreen/Ionia/ Portland  
Pastor Ryan Counsell  
Ionia Elementary  
Ionia Community Service  
Family Camp III

### JULY 29-AUGUST 2

Clare/Edenville  
Pastor Terry Nelson  
Edenville Elementary  
Ministerial Retreat

### AUGUST 5-9

Williamston  
Pastor David Pano  
Greater Lansing Adventist School  
Teachers Convention

### AUGUST 12-16

Grand Blanc/Holly  
Pastor Daniel Ferraz  
Adelphian Junior Academy  
Holly Community Service  
OshKosh Camporee

### AUGUST 19-23

Pioneer Memorial Church  
Pastor Dwight Nelson/Team  
Ruth Murdoch Elementary  
Andrews Academy  
Berrien Springs Pioneer Memorial  
Community Service  
Adventurer Leadership

### AUGUST 26-30

Kalamazoo/Kalamazoo Filipino  
Pastor Moise Ratsara  
Kalamazoo Junior Academy  
Kalamazoo Community Service  
UP Camp Meeting



## BE THERE

Recently I was in a meeting with an older minister, and as we were discussing strengths and weaknesses, he asked me an important question: “Who has impacted you more in life, your mother or your father?” The question, though seemingly simple, was actually more complicated. You see, my parents divorced the summer before I entered the academy. My mother was an Adventist and my father was not, and that made for a very difficult union. After 18 years, they decided to call it quits. Freshman year of academy is often difficult, but it became very challenging for me as my father, who previously struggled with absenteeism, was now even better at camouflaging himself from the call of fatherhood. He struggled to be there. I’d like to say that the story has changed over the last 20 years, but it hasn’t.

This is where the grim reality strikes to the heart. People, especially men, will often say, “My father wasn’t there for me.” And so they may point to their mother or another who was there and who helped form who they are today. Yet the

undeniable truth is there is no replacement for a father. Whether through their presence or through their absence, they form us.

“Who has impacted you more, your mother or your father?” There is no doubt that my father’s absence, his failure to be there, has formed me more than any other variable in my life. For some this adversity is crushing, and for a time it was so destructive for me that post-expulsion from academy, I was in a hopeless downward spiral that seemed would only end in complete loss.

The path has been long and arduous and continues to be an upward climb for me with many stories to be shared from along the way, but right here it is important to note the power of absence. You

see, you can allow your father’s absence to destroy you or drive you. Some have lost their fathers to death, divorce, or desertion. However it happened, the reality is the same. You have a Father in heaven who loves you. He claims you as His own and calls you His son. He has always been your Father and He has always been there. My earthly father’s absence, though painful, enabled a greater longing for the presence of my Father in heaven. My earthly father’s silence allowed my heavenly Father’s voice to project louder. The absence of purpose and mission transferred from my earthly father gave place to my Heavenly Father’s calling to His message, His mission, and His purpose. A calling that would lead me to be there for others and call them to sonship with the Father, to join in the message, mission, and purposes of the family of God.

As we navigate the masculine journey, the challenges of manhood will be a constant. Your call as a man is always to



**MICHIGAN 2019**  
**MEN OF FAITH**  
 “SOUND THE BATTLE CRY”



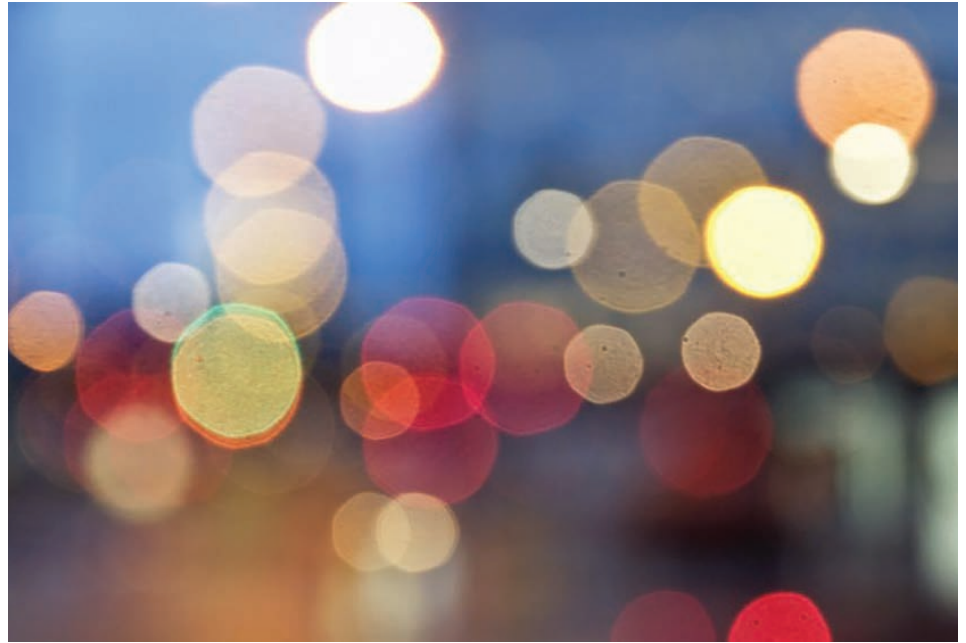
**SABBATH, SEPTEMBER 7, 2019 | 9AM-5PM**  
**GREAT LAKES ADVENTIST ACADEMY**  
*BRING A FRIEND AND YOUR LUNCH*

point others to their Father in heaven, calling them to embrace their sonship and inheritance granted to them by Christ, for it is through Him that we become sons of God.

Don't let your life be characterized by absenteeism. Be there. Your presence is essential for your success, the success of the men of faith in your sphere of influence, and the success of the church. That means be there when it matters most. Be there at church on Sabbath morning, especially in Sabbath school. Be there at prayer meeting and the evangelistic efforts of your church. Be there in the lives of men when they are suffering hurt or loss. Be there when it's hard and uncomfortable. Be there September 7 at Great Lakes Adventist Academy for "Men of Faith." In an age of absence, you are called to presence. So be there whenever and wherever "there" might be.

**Jeff Akenberger**, pastor, Elk Rapids Spanish Company, Kalkaska and Traverse City churches

*"The father should do his part toward making home happy. Whatever his cares and business perplexities, they should not be permitted to overshadow his family; he should enter his home with smiles and pleasant words." –Ellen G. White*



## SPIRITUAL BLIND SPOTS

**E**very Christian is ignorant of their ignorance. Put another way, we have blind spots. The world even more so.

It's possible to think you know something but not know it—to see, hear, and read truth; yet see not, hear not and perceive not (Matthew 13:13-15). There's a way that may seem right to you, but its end is death (Proverbs 14:12).

The Laodiceans claimed they were rich, increased with goods and in need of nothing, but the reality is, they knew not their depraved, wretched, and miserable condition (Revelation 3). Is it even possible to be unaware of one's personal state of misery? How can one be so wrong about their internal condition?

Paul says, "If any man thinks he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know [it]." You can even think yourself to be something when you're nothing and deceive yourself (Galatians 6:3). Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it even entered the realm of your imagination the things God has prepared for those who love Him (1

Corinthians 2:9); and His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways (Isaiah 55:8, 9).

David was unaware of his sin of murder and adultery and needed Nathan to give him a "straight testimony" (2 Samuel 12).

It was Jesus who said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

It was Peter who bragged he would never betray His Lord, the reality being he did just that. The heart is deceitful above all things; it's desperately wicked and who in the world can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9). "The lips may express a poverty of soul that the heart does not acknowledge," says Ellen White; and you can speak to God of your "poverty of spirit" while your heart is "swelling with the conceit of its own superior humility and exalted righteousness" (*Christ Object Lessons*, p. 159).

You can draw near to God with your lips but have your heart far from Him (Matthew 15:8). Because we're unaware of our spiritual condition, we don't

(continued on page 6)

## (SPIRITUAL BLIND SPOTS)

even know what to pray for and need the Holy Spirit to pray for us! (Romans 8:26). That's why God does "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" because we're often unaware of where we should go and what He desires us to be.

The disciples had the best Teacher that ever lived. Jesus attempted to have His words sink deep into their ears (Luke 9:44-45). But their blindness was too thick; their myopia to myopic. When the greatest event the world has ever witnessed took place at Gethsemane and Calvary, they were sleeping, soporific to the reality of realities. For similar reasons, the antediluvian world lost their only hope of salvation. They were living life as usual and knew not their fate until the rain began to fall (Matthew 24).

Lot's family took him to be joking (Genesis 19:14). And to many Christians, Jesus will come as a thief in the night (2 Peter 3:10). We're deluded into thinking everything's ok, when things are anything but.

That's how Satan dupes us. We're a generation that's pure in our own eyes, but not washed from our filthiness (Proverbs 30:12). Christians think they're saved when they're actually lost (Matthew 7:21-23), similar to how anorexics can appear chubby to themselves when they're actually skinny.

You can also think you're on God's side when you're on Satan's. You can even kill in His name (John 16:2).

May we come to the realization that spiritual things are spiritually discerned (I Corinthians 2:14).

May God open our eyes.

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Andy Im, Communication

## (MISSION DRIFT)

is the training of body, mind, and soul for divine service. This is the education that will endure unto eternal life." *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 330. In *Messages to Young People*, p. 173, this focus is crystallized: "If placed under the control of His Spirit, the more thoroughly the intellect is cultivated the more effectively it can be used in the service of God. . . those who have had the benefit of a thorough education, can do a much more extensive work for Christ. They stand on vantage ground." Let's synthesize this into one sentence: Provide an excellent education for service to God. We should not have to compromise quality in favor of an Adventist education. They are not mutually exclusive. Both are essential.

We, as parents, want our children to be successful. What we don't want to do is lose sight of what true success looks like. My prayer every morning has been that my children will be saved for the kingdom. I think of the book title, *Lord, Keep Your Mansions—Just Save My Children*. In this book Richard O'Ffill shares how a big house in the country was important, but now nothing else matters. We want our children saved in the kingdom and serving the Lord until His return. As we were reminded in the paragraph above, true education prepares our children in body, mind, and soul for divine service. That is the focus, to serve our Lord and Savior regardless of the life work chosen.

My belief is that when the parents, teachers and the church are fully united on this mission then God can fully bless our work. Finances and enrollment will not be a factor when we are laser-focused on the original mission. It might be time to complete a self-audit of our focus, both in our home and in our schools. If we discover some "mission drift," lets make that course correction and reap the blessings poured out from heaven.

"With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world! How soon might the end come — the end of suffering and sorrow and sin! How soon, in place of a possession here, with its blight of sin and pain, our children might receive their inheritance where 'the righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever;' where 'the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick,' and 'the voice of weeping shall be no more heard.'" *Counsels to Teachers, Parents, and Students*, p. 555. I personally am looking forward to Christ's soon return, but not without my children. Keep the focus!

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Brian Kittleson, Associate Superintendent of Education

***"The youth need to be impressed with the truth that their endowments are not their own. Strength, time, intellect, are but lent treasures. They belong to God, and it should be the resolve of every youth to put them to the highest use. He is a branch, from which God expects fruit; a steward, whose capital must yield increase; a light, to illuminate the world's darkness."***  
**–Ellen G. White**



iShare Conference will be held on the campus of Great Lakes Adventist Academy, from August 9-11. Come hear dynamic speakers, attend practical seminars, and listen to exciting frontline testimonies from young literature evangelists. For more information visit: [miyouthrush.org/ishare](http://miyouthrush.org/ishare).



Save the date! This Year's Mother-Daughter Retreat will be held October 11-13. Online registration will open August 19. You may also call 517-316-1565 to register and for more information.



The Golden Years Retreat for seniors ages 50+ will be held at Camp Au Sable from September 8-12. The speaker for the event is Elder Jay Gallimore. To register or for questions, please call (989) 348-5491 or email Jordan at [jgrove@misda.org](mailto:jgrove@misda.org).



Many have shared how they were especially blessed by this year's messages at camp meeting. The sermons and seminars are available for purchase at the Adventist Book Center (ABC). Be sure to stop by or call for your order at (800) 876-9222.



The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has created a one-of-a-kind humanitarian pin for pathfinders to add to their uniforms. This pin will be offered for a limited time only at the 2019 International Pathfinder Camporee at Oshkosh. For more information on earning the pin, visit the following link - <http://bit.ly/pln7919>.



Camp Au Sable is looking for a full-time Assistant Food Service Director. The person will work closely with the head chef to manage daily kitchen activities, which includes overseeing and mentoring staff. For questions and/or to submit your resume, please contact Tammy at [tmi-cheff@misda.org](mailto:tmi-cheff@misda.org).

Do you want to receive the weekly e-newsletter of the Michigan Conference for the latest in news and upcoming events? Subscribe now by copying the following link to your browser: <http://bit.ly/MISDA7>.

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## MONTHLY CALENDAR

### July

27-28 Statewide Youth Rally

29-Aug 1 Ministerial Retreat - Camp  
Au Sable

31-Aug 3 ASI National Convention -  
Louisville, Kentucky

### August

4 New Teacher Orientation -  
Camp Au Sable

5-8 Teachers Convention -  
Camp Au Sable

9-11 iShare Conference

12-17 OshKosh Camporee

19 School Begins

23-25 Adventurer Leadership  
Workshop

27 MI Executive Committee

29 Camp Meeting Committee

29-Sep 2 UP Camp Meeting -  
Camp Sagola

### September

2 Office Closed - Labor Day

6-8 Adventurer Family Camp -  
Camp Au Sable

6-8 Adventist Community Service -  
Camp Au Sable

7 Men of Faith - Great Lakes  
Adventist Academy

## ADVENTIST COMMUNITY SERVICES OPENS DOORS!

Alanna Rodriguez, member, Escanaba Church

Walking into Menards for painting supplies, Pastor Danny Rodriguez was dressed in work clothes and asked the employee if he could direct him to the primer. The employee said he would help him in just a minute since he was in the middle of preparing some paint for another customer.

Sam\* stepped out from behind the counter and asked, "Are you the pastor from the Seventh-day Adventist church in Escanaba?" Danny had never seen the

man before, and was interested to hear how Sam recognized him.

As they began walking to the primer aisle, Sam shared how his family was in hard times this past year, and came one time to the Adventist Community Service (ACS) Food Pantry in Escanaba for food on a Sabbath afternoon.

One of the volunteers from Rapid River, Betty Burnett (fondly known by all as

Grandma "B"), talked to Sam. Her presences and kindness meant so much to him and his family in their time of need.

Although it was the only time that Sam came to the food pantry, the love and kindness that was given to him left a lasting impression.

Pastor Danny was so caught up in the conversation, that he forgot to ask Sam how he recognized Danny.

Each week the pantry serves 30 to 40 families in the community. Many

have commented on how they are treated when they come to the pantry.

One challenge the ACS has in Escanaba are volunteers. Pray that God will send laborers to our ACS and prayerfully consider volunteering in your local ACS.

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\*not his real name

