

# MICHIGAN MEMO



## FOR SUCH A TIME

**W**e are living in unparalleled times. The shock to the economy alone has the Feds forecasting up to 47 million job losses with a potential—perhaps short-lived—unemployment rate of 32% in the aftermath of COVID-19.<sup>1</sup> Projections like this are derived from a broad range of data and complex algorithms that may or may not come to pass. At the time of writing, jobless claims in the United States have spiked to 6.64 million,<sup>2</sup> with millions more expected to file for unemployment in the weeks ahead.

No one knows what the future holds and what the new normal will be once the dust settles. There are potential consequences that could have enduring implications for religious liberty, healthcare, and broad church operations, to name a few.

There are some things, however, of

which we can be certain as Seventh-day Adventists. We exist today as a movement of prophecy, and our mission is decided. So is our message. We are called to proclaim the everlasting gospel “to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.”<sup>3</sup>

Medical missionary work, or the right hand of gospel ministry,<sup>4</sup> also has significant bearings upon us at this time in earth’s history. “There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. . . . The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. . . . Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.”<sup>5</sup> It is true that we are unable to draw comfortably near to one another in the current milieu, but through the use of technology and other creative

means, we can find ways to minister, even now.

For years Adventists have defended and argued for a comprehensive approach to ministry that incorporated our distinctive message with medical missionary work, which is to function as an “entering wedge”<sup>6</sup> upon the hearts of those we are trying to reach. The hope now is that we are awaking to the practical significance of medical-based ministry.

We do not know what lies ahead, but we do know this. Many are dying from COVID-19, and we need to do all we can to assist those in need. It should be unacceptable to every Seventh-day Adventist that thousands are passing to the grave without having heard the gospel.

From an Adventist perspective, the global need can be narrowed down to

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JIM MICHEFF, PRESIDENT



*“How are we spending all of this time? Set aside the news and media outlets, along with secular entertainment, and focus on sacred things. God is giving us the opportunity to prepare for what lies just ahead.”*

## NOW IS THE TIME

What is happening all around us? We have been told that the last movements of this world will be rapid ones. In just a few short weeks, this world has changed right before our eyes. Think about it. The United States and the entire world have slowed down to allow only the bare minimum of activity. Workplace shutdowns, school closings, places of amusement and sports, bars and nightclubs, all closed. State and federal governments have initiated and enforced social distancing that is eliminating large group gatherings—including church attendance—all in an effort to curb the COVID-19 pandemic that threatens the public health of all citizens.

Yet, these are exciting times—times that the apostles had desired to experience! For years we as a denomination have taught and preached about the time of the end. This is not a time to be anxious, fearful, or timid. This is time to live out our faith!

Matthew 24 is well known for the description of what this world will be like just before the end of time. We also know that both Matthew 25 and Revelation 3 describe what the church of God will be like. This includes Seventh-day Adventists. The people of God are spiritually asleep and need to wake up. God’s alarm clock for us has gone off. Fight the urge to hit the snooze button. How many times have we wished that we had more time to spend in personal time with God? Now, most of us have been directed to

stay home, and God has given us a gift of time. Time to think. Time to pray. Time to study. Time to commit. Take advantage of the time that we have been given.

How are we spending all of this time? Set aside the news and media outlets, along with secular entertainment, and focus on sacred things. God is giving us the opportunity to prepare for what lies just ahead. He has promised to do amazing things both in and through us.

Paul put it this way: “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.”<sup>1</sup>

We must remember that this work of examination and testing is not to be done by ourselves. Why? Because our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and we cannot know them. God says that He alone searches the heart and tests the mind.<sup>2</sup>

We were given a Guide to help us! The Helper is the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit is first to remove the rebellion and sin out of our lives, uniting us to Him, and binding us in unity as His church. It is the Holy Spirit that convicts, convinces, and reproves us of our sin and our need of righteousness and gives us confidence to face the judgment to come.<sup>3</sup> Revelation 3 describes this process of character development as buying gold refined in the fire and white raiment. We must

take on the attitude of a learner. As our understanding and picture of Christ’s life of purity becomes clearer, our picture and understanding of sin also becomes more vivid. Without Jesus’ life as the standard, we are not able to understand what sin really looks like. When we allow the Holy Spirit to remove all of our cherished sins out of our hearts,<sup>4</sup> then, and only then, will the outpouring of the latter rain come to empower His church to be living witnesses, extending God’s offer to do the same in others’ lives.

Is the Seventh-day Adventist movement God’s last day remnant church? Yes, the Bible identifies His church as a people who love and fear God by keeping His commandments and the faith of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> But what does that mean? We need to ask ourselves, “What is an Adventist?” And more importantly, “Why am I an Adventist?”

Denominations are defined by the Bible beliefs they teach. Doctrines are important because they form the foundation of our relationship with God. In order to become an Adventist, new members profess to know the 28 Fundamental Beliefs, and then pledge to incorporate these beliefs into their everyday lives. Many of these doctrines are shared by other Protestant denominations, but we know that one Bible doctrine will become the testing point for the whole world in the near future.

Fundamental Beliefs 19 and 20 are entitled “The Law of God” and “The Sabbath.” These teach the importance of

obedience to God's law—all 10 Commandments—especially the fourth commandment, the Sabbath. God singles out the fourth commandment because it reflects our relationship with Him. The Bible even identifies the Sabbath as a sign that we belong to God.<sup>6</sup> This one commandment that is especially disputed and rejected by those professing allegiance to God reveals the inner rebellion of the heart.

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines a rebellion as opposition to one in authority or dominance: open, armed, and usually unsuccessful defiance of or resistance to an established government. A rebellion originates from a sentiment of indignation and disapproval of a situation and then manifests itself by the refusal to submit to or to obey the authority responsible for this situation. In our situation, we have rebelled against the authority of our Creator.

What is the difference between an Adventist lifestyle and any other, including a nominal Christian lifestyle? We make our choices through the lens of our doctrines and beliefs. Doctrines affect our everyday life and decisions. They are God's tools in forming our character. If we want to determine the effect of our beliefs on our character, evaluate the atmosphere at home. Is the oneness with God reflected in my marriage? Do I find myself talking to God throughout the day and asking for His guidance? Am I engaged in my local church? Do I care about my neighbors, and am I reaching out to

help others? Do I migrate to spiritual things, or am I more drawn to secular things? These are important questions, but perhaps the clearest indication is simply to ask ourselves how we relate to the Sabbath. God told us that this is a sign that shows our relationship to Him. How do I spend the Sabbath, and is it truly a delight? The devil tries to get us to focus on the particulars of the Christian lifestyle, such as dress, diet, entertainment, and music, while neglecting the motivation for these things. But when Christ is in the heart, all of these things and so much more will reflect our love for Him.

God earnestly desires for His last-day remnant people to hold high His banner of Bible doctrines. Underneath this banner stand all who practice those beliefs in life and word. Being an Adventist is more than a mere profession. It is a complete, transformed lifestyle that combines both practice and profession. The Bible is clear that not all who profess to believe in God have incorporated those beliefs into their lifestyle.<sup>7</sup>

We are sent the following warning: "The mighty shaking has commenced and will go on, and all will be shaken out who are not willing to take a bold and unyielding stand for the truth, and to sacrifice for God and His cause. The angel said: 'Think ye that any will be compelled to sacrifice? No, no. It must be a freewill offering. It will take all to buy the field.' I cried to God to spare His people, some of whom were fainting and dying. Then I saw that

the judgments of the Almighty were speedily coming, and I begged the angel to speak in his language to the people. Said he, 'All the thunders and lightnings of Mount Sinai would not move those who will not be moved by the plain truths of the word of God, neither would an angel's message awake them.'"<sup>8</sup>

God is allowing all of us to encounter events that will require *entire* trust in Him. This process will separate those who have merely adopted the name from those who are developing the character of God.

I believe we are going to continue to have some time before movements and events eliminate our privilege to operate churches and schools. Right now, we need to make the most of our opportunity to prepare for the test that will try our faith to the utmost. For soon our opportunity will pass, and only those who have cooperated with the Holy Spirit in developing a Christ-like character will be empowered to live and afford this dying world God's last invitation. Now is the time to prepare, and by God's grace and power, we can have the character of Jesus!

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:5, 6, NKJV.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 17:9, 10.

<sup>3</sup> John 16:8.

<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:13.

<sup>5</sup> Revelation 12:17, 14:12.

<sup>6</sup> Ezekiel 20:12, 20.

<sup>7</sup> 1 John 2:19.

<sup>8</sup> *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White* (CET), p. 107.

## PRAYER FOCUS

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

### MAY 4-8

Berrien Springs Spanish  
Pastor Nilton Garcia  
Andrews Academy

### MAY 11-15

Three Angels Fellowship/Sparta  
Pastor Daniel McGrath

### MAY 18-22

Glennie/Tawas City/West Branch  
Pastor Josiah Hill  
Tawas Community Services/West  
Branch Ministry

### MAY 26-29

Michiana Fil Am/St Joseph  
Pastor Roy Castelbuono  
Andrews University





## HOW IS IT GOING, YOUTH?

**H**ow's it going, MISDA Youth? As I write, I have been “self isolating” now for about a week. The calendar says it is spring, and the sun is actually cooperating for once, but the conversations that I have been having on social media and on my cell are cloudy at best. This morning I talked to a lady in New York City who lives about five blocks from Times Square. She represents an organization that helps people get out of medical debt, and I am excited about partnering with her to help the people here in Michigan. We had been playing phone tag for the past few days, and I was finally able to get a hold of her in order to find out more about her company. “Hello!” I said excitedly. Her tone was somber as she replied, “Hello.”

“How are you holding up in the city?” I asked.

“Things are crazy here. No one is on the streets, and I have moved out of my home to stay with a relative. New York is the worst place in the country to be right now.”

As she related other details of her situation over the phone, I remember thinking, “This is terrible. How can I help her right now? Should I tell her that she shouldn't be living in the

city?” I remember hearing that counsel years ago, and while I thought it seemed a little too strict at the time, it makes perfect sense right now. What if I tell her how happy I am to be living in the country here in Michigan and glad I took that advice? That seemed a little too arrogant and probably wouldn't go as smoothly as it would have if we had known each other for longer than three minutes. So after the awkward pause, I just asked about her program and how we could help. She was very professional and gave me everything I needed to know. I hope that by the time you read this, we will have something on the youth website [www.misdayouth.org](http://www.misdayouth.org) that will promote this ministry. (Shameless plug intended!)

As our conversation came to a close, the Holy Spirit told me to do something, which to no surprise is the greatest way I could help. “Can I pray for you before we hang up?” I asked.

“Yes. I would like that,” she replied. I don't remember everything I said in that prayer, but I do know that when I finished, she said, “Thank you very much. I needed that.”

Need is a very interesting word. It means, “required because it is essential.” She didn't need me to tell her how

to live her life, nor did she need some flowery words from a pastor in Michigan. What she did say she needed in that short reply was a prayer—a prayer that told her that there is a God in heaven that loves her and listens when we talk to Him.

Young people, here is what I learned from this conversation: Now is the time to be bold in our faith. Do not be ashamed to tell others about a God who loves them, died to save them, and is coming very soon. Let the Holy Spirit tell you how to do this, whether it involves the sacrifice of your time and resources or just requires you to offer up a simple prayer. Each and every day, be willing to be used by God.

I have no idea what life will be like for us here in Michigan in May or as you read this article for the first time. Even so, I want to encourage you do three things that I believe will work no matter what the governor has declared or rescinded.

First, take time to talk and listen to the Lord each day. Make it the priority of your life, and do it first thing in the morning.

Second, reach out to those around you. Whether they are family, friends, or complete strangers, it doesn't matter. Do not be afraid to ask, “How are you? Is everything OK? How can I help?” You can do these things in person if possible, or if not, you can text them, call them, or even write them a letter. (Ask your parents what letters are. We used to write them years ago while we listened to our cassette tapes.) When they respond, just simply listen to what they are saying and be bold enough to invite God into the conversation through prayer at the end. Ellen White said, “Prayer moves the arm of Omnipotence,” and I have found that to be very true.

Finally, ask for help. Do not be too proud to say you need something. People are looking to help you. Do not

*(continued on page 7)*



***Our faithfulness to God in returning tithes and offerings is often tested during times of financial hardship. What are we to do?***

## FORWARD IN FAITH

**T**he past several weeks have dramatically changed the world we live in and have impacted us greatly. This could create a lot of anxiety if we did not have the hope that we have been given. Now is the time for us to be encouraged that our Lord is coming soon! Now is the time to press together as a family of believers to encourage each other and to be faithful to the end as our redemption draweth nigh. There are so many things that the Lord has entrusted to us to be faithful in, but I will just focus on three of the ones that can strongly influence our lives. I highly recommend reading chapter 25 of *Christ's Object Lessons* for a more comprehensive study.

### **Time**

God has given each one of us the same amount of time each day. We are told in *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 342, "Our time belongs to God. Every moment is His, and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time." Christ was our perfect example in how He planned out His day. "So utterly was Christ emptied of self that He made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of

His will" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 208). May that be our experience each day.

### **Giving**

I once read that you can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. Our faithfulness in financial giving is one of many spiritual thermometers that show just how much we truly trust in the Lord. When we obey God's command to return His holy tithe, His portion of what He has given to us, we are acknowledging and trusting Him as Lord of our lives. We are also reminded that everything that we own has been given to us by God. He then gives us the opportunity to express our gratefulness for all He has done for us by giving a love offering to His work.

### **The Message**

God has also made us stewards of the beautiful message of His soon return (Colossians 1:25-29). It is evident that we are living in earth's final hours, and this talent that God has entrusted us with can still be shared. Jesus tells us in John 9:4, "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work" (NASB). What a beautiful message of hope God has given us at this time! May we be faithful in sharing it with the world.

I am so thankful that God is faithful,

especially in times of uncertainty. Do you remember reading in the Bible about when the Israelites left Egypt and were led into the wilderness? There were over 600,000 men, plus women and children, that God needed to provide for as they headed into the desert. They had just endured plagues and a collapsed economy, and were persecuted for their faith. Leaving their homes and everything they were accustomed to, they fled Egypt. Did God let them down? Absolutely not. He was faithful in all things, even when they complained, rebelled, and missed out on the rich blessings of trusting in Him. After forty years of wandering in the desert, there was a remnant of that original group that left Egypt that trusted in God and entered into the promised land. I see so many similarities between the Israelites and what is happening with us today, don't you? Can't you see how close we are to the promised land? As we move forward in our journey with Him, may our experience with the Lord deepen as we remain faithful stewards in what He has called us to do. May God keep us as we press on in faith to the very end, and by His grace may we be a part of that remnant people who enter into the place He has prepared for us.

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**Mike Bernard**, Treasurer

# Bible Study Offer.com



## EFFECTIVE BIBLE STUDY MINISTRY TIPS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

**T**o find Bible study interests right now, you can . . .

- Call previous Bible study leads, prophecy seminar attendees, and missing church members as the current crisis has likely awakened dormant spiritual interest. Pray with them and invite them to receive Bible lessons and DVDs.
- Distribute strategically-placed BibleStudyOffer.com (BSO) *GLOW* tracts and business cards. Though person-to-person distribution may be unwise right now, a well-placed tract or card still has power to arrest the attention.
- Insert the BSO *GLOW* tract or business card inside the “Coronavirus and Immunity” *GLOW* tract or other *GLOW* tract of your choice before distributing.
- If you have a church sign, use it to say something like, “COVID-19 got you asking Bible questions? Find answers at BibleStudyOffer.com.”
- Place a BSO yard sign in a prominent place.
- Share a link to BSO via social media and text messaging.
- If you can safely maintain a

conversation from at least six feet away, feel free to use those social interactions as opportunities to gauge spiritual interest. For example, you can turn conversations about Coronavirus toward your faith in God and your trust in the Bible. Share a favorite Bible promise and let them know that at BibleStudyOffer.com they can receive Bible lessons and DVDs about the Bible prophecies that speak about current world events.

- Just ask! Even while maintaining safe social distance, you can still ask friends, neighbors, co-workers, or even strangers if they would be interested in studying the Bible. If they show an interest, you can refer them to BibleStudyOffer.com or even sign them up from your smartphone right there on the spot. Even better yet, you can schedule a time to study together over the phone or by video chat.

**To follow up new Bible study requests right now, you can . . .**

### Call Ahead

- Most people who request Bible studies through the BSO website select the “personal” option. Perhaps they assume another option would be uncomfortable

or would require too much of a time commitment. Regardless, under normal circumstances we recommend going directly to every interest’s home to deliver Bible study materials personally without calling ahead—even for those who request the “personal” option. That brief interaction is an invaluable opportunity to make a good first impression, to ease potential suspicion, and to put a face to their Bible study journey.

- During this time of heightened concern about direct social interaction, however, it may be wise to make your first contact over the phone.
- If you call ahead to those who requested “personal” studies, you will need to discuss the two delivery options we provide: dropping the studies off at their home or sending the materials through the mail. Obviously, if someone requests the “one-on-one” or “small group study” option, there is no need to call ahead. Proceed directly to a home visit in such cases (see the recommended protocols below for drop-off and in-person studies at this time).
- When you make the initial call, say something like this:

“Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I’m a local representative for BibleStudyOffer.com. We received your request for the \_\_\_\_\_ lessons and are happy to see you have an interest in studying the Bible. If you don’t mind my asking, what prompted you to request these lessons? You made a wise choice! We would like to get these lessons to you as quickly as possible. I can personally drop them off at your home as early as today or tomorrow, or I can mail them to you so you would receive them in the next few days. Which would you prefer?”



“At BibleStudyOffer.com we do more than merely distribute Bible study materials. We also provide personal assistance on your Bible study journey. I would like to give you my phone number so you can reach me at any time with questions, concerns, or insights you might have as you study God’s Word. May I pray with you before we go?”

### Drop off study guides personally

- It would be wise to take extra precautions when preparing Bible study materials at this time. Be sure to wash your hands, then wear gloves and a mask to place Bible study guides in a sealed plastic bag along with a note explaining the safety precautions that you took in packaging the lessons. Though this may seem excessively cautious, many will appreciate your diligence and thoughtfulness.
- Use hand sanitizer before you take

the lessons to the door. Leave them on the porch, and then ring the doorbell.

- Maintain social distance upon delivery by staying at least six feet away from the door after knocking. Remain off the steps or porch as you interact with people.
- If someone seems uncomfortable with personal delivery at this time, offer to mail future study guides.

### Send Bible study guides through the mail

- Mail only two Bible study guides at a time. Be sure to include the corresponding review cards, a stamped self-return envelope, and a cover letter. (See the resource section for a sample introduction and follow-up letter.)
- Always include a personal note, sharing how excited you are for them and how confident you are that the Lord will bless them as

they study. Be sure to give your phone number along with an appeal for them to contact you with their questions, concerns, or insights.

### One-on-One or Group Studies

- Normally, setting up a one-on-one or group study is as simple as choosing a time and place that works for everyone. In our present circumstance, however, we recommend that all interactive studies be conducted via telephone or computer screen at this time.
- You can deliver the study guides as outlined above for drop-off studies, then immediately follow up with a phone or video chat study when you return home or at another agreed upon time.

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**Kameron DeVasher**, director, Personal Ministries

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### (TIME)

two things. The first pertains to the global demand for physical health and healing. Many are hoping to come through to the other side of COVID-19 and to live to tell the story. Our health message and medical missionary endeavors can help make this a reality.

The world also needs to come face-to-face with the everlasting gospel prior to the return of Jesus,<sup>7</sup> and it is imperative that we keep this primary, because our message ultimately drives our mission.

“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”<sup>8</sup> When we

meet the physical needs in our communities, we will find better success in introducing people to our message.

It is for such a time that we exist today.

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**Andy Im**, director, Communication

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/30/coronavirus-job-losses-could-total-47-million-unemployment-rate-of-32percent-fed-says.html>. Accessed April 2, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.com/us-weekly-jobless-claims-unemployment-filings-record-labor-market-coronavirus-2020-4>. Accessed April 2, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 14:6, NKJV.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 219.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143, 144.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 73.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 24:14

<sup>8</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p.143.

### (YOUTH)

believe the lie that no one cares. That just isn’t true. Have the courage to tell others that you are in need, and then watch how the Lord works through them for you.

In closing, what this pandemic has taught me is that Jesus really is coming soon! We need Him more than ever now, and He needs us to tell others that there is Someone who loves them and has a plan for their future. We do this in the way we talk, of course, but even more in the way we listen and act towards each other.

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**Chad Bernard**, director, Youth

## MICHIGAN CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

5801 W Michigan Ave

Lansing, MI 48917

PHONE 517.316.1500 FAX 517.316.1501

commdept@misda.org

www.misda.org

www.facebook.com/miconf

### MONTHLY GIVING

#### May

- 2 Local Combined Budget
- 9 Disaster & Famine Relief -  
World Budget Offering
- 16 Local Combined Budget
- 23 Michigan Advanced Partners
- 30 Evangelism

#### June

- 6 Local Combined Budget
- 13 Local Combined Budget
- 20 Local Combined Budget
- 27 Michigan Advanced Partners

#### July

- 4 Local Combined Budget
- 13 Women's Ministries -  
World Budget Offering
- 18 Local Combined Budget
- 25 Michigan Advanced Partners

#### August

- 1 Local Combined Budget
- 8 Adventist Universities -  
World Budget Offering
- 15 Local Combined Budget
- 22 Michigan Advanced Partners
- 29 Radio Ministry Expansion

### NEWS BRIEFS



The current milieu, both here in Michigan and globally, makes it imperative to receive timely news that impact our churches, schools, and members throughout the state. We are asking all Michigan members to subscribe to the *Michigan Update*, the weekly e-newsletter for the Michigan Conference for several reasons. First, the next issue of the *Michigan Memo* is scheduled for August, which is several months from now; and we typically do not provide the *Memo* during the camp meeting period (June and July). Secondly, unforeseen circumstances could potentially disrupt our ability to print and distribute the *Memo* as we have done in the past, so the weekly e-newsletter will become a primary means of sharing information to our constituents. Once you are subscribed, you can expect to receive the latest updates and news regarding the Conference, COVID-19, and various ministry and outreach opportunities, to name a few. To subscribe, please type [www.misda.org/subscribe](http://www.misda.org/subscribe) in your web browser and hit "enter." From there, simply enter your name and email address and click "subscribe." Thank you for your understanding at this time.



Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the "Ye Olde's" coordinating committee made the decision, for safety reasons, to postpone the reunion that was scheduled for this coming June 5-7, 2020 on the campus of Great Lakes Adventist Academy. We will honor this year's and next year's honor classes together on June 11-13, 2021. That will include graduates from 1950 & 1951, 1960 & 1961, and 1970 & 1971 and we welcome all others who have graduated from Cedar Lake Academy 50-plus years ago.