

American Union Newsletter

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HIGHLIGHTS

Western Field Conference

Thursday, August 16, to Sunday, August 19, 2018
Camp Kuratli at Trestle Glen
Boring, Oregon

The Western Field Committee chose a camp for the Western Field Conference located about a half hour from Portland, Oregon, near Boring, in a beautiful rural area. The delegates arrived a day before the conference and completed their work in one day. The conference theme was, “Be established in the Present Truth.” 2 Peter 1:12. We hope that especially those who were unable to attend this gathering will be blessed by the highlights below. Please read slowly so the thoughts—new and old—will have a chance to sink into your mind and heart and inspire change.

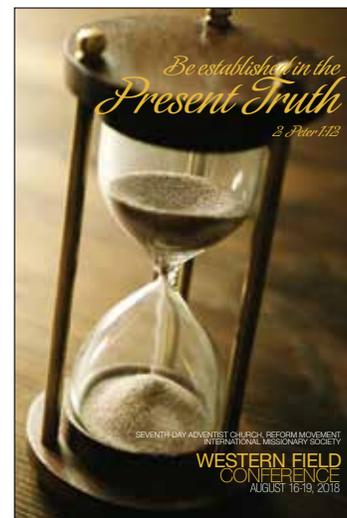
Thursday, August 16

Sandra Nelson, from Sacramento, California, opened the morning worship with a question: “How is your vision?” This refers to what one sees with his imagination, as referenced in Proverbs 29:18: “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Every morning we need to wake up for life, not just to life! For each person, God has a plan for the day, the year, and the life. We should check in with Him first thing every morning to determine the way to go. If every one of us would go to God for guidance every morning, we would be like an army!

“Many who are qualified to do excellent work accomplish little because they attempt little. Thousands pass

through life as if they had no great object for which to live, no high standard to reach. One reason for this is the low estimate which they place upon themselves. Christ paid an infinite price for us, and according to the price paid He desires us to value ourselves.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 498.

The science of the soul is to hear God’s voice. By spending time with Him, the Christian is inspired and taught to accomplish great things with Him. The example was given of Caleb in the time of Moses and Joshua. When in Numbers 13:26-33 the ten unbelieving spies said they were as grasshoppers compared to the giants, Caleb’s vision of divine power made him see the giants as grasshoppers in God’s sight. Therefore, he later requested Joshua to give him the land occupied by the giants: “The Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said.” “Hebron

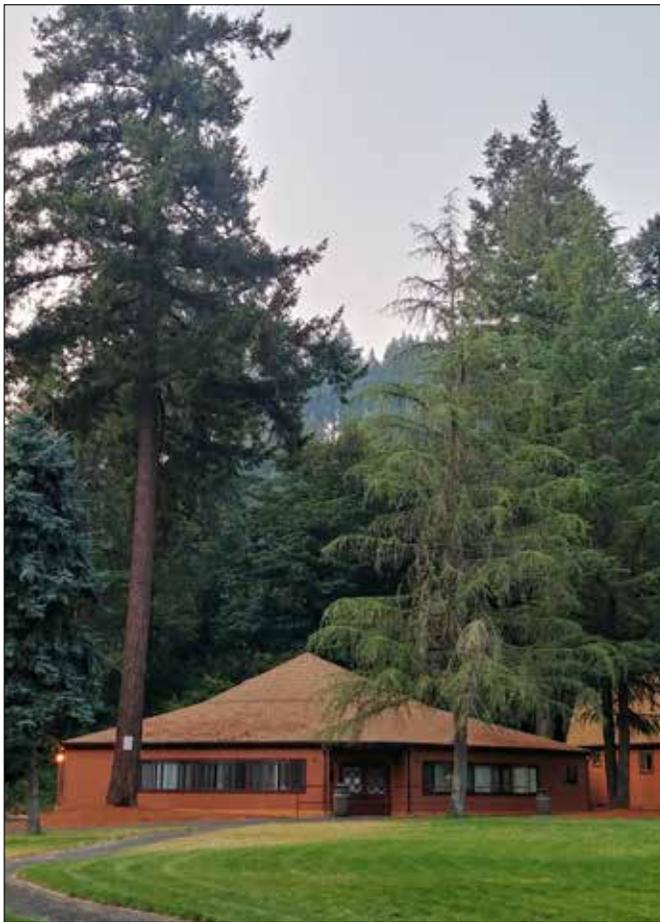


therefore became the inheritance of Caleb ... unto this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel." Joshua 14:12, 14.

Just as Caleb had a vision from God, so right before Jesus' coming His people will have a great vision; and God will do great things for them, as He did for Israel. We serve the same miracle-working God, so let us go forward, guided by His vision.



There were eight workshops on the conference program, beginning after breakfast on Thursday. While these were going on, the Children's Conference was coordinated by Sandra Nelson with the theme of "Joseph—the Unstoppa-



Meeting place at Camp Kuratli at Trestle Glen

ble Christian." Six excited children studied the life of this unstoppable worker for God. The activities were divided into different sections to highlight the stages in Joseph's life—his upbringing as a child (shaped for service), his experience in the pit and as a slave (conquering disappointment/fear), his life with Potiphar (faithful always), his time in prison (bad things do happen to God's children), and finally his life as a ruler in Egypt (as a great witness).

The children made kaleidoscopes, which demonstrated to them that God can use all of our brokenness to make beautiful patterns out of our lives. A special part of the children's conference was a little plastic bird that never stopped tipping his head as if he were drinking during the whole conference. We are the birds, and the water is God's word. Let us drink deeply from His word and draw strength to live for Him as long as we live! Like Joseph, we have the privilege of being unstoppable Christians!



Three workshops took place on Thursday morning; and two more, in the afternoon. Workshop 1, "**The Sanctuary**," was presented by Helen Marttinen, from Canada. She summarized the history behind the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness, beginning with Jacob's family being settled in the best land of Egypt by Joseph at the command of the Pharaoh. God blessed and multiplied His people as they kept separate from the Egyptians, but they were later enslaved under another Pharaoh and cried for relief. Moses was providentially protected as a child and guided for eighty years until he was ready to be used to carry out the divine plan for the Israelites' deliverance. The plagues demonstrated God's power not only to the Egyptians but also to the Israelites.

When Moses was commanded to build the sanctuary according to the exact pattern that God gave him, he did so, aided by the people's generous offerings. The workshop participants helped to identify the parts of the sanctuary and their meaning, from the courtyard to the holy place and the most holy place. The courtyard is where repentance, confession of sin, forgiveness through the shed blood of Christ, and baptism were represented as taking place. The Christian walk was illustrated in the holy place, depicting Jesus as the bread of life, the Holy Spirit's light, and prayer. And in the most holy place was God's holy presence in the shekinah along with representations of His covenant of mercy, obedience, providence, and authority.

The old covenant with the earthly sanctuary and services was a shadow of heavenly things—a picture, if you will, of how God saves all who desire to be saved. The new covenant also has a sanctuary—in heaven (Hebrews 8 and 9). There are no animal sacrifices there, for the Lamb of God shed His blood once for the sins of the world and ministers as the High Priest.

The messages pictured in the sanctuary and its services are especially important for this time (see Daniel 8:13, 14, 17, 26; 12:4, 9), when Jesus will soon complete His mediatorial service and the investigative judgment. The early Adventists were amazed to learn about the

sanctuary; and today we are blessed to see all things coming to an end, to be used by God to urge the world to escape from His wrath in the day of judgment, and to inherit everlasting life.



Workshop 2, presented by Martha Knight, from Denver, Colorado, was titled **“Facing Life’s Record.”** She told the story of being stopped by a police officer last year just as she had several difficult situations happening all at the same time. The officer said she had gone 20+ miles over the speed limit. Never having received a ticket before, it was a severe blow to know that she would have a blemish on her perfect driving record. Although she knew that one should be more concerned about the record in heaven than on earth, it was still very painful. Then, when she checked what the penalty would be, she was astonished to learn that she had been given a “no charge moving violation.” What a relief!

Everyone has a record to face in the three heavenly books. But more than just moving violations are recorded there; the record includes our thoughts, actions, and motives. “For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.” Mark 4:22. In the typical day of atonement, only those who came before God with repentance and “afflicted their souls” were permitted to



Children’s conference attendees with Athai Finch, back left, and Sandra Nelson, back right

participate, so the professed people of God are the ones examined in the antitypical judgment.

Several verses of Scripture state that one’s name can be blotted out of the heavenly book of life for a number of reasons—adding or taking from the holy word, misusing bestowed gifts and talents, selfish acts, unfulfilled duties, warnings rejected, and wasted moments and influence. We also read that some who are saved may nevertheless sustain a loss of vigor for eternity because of misdemeanors and abuse of their moral powers! Have we improved the abilities entrusted to us for the blessing of the poor? Everything that is done in love, no matter how small, will be accepted and rewarded in heaven.

Each person is responsible to make the most of the privileges and opportunities God has given him or her. Christ and Satan are battling for every soul. Thus, when we repent of, confess, and forsake our sins, Jesus says to Satan, “The Lord rebuke thee.” June 9. “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” James 4:7. Like Moses and Job, let us submit to and honor God.



“The Health Zip Code: 85210” was the title of Workshop 3, given by Elder Idel Suarez, Jr., President of the American Union, from Cedartown, Georgia.



Left to right, Martha Knight and Wendy Eaton

The government uses zip code areas to prepare health statistics for different populations. In this workshop, each number was attached to a particular health habit. Beginning with the number 8, everyone should get approximately 8 hours of sleep per night and should drink at least 8 cups of water per day.

For the number 5, it is recommended that a person eat that many servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Some experts advocate 9-10 per day. Whole foods contain phytochemicals and fiber.

For the number 2, the American Pediatric Assn. states that no child under 2 should ever be in front of a screen or monitor. And for adults, no more than 2 hours per day should be spent in front of a screen. Other things that the number 2 applies to are the handfuls of unsalted nuts and seeds that one should eat daily and the number of meals per day that is best for good health.

The number 1 was applied to the time that should be spent in exercise every day—1 hour. “Walking, in all cases where it is possible, is the best remedy for diseased bodies, because in this exercise all the organs of the body are brought into use.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 78.

The last number in the code is 0. This applies to carbonated drinks (soft drinks), sugar, fructose, and artificial sweeteners. Proverbs 25:27 even says, “It is not good to eat much honey:...”

“He who cherishes the light which God has given him upon health reform has an important aid in the work of becoming sanctified through the truth, and fitted for immortality.” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 59, 60.



After lunch, Workshop 4, titled “**Preparation for the Final Crisis,**” was brought by Christian Nelson, of Sacramento, California. “The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not



Left to right, Shiloh Suarez, Athai Finch, and Aracely Elias

another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 100.

“Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” Jeremiah 33:3. Every Christian is in a serious spiritual warfare. There is a Hebrew word—*Terwuwah*—that is translated as “war cry” or “clamor, affirmation of joy,” as in a blowing of trumpets. God is depicted in the Scriptures as hearing His people’s cry, causing them to see His face with joy, and delivering them.

In the battle right before Jesus comes, God’s people will be filled with His Spirit, and they will be victorious in the final crisis.



Workshop 5, the last of the day, was presented by Wendy Eaton, from Canada. The title was “**The Sabbath Truth.**” The Sabbath commandment is unique, even beyond its being and containing God’s seal of His law. The other nine commandments may be violated through weakness; but men who are considered great religious leaders in the world proclaim openly that they WILL NOT keep the Sabbath. God Himself told Moses to speak to the people “saying, Verily My sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doeth sanctify you.” Exodus 31:13.

- When Israel was in the wilderness, a man was stoned to death for deliberately violating the commandment by gathering sticks on the Sabbath. Numbers 15:32-36.
- Every week for forty years, God taught His people the importance of the Sabbath day in the manna that He gave them for food every day. A double portion fell and was gathered on the sixth day and kept for the Sabbath, in which case it did not spoil as it did when kept overnight on other days of the week. No manna fell on the Sabbath.
- In Jeremiah 17:21-27, God made known what would happen if the people honored Him on His holy day and what would happen if they did not. Violation of the Sabbath was one reason that Israel and Judah were taken captive to Babylon.
- The Sabbath will be kept in eternity. Isaiah 66:23. “Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man’s thoughts and affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel. The keeping of the Sabbath is a sign of loyalty to the true God.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 437. Satan has



Three ministers answered questions submitted from the congregation

vite people to be ready and witness for God. At that time, no one should deliberately violate the Sunday law, for the mark of the beast is not received by not doing our regular work on Sunday. Rather, we should do missionary work and visit from house to house to pray and have Bible studies. That day is coming soon. The only way we will be ready mentally, emotionally, and spiritually to keep the Sabbath under persecution is by keeping it holy now.



After dinner, a panel composed of the three ministers present (Elders Henry

done everything possible to obliterate God's holy day from man's mind so the memory of the Creator and His great work will be erased. The Sabbath is present truth for many reasons, one of them being because it has been under severe attack down through the ages and will be the focus of persecution against God's people very soon.

Three young people were called to the front for an activity in which they had to answer objections to the present truth without having with them any of the tools that we tend to rely on—the Bible, a concordance, cell phone, tablet, or a person to help us. This was the position the apostle Paul was in when he was brought before his accusers and judges. The young people addressed these objections:

- *Did Jesus not come to do away with the commandments and teach only the law of love?*
- *Does not Colossians 2:16 say that no one is to be judged in respect to the Sabbath day?*
- *Does not Romans 14:5 say that the day one keeps is not important?*
- *People say, "I keep Sunday in honor of the resurrection." What response should be given to this idea?*

The questions were answered well by the young people, but it was stressed that we all need to learn exact verses, knowing what they say and where they are found. We can practice on each other and thus learn how to testify for the divine Sabbath.

The book *The Great Controversy* tells what should be done when the Sunday law comes. We are not simply to sit and wait for that day but to pray and in-

After dinner, a panel composed of the three ministers present (Elders Henry Dering, Idel Suarez, Jr., and Larry Watts) answered questions submitted by individuals in the congregation. Following are some of the questions and answers.

- ***Is it OK to be a medic chaplain in the army or join the Coast Guard?*** (L. Watts) The early Christians, Protestant Reformers (Quakers and Anabaptists), and early Adventists were pacifists, preaching that Christ's people will not take anyone's life. Would you purchase liquor for an alcoholic or buy cigarettes for a smoker? In World War II, Hitler considered it very important to have medics supporting his army's efforts. God's people cannot be part of systems that destroy life or covenant with those who are at war. "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the



Left to right, Sara Burton and Vilma Ramirez



Old caboose at Camp Kuratli

Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence.” John 18:36.

- **What is the church’s position regarding young people who have boyfriends or girlfriends in the world?** (I. Suarez, Jr.) See 2 Corinthians 6:14-16: “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:...” 2 Corinthians 6:14. This has a lot to do with the spiritual experience of the minister where the young person is a member. Every youth should be encouraged to have a deep experience with God and to follow His providences, which are always in harmony with His word.
- **What are the two horns of Revelation 13:11?** (H. Der-ing) In Revelation 13 are two beasts, one coming up from the sea and the other coming up from the earth. The first represents the papal system, a persecuting power that arose from the multitudes of people. The second comes up slowly from the earth and represents the United States, which has become a world power with a strong military. This nation became independent in 1776, and its Constitution dates from 1787, right around the time when the power of the first beast was waning and it received a deadly wound.

The two horns like those of a lamb represent religious and civil liberty. The first beast has seven heads and ten crowns, denoting a dictatorship, while the second beast has no crown, meaning that it has a republican form of government. But the prophecy says that the United States will change—like the geysers in Yellowstone National Park—and speak like a dragon. A nation speaks through its laws. It is hard to imagine, but persecution will be meted

out by this second beast, and everyone will have to decide whether he stands on God’s side or with the two beasts.

- **How can you prove from the Bible that there was light before the sun?** (L. Watts) The Bible says in Genesis 1:3-5 that God created light on the first day and that before that the earth was without form and void, or dark. Other texts refer to light as connected to God Himself. “I am the light of the world,” Jesus said in John 8:12. “For our God is a consuming fire.” Hebrews 12:29. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” James 1:17. Another important clue is in Revelation 21:23-25, which says that in the holy city “the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” Where God’s presence is, there is light.
- **Was the Sabbath created during creation, or did it exist before then?** (L. Watts) The Sabbath will be kept in the new earth. Isaiah 66:23. God first created matter and time. Then He instituted a memorial of creation carved out of time. Is the Sabbath part of God’s law? Is the law a reflection of His character? Does His love include rest? The principles of the Ten Commandments are part of His character, and therefore they are eternal. So, the Sabbath is the symbol of rest in Christ, which encompasses forgiveness, God’s taking from man the burden of sin. Thus we can say that if a person has unforgiven sins or if he has not forgiven others, he has not truly kept the Sabbath.
- **Are hot peppers healthful?** (I. Suarez, Jr.) The word “gall” in Deuteronomy 29:18 refers to a poisonous herb. Hot peppers have nutrients, but they are actually drugs, or stimulants. They contain capsaicin, which is for external medication and not healthful. Hot



Some conference attendees who visited Multnomah Falls



Multnomah Falls with conference attendees on the bridge

peppers are neurotoxins; if people eat them and then stop doing so, they will get sick. If anyone abuses his system, he will pay a price for such abuse. “But He answered and said, Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” Matthew 15:13. This text refers to spiritual matters but can be applied to physical plants as well.

- **What advice can be given to a homosexual?** (I. Suarez, Jr.) No one should keep anyone away from Christ, and everyone is to come as he is to the Saviour and study His word. Homosexuality comes under fornication or sodomy. The apostle Paul refers to it and writes that it can be overcome. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Some Seventh-day Adventist ministers assert that the Bible does not say anything about homosexuality, but the apostle wrote about overcoming fornication and similar perversions. Society today is like that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Often those who have such difficulties were abused or hurt in some manner as children, and such things continue in families, even to the point of having demons. Jesus removes sin-destructive things of every kind—when one wants to bring all of his thoughts and his very being to Him.

- **What does it mean to be more than conquerors?** (L. Watts) “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Romans 5:20.

Friday, August 17

The morning worship was conducted by Klaus Klee, from Denver, Colorado, and titled “**The Gospel Message.**” The Lord knows everything about everyone in the universe at every moment. He knows each being as if there was no one else in existence. In this fallen world, everyone who responds to His call is led to Calvary. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come...” Revelation 22:17. Every day brings change and new things, so it is extremely important to listen to the Master’s voice for direction, encouragement, and spiritual instruction—for present truth. One constant, however, has always been there—the Messiah.

We are here as a group, but the Lord is communicating with each person individually. Every moment He watches over each one through His Spirit and His holy angels to keep him from stumbling or falling; He lifts and encourages all who are listening for His voice. Time passes, but truth remains; and God will carry out His all-knowing purposes for the best possible results for the individual and for His people as a body. He gives everyone responsibilities and opportunities to share Him with those who come within his circle of influence. Let us serve the Lord with gratitude, trust, and joy.



After breakfast, the congregation assembled for Workshop 6, titled “**Babylon Is Fallen,**” brought by David Moreno, of Huntington Park, California. Revelation 18:1-4 provides more information about Babylon’s fall; the whole chapter goes on, telling what will happen to that evil religious system and those who join it. The difficulty is that while God calls His people out of Babylon, few are listening. “Hearing” is one thing, and “listening” is quite another. Babylon has sacrificed truth to form alliances with the world. It has moved far away from purity to vile corruption.



David Moreno presented a workshop



Talana and Jeffery Johnson sang a duet

The warning of the judgments to fall on Babylon cannot refer just to papal Rome, because it has been fallen for a long time. That means that people need to be called out of other fallen organizations as well. “God has many thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal,...” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 171. There are people who understand the beauty of the gospel as presented in God’s word. They are honest, and they cherish simplicity and truth—the opposite of Babylon’s qualities.

God sends the light to all, but only those who have applied what they have heard and who are searching for more truth will recognize the message as coming from Him. May God fill us so we are obedient unto righteousness and have courage to do that which is right.



Workshop 7, titled “**The Mark of the Beast and the Book of Life**” was presented by Barbara Watts, from Denver, Colorado. What is the relationship between these two things? The holy scriptures refer not only to the “book of life” but also to “Thy book,” “My book,” “the book,” and “a book.” Most often the verses say that certain people will be or will not be blotted out of the book (e.g., Exodus 32:32, 33).

The last generation on earth will face the final test, described in Revelation 13:15-17 and 14:9-12. What will Christians do in that day? Of those who obey God, it is written, “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12. Actually, the Bible tells what each of us will do: “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.” Luke 16:10. Taking care of



This group attended the Western Field Conference in Boring, Oregon

the little things—our small responsibilities—is the training needed for more important matters. Also, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” Luke 16:10; 9:23. Denying oneself of everything that is contrary to God’s will and way prepares him for what is ahead and secures his place in the book of life. What one does now is what he will do then! Important areas to take care of include:

Honesty and caring. Are we honest, careful, and caring in our business dealings, relationships (family), church matters, self-examination, accepting rebuke, and repentance? “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reborn?” 2 Corinthians 13:5.

Self-denial. Are we guided by our senses or by Biblical principle? EYES: Media, movies, television, video games, sports, exterior attractions, and physical appearance are calculated to enchant and enslave the mind through the eyes. EARS: The music, conversations, reports, and things we choose to listen to have a huge effect on our minds and spirits. MOUTH: What we put in our mouths and what we say both need to be guided by divine principle, not by whim or the world’s influence (e.g., advertising).

Seeking one’s own convenience. This is very dangerous. Do we decide things on the spur of the moment, based on our personal convenience, or do we carefully pray and listen for God’s voice? Do we consistently carry out our responsibilities? Do we put others or ourselves first? Do we either love or hate conflict—both of which lead into wrong paths—or do we move by faith?

Going along with the crowd. How do we relate to the society around us? Do we resist the worldly pressures of family, friends, co-workers, and society? Do we trust human systems (government, doctors, politicians, and/or our own minds) rather than God? Do we stay in the cities instead of getting away from them so we can live a godly, simple life?

“Now is the time to prepare.... Search the Scriptures for yourselves, that you may understand the fearful solemnity of the present hour.” —*Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, p. 191.



The eighth and last workshop was given by Elder Larry Watts, of Denver, Colorado, titled “**Abraham and the**

First Angel’s Message.” We will be enriched spiritually by searching the Bible’s messages deeply, and this is also the case with the first angel’s message. It deals with the relationship between God and the individual. How does one have a relationship with God? Through Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and worship. To put the first angel’s message in context (Revelation 14:6-12), the second angel’s message presents the believer’s relationship to the world, and the third angel’s message shows the believer standing with God before the world. We can see the experiences of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in these three messages—justification (faith in Christ), sanctification (faith of Christ), and glorification (obedience of Christ).



Elder Larry Watts

Abraham was taught by God for fifty years. Jesus said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad.” John 8:56. “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” Galatians 3:8.

When Abraham was put to the severest test—being instructed to offer his only son as a burnt offering—he demonstrated the amazing relationship with God that had developed over time. In this greatest of all tests, “the friend of God” (James 2:23) did not rely on logic,



The congregation listened to answers to their questions



Elder Henry Dering

experience, or even previous learning. He simply trusted God. This allowed him, as Jesus said, not only to be shown the gospel but also to experience it—what it was like for God giving His only begotten Son to die for the sin of the world. The difference was that God provided a ram in the place of Isaac, while He actually gave His only begotten Son for

the sin of the whole world.

When we learn to trust God (“Fear God, and give glory to Him,” Revelation 14:7), the world—Babylon—is fallen in our eyes and has no further influence over us. God bless each of His people to have that personal relationship with Him—to trust Him always, no matter what.



The service to begin the Sabbath, presented by Elder Henry Dering, of Sacramento, California, was titled “**I Will Come Again.**” Jesus’ words in John 14:3 are present truth today. Will we trust Him and His word? For every Bible prophecy about Jesus’ first coming, there are eight about His second coming. What will that be like? “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon all,…” “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him.” “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.” Jude 14, 15; Psalm 50:3; James 5:7.



Michael and Yonka Mitov, from Canada, with Elder Idel Suarez, Jr.



The Nelson family sang a special song

Signs of Jesus’ soon coming are visible all around the world, but who is paying attention? The story was told of a boarding school in Thailand in which a fire broke out. An 11-year-old girl rushed back to tell her friends to get out quickly; but some of them did not believe her, and they went back to sleep. Eighteen of them died. Similarly, people ignore the signs of Jesus’ soon coming that are so visible.

- Increase in knowledge. Daniel 12:4
- Wars and rumors of war. Matthew 24:6, 7
- 30 million homeless children
- Famine. Matthew 24:7
- Disease, pestilence
- Natural disasters (Luke 21:11) increasing in frequency and intensity
- Moral degeneration and increasing crime and violence
- Growing acceptance of the occult and witchcraft
- The gospel preached to the whole world; some say it has reached 90 percent of the population. Matthew 24:14.

Jesus’ coming will be literal, worldwide, audible, visible, and glorious! Here are the four steps to heaven:

- Recognize that God loves you (revelation)
- Acknowledge that you are a sinner
- Repent of and confess your sin
- Accept God’s grace—the free gift of salvation

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Revelation 3:20.



The final service of the day, “**Methods for Spreading the Gospel,**” was coordinated by Sandra Elias, from Huntington Park, California. Jesus’ commission to His

disciples is clear: “Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Mark 15:16. God gave work to everyone. The traditional way of reaching people is to knock on doors. Sandra told experiences about how important it is to take a step back from the door and to watch out for dogs. Even when one is not treated well, miracles happen. Sometimes people find literature in the trash and are moved to search for God. The media, especially social media, provide opportunities to share the present truth with others, often with surprising results. Sandra’s daughter Aracely met a man from Hawaii and shared the gospel with him. One day his grandfather said to him, “I want you to read this article I found online.” It was the article in the *American Union Newsletter* about Aracely’s baptism!

Martha Knight related experiences made in various forms of outreach. A lady phoned her and said, “I found your book—*Steps to Christ*. May I read it before I give it back?” Martha has a special phone just for people to call when they find her number on the literature she distributes. She also told several stories about ministering to homeless young people who live under a bridge, including giving them food and clothing, such as hats, gloves, and socks, as well as blankets, umbrellas, and plastic ponchos. Jesus said, “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” Matthew 25:40. Who are “the least of these My brethren”? Are they just the poor people? No, the least are everyone.

Sandra Nelson praised God for opening the way to help others. She encouraged everyone—including those in the church who are shy—to give magazines and pamphlets to people at work, on the bus, or anywhere else. There are many ways to reach out. The key is to pray, which helps one to have a missionary heart and love others. Trust God; His timing is perfect!

Pray non-stop especially for our children who are not in the faith. Many wonderful things can happen through prayer: Blessings and healing.

Sabbath, August 18

The morning worship was presented by Jeffery Johnson, from Denver, Colorado. He asked the question, “What are we going to do about what is going on in the world?” He related how God had given him a deeper experience through a “fast course”! God told Moses at Mount Sinai, “And let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.” Exodus 25:8. The phrase “among them” also means “in them.” Through the sanctuary itself as

well as its services and festivals, God taught His people in the past—and still does today—prophecy and the true religion of the heart. Remember the Passover, the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of first fruits, Pentecost, the feast of trumpets, the day of atonement, and the feast of tabernacles. When we study the types, we can recognize the antitype and the seven prophetic signposts. When we see what the Master is doing, we know what to do.

What is Jesus’ position, and what is He doing today in the real day of atonement? He is cleansing the sanctuary and cleansing you! He cannot complete the cleansing of the sanctuary until He has a clean, purified people. He wants us to be holy in the way we live. “But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:15. How we live is what matters, for people see this—without our even saying a word! Our testimony is an encouragement to individuals who are afraid; let us be bold for Christ, having the Bible as our guide. Lift up Christ, and block self. He asks you, “Are you going to be My representative today?” Let us each step out in faith.



Aracely Elias and Stephen Nelson played a duet



In the teachers' meeting that preceded the Sabbath school, Elder Larry Watts shared a few ideas to assist the Sabbath School instructors. The church is a training institution where one learns how to teach. And, to be effective in conveying the counsel of the holy Scriptures, teachers need to have a teachable spirit. When Jesus was on earth, He knew everything about everyone, and He was very patient, watching for the teachable moment. His example is for us.

When someone tries to bring controversy or conflict into the Sabbath school, it is the teacher's responsibility to have a different spirit and to deflect the attention away from anything that is negative, for people will remember what attracted their attention to a correct idea. Music in the Sabbath school is important because it uses the whole mind, thus preparing it to understand deep spiritual thoughts.

Every Sabbath School Lesson has three to five main points, and they should be the focus. If necessary, go to the original language ahead of time for words or concepts that need to be clarified. At the end, be sure to do a CTA—Call To Action—based on Jesus and the most positive point. In fact, one should look at the end first to see the lesson's direction and be able to make a deep, lasting impression on each student's mind.



Following the Sabbath school, Elder Idel Suarez, Jr., presented the theme of the conference—“**Present Truth.**” He first told the children a story about an egg, a snake, and a machete. On his father's farm, a hen had laid two eggs in a nest. While she was gone for a few minutes,



Elder Idel Suarez, Jr., told the children a story

a snake crawled into the nest, swallowed the two eggs, and then went to sleep. But Elder Suarez' Uncle Peter came and saw the snake. He got his machete, grabbed the snake, cut it open, took out the eggs, and put them back in the nest. The hen came back and continued to sit on them, and the eggs hatched successfully! The gospel is like that; Jesus Christ saves man from the belly of the snake—Satan, the evil one. May all the children grow up to love the Saviour!



Elder Idel Suarez, Jr.

Elder Suarez referred to various parts of the theme text. “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them and be established in the present truth.” 2 Peter 1:12. While the word “truth” appears 222 in the *King James Bible*, the phrase “present truth” is found only in this one place. The apostle wanted to be sure that the people remembered the key words after he was gone. The first word comes from “neglect.” Do we neglect prayer or the counsel Jesus gave in Matthew 18:15-17, about helping each other look carefully at his or her walk with God? “Remembrance” applies not to what a person knows but to what he applies in his life—what he does. Jesus said, “Remember Lot's wife.” Luke 17:32. Her thoughts were revealed by her actions. “Established” means to be firm on the foundation of Jesus Christ, who is the present truth (the Way, the Truth, and the Life). Colossians 2:7.

The dominant religions in the world encourage sinners to think that God will save them when they continue in sin—as long as they confess it. God is love, and He forgives sin, so no one needs to just give up. However, Peter said that a person is purged from sin. Matthew Henry said that all who believe in God must be careful to preserve good works—not just knowing what is right but also doing it. In fact, every church member is really a Bible teacher, inspiring others to put away all that is destructive and to cultivate the heavenly virtues.

In the time of slavery, there was a black woman in New York named Isabella (Belle) Baumfree (1797-1883) who wanted to be free, so she decided to escape from her slave master. In 1826, she picked up her daugh-

ter and walked away. She went to the house of a white man, and he helped her to be free. Her five-year-old son had been sold to a man in Alabama, and she went to court and sued the white man for selling her son. She won the case, becoming the first black woman to win a court case in the United States against a white man. She was convinced of the gospel and met Ellen G. White and Uriah Smith. “She gave herself the name Sojourner Truth in 1843 after she became convinced that God had called her to leave the city and go into the countryside ‘testifying the hope that was in her.’” –https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sojourner_Truth.

All of us were sold, born into slavery and death, and our slave master—the god of this world—does not want to free us. But Jesus freed us from both the past and the present. He overcame temptation for every person. He tells us to go to court and sue for our freedom and our children. When we go to court in the great judgment, we need Jesus. May God give us courage, even as we learn to overcome the longest distance in the world—that between the mind and the heart.



After lunch, the newly elected officers of the Western Field were presented to the congregation by Elder Suarez. In 1 Timothy 3:15, the apostle Paul referred to “the church of the living God” as “the pillar and ground of the truth.” The word for church in Greek—*ekklesia*—referred to the citizens who conducted business. We can therefore apply this to

the assembly of the citizens of heaven in exile—the delegates of the Western Field—who conducted the business of the church on Wednesday and elected officers. There was wonderful harmony, and the delegates prayed a lot. Following are the new officers:

- President: Larry Watts
- Vice President: Henry Dering
- Secretary: David Moreno
- Treasurer: Jose Alvarado
- Missionary/Good Samaritan Leader: Martha Knight
- Assistant: Talana Johnson
- Youth/Music Leader: Jeffery Johnson
- Assistant: Christian Nelson
- Family/Education Leader: Sandra Nelson
- Assistant: Anne Petrovich
- Health Leader: Ruth Moreno
- Assistant: Sandra Elias
- Canvassing Leader: Gadiel Macias
- Assistant: Marisa Gil
- Auditor (WF Treasury only): Barbara Watts

- American Union delegates:
- President/First Delegate: Larry Watts
- Second Delegate: David Moreno
- Third Delegate: Martha Knight
- Fourth Delegate: Sandra Nelson
- Fifth Delegate: Jose Alvarado
- Sixth Delegate: Barbara Watts



Newly elected officers of the Western Field



Alumni from Bethel Missionary Institute sang a special song

- First Alternate: Jeffery Johnson
- Second Alternate: Henry Dering
- Third Alternate: Christian Nelson
- Fourth Alternate: Antonio Elias
- Fifth Alternate: Sandra Elias
- Sixth Alternate: Gadiel Macias

- Western Field Committee:
- President: Larry Watts
- Vice President: Henry Dering
- Secretary: David Moreno
- Treasurer: Jose Alvarado
- Missionary Leader: Martha Knight

The delegates decided that the term for the Western Field officers would be three years, so the next delegates' meetings will take place in 2021, as the Lord wills.

The newly elected President was asked to speak a few words, and he read the following verses: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together." Ephesians 3:14, 15; 2 Peter 1:4; Matthew 11:28, 29; Deuteronomy 22:10.

Let us accept the divine nature that is offered to every believer through Jesus Christ, whose kingdom is established

on love and righteousness, never in any way accepting the thoughts or ways of this perverse world.



The children's and youth program was coordinated by Sandra Nelson. People were present from several states and Canada. After the children who attended the children's conference gave a program based on what they had learned about Joseph, the primary Sabbath school class summarized the parable of the sower and the seed. Songs, praise, and testimonies were given by a number of adults as well. Several alumni of Bethel Missionary Institute in Hungary were present, and they sang "We're Marching to Zion." Henry Ramirez, from Nicaragua and Costa Rica, spoke briefly about the wonderful ministry of the angels.



To close this very blessed Sabbath day, Jose Alvarado, from Huntington Park, California, spoke about "**The Last Warning–Present Truth.**" He referred to the verse of the conference theme and emphasized that present truth centers in Jesus; it is not a fable but true reality. What we preach is the message of the Saviour's soon return to gather His people into His kingdom. This requires every believer's participation and sacrifice. The Lord opens up His treasures for His people who carry the last warning message. The question is, "What is my relationship with God?" There are enough things to do in the many branches of God's work that everyone can find his special place in the Master's service.

Before the flood, Noah both preached the coming judgment and put his message into practice. His ac-



Enjoying the sunshine during a break

tions and character in the middle of a corrupt generation preached a continuous sermon and condemned the unbelievers, even as they heaped scorn and ridicule upon him. We cannot expect anything different from what he and Jesus Himself experienced; but that does not matter, for the cross is the greatest power for every age and especially now. Mercy, righteousness, and peace are the divine attributes that will shine out from God's people and endure every trial.

Let us be very careful to view the gifts that we have been blessed with as belonging to God, not to us. As we cherish the Holy Scriptures and the gift of prophecy, a reformation will take place in our lives that is revealed in obedience to God's holy law, good health practices, spiritual strength, and purity of body, mind, and spirit. The more our minds are centered in Jesus, the closer we will come to His character. Let us be cautious of "new light" but have our eyes open to the Saviour's deep, penetrating truths as we pray, study, and share Him with those we meet. We want soon to meet Him "who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:4.

Sunday, August 19

During the night and early in the morning, many conference participants left the camp. For morning worship, Sister Talana Johnson, from Denver, Colorado, shared thoughts on the topic of "**A People of Distinction.**" This conference was a great blessing as we were privileged to be in a peaceful place and focus our thoughts on spiritual truth. God wants His people to be special—separate from unbelievers. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." 2 Corinthians 6:17. Every facet of our lives is included in this—our personal connection with God, our health practices (diet and exercise), music, conversation, witness, and service. When we have to be surrounded by the world and its manifestations, such as in our places of employment, our minds and hearts will be protected from evil by our reflecting Jesus' purity, peace, and righteousness. Let us not hold back our talents but be ready always, like a soldier, to participate in the spiritual warfare. Every deed of righteousness is recorded with joy by the holy angels.

What gives us distinction? We are chosen of God and have loved Him for loving us. Deuteronomy 7 tells all the things that God promised to do for those who loved Him and kept His commandments among Israel, and the promises are for us. Those who are chosen by God to do something are equipped and supported by the omnipotent

God. They are not to be afraid but to fight the battles for His kingdom. They have a holy mission to remain unpolluted amid the evil world. And what about our outward appearance? God wants us to be mindful that we have influence and that we can cause others to stumble if our appearance and conversation are inappropriate. In the church, new people are watching us, so let us be a blessing and encouragement to them.

God's people are His treasured possession. They understand His mercy and honor Him in every way in every place. In small ways now and bigger ways in the future, God's people will be mocked and persecuted. So, let us practice now by doing everything without complaining, by not arguing, by looking for what is good in every circumstance, and by trusting Him, not self. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:5.

A question asked at the beginning of the conference was repeated: "What would you do if you had only 24 hours to live?" We were reminded that that is all the time we have every day. Let us use our time, gifts, circumstances, and blessings to honor our Lord and King, who will soon return and say to all who love Him, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34.



Thus ended the Western Field Conference. It was a very joyous time spent together with God and one another! Thank you to all who managed this blessed event, including the former Western Field officers, coordinators, planning assistants, presenters, musicians, teachers, photographers David Moreno and Helen Marttinen, and all the participants! May these highlights and the Spirit of God resonate deeply in your soul!

—Barbara Watts



Present Truth

Ellen G. White

Those who sincerely believe and teach the word of God must expect to be received by the world with no greater favor than was the ancient preacher of righteousness. Those who lived in Noah's day despised his prophecy. Scientists quieted the fears of the people by assuring them that it was impossible for his predictions to be fulfilled; they were but the delusive fancies of an imbecile old man. But the unbelief and mockery of the people did not hinder the event. The God of science manifested His power in a manner which has astonished the philosophers of every age.

The laws of nature cannot prevent the fulfillment of God's word. The law is never greater than the Lawgiver, nor are the things created greater than the Creator. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man. As men are warned of impending judgment, thousands will say, It cannot be. They will despise the truth, make light of prophecy, and deride the teacher of righteousness. One will turn aside to his farm, another to his merchandise, and care for none of these things.

The inhabitants of the antediluvian world were condemned to destruction for their iniquity, yet they had the offer of mercy. By repentance and reformation of life they might have secured forgiveness and the protection of God. So in this dispensation, every one who believes and obeys the divine word will find pardon and a shelter from the wrath to come. The history of their sins, with the sure destruction that followed, should be a warning to us. There is to be a baptism of fire as there was of water, and all the unbelief and scoffing of the ungodly will not hinder the event.

The Scriptures briefly state the reason for the prevailing iniquity in Noah's day. The sons of God married the



daughters of men. Those who still cherished the knowledge of God united themselves with the ungodly and corrupt, and as a result became assimilated to them in character. The message of warning would have been received by a larger number, had it not been for their connection and association with those who despised and derided the word of God.

In the days of Noah the Spirit of God was so long and stubbornly rejected that it ceased to strive with men. Thus will it be, prior to the end of the world. When the gospel falls on closed ears, when the Holy Spirit ceases to imprint the truth upon the heart, preaching and hearing will alike be in vain. Are we not fast approaching this state of things?

Those who would stand now must be Bible readers, and Bible Christians; they must faithfully obey the divine precepts, both in private and in public. —*Signs of the Times*, February 16, 1882.

2018 Calendar

- Early October – Orion Christian Academy Tour of Battle Creek, Michigan (contact www.ocaedu.org for information)

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