

CALENDAR

Nov. 5-7

Kids in Discipleship Church Training at the Central California Conference Office

Nov. 11-14

Go Fish: Putting Families First at Leoni Meadows

Nov. 19-21

Young Adult Retreat at Camp Wawona

Dec. 5

Church Ministries Leaders/Teachers Training at the Clovis Church

Dec. 5

Treasurers Training at the Central California Conference Office

Dec. 11

Senior Citizen Seminar at the Milpitas Church

 Spiritual Growth

 Loving Fellowship and Unity

 Mobilization of the Spiritual Gifts of All Members

 Outreach

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Central Acts

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Milpitas Church Honors Community First Responders with 9/11 Service

by Shenalyn Page

On Sabbath, September 11, 2010, the Milpitas Adventist Church was overflowing with honored community guests. Their official means of transportation – a fire engine, emergency vehicles and cars – were parked out front. Their uniforms signaled that something very special was happening.

For the ninth anniversary of September 11, 2001, the Milpitas church family decided to honor their community's first responders. "We had two goals," says Pastor Rob Benardo. "We wanted an Adventist speaker who was at 9/11 [Ground Zero], and we wanted to demonstrate our appreciation to Milpitas' first-responders."

For the keynote speaker, God led to Steven Negron, an 18-year veteran of the New York City Fire Department. He told of responding to the 9/11 attacks with his Emergency Medical Service and HAZMAT unit. His compelling story of heroism, emotional exhaustion, and finding renewed hope in Jesus "was absolutely perfect," says Benardo. "Our guests were glued to him." (See Negron's testimony on Page 2)

Though competing with an Oakland A's baseball game which was also honoring first-responders, about 20 Milpitas heroes attended the church program. Among them were Chief of Police Dennis Graham, Fire Chief Brian



Pastor Rob Benardo (left) welcomes Milpitas Fire Chief Brian Sturdevant (center) and Police Chief Dennis Graham (right) to the special Sabbath program as a guest first responder looks on. Twenty first-responders, firefighters and EMTs, were also honored.

Sturdevant, firefighters from the local firehouse, EMTs, former mayor Jose Esteves, and several mayoral candidates.

Church member Elmer Ellacer, an ER nurse, invited several paramedics he knew from work and five accepted. "It was easy to invite them," Ellacer says. Many community residents also attended. "It was awesome," adds Benardo. "The church was packed out. We had to add chairs in the foyer."

Church members had been praying for ways to continue relationships with their honored guests. One answered prayer came from Fire Chief Sturdevant. He wants his team to improve their health, so health outreaches are in the works. He also said that he may have found a church home.

Mugs with "Be Strong and Courageous" Joshua 1:9 were given to the first-responder honorees. In his handwritten thank you note Chief Graham said, "I will keep close to me [the promise in] Joshua 1:9. I know there will be many occasions when I will draw on it. God's blessings to you and your church members from the entire police department." 

Photo by Benjamin Reyes



New York City fireman Steve Negron (center) spends time with church members and guests after the worship service.

Photo by Benjamin Reyes

From Tragedy to Renewed Hope in Jesus

by Shenalyn Page

Under the crystal clear sky of September 11, 2001, Steven Negron, an 18-year veteran of the New York City Fire Department (NYFD), was called with his HAZMAT unit to the World Trade Center. By the time his truck arrived, tower one was already down. His crew pushed through the dense cloud of dust, ash and paper that remained, rescuing the hurt and transporting them to the nearest hospital.

Negron spent the next three days at Ground Zero. Whenever his

buddies came to take him to rest at the firehouse, he hid. Finally, the fire chief ordered him off the field of action. On his way to the firehouse, Negron realized he felt nothing – no sorrow, no pain – nothing.

“I was totally desensitized to tragedy,” he states. “My wife says I had a heart of steel.” He’d spent his childhood with abusive relatives in Puerto Rico. When he returned to his mom in New York City, he took to the streets and lawlessness. In time, he married and began to straighten

out his life. He had three children, became a firefighter, and was active in the Sactuario de la Oración Adventist Church in the Bronx.

“I knew all the doctrines and prophecies, but I didn’t know Jesus,” Negron says sadly. “That day coming back to the

firehouse, I started calling out to Jesus and asking to make me feel alive.”

God answered and gave Negron a tender, sympathetic heart. “I feel everything now!” he says. Negron fell in love with Jesus like never before. He returned to Ground Zero and spent the next three months working amidst the rubble and sharing his newfound hope in Jesus.

In addition to his work with the NYFD, Negron is a passionate preacher of the Word and a motivational speaker. He has participated in evangelistic campaigns in Colombia, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, and the United States. He is now a local church elder and a member of the New York State Chaplains.

“I share this message of hope with all who will listen,” Negron says. “Since 9/11 my life has changed completely.”



Steve Negron at work in New York City.

Camp Wawona Ministries Report

This past summer 46 campers made decisions for baptism! Another 38 requested Bible studies. And approximately 90 percent of the 476 summer campers expressed a desire to accept and follow Jesus.

“Fun is the motivating factor that gets kids to come,” says Elden Ramirez, conference youth director & Camp Wawona executive director. “But when they get here, they find a staff and program that are very

intentional. From the first morning song to the last evening prayer, the whole day provides opportunities to meet Jesus. Around every corner is Christ.”

“The staff share a common goal: to share the love of Jesus with kids and invite them to join the adventure of the Christian walk,” adds Donnie Keele, junior youth director. Fifty five summer staff joined the 11 full-time staff to provide the summer camp ministry.

In September, Camp Wawona’s new Outdoor Education program began. Outdoor School officially opened in April 2009. Eight school groups participated this past spring.

Derek Wright, the program’s director, has seen the program



grow from an idea to reality. “It’s a good feeling to finally see it come together,” Wright says. “People are being connected with their Creator through the creation. It’s kind of hard not to experience God when you’re surrounded by things He made.”

For more information about Outdoor School and what’s happening at Camp Wawona, visit us on the Web at <http://www.campwawona.org>.



Derek Wright with outdoor education students.

New Construction Begins at Camp Wawona

After a 19-year journey and with permits finally in hand, Phase I of Camp Wawona's rebuilding began on May 17, 2010. The first project is replacing and relocating the tent cabins. Platforms for eight new Yurt cabins have been completed. Built in the round, Yurts provide a spacious living environment for the male summer camp staff and for year-round camping for families and church groups.

The Yurt cabins will be so spacious and inviting," says Jackie Bragaw Phillips, capital campaign director. "We have needed new housing for the male summer camp staff, and also additional housing for families on retreat weekends. The Yurt cabins will be a nice addition to our Camp Wawona year-round program."

"Construction is just beginning. We will build as fast as the funds come in," Phillips adds.

The History

In 1987 the National Park Service and Mariposa County agreed on a new zoning plan – the Wawona Specific Plan. The plan did not allow for a church camp, designating Camp Wawona as a non-conforming use.

Camp Wawona would cease to exist by the year 2037 unless the zoning plan was amended. In the meantime, no permits for essential facility improvements could be issued.

The 35-acre camp was established in 1929 for a year-round two-fold purpose: a summer camp and a church and family retreat and training center. The Conference began the process of saving Camp Wawona in 1991.

To amend the Wawona Specific Plan to include "church camp" as a conforming use, both the National Park Service (NPS) and Mariposa County had to agree. The NPS supervisor offered a land swap as a condition: 18 acres at the top of camp's property for 15 acres of NPS land along the entrance road. In good faith conference



Platforms for the Yurt cabins.



Rendering of a completed Yurt cabin.

What's Next

While funds for the eight new Yurt cabins have been pledged, conference leaders are committed to only spend money received. The Yurts will be built as those pledged funds become available.

A new bathhouse is needed to serve the Yurt campers. Fundraising for the \$368,000 building is ongoing. Already \$200,000 has been pledged for the new bathhouse! Once the remaining \$168,000 is raised and funds arrive, construction will begin.

Watch your mail boxes for a new Camp Wawona DVD that arrives at every CCC member's home. The DVD will also be shown in the churches. "God is blessing in such exciting ways! We are the generation to which the rebuilding has fallen," says Phillips. "We are the ones to whom this privilege has been given."

To see the Master Plan or for more information, go to ccc.adventist.org. Select Capital Campaign in the departments/ministries section. You may contact Jackie Bragaw Phillips at jbragaw@cccsda.org or (559) 217-1031. 

administrators signed a Memo of Understanding with the NPS.

Mariposa County officials required a Conceptual Master Plan. Architect David Lee, experienced in church camp development and building in a national park, was hired.

Fast forward a few years to a new park supervisor, the devastating Merced River flood and other obstacles. NPS and Mariposa County officials agreed to support the Conference's request to rebuild on its own land. A new conceptual plan was designed for the camp's existing 35-acres.

The redevelopment of Camp Wawona would require a new source of funding. A three-fold Capital Campaign was approved by constituency delegates in 2000. The projects included are the redevelopment of Camp Wawona, establishing a Conference Educational Endowment and refurbishing the Soquel Conference Center.

Public hearings for rezoning began in November 2006. Three entities were involved. The Wawona Township Planning Advisory Council with Wawona Property Owners Association and the Mariposa County Planning Commission both recommend the rebuilding project with majority votes. The Mariposa County Supervisors unanimously approved the rezoning and the redevelopment of Camp Wawona.

The Camp Meeting Evangelism Offering Reaches \$1,539,944

Responding to the Holy Spirit's leading, members generously and sacrificially gave \$1,539,944 in gifts and pledges to the Camp Meeting Evangelism Offering this year. These sacred funds are managed by the Evangelism Committee, a group of pastors, church members and conference leaders. The Committee meets several times a year to review, approve or deny requests. On October 12 and 13 committee members spent time in prayer and Bible study at Camp Wawona, seeking God's will and wisdom before decisions and project priorities were decided.

For a 16-page report of the 2009/10 Evangelism Offering projects, go to ccc.adventist.org and select Evangelism from the left-side menu. There you will also find applications, criteria and the deadlines for application submittal. For more information, contact Sandra at (559) 347-3165 or smantro@cccsda.org.

Staying Faithful to Jesus



Nelson Tabingo

For years, members of the Fresno Central Valley Fil-Am church faithfully served their neighborhood, inviting church neighbors to numerous events including health fairs, a community Pathfinder Club, block parties, seminars, and public meetings. Still language (Spanish) and cultural barriers made successful outreach difficult.

Staying faithful to sharing Jesus, they fervently prayed for God's will for their congregation. For the past two years, the members began to consider various options of acquiring a suitable church facility that would also give them better outreach opportunities. Options included building at a new location with cost estimates ranging from 3 to 4.5 million dollars.

In the meantime, a Hispanic church plant had grown into the Sequoia Spanish church. Finding adequate and affordable places to rent was proving more and more challenging. The Sequoia congregation would be a perfect fit for Fil-Am's Hispanic neighborhood.

But as circumstances unraveled, God's amazing plan for both church families became more apparent. We can identify clear indications of God's leading, fulfilling His assurance.

In June, the availability of an existing church facility on a 4.4 acre property was providentially discovered just after the listing was made public. The price was \$1,830,000.

The property was move-in ready and included a sanctuary with beautiful stained glass windows and a pipe organ, a chapel, a practice room with robes for a choir, a large fellowship hall with fully equipped kitchen, 16 furnished classrooms with pianos, and a preschool building with 13 rooms.

Through a series of miracles, escrow closed in August. On August 26, 2010, the Fil-Am congregation worshiped in their new church on Ninth and Clinton as the Sequoia congregation spent their first Sabbath in their newly purchased facility too.

In addition to their building fund, both Fil-Am and Sequoia congregations were able to obtain loans at a very opportune time which otherwise would not have been feasible. The Fil-Am congregation generously made it possible for the Sequoia church family to purchase their former church by financing some of the debt.

Planning Ahead

While searching for a new church property, 12 key church board members participated in a "Faith and Finance" seminar, a comprehensive resource prepared

by the North American Division stewardship department. The seminar teaches biblical principles of financial management designed to educate church members with relevant counsel from Spirit of Prophecy.

Conference policy provides assistance by covering the workbook expenses for training a core group of 12 leaders with the understanding that they, in turn, will hold seminars for the church members. The implementation of this Faith and Finance seminar program is still in progress and will prove valuable as the church deals with the monthly loan amortization.

Every project of this nature requires the generosity of God's people. The experience of Israel when David challenged the people to give for the temple stands as a reminder. *"And the people rejoiced greatly because with a loyal heart they offered willingly to the Lord...for all things come from You and of Your own we have given You."* (1 Chronicles 29:9, 11)

Every act of giving should be done with the knowledge that all we are and all we have comes from the Lord.

In retrospect, the determination of the church leadership to have a better place of worship, the unwavering enthusiasm of Pastor Abel Pangan and the optimism and support of the church members, proved to be critical factors in blending with the Lord's plan and promise for His people being fulfilled.

The journey with God continues, and it is happening every day. It is our joy and privilege, as His people, to be in step with His plans for our churches and for each of us individually.

In His care,

Nelson Tabingo

Leadership Training for Local Church Members

Sunday December 5, 2010 • 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Clovis Adventist Church • 2370 Helm Ave. • Clovis, CA 93612

Cost: \$15.00 per person, Includes materials, continental breakfast and lunch

Register by November 22

Who Should Attend: Church Clerk, Treasurer Coordinator, Community Service, Sabbath School Superintendent, Religious Liberty, Men's Ministries, Prayer Ministries, Women's Ministries, Children's Ministries, Youth & Young Adult, Personal Ministries, Prison Ministries, Health/Temperance, Stewardship, Web Site, Bulletin/Communication, Outreach, and Finance Committee.

Seminar break-out sessions are in the morning and afternoon. Check the schedule as not all training seminars are repeated in both sessions.

For more information or to register, call the ministries department at (559) 347-3176 or e-mail to ministries@cccsda.org. At ccc.adventist.org you will find the registration form and schedule at Upcoming Conference Events on the home page.