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# Thank You, Pastors

By Bryan and Becky von Dorpowski

**PASTOR APPRECIATION MONTH** was established in 1992 by a group of pastors and church leaders to honor those who serve in ministry. They grounded the celebration in Paul's words to Timothy: The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17). In honor of our pastors, I'd like to share a story about how they ministered to our family last summer in a way we will never forget.

Our 21-year-old son, Michael, loves surfing. When the north winds blow down Lake Michigan and the waves begin to swell, you will most likely find him in St. Joseph [Michigan], with a whole community of surfers from northern Indiana and Southwest Michigan.



▲ Michael von Dorpowski's surfing friends gathered at the hospital for prayer.

After surfing one July evening last year, Michael called home to let us know that he would be late because he was replacing a broken leash on his surfboard. Around 12:30 a.m., our landline phone rang. My wife, Becky, heard Michael slurring his speech and having trouble communicating. She eventually understood that he was in his bathroom on the other side of the house in need of our help.

Becky found Michael lying on his bathroom floor, breathing with difficulty, sweating, vomiting, and complaining about the pain in his head. Becky yelled for me and, as I called 9-1-1, Michael became unresponsive.

At the hospital, doctors immediately ran a CAT scan and discovered a small brain bleed. Over the next few hours, the brain bleed nearly quadrupled in size and they immediately took him to the operating room for brain surgery. It was during this time that two of our pastors, Dwight Nelson, senior pastor at Pioneer Memorial Church, and Skip MacCarty, a retired Pioneer pastor, visited to pray with and support us during the entire four-hour surgery.

What I never imagined was how Michael's hospitalization was an opportunity to minister to his surfing friends, most of whom aren't familiar with the Adventist church. Two other Pioneer pastors, José Bourget, with help from Ben Martin, organized a prayer service in the hospital garden. The Third Coast Surf Shop placed the invitation out on their social media pages and many from the surfing community joined Michael's other friends in prayer. Some of the surfers didn't know how to pray but prayed anyway. As we look back, we can see how God used our pastors to not only support us, but also to witness to this surfing community.

Michael spent the next few weeks in a medically induced coma. One Sabbath, Pastor Dwight stopped by to pray with us. He leaned over Michael and said, "Michael, this is Pastor Dwight. Can you hear me?" To our shock and surprise, with eyes closed, Michael nodded his head. Pastor Dwight then asked, "Michael, can I pray with you?" Once again, Michael nodded.

At the end of one month, Michael left the hospital and spent one week in extensive therapy. We praise God for saving and healing our son, and for the support of our church pastors. God ministered to us through each pastor in a unique way, and we appreciated their creativity in ministering to Michael's friends as well. When we think of our pastors, we share in Paul's proclamation: I thank my God every time I remember you (Philippians 1:3 NIV). ■

*Bryan and Becky von Dorpowski are the head elders at Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich.*

# ¡Ánimo en el Señor!

“Vestíos de toda la armadura de Dios, para que podáis estar firmes contra las asechanzas del diablo, porque no tenemos lucha contra sangre y carne, sino contra principados, contra potestades, contra los gobernadores de las tinieblas de este mundo, contra huestes espirituales de maldad en las regiones celestes.” Efesios 6:11-12

Al leer y ver las noticias del tiroteo y los fallecimientos que tomaron lugar en el mes de agosto en El Paso, Texas fue algo muy impactante y personal para mí. Hay un Walmart que está cerca de mi casa y cuando voy allí veo muchos Hispanos con sus familias haciendo sus compras. Pensándolo ahora me doy cuenta que lo que yo veía como un lugar seguro, ahora no se puede ver así tan fácilmente. No obstante, pasan cuatro días y escucho de las redadas masivas en Mississippi, sólo cuatro días después, se sintió como un doble golpe para los hispanos.

No hay duda que lo que ha pasado y lo que viene es parte del plan de Satanás para desanimar al pueblo Hispano. Satanás sabe que Hispanos cristianos, en especial Hispanos Adventistas en este país, están teniendo éxito al ganar almas para Cristo por medio de campañas evangelísticas, grupos pequeños y plantación de nuevas iglesias. Por lo tanto, estoy convencido que el ambiente que se ha creado en contra de los inmigrantes es parte del plan de Satanás para estorbar la predicación del evangelio.

Como consecuencia de lo sucedido, los líderes hispanos a nivel de unión nos reunimos para desarrollar una declaración, donde expresamos nuestra preocupación por el racismo existente y enfatizamos la posición Bíblica de amar a nuestro prójimo y a la vez dar nuestro apoyo completo al pueblo hispano. A continuación, la declaración oficial:

**Considerando que**, muchos inmigrantes latino-americanos en los Estados Unidos, sienten temor y angustia por sucesos recientes;

**Considerando que**, la Biblia nos enseña a amar al prójimo sin importar su raza o nacionalidad (Juan 17:21-23, Juan 13:34), que Dios ha hecho a toda la humanidad de una sola sangre (Hechos 17:26), merecedores todos del mismo respeto y consideración;

**Considerando que**, la iglesia tiene la responsabilidad moral de cuidar del desfavorecido (Levítico 23:22) y denunciar la opresión, el abuso o el maltrato en cualquier forma (Salmo 82:3-4; Isaías 1:17).

El liderazgo hispano de la Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo Día en Norteamérica, declaramos nuestra determinación a:

condenar el racismo en todas sus formas, especialmente cuando se lo expresa en violencia, rechazar las prácticas que inspiran humillación y temor en el corazón de las personas, e inspirar a nuestros miembros de iglesia y vecinos a crear un ambiente de aceptación en nuestras comunidades, anhelando y esperando el día en que el Creador de todos los seres humanos establezca su reino definitivo de paz y libertad eternas.

Al concluir pido a mis apreciados lectores que sigan orando y que se vistan con toda la armadura de Dios para poder vencer las asechanzas del diablo con el poder del Espíritu Santo. ■

*Carmelo Mercado es el vicepresidente de la Unión del Lago.*



▲ Carmelo Mercado