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Scavenger hunt allows Children's Sabbath School new opportunity to safely connect

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Courtesy Mbaiwa family



Courtesy Press family

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Scavenger hunt allows Children's Sabbath School new opportunity to safely connect

What is a family to do for fun in single digit weather during a pandemic and still stay safe? Here's a proven idea from the Children's Sabbath School leaders at Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University which can be replicated in any community.

On Sabbath, Feb. 6, dozens of families with children between the ages of 4 and 12 lined up in the Pioneer parking lot awaiting their turn to experience a drive-thru scavenger hunt. When their time came, participants received their first clue via text. But these weren't just any clues. These were stories – thoughtfully written by Seminary student, Nashonie Chang – that taught about the lives and work of several of our Adventist pioneers. All of these pioneers have a building named after them on the campus of Andrews University, names such as White, Bell, Horn, Griggs, Sutherland. At the end of the story clue, participants drove to the building which bears the name of the pioneer and read a brief life sketch on the person.

Upon arrival at the building, Children's Sabbath school and other volunteers

greeted the families. At each building, the families were given items relating to Sabbath school, including a craft, apples, Sabbath school magazines, the beloved smooth stones in exchange for memory verses, and a Nathan Greene postcard at the finish. Participants also were able to take part in a little service activity at one of the stops. They were given a piece of paper with a person's name and contact information on it and were asked to contact the person – right then and there – to show them some love and give them a sense of the community that they may be missing due to the pandemic.

To add to the fun of the adventure, there was a prize drawing at the end. Three lucky families received either an Adventist Book Center or a Your Story Hour gift card.

This adventure was organized by Glynis Bradfield, one of the Pioneer Sabbath school superintendents. Bradfield, along with Ben Martin, the Family and Discipleship pastor at Pioneer, explain that research shows that the number one factor for church growth is how we treat our families. However, the challenges during these times are clear. "We've done a good job of getting our message out through online services or prayer service on Zoom," acknowledged Martin. "But as far as nurturing the family, this has been a challenge. For some families the pandemic was a time to bond. But for some,

this has been a nightmare. So, to shift focus and do something like this, where our families could connect, is healthy."

Many photos of smiling families holding up all of their treasures were shared in the Pioneer Children and Family Discipleship Facebook group page. And many comments shared the fun that they had and the interesting things that they learned. "We enjoyed learning so many new things about the history and heritage of this amazing Pioneer community we call home. We were especially inspired by the story of the Horn family's faith," posted the Press family.

"It is also interesting that ordinary people like you and me were guided by God to find this lovely place and now we are enjoying their dedication to God's work," the Mbaiwa family wrote. The Mello family shared, "We loved hearing all about the



Courtesy Osman family

▲ Top Left: Mbaiwa Family. Top Right: Press Family. Above: Osman Family.

heroes of our faith that have come before us! We're ready to be pioneers in 2021!" Summing it all up, the Maseko family stated, "We learned about friendship, adventure, joy and honesty in all we do for Jesus. We, too, can share Jesus, no matter how small."

Do note, you don't have to be on a university campus in order to enjoy a driving scavenger hunt. You can do this

with your church or school or any group. Just choose some local landmarks, parks or prominent buildings, and guide people to each one with clues that describe them. If you don't have the capability of texting the participants, you can type up the clues and email them out or give them as handouts at the starting point. Depending on the size of your group, you may want to stagger start times or take people on

different routes, so cars don't get backed up at any one location. Providing an opportunity for participants to share photos with each other adds to the sense of a shared experience. So, give it a shot and have fun exploring your area in a different way! ■

Diane Helbley, Pioneer Memorial Church member who participated in the event

New ministry launched to reach missing members

Seventh-day Adventists are often concerned for their children who are not walking with God. Or friends who move, but never transfer their membership. Or classmates who just never connected with the Seventh-day Adventist Church after graduating.

If a person who is not currently connected to the Seventh-day Adventist Church lives down the street, you may visit them and pray with them. The difficulty comes when a friend or family member lives in a different part of the state or even the country.

A new website ministry launched by Wisconsin Academy Church pastor, Jonathan Fetrick, is a solution to this problem. Shepherdsinitiative.com exists to connect people with God and His church.

The idea started while Fetrick was praying during his devotional time. "I became very convicted that we need a website that helps our churches connect with missing members who don't live close to their church anymore," he says. But how to make this conviction a reality? After a lot of prayer, he teamed up with Josue Peralta, a young adult from Milwaukee with a passion for God, to build the website, as well as a donor from a church he used to pastor in the Washington Conference. The Wisconsin Academy

Church also believes in this personal ministry that God has laid on his heart and has been very supportive.

In today's world, jobs, school, family and preferences indicate that, on average, a person will move 11.7 times during their life. An individual may be very connected to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but every time they move, they must re-engage with church. Fetrick notes that the gospel and connection with church is contextual. "A person may easily connect with people in one church, move to another place and not even know where to find the church. Because situations change, at one point in a person's life they may connect to church primarily because of friends and family while at other points in their life it may be for other reasons." Research indicates that a person needs five friends in church in order to feel like they are part of the group.

You are encouraged to check out the website and prayerfully consider three things:

First, consider partnering by entering names and information of people that you know. Once this information is received, a local pastor or elder at a Seventh-day Adventist Church close to where they have relocated will be contacted. "I will ask them to identify the person in their local church they think may be able to build a friendship with your friend or family member," explains Fetrick. "I will keep the name and information of your



friend or family member as confidential as possible while still building the connection. I will commit to praying at least weekly for your friend or family member."

Second, consider telling others in your church about the website so they can enter names.

Third, pray for the ministry. "I have no way of knowing whether one name will be entered or thousands of names," Fetrick says. "I am committed to treating each name entered as a valuable individual that God loves." ■

Wisconsin Conference, with Herald staff