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### Student Leaders Deepen Faith and Hone Skills at Union-Wide Retreat

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▲ From Oct. 5–8, 2023, academy students from around the Lake Union spent time sharing ideas, as well as connecting with God and each other amid a picture-perfect setting at Camp Au Sable.

Photos by Student Yearbook/Newspaper Team



# Student Leaders Deepen Faith and Hone Skills at Union-Wide Retreat

**FROM OCT. 5–8, 2023, ACADEMY STUDENTS FROM AROUND THE LAKE UNION SPENT TIME SHARING IDEAS, AS WELL AS CONNECTING WITH GOD AND EACH OTHER AMID A PICTURE-PERFECT SETTING AT CAMP AU SABLE. THE THEME WAS “THIS ONE THING” BASED ON PHILIPPIANS 3:14, WHICH EXPRESSES OUR DESIRE TO LEAVE BEHIND INFLUENCES WHICH HOLD US CAPTIVE AND PRESS TOWARD THE GOAL OF CHRIST JESUS.**

## Learning Together

Approximately 90 student leaders from seven academies fanned out across the campground for breakout sections geared toward their respective campus roles. During the sessions, students discussed how their own associations were run and brainstormed ideas they could implement at their respective academies. Among these conversations were understanding the mental aspects of being a

student leader, dealing with different personality types, and maintaining strong relations between student officers and other students.

Outside of their sectionals, student leaders had the option to participate in several recreational activities, such as go-karting, horseback riding, basketball matches and canoeing. This was a time when they could interact with other leaders in a fun and enjoyable way.

Andrews University’s enrollment team

also made an appearance at the camp, providing an inspirational Sabbath School and a fun evening program.

Though the main speaker, Wendy Eberhardt, vice president for ministries at the North American Division, couldn’t attend because of illness, three speakers were found to fill in. It rained during half the weekend; but even though students had to travel between buildings and cabins in the rain, none of this dampened the activities.

## Speaker Highlights

The week began with Thursday evening and Friday morning worships led by the Lake Union Executive Secretary Elden Ramirez. He told the audience that even though we sin, God will forgive and forget our sins because Jesus’ love covers us. All we’re called to do is accept it.

On Friday evening and Sabbath morning, Tracey Wood, youth director for the North American Division, expounded on the importance of understanding that God believes in us. Through a retelling of his experience as a high school senior, he affirmed that God would make a way for us to serve. “God believes in you,” he said, “and all you need to have is a heart of service.”

Steve Baughman, former Indiana Academy principal and current director of ACE Academy, spoke on Saturday evening and Sunday morning. He told the students they were going to leave on a high, but they need to “feed the blaze. Now is the time to go back to your schools and get to work.”

#### Communion Service and Testimonies

Student leaders were invited to wash one another’s feet in an act of humility and compassion to others and had the opportunity to partake in the bread and wine, symbols of Jesus’ body and blood.

During the testimonials segment, one student told of the hardships of constantly moving and how she found a place of belonging and familiarity by joining an Adventist academy. She was able to find her place within the school community, even though her parents were in another country serving in the mission field. Another student spoke of wanting to have a greater feeling of acceptance in God’s love. He had accepted Christ but was constantly searching for acceptance from his Creator, finally finding solace through a local pastor and Bible studies.

#### Participants Reflects

Marelin Gonzalez Adames, Great Lakes Adventist Academy junior class pastor, said she is returning to campus ready to make a difference. “Before, the other two pastors and I wanted to make a change, but we would never actually come up with the necessary steps to get where we wanted to be. Now we’re planning to go back and help train the younger class pastors.”

Meanwhile, Elliott Kim, Hinsdale Academy SA president said the leadership camp allowed him to get to know other student leaders as well as circulate fresh ideas.” I felt like our discussions were really positive and encouraged innovative thinking. It was also great to hear about the experiences of other students and staff.” ■

**Jacob Capiña** leads public relations for Hinsdale Adventist Academy Student Association.

# Former Lake Union President Maurice Valentine Dies

VALENTINE MOST RECENTLY SERVED AS GENERAL VICE PRESIDENT AT THE GENERAL CONFERENCE.

ON OCT. 20, 2023, MAURICE R. VALENTINE II, A DEDICATED SERVANT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, DIED, LEAVING A LEGACY OF UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO HIS FAITH AND AN IMPRESSIVE CAREER OF LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE ADVENTIST CHURCH. HE WAS 63.

Valentine was a general vice president of the General Conference (GC) of Seventh-day Adventists at the time of his death. Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference, shared, “Pastor Maurice Valentine’s death is a tragedy for the world church. He was a very godly leader and an important part of our world church leadership team. Our hearts are broken with this tragic news.”

Valentine began his journey in ministry in 1985, serving as a pastor in various churches across Colorado, Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska in the United States over 28 years. Valentine’s life of servant leadership led him to become the ministerial director of the Mid-America Union Conference from 2006 to 2012, furthering his impact on the church. He was later called to the Central States Conference as assistant to the president, vice president for administration (secretary), and then president.

G. Alexander “Alex” Bryant, president of the North American Division, reflected on his relationship with Valentine, saying, “Maurice and I knew each other for over 40 years through our college life and ministry. Maurice always had a passion for God, his family, and for ministry.” Bryant and Valentine attended Oakwood University together, where they became friends. Later, they had the privilege to serve together as partners in mission for the



Central States Conference. Bryant affirmed Valentine’s leadership, stating, “He executed his responsibility with a high degree of excellence and professionalism. He would always find encouraging words to speak to those he met and took the time to listen to them, especially in the darkest moments.”

In September 2017, Valentine’s unwavering dedication to the church led him to be called to the Lake Union Conference, where he served a total of six years, first as secretary and later as president. Kenneth Denslow,