Breaking News: American Union Conference Location Change

Some things are impossible to plan ahead for. Such is the case with the upcoming American Union Conference. A conference site was chosen. Agreements were made. Registration began. The typical pre-conference activities were in full swing, when a phone call came that changed everything. The conference grounds had been severely damaged by a wild fire and would not be able to accommodate our meetings there.

Several people jumped into action, searching for nearby facilities able to host our group on such extremely short notice. We are very thankful to report that a new location has been found. The American Union Conference will be held at the Best Western Plus Heritage Inn at 8179 Spruce Ave., in Rancho Cucamonga, California, just five miles from the Los Angeles/Ontario International Airport. The conference dates remain unchanged.

If you have already made a reservation for the conference, your reservation will automatically be transferred to the new location. If you have not made a reservation, do so immediately, or contact Sister Evelyn Arevalo at au1914treasure@yahoo.com, or phone 321-297-8638.

May this American Union Conference be a great blessing to all who attend.

Religious Liberty Publishing Assn. Catalogs

Religious Liberty Publishing Assn. has released its Summer/Fall retail and sale catalogs. Special discounts are available for those who are registered with RLPA as Literature Evangelists. View the online catalog by going to sda1888.org. Children’s books, Bibles, religious books, pamphlets, and more are available. Purchase publications for your home library, to give as a gift, or to reach out to others.
NEF Youth Camp
Pastor Neptali Acevedo, President of the NEF, Bronx, NY

During the first week of July (1-7), the Northeastern Field held its annual youth camp. It was a special time for the young people of this field. The youth leader, Brother Miguel Figuereo, invited an experienced young Bible worker from Venezuela, Brother Boris Acevedo, to take part in the activities planned for that week. Brother Boris kindly accepted the invitation and used his vacation time to travel to the US and share his knowledge and experience with us, greatly contributing to the success of our program.

The weather forecasts were very bad; according to them, we were to have continual rain and thunderstorms. We prayed fervently that the Lord would change the weather. We could not change the date for the camp, because the camping sites had been rented ahead of time and no other time was available for our meetings. In faith, we pressed ahead with all the plans for the youth camp, including all the outdoor activities, which made up a large portion of the program. We kept praying to the Lord. The first day of July was a very rainy day. When we arrived, everything was wet and humid. Thanks to God, we had enough clear weather to set up our tents. Tuesday was also very rainy; but because we had erected a shelter with ropes and tarps, we had a covered area in which to hold our meetings and studies.

Belleplain State Forest, the place where we held our camp, is a heavily forested area with a beautiful lake for swimming and canoeing. It has everything we needed for our program: big camping sites, washrooms with showers, fireplaces, a big open sports area, hiking trails, and more. God heard our prayers, and from Wednesday on the weather was excellent. We had no more rain, just beautiful blue skies with warm temperatures. By God’s grace, we enjoyed sunny days the rest of the week.

The topics analyzed and studied at this camp were selected from surveys previously sent out requesting discussion ideas from the young people themselves. Among the subjects studied were: personality problems such as shyness, low self-esteem, and introversion; fundamental reasons for our principles regarding fashion and dress; videos and online games; evil spirits and liberation in Christ; and theology about the existence of God.

For the Sabbath, we rented a “pavilion” in which to hold our services. Brethren from Elizabeth, New Jersey, joined us, making the meeting even more joyful. The sermon was presented by Brother Boris Acevedo. His message was about the time of youth. When we are teenagers, we dream of becoming adults, having our own cars, houses, and families. But when we are adults and feel the weight of real life with its responsibilities and burdens, we begin to dream about what it was like when we were young and free to choose again. That is when the temptations of the “if’s” come to the mind.

What if I had married a different person? What if I had studied for that other career? What if I hadn’t done this or that? What if I had paid attention to my parents’ advice?! What if I had accepted the invitation to be baptized? That’s why the time of our youth is valuable only when we follow the instruction, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” To close his message, Brother Boris made an invitation to the young people who had participated in the camp to come forward so he could pray for them. All of them stepped forward to receive the blessing. The closing of the program was, as usual, an emotional moment; but all of us had the satisfaction of having experienced a wonderful time together in the midst of nature and in the company of God.
Prayer for Empty Chairs
Margie Seely, Cedartown, GA

The decorations were hung; and the crafts, laid out. The pianist’s fingers were poised on the piano keys, ready to play the opening song. Children wiggled excitedly in their seats as the teacher stepped to the front. Vacation Bible School was about to begin. Suddenly, seven-year-old Maya raised her hand. “Stop! The kids aren’t here yet!”

Many invitations had been distributed throughout the surrounding neighborhood. In the four years since our church began holding annual Vacation Bible Schools, we have been blessed to see many of the same children attend year after year. We know their names. They wave to us in the grocery store and on the street corners. Their parents attend some of the other programs our church offers. Everyone knows that, come summertime, our church will host a Vacation Bible School program where for one happy week kids explore Bible truths and create fun memories together.

But on this year’s opening day, only church kids were in the seats. Empty chairs overpowered the room. Where the sounds of children should have reigned, only a few quiet voices broke the silence. This bothered Maya greatly. She did not want Vacation Bible School to begin until the neighborhood kids had arrived.

“Please don’t start until they come!” Maya pleaded. “They’re going to miss it.” The teachers looked at one another. What should they do? Everything was ready to go. A schedule had been planned, and no one could guarantee that waiting would produce any results. Maybe no neighborhood children would come at all this year. But Maya was adamant. “Please wait for them.”

“Let’s pray,” the teacher suggested. Maya and the other church children quietly slipped out of their seats and onto their knees. They prayed for God’s blessing upon this Vacation Bible School. They asked for His Spirit to guide the classes. They asked for neighborhood children to come. Then, believing that God had heard and would answer, all were ready to begin.

This year’s Vacation Bible School program focused on service. Through songs, crafts, Bible stories, and even outdoor recreation activities, the children learned how God wants us to serve our families, our friends, our neighbors, and our communities. When we serve others in kindness and love, we ultimately serve God.

When the opening story was over, Richard Eaton and Shannon Francis escorted the children outside for recreation, allowing the other teachers to prepare for the craft. Preparation time was suddenly interrupted when Maya and several other children burst through the door exclaiming, “Our prayer has been answered! The kids are here!”

Over the next few days, approximately twenty neighborhood children attended our Vacation Bible School program. All of us, including one little girl in particular, were reminded that our all-powerful God loves to answer the prayers of even the youngest of His children.
Introducing: Orion Christian Academy!
Margie Seely, Education Department Leader, Cedartown, GA

“As far as possible, all our children should have the privilege of a Christian education.”

For many years, the above quotation has troubled me. Having received a Christian education as a teen, provided Christian education for each of my five children, and taught as a Christian educator for twenty years, I know first-hand the immense blessings Christian education brings to both the child and the family. There is no substitute. But how does a small church like the Reform Movement provide Christian education for all the children in the American Union?

Isaiah 55:8, 9, says, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” This summer I have found these words to be completely true.

In June, I began praying and researching about what it would take for the American Union to open an online school for US children in grades 1–6. I learned many things. Most importantly, I learned that my plans were too small. God led in tremendous ways. He opened doors that have enabled the American Union to provide an accredited, online, Christian education in the five core subjects (math, English, history, science, and Bible) plus electives for American and international students in grades 3-12! (Enrollment is open for grades K-3 as well, but without accreditation.) We serve an amazing God!

Below is a list of some of the other blessings that come with this program:
- self-paced, mastery-based learning
- easy-to-follow lesson plans and academic goal sheets
- media-rich curriculum
- immediate feedback on student work, quizzes, and tests (essay questions take a little longer)
- diagnostic testing and evaluation
- report cards and high school transcripts
- translation help for ESL students
- open communication between parents and teachers
- student social network to build a sense of community

Orion Christian Academy has already begun enrolling students. If you have questions, would like to receive an application and handbook, or simply wish to sign up for our quarterly newsletter, contact me at 404-673-2980 or margieseely@yahoo.com.

2013 Calendar

- August 13: Orion Christian Academy opens enrollment for the 2013-2014 school year (see information above)
- August 14-18: American Union Conference, Rancho Cucamonga, CA
- August 21-28: International Youth Conference, Camp O-AT-KA, Portland, Maine
  Contact Barbara Watts at barbara.watts@isma1.org or 916-765-3389
- August 30: Seminar for Church Youth Leaders, Tampa, Florida
- October 9: Bethsaida Missionary School begins, Cedartown, GA