

Media centre targets new audiences

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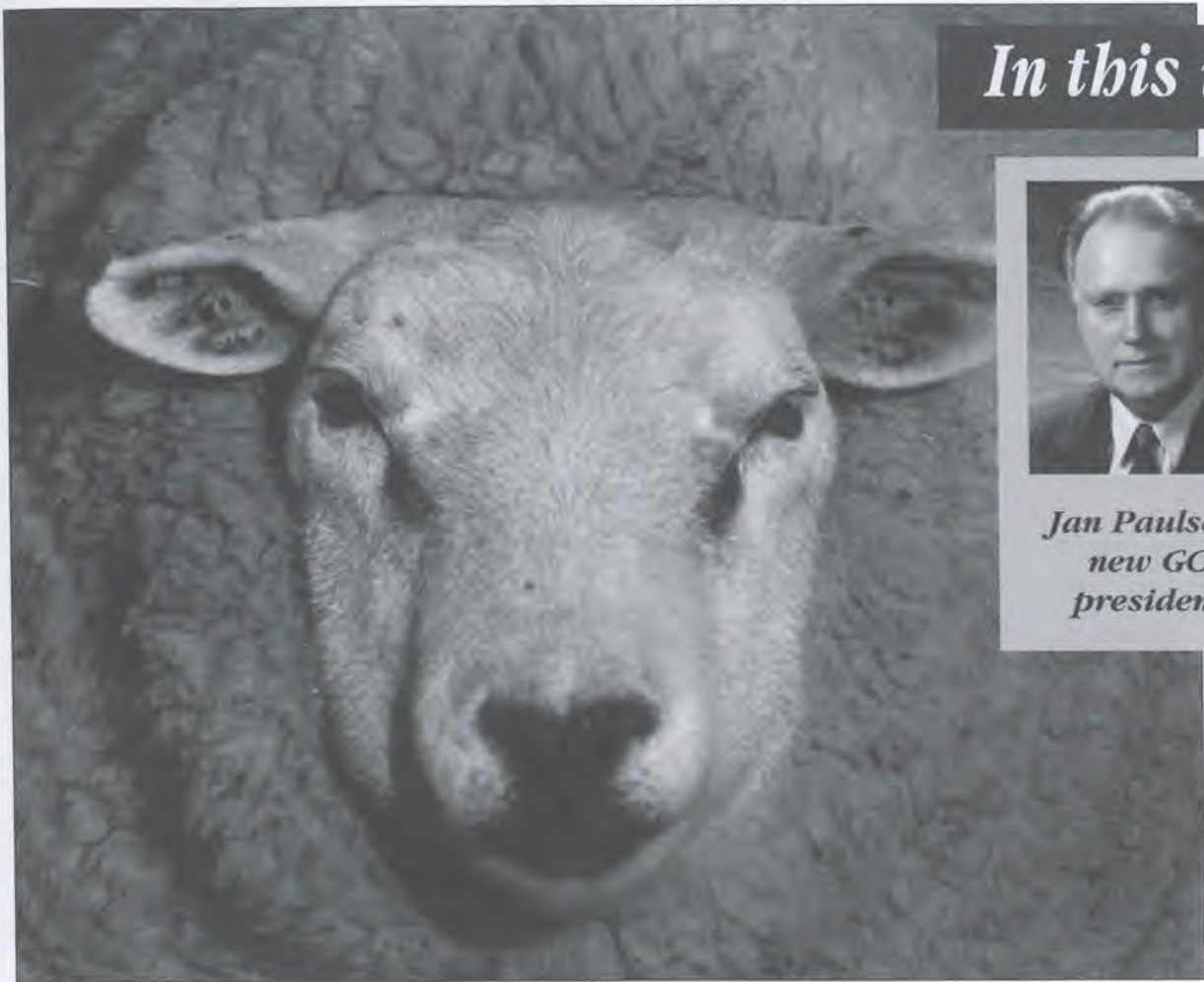
March 20

1999

In this issue



*Jan Paulsen,
new GC
president*



*Adventist
congregationalism:
Is it the answer?*

GET CONNECTED FOR E-TERNITY

I'm nervous. I'm sitting in a church 1000 kilometres from home, about to meet someone I've been e-mailing for the past year. I scan the faces of the people sitting nearby. *No. Definitely not! Couldn't be. Maybe. Quite possibly. Definitely! Then again . . .*

My e-pal could be one of half a dozen people. I've never met this person, nor exchanged details about appearance. And that's the beauty of e-mail. As another e-pal put it, e-mail is teaching the world to fall in love with personalities.

Take the romantic movie *You've got mail*, starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan. The owner of a new mega-chain city bookshop (Hanks) forces the owner of a smaller, established bookshop across the road (Ryan) out of business. The two, writing under pseudonyms, confide in each other by e-mail and end up falling in love.

Suddenly! A tap on the shoulder.

"Hi, Brenton."

"Hi. Let me guess, you're . . ."

Personality, not appearance

God was the first to teach the importance of personality over appearance. He emphasises in the Bible that what matters most is what's in the heart. Take the story of David, for example.

God has just rejected Saul as King of Israel. Samuel, the prophet at the time, is in mourning for Saul.

God is grieving, and He sends Samuel to anoint one of the sons of Jesse of Bethlehem. God's chosen one is among Jesse's sons. He will be the new king.

Samuel obeys and, in what was probably the world's first all-male catwalk, Jesse's sons parade before the prophet.

First up, Eliab, and Samuel's impressed. But God says no. "Don't think Eliab's the one just because he's tall and handsome. He isn't the one I've chosen. People judge others by what they look like, but I judge people by what's in their hearts" (1 Samuel 16:7, CEV).

Next is Abinadab. No.

Shammah. No.

"E-mail is teaching the world to fall in love with personalities."

"Jesse, God hasn't chosen any of these. Do you have any more sons?"

"Well, yes, just the youngest, David, but he's busy right now."

"Busy! Get comfortable, we're not moving anywhere until he gets here."

The rest, as they say, is history. David is eventually made King of Israel and lives a long and prosperous life.

End of story? No.

Even though David doesn't live a perfect life (remember, he has an affair with Bathsheba, the wife of an army officer who was away at war—and he kills the army officer!), he is loyal to God. And for as long as Judah continues as a nation, God keeps a promise He

makes with David:

"Now I promise that you and your descendants will be kings. I'll choose one of your sons to be king when you reach the end of your life. . . . I'll make him a strong ruler, and no-one will be able to take his kingdom away from him. . . . I will be his father, and he will be my son" (2 Samuel 7:11-14, CEV).

David is stunned.

"My family and I don't deserve what you've already done for us, and yet you've promised to do even more. Is this the way you usually treat people?" (2 Samuel 7:18-19, CEV)

Yes!

Pure personality

God is interested in what is happening on the inside. That's why he promises: "I will write my laws on their hearts and minds. I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33, CEV). He even re-emphasises the promise in the New Testament (see Hebrews 8:10) to prove it was for His people in all times.

The catch? Because God knows what's in our hearts, He knows they need renewing. So if you haven't already, ask for it.

The reward? "God blesses those people whose hearts are pure. They will see him!" (Matthew 5:8, CEV).

The challenge? Get connected.



Brenton Stacey

Next week

How you can really experience the fellowship of God's family.

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SPEAKING A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

"Come over to Macedonia"

A small group of believers in the town of Kumanovo, Macedonia, sounded the call to "come over to Macedonia and help us." The group of believers wanted to engage in evangelistic activities so they could establish a Macedonian congregation in the town.

Sain Mamutovski, one among many



Sain Mamutovski and his family.

who benefited from the love of these believers, writes:

"My conversion began a year ago. My wife and I lived close to an old woman who was an SDA Church member. Her name was Elmaza, and she was a faithful and dedicated old woman.

"My family was living in extreme poverty, not knowing how to survive until the next month. Our neighbour, Elmaza, started visiting us and sharing her faith with us, but we were not really interested. We were preoccupied with our survival.

"I was thinking only of finding a job and earning money for our everyday existence, while my wife, in the course of time, became more interested in listening about spiritual matters.

"Meanwhile, I got a job in Germany. I felt a door was opening for solving my financial problems. I earned some money, spent a lot, and saved almost nothing. I completely forgot the elderly woman's words about God. I forgot

to thank Him for solving my biggest problem. I lived better, but I was not satisfied. I felt empty.

"Then God, in His providence, allowed my three-year-old son to get very sick, making me more conscious of His good plans and wishes for me. The doctors suspected the worst. I turned to God, asking Him for His mercy and forgiveness, and to cure my son, my greatest treasure. God answered my prayers. I was overjoyed.

"Soon we returned to Kumanovo, Macedonia, where we were living in the same miserable conditions. But this time we were determined to look for God. Sister Elmaza, from the Kumanovo SDA church, was ready to help us all over again. She started studying the Bible with us. Our new church family gladly accepted us, collecting financial help for electricity and other necessities for our home. At the end of 1997 both my wife and I were baptised."

Even in the USA

Four young Global Mission pioneers make up the travelling team of YouthNet eXtreme. The ministry focuses on reaching Generation X with the love of Jesus Christ. The team made their debut in June at a camp-meeting held in Huttonsville, West Virginia. Eleven young people were baptised and 20 more expressed a desire to be baptised in the near future.

"We're not perfect people you can't relate to," says Brian Yeager, one of the four, "but we're all sold out for God."



Eleven were baptised at eXtreme's first camp.

His love breaks through . . .

. . . In Sri Lanka



Although harassed and, on one occasion, arrested for sharing his faith, Global Mission pioneer Lakshantha established a group of 27 baptised believers in Gampola. Today he and his wife, Indra, find joy in sharing God's love in Kegalle, another unentered area.

. . . In Cuba



More than 6000 people were baptised in Cuba during 1998, thanks to the Global Mission vision and the work of Maranatha Volunteers International. Since Maranatha began working there the church has more than doubled.

. . . In your district



What are you doing to fill this empty space? What are you doing to help God's love break through in your part of the world?

Did you hear...?

■ ... About the small church with the big dream?

Waihi (NNZ) church has a weekly attendance of about 40 and it dreamed of purchasing a data projector for outreach—at a cost of \$NZ5500. They were \$NZ2000 short when they planned a Sabbath worship service with a borrowed projector and a NeXt Millennium video.

When they counted the offering to help purchase a projector, they had raised \$NZ2300.

■ ... About the Adventist education foundation that's building for the state education department?

The newly formed Queensland Adventist Education Foundation (known as **Shine Foundation**) recently handed over its first venture, a five-bedroom house, for lease to the state government's education department. Long-term leasing arrangements will guarantee higher-than-average returns.

The South Queensland Conference president, **Pastor Chester Stanley**, is pictured handing over the keys of the house to Springfield State



School principal, **Neville Smith**. Also pictured are **Stewart Hemsley**, foundation president (at left) and vice-president **Peter Sissons**.

The foundation has purchased three more sites to construct homes in the area for resale early in 1999. Funds will go to assist the Adventist schooling system.—*Focus*

Church calendar

- **March 20-27** Youth Week of Prayer
- **March 27** Youth Offering

Quest approves Olympic Signs and Edge



Olympic issues of *Signs of the Times* and *The Edge* have been well received by Quest Australia for distribution at the Olympic Games in Sydney.

Following earlier meetings with the Greater Sydney Conference and *Signs* editor Pastor Bruce Manners, Quest—the coordinating body for Christian activities during the games—"enthusiastically" endorsed the magazines at a meeting on February 11. "Quest sees our publications as reaching out to the secular mind and filling a unique niche," says conference communication director Pastor Larry Laredo.

Seven other church organisations presented outreach items at the meeting.

"The fact that other church communities are prepared to pay for and distribute our publications is a tribute to their quality and potential," says Signs Publishing Company print marketing manager Alan Holman, who presented the magazines at the meeting.

Mr Holman (right) is pictured with Quest Australia chief executive officer David Willson and executive assistant Amanda Bruder.

Former farmer ordained

Grant Burton was ordained in the Alstonville



(NSW) church on February 20. Pastor Burton (pictured with his wife, Rosalie, and children, Geena-Rose and Caleb) returned to manage his family's dairy farm near Christchurch a year after starting theology at Avondale College in 1975. He returned in 1989 and graduated with majors in history and religion in 1995 while under appointment to the Alstonville and Ballina churches. Pastors Peter Colquhoun (North New South Wales

Conference president), Jerry Matthews (ministerial secretary) and John Skrzypaszek (Lismore minister) helped with the ordination service.

Accounting centralised

The South Pacific Division (SPD) has established a committee to study how to make conference, mission and union accounting more efficient. The Centralised Accounting Steering Committee will report to the SPD Executive Committee following a meeting of conference and union treasurers in Sydney on April 16. The Trans-Australian Union Conference Executive Committee voted at its annual meeting last year to accept the concept of centralised accounting. This year it is trialling a centralised accounting office servicing several organisations.

"Just lovely people"

Debbie Wilks says this about Adventists: "They're just lovely people." This was after she had been helped by the Yandina (Qld) church after recent floods on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. Eve Broad, the AdCare leader for the church, took Mrs Wilks shopping for furniture after the floods. The South Queensland Conference donated \$A21,000 to help flood victims.

Musical items needed

Any individual or group wanting to perform at the General Conference (GC) session next year needs to act now. Applications must be made through the division to be passed on before June. Contact GC Session Music Committee, c/- Ray Coombe, Locked bag 2014, Wahroonga NSW 2076; fax (02) 9489 0943; e-mail: rcoombe@adventist.org.au

100 volunteers to Nepal

More than 100 Australian volunteers have been to Nepal in the past three-and-a-half years to help build a heart hospital, under the direction of Pastor Des and Shirley Mowday.

Rheumatic heart disease is a major health problem in Nepal, and the former Adventist Development and Relief Agency-Nepal, Paul Dulhunty, dreamed of converting a derelict shoe factory into the first national heart hospital for Nepal.



The outpatients department is now working; the operating theatre will be ready within 12 months; and the next project, to add a cardiac catheter laboratory to the hospital, is being planned.

The Mowdays are organising another team for this year. They are pictured with the acting Prime Minister of Nepal, Girija Koirala.

Briefly

■ Sydney Adventist Hospital chief engineer **John Maxwell** (pictured) received the Paul Harris Fellowship from the Rotary Club of Pennant Hills on February 18.



The international award, usually reserved for Rotary members, was awarded for Mr Maxwell's dedication to the hospital and its health-care outreach.

■ Australian **Pastor Peter Roennfeldt** began an evangelistic campaign in Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia, on February 20. The exclusive 1000-seat conference centre was filled to capacity twice a day, with some being turned away because of lack of seating.

World news

Lawsuit settlement close?

Indications are that the lawsuit against the Seventh-day Adventist Church filed by James Moore has been settled by defendants other than the General Conference Corporation and the Inter-American Division, and that the suit has been withdrawn. A settlement has not been verified by court records, and the church has not been notified that the suit has been withdrawn. The church has not been party to any settlement negotiations and is not aware of the terms of any potential settlement. "The church would welcome the withdrawal of the suit," reports the South Pacific Division communication director, Pastor Ray Coombe, "which the church has characterised from the beginning as 'frivolous and without merit.'"

Meet retired pastor, Ernie Krause

Retired minister Pastor Ernie Krause (pictured) received a standing ovation at the North New South Wales session last year when he was awarded a citation for 52 years of service, as a teacher and minister, to the church.



Pastor Krause most fondly remembers his three years as a boys dean and librarian at Fulton College in Fiji. "I learned more in those three years than elsewhere: the mix of nationalities from the Pacific, their different cultures and how they lived were really eye-openers. As was the tireless service of the staff—morning to night without a break."

And, he will also remember the huge number of interested people as a result of the NET '98 programs in his Macksville and Nambucca churches. "That's the biggest success in reaching the community I've seen."

Pastor Krause will miss visiting church members ("I often get more from the visitation than the members get"), but not late-night board meetings ("I tend to be a workaholic, and my biggest problem in ministry has been to keep a balanced life. You get so involved in work that your wife and children suffer").

Pastor Krause says he was fortunate to be part of an active youth group at the small Ashfield (NSW) church when he was young. "Because of the lack of members, the youth were given responsibilities as Sabbath school teachers and superintendents. I was even made an elder in my teens. The members were people-focused."

He says there was a tendency to emphasise doctrines and overlook people's needs when he was younger, but "you've got to preach doctrines and meet needs."

Perhaps his desire to continue in ministry so long came from an Adventist pioneer. "I remember Pastor Robert Hare—he always wore a long coat, as you'd expect pioneers to. Here he was, an old man and he'd walk from the railway station to the church—about four kilometres up a hill. I'd stand at the top of the hill and see this figure coming. He'd retired, but he still preached. I'd think, *Here's this chap as old as he is, still involved in ministry.*"

Highlights in ministry? Building Alstonville church (NSW), selling the Ballina church and relocating. "I was there for 10 years as pastor and saw it through from planning until completion."

A quote that has meant much to Pastor Krause is, "They [children] should be taught that this world is not a parade ground, but a battlefield" (*Education*, page 295).

"In other words," he says "expect troubles and burdens, but don't let them sweep you off your feet or think God has left you. It also has a lot to do with training children."

Pastor and Mrs Krause have retired in Alstonville. They expect to be able to take life a little easier. Don't expect them to stop ministering, though.—Bruce Manners

CONGREGATIONALISM: IS IT THE ANSWER?

by George Knight

It has become popular in some Adventist circles to debate the advantages of congregationalism versus a hierarchical church structure. The following was a presentation made by George Knight to open a discussion about the impact of congregationalism during the General Conference Annual Council at Iguacu Falls, Brazil, in October last year. While addressed specifically to church leaders, his overview of the issues warrants a broader audience.

There are only two truly Catholic churches in the world today: the Roman Catholic and the Adventist catholic. Adventism is catholic ("universal") in that it has a worldwide commission to fulfil the mission of the three angels of Revelation 14; to take the end-time message to every nation, tongue and people.

But some Adventists have come to believe that in the area of church organisation Adventism has gone too far. The reaction for some has been the congregational option.



Learning from the past

Congregationalism is deeply rooted in Seventh-day Adventist history. James White and Joseph Bates came into

Adventism from the Christian Connection, which had a congregational polity. The Connectionist movement was held together by a loose association of churches (somewhat like today's Baptists) that shared common periodicals and periodic general meetings. White and Bates brought that

form of organisation into Sabbatarian Adventism in the late 1840s and early 1850s.

White, however, soon realised that congregationalism was not sufficiently focused to gather in a people. By the middle of the 1850s he was calling for an organised church body so the outreach work of the Sabbatarians could be organised and move forward with direction and vigour.

White's initiative was met with resistance by those who remembered the casting out of Millerites from their churches and the cry of George Storrs in 1844, that the first step toward church organisation was the first step to becoming Babylon. White responded that the very reason Sabbatarians needed to be organised was that the movement was already a "perfect Babylon" of confusion.¹

Those branches of the Millerite movement that followed the congregational logic of Storrs and the connectionists, had an extremely difficult time organising into churches. Only one developed an organisation strong enough to hold a movement together and to foster an extension of its message—that one became the Seventh-day Adventist Church. All other branches of Millerism are either dead or dying.

They had no organisational focus or centre. A second problem was that they lost their vision of being an apocalyptic people who had a special end-time mission.²

In spite of Seventh-day Adventism's organisation, or perhaps because of it, congregationalism periodically raised its head. A most threatening episode took place in the wake of the Kellogg crisis. Between 1907 and 1915 there was a significant congregationalist move-

ment spearheaded by A T Jones of 1888 fame, L C Sheafe, Adventism's first prominent Afro-American pastor, and others.

Currently, congregationalism again challenges the denominational organisational structure as to which is the best way to "do church" and carry out Adventism's mission.

It's also important to note that Adventism had a third founder—Ellen G White—raised in the Methodist Episcopal Church. The title of Charles W Ferguson's book helps us see where she came from on the topic of church polity. *Organising to beat the devil: Methodists and the making of America* tells the story of the 19th century's most rapidly expanding American denomination. The Methodists' secret was their self-consciously, mission-focused organisation.

Various forms of congregationalism exist in current Adventism. They've been stimulated to some extent by an individualism deeply ingrained in its Protestant heritage, and by a lack of reflection on the biblical doctrine of the church by Adventists.

It's important to realise that congregationalism has more than one face. We generally think of congregationalism in terms of entire congregations voting to take independent actions disruptive to the sisterhood of churches. But there's another form of congregationalism that is much more difficult to detect and certainly more widespread and serious—"congregational mentality." That's when individuals (rather than entire congregations) silently vote with their feet and their cheque-books as to how to dedicate their money and time.



What does the Bible say?

Seventh-day Adventism has built its appeal on a pledge to be faithful to the Bible. We expect a biblical rationale for any organisational plan that may be proposed.

The first thing to note is that there is no one-to-one correspondence between the church model reflected in the New Testament and Seventh-day Adventist Church organisation. The most that can be asked of the New Testament documents is

If we hear the wake-up call but merely hit the snooze button, we may end up being responsible for turning a troubling trend into a full-scale disaster.

whether they reflect primarily a congregational model or a more complex model.

As well, the New Testament church did not necessarily present a mature or completely harmonious view of church structure. It was a young church undergoing transition.

But whatever the status of that development, the New Testament presents us with a picture that moves beyond the congregational model. The evidence does not indicate that independent members or even independent, self-sufficient congregations were the order of the day. To the contrary, they belonged to the priesthood of believers who had assembled themselves into congregations—their primary unity in what Paul referred to as the “body of Christ.”

Paul made it explicit that the head of the church was no person or group of people, but Christ Himself.

Thus all ecclesiastical authority at the human level is delegated authority and that authority, unlike the model of the world, is not masterly authority, but servant authority.

Human church leaders have authority to sacrifice and serve as the Holy Spirit seeks to use them. The New Testament leaves no doubt as to the servant leadership ideal, yet servant leadership is probably the easiest thing in the world to abuse and neglect.

Beyond the headship of Christ, the New Testament pictures a church that was consciously led by the Holy Spirit. The church was not structure-centred or person-centred, but centred in the divine Godhead. Whenever the church forgets that fact, as it often does, it soon leads itself astray.



Church council

In the world of the New Testament church, the Bible indicates a structural model that transcends the congregational.

The fullest example of that model is illustrated in Paul's mission. The apostle functioned under Christ's leadership as a sort of superintendent over the workers in the areas he had opened up to the Christian message.

Beyond that, Paul had lieutenants, such as Timothy and Titus, who not only did the work of evangelists (2 Timothy 4:5), but also functioned in leadership roles.

Timothy had authority to lay hands on local church leaders, rebuke those leaders who persisted in sin, and to determine which local leaders were worthy of “double honour” (1 Timothy 5:17-22). In like manner, Titus exercised a God-given authority to appoint local elders (Titus 1:5).

Timothy and Titus don't appear to be functioning as what we would call conference presidents or what others might call bishops. Rather, their function appears closer to that of the Methodist circuit riders, who did evangelism, but also had the responsibility of a score of congregations. They appointed local elders and

cared for the churches as they made their rounds.

Adventism adopted aspects of that model for about 60 years. Until the early twentieth century Adventism did not have settled pastors, but travelling pastor-evangelists who appointed local leadership.

While Paul may have functioned as a general superintendent in his geographical area of mission, he did not operate as a free agent. Rather, he worked in harmony with leaders in other parts of the Christian mission.

The best illustration of such interlocking leadership is found in the general council of the church reported in Acts 15. That council definitely reflects the international or interdistrict leadership of the early church coming together to settle a problem disrupting the body of Christ—the membership and behavioural requirements of Gentiles who desired to join the church.

Acts 15 shows Jewish and Gentile church leaders acting in harmony under the leading of the Spirit in making certain decisions regarding Christian conduct. They not only made such decisions, but the leaders of the Gentile sector made the rulings known to the various churches they had contact with in the wider Christian community (Acts 16:4).

While not indicating a developed hierarchical system, the evidence shows much more than a congregational form of government. Yet congregations had authority in many or most matters. The congregation was extremely important in Paul's eyes. The Corinthian letters, in particular, show Paul's respectful treatment of a troublesome congregation.



Exploring advantages

There are some positive things to be said about aspects of congregationalism. The local congregation is where the members

“do church.” If congregations are healthy and contented, we can expect the other levels of the church to be vibrant and healthy.

The converse is not necessarily true. It's possible, through engineering (or manipulation), to have a very healthy and vibrant structural and institutional system—as long as the people remain convinced to support the larger system—while having listless congregations. There is, however, a time bomb built into this scenario. Health at the congregational level is the only way to guarantee long-term health at other structural levels.

Another thing to note about a healthy congregation is that no-one can stop it. If members have excitement about their mission, there will be initiative toward mission and outreach. A local sense of responsibility is priceless. Beyond this, a local congregation knows the needs of its community in an intimate way and can create a diversity of programs to meet those needs.

Hierarchical models of church structure also have their advantages. Perhaps the foremost is that they provide the essential framework for concerted action. A worldwide church can target money and personnel into needy areas of the world—that's beyond the potential of a local congregation. Larger structure not only provides concerted action, but also a global vision.

A hierarchical model also provides for continuity, and somewhat of a unity for its constituent parts.

Both congregational and hierarchical models of the church have their downsides, of course. Congregations, for example, can easily become focused on merely the needs of their local community and forget the larger mission of the church. Without any accountability, it's easier for them to wander from their theological moorings, and it's also easier for them to come under the sway of a charismatic leader and his or her peculiarities.

Hierarchies, for their part, "may become bureaucratic, an end in themselves, and a drag on innovation."³ Imposed rigidities provide the death knell for local initiative, responsibility, or even caring about what happens. Neither system has all the advantages or disadvantages.



Uniformity and unity

The challenge of congregationalism also requires that we ask and answer important questions about the differences

between unity and uniformity. Must all parts of a global church do things in exactly the same way?

In terms of church structure, there is no compelling argument for exact uniformity. The structure for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as has been amply demonstrated by the doctoral studies of Adventist scholars Andrew Mustard and Barry Oliver, has not been based on theoretical ecclesiology, but on functionality for mission. Importantly, it is the mission rather than the structure that is inspired.

As Dr Oliver puts it: "While Seventh-day Adventists have become one of the most ethnically diverse Christian denominations in the world, they remain not only in danger of failing to respond adequately to the change that cultural diversity has brought, but they are even in peril of refusing to acknowledge that diversity necessitates structural adaptation. To remain viable, change should not only be respected, it must be anticipated."⁴

As noted, this problem of unity in diversity was faced by the first-century church at the Jerusalem Council. There the tectonic plates of Jewish and Gentile church memberships clashed. The brethren "in session," under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, finally formulated a ruling whereby there were only four things with which the Gentile churches needed to comply (Acts 15:20-29).

There were probably many other teachings that they agreed upon that are not mentioned. It's surprising how little uniformity the apostles required in the face of the obvious problems of melding two quite diverse groups into the church.

There is a difference between unity and uniformity. Some argue that Adventism must be united in mission, its core message, and in ser-

vanthood, but not in everything. They suggest that many issues need to be decided locally.



Congregationalism's appeal

As some Adventists see it, there are many appealing features to congregationalism, though not all "congregational

types" would find all points in the following list attractive. This list has been gleaned from various types of members dissatisfied with the present order of things:

1. Perceived and real abuses of power. Many wonder where the servanthood of leadership has gone, even though the rhetoric has remained. Too many see a two-level clergy model, somewhat like the medieval church, with bosses at the top and the servants on the bottom, in the local churches.

2. A lack of resources at the congregational level. The institutions that raise the money have the fewest discretionary funds in the ecclesiastical "financial heap." Many are tired of hearing that a large portion of the funds come back through appropriations from higher levels. Such people don't want earmarked funds for a given program, but funds they can put to use in their local area to implement programs to promote mission opportunities that are especially inviting for their local community.

3. The problem of a church structure with four levels above the congregational level. Some are calling for a trimmed-down institution that puts more money and personnel on the front lines.

4. Outreach potential of congregational churches. In nearly all of Adventism's recent congregational breakaways, it seems that more successful outreach has been behind congregational-type initiatives—usually with contemporary worship styles and an emphasis on gospel preaching. Many feel there are good reasons for such renewal. After all, they note, Adventism has too many

dead and dying congregations that have lost the ability to attract and inspire either members or nonmembers.

5. Declining confidence in the organisation by laypersons and pastors. This is part of a larger picture that began developing in the larger culture with Watergate and resistance to the Vietnam War. In the church there were parallel events brought about by crises within the church. The result in the larger culture has been postmodernism and postinstitutionalism. The Christian world has seen the arrival of what some have termed "postdenominationalism."

6. The perception that no-one is listening "up there." Too many feel that the denominational leaders are merely expressing knee-jerk reactions to congregationalism rather than really listening to concerns.

7. Structural frictions between pastors and congregations. Many pastors feel they've been placed in an adversarial role rather than a pastoral role with their congregations. In this view, the pastor's job is to produce numbers for the conference—numbers in terms of money and baptisms. This perception is matched by too many members feeling they are valued chiefly by their pastors and the organisation for their ability to give.

8. Theological differences. Some see congregationalism as being a way to achieve more freedom to preach the gospel while playing down the Seventh-day Adventist distinctive doctrines.

9. An unhealthy resistance to change. Much of the appeal of congregationalism circles around finances and distrust of the church as represented by its leadership. Many members and pastors resent leaders who seem to believe that the present way of doing things is the only way of doing things.

Concerned individuals fear that the denomination may have confused its structure with its mission. They are attracted to congregationalism by the truism that the denomination can only be healthy if it is healthy at the congregational level.



Fears of congregationalism

That's an extensive look at what causes congregationalism to be appealing to some Adventists. Fears of the movement may be more quickly summarised:

- Many concerned members fear that as congregationalism increases, Adventism might disintegrate structurally. In that scenario it would no longer be able to focus its firepower in the effective employment of people and finances to the entire world.

- Again, once central authority is gone, there could easily develop a diversification of theological perspectives along with a localism that not only loses its world vision, but loses the vision of Adventism as an apocalyptic people with a mission to the entire world (Revelation 14:6-12).

- Other genuine fears relate to the possible rise of regional charismatic leaders who could dominate congregations in the way some Protestant pastors have abused their positions.

- There's also the danger that the establishment of independent congregational legal corporations could be abused. After all, the history of Christianity has many times witnessed theological minorities wresting control from the majority and taking their property and movement down strange paths.

While the development of such a problem at the denominational level is not impossible, the weight of an entire denomination does provide a stabilising factor not available to a loose cluster of congregations.



Options for the future

The obvious or preferred option would be to develop a church that utilises congregational initiative, responsibility and diversity to the fullest while, at the same time, capturing the advantages of a structure that can amass

and focus worldwide assets for the purpose of mission. It is easier, of course, to state the ideal than it is to actualise it.

It's even easier to maintain the status quo. And that's another possible option, though hardly a good one. Instead, it seems vital that Adventist leaders on all levels, from the local church to the General Conference, begin to listen to the varied but responsible voices within the church that are calling for a new season of focus and initiative.

I urge that each of us stop talking long enough to truly listen—listen with the ears of our minds and the ears of our hearts turned up to their most sensitive level.

Listen to the Adventist dissidents: they may have some valid points.

Listen to the medieval Roman Catholic Church, which didn't listen and made Luther into a hero. Remember that Luther never wanted to break away.

Listen to the message of our Protestant heritage at its best—one of protest in the light of Scripture.

And listen to the Lord of the church who still guides His people from His throne.

It is in the power of denominational leadership to determine whether Adventist congregationalism will be a wake-up call or a death knell. If we hear the wake-up call but merely hit the snooze button, we may end up being responsible for turning a troubling trend into a full-scale disaster. **R**

1. James White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, December 6, 1853, page 173.

2. George Knight, *Millennial fever*, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Boise, Idaho, 1993, pages 327-42.

3. William G Johnson, in *Adventist Review*, November 1997, page 17.

4. Barry Oliver, *Seventh-day Adventist organisational structure*, Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1989, page 355.

George Knight is professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist theological seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA. Adapted, with permission, from Adventist Review.

JAN PAULSEN ELECTED GC PRESIDENT

Jan Paulsen was elected president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on March 1. The election occurred as part of a



Pastor Jan Paulsen is the first European to be elected General Conference president.

special meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee, and follows the recent resignation of Pastor Robert Folkenberg.

Dr Paulsen has been vice-president of the General Conference since 1995. Prior to that he was president of the Trans-European Division from 1983 to 1995.

Dr Paulsen has been a pastor, a departmental leader, a teacher and a college president. A Norwegian, he

becomes the first European (but not the first European-born, see box) to be president of the worldwide church. He has academic degrees from Andrews University in Michigan and Tübingen University in Germany.

The committee of 244, with members from more than 90 countries, met for the full day, with the entire committee serving as the nominating committee. They spent almost two hours discussing the qualifications they expected in a president, and turned to prayer on four occasions.

In the process of selecting a new president, the committee considered more than 10 names and spent almost four hours in discussion.

During the morning, Pastor Folkenberg spoke for approximately 30 minutes and thanked the committee for giving him the opportunity to lead the church for more than eight years.—*Ray Dabrowski/ANN*

Non-American GC presidents

● Dr Jan Paulsen is the second Norwegian-born Adventist to be General Conference president. Ole A Olsen (president from 1888 to 1897) was born in Norway in 1845, but his family moved to the United States when he was five years old.

● Charles H Watson (1877-1962), pictured, an Australian, was part of a wool buying business until becoming an Adventist. He was president of the Australasian Union Conference from 1916 to 1922. In 1922 it became the Australasian Division—he served as president for two periods (1926-1930; 1936-1944). He was General Conference president from 1930 to 1936.



SAH REDUCES COSTS, CUTS 50 JOBS

Sydney Adventist Hospital is cutting the equivalent of 50 full-time wages as part of an immediate \$A3 million cost reduction. Most of the cuts will come from non-nursing areas.

The hospital has been "substantially" affected by over-bedding as new hospitals have been built, reports chief executive officer Ian Grice.

He adds that the fall in private health insurance membership, high inflation rates that "far exceeds community averages" and the aggressive negotiating positions of the health funds, have contributed to a "significant" downturn in the industry.

"The San is determined to maintain its position as an industry leader in the delivery of quality care, and to strengthen our commitment to excellence," says Mr Grice.

"Unfortunately, our savings, achieved through re-engineering, have been more than matched by increasing industry costs, and the aggressive contracting techniques of the health funds have contributed to our reduced revenues.

"We're extremely sorry about the rapidity of changes taking place and the possible decline in staff morale. But these decisions had to be made to reposition ourselves for growth beyond 2000."

The downturn in the hospital industry began in November 1998, but "no-one has been able to come up with a clear reason why this has happened," says Mr Grice.

"It's placed enormous stress on small hospitals and raised questions about their viability. Some may have to close."

Mr Grice is impressed by the level



Ian Grice: "We're extremely sorry about the rapidity of changes taking place and the possible decline in staff morale."



A "significant" downturn in the hospital industry is forcing Sydney Adventist Hospital to cut the equivalent of 50 full-time wages.

of understanding his staff have of what is happening in the industry, and of what things the hospital needs to do to respond to the downturn.

"I have absolute confidence that, working together as an administration and staff, we will be in business as a strong, surviving hospital beyond 2000."

MEDIA CENTRE TARGETS NEW AUDIENCES

The noticeboard in Pastor Grenville Kent's office at the Adventist Media Centre (AMC) is crammed with quotes from Picasso, Robin Williams, Ferdinand Porsche and Leonardo DiCaprio. But his favourite is from the late Pastor George Burnside—"I don't like worms, but I'll use them to catch fish."

"That's what we do in our outreach," says Pastor Kent, the media centre's creative coordinator. "We find out the needs and preferences of secular people and target our message accordingly."



Pastor John Banks: "The church's message is not confined to the latest technological breakthroughs."

"We rely on the church being unselfish. Members need to understand that some of the resources we produce aren't for Adventists—they're for non-Christians."

"I've just received a letter from a grandmother who read our Bible-study series *Ten questions for God*, which targets non-Christian teens. She said, 'Once I adapted to the style of the presentation, I understood the reason why God's message needs to be presented to modern folk in a modern way.' She understands."

So, what else is working?

Adventist Discovery Centre

"Year after year, our archaeology course 'Digging up the past' turns out the most responses," says Adventist Discovery Centre director Pastor John Gate.

"We're pushing these first-contact courses, meeting people where they're at, winning their confidence then inviting them to go on to a spiritual course."

Between 70 and 120 Discovery course students are baptised each year.

"We don't say they're our baptisms," says Pastor Gate. "We take

pride in being part of the wider church network."

Pastor Gate would like to see a wider range of first-contact points in the future.

"The community is far more diverse than we think it is. What we're offering is touching only a very limited area."

How can church members help?

"If you're running an outreach program, letterbox the area with lead cards first. Then let us know when it starts, and we'll write to our students in the area inviting them to the program."

Public evangelism

"I don't think we'll ever be able to improve on the biblical principle of public and door-to-door evangelism," says AMC evangelist Pastor Geoffrey Youlden. "When the church is emphatic about public preaching, it goes ahead in leaps and bounds."

One of Pastor Youlden's roles at the media centre is to model a successful form of public evangelism. He runs about eight programs early in the year, and then, later in the year, spends nearly every weekend following up each program.

"I'll go back at least three times through the year for baptisms and visitation."

Television evangelism

Television evangelism is expensive, but it works.

"The media centre has a very accurate tracking method," says general manager Pastor John Banks. "We know how much it costs for each response from television, radio and print. And accurate statistics make church administrators listen."



The AMC's new \$A2.6 million extension.

Responses last year from the North New South Wales Conference increased by 499 per cent over 1997. "Media, used appropriately, is a powerful evangelistic tool," says Pastor Banks.

Pastor Youlden's other role at the media centre is as presenter of its television evangelism.

"The media is terribly powerful—that's the trouble. It's mostly used in the wrong way and, as a church, we have so few resources to counter

What the staff are saying

Staff at the Adventist Media Centre comment about the institution and their jobs:

● "You have to have fairly thick skin if you're going to succeed in public evangelism, because you're always going to have your critics."—*evangelist Pastor Geoffrey Youlden*

● "We're not aware yet of how complex and expensive filmmaking is. But it's the most culturally reaching medium."—*creative coordinator Pastor Grenville Kent*

● "We don't say they're our baptisms. We take pride in being part of the wider church network."—*Adventist Discovery Centre director Pastor John Gate*

Pastors Geoffrey Youlden (top), Grenville Kent (far right) and John Gate (right).



that. Religion's not a popular thing anyway. So everything's against us."

Not quite everything.

"One of the exciting opportunities for evangelism is community television," says Pastor Youlden. "We're not going to make an impact on the big television channels, but as community channels multiply, they'll be looking for material to fill their schedules."

"As a church, we have to continually reassess the channels we use to reach out."

Part of that reassessment was taking the television shows "It is written" and "Focus on living" off air.

"They were being relegated to early Sunday mornings," says Pastor Banks. "We weren't getting

value for money."

The media centre is now producing a series of 180-second infomercials hosted by a popular television personality, a series of 90- and 30-second "bright idea" spots with Ita Buttrose (currently being broadcast in northern Queensland) and a series of 30-second *Search* commercials.



Find the AMC on the Web at www.amcdiscovery.com.au

The future?

The media centre plans to produce more spot advertisements and Discovery courses, and get more involved with the World Wide Web in the future.

"And we'll still have the same passion and vision for communicating the gospel," says Pastor Banks.—
Brenton Stacey

Credits roll for long-serving producer

Adventist Media Centre (AMC) producer Pastor Russell Gibbs has responded to a call from the North American Division. Pastor Gibbs—who has worked at the AMC for 21 years, 18 as producer—and his wife, Jann, leave at the end of the month for the AMC in Simi Valley (California, USA).



Pastor Russell Gibbs.

Pastor Gibbs's first assignment was producing 16-millimetre health films for Dr Saleem Farag in 1969. He and his wife responded to a call from the Papua New Guinea Union Mission in December 1975. After nine years in the Eastern Highlands Province, the couple returned to the AMC where, among other things, they produced a series of evangelistic videos for the Pacific islands.

"This was the most far-reaching and creative project Russell and Jann were involved with," says former South Pacific Division president Pastor Walter Scragg. "Within days of the Fijian series being released, it had been shown to the prime minister! This was pioneering at its best."

Pastor Gibbs also produced videos for the Inter-American and Southern Asia-Pacific Divisions, the General Conference and Adventist World Radio (AWR). AWR public relations director Andrea Steele describes a video series about the results of radio ministry produced by Pastor Gibbs as "a work of art."

Pastor Gibbs also produced the *Keepers of the flame* and *Search* series.

"We'll miss Russell's expertise and professionalism," says SPD president Pastor Laurie Evans. "He's a person of exceptional talent."

The couple will join Australians Pastor Warren and Jan Judd and Colin and Marilyn Mead at Simi Valley.

children

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Daniel and the Lions

"My ____ hath sent his ____,
and hath ____ the ____,
that they have ____ me..."
Daniel 6: ____ KJV



But, surely, God is not subject to the prayers we pray! If He were, then every prayer would be answered.

Focus on priorities

LAWRENCE NAUGHTON, QLD

With the resignation of the General Conference president, I believe it is time that we stopped and took a look at the focus of our priorities. The current issue has the potential to rock the church badly but, as members, we should know and believe that our future is secure in the hands of the Saviour. What should we be doing? Moving on with the work of proclaiming the gospel.

At the Elders Summer School I listened to a presentation by Pastor Laurie Evans, the division president, on his vision for the future. I would urge members to obtain a copy of this. Along with that read Dr George Knight's overview of Adventist congregationalism, which he presented to the Annual Council in Brazil [printed in this issue of the RECORD].

as "outposts of mercy" in the midst of collapse appears fanciful.

Likewise, his portrayal of idealised "peace and joy" at this crisis time does not harmonise with *The great controversy*. It depicts the vengeance of the enemy against the people of God as a hated sect. They will be alienated from their communities, and the afflicting of their souls in anguish will be likened to Jacob's trouble.

May I appeal for vigilance to ensure that articles in the RECORD are truly faithful to inspired testimony.

WENDY DAUGHTREY, E-MAIL

I appreciated the editorial dealing with end-time scenarios. I'm thankful that the Lord didn't leave us in the dark on what events are important for us to watch as true signs of the times. All Seventh-day Adventists need to take to heart the counsel of the faithful and true wit-

ness and be wide awake and watching unto prayer.

Better prayer

STEVE PARKER, SA

A disturbing phrase tucked away in Carol Ferch-Johnson's "Where does prayer fit in?" (January 30) asserts that "God can't resist prayer . . ." But, surely, God is not subject to the prayers we pray! If He were, then every prayer would be answered. To suggest that God's "power has been unleashed" because He cannot resist prayer, smacks of a magical approach to prayer and shifts the attention away from God as sovereign and all-wise, to prayer as a ritual.

It is essential that we not trust in prayer *per se*. Prayer is conversation with a person. We need to engage in a genuine conversation with God—one in which we respect Him for who He is.

Beasts and more

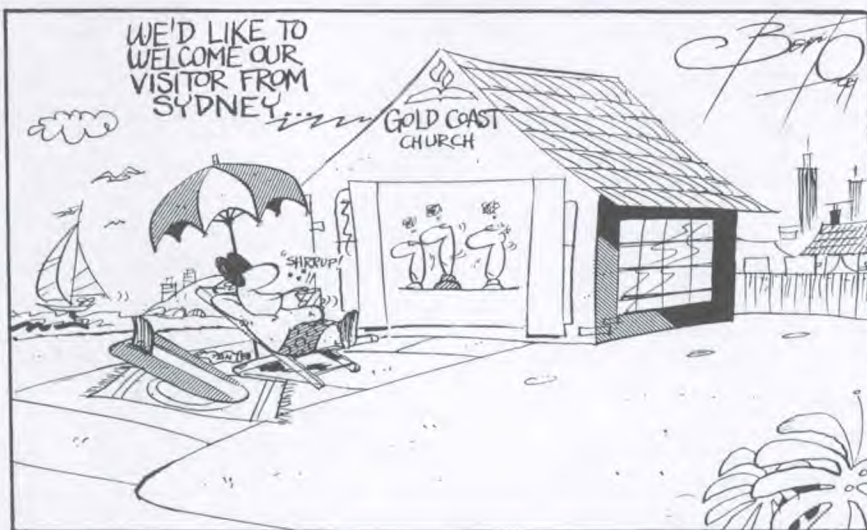
VAUGHAN KING, TAS

I appreciated the editorial "The Beast, bar codes and Bill Gates" (February 27). It clearly identified the big issue and the focus of the three angels' messages.

I wish I could say the same about "What are you getting ready for?" by Chris Blake. I acknowledge his point that Adventist Christianity is not about "trying to survive until the Second Coming." However, in warning against the stockpiling of the survivalists and resulting isolationism from the community, he overlooks Ellen White's counsel for this crisis in the book *Country living*.

God certainly gives a call to prepare for a time when the buying and selling of essential supplies will be impossible for His people. Without this preparation, Blake's portrayal of Adventist homes and institutions open to the community

Just a coincidence



Mail: RECORD Editor, Signs Publishing Company, Warburton Victoria 3799 **Fax:** (03) 5966 9019. **E-mail:** editor@a1.com.au Views in Letters do not necessarily represent those of the editors or the denomination. Letters should be less than 250 words, and writers must include their name, address and phone number. All letters are edited to meet space and literary requirements, but the author's original meaning will not be changed. Not all letters received are published.

Volunteers needed

Position	Place	Job description/duties	Term
Experienced builder—couple	Bougainville, PNG	Work with local people to build new classrooms for school, Kepesia, Bougainville. Basic living conditions.	2–3mths ASAP
ESL teacher	Adventist University, Moscow, Russia	Preferably person with a degree and experience in teaching ESL to adults to teach theology students.	1 yr, commencing March 1999

For further information contact Pastor Eric White, Coordinator, Volunteer Services, South Pacific Division, Locked Bag 2014, Wahroonga NSW 2076.
Phone (02) 9847 3333; fax (02) 9489 0943; e-mail <ewhite@adventist.org.au> web www.adventist.org/gc/secretariat/volunteers/

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Weddings

Groom—Duncan. Peter Mark Groom, son of Phil and Averil Groom (Auckland, NZ), and Keralie Joy Duncan, daughter of Graham and Barbara Duncan (Cooranbong, NSW), were married on 7.2.99 in the Waitara Adventist church. Bruce Price

Hardy—Robertson. Kerrin Dale Hardy, son of Norm and Glenise Hardy (Suva, Fiji), and Natasha Lynn Robertson, daughter of Ross and Rosa Robertson (Merredin, WA), were married on 7.2.99 at Merredin. Norm Hardy

Judd—Green. Damien Judd, son of Ray and Cheryl Judd (Albury, NSW), and Tammie Maree Green, daughter of Robert and Robyn Green (Canberra, ACT), were married on 14.2.99 in a garden setting at Hill Station Cottage, Hume, ACT. Andre van Rensburg

Kerr—Gray. Andrew Jason Kerr, son of Edward (Warner, Qld) and Cheryl Kerr (Bray Park), and Amanda Jane Gray, daughter of Alan and Margaret Gray (Strathpine), were married on 14.2.99 in the Pine Rivers Adventist church. Mike Brownhill

Lillo—Jones. Pablo Lillo, son of Nelson and Glenda Lillo (Woollahra, NSW), and Megan Jones, daughter of Ion and Glenda Jones (Parramatta), were married on 7.2.99 in the Wahroonga Adventist church. Bob Saunders

Maxfield—Jones. George Edgar Maxfield, son of Eddie and Margaret Maxfield (Westminster, WA), and Ros-

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alind May Jones, daughter of Cyrus and Nola Adams (Girrawheen), were married on 14.2.99 in the Livingston Adventist church. Cyrus Adams

Milburn—Ikin. Jason Milburn, son of David and Lyn Milburn (Mackay, Qld), and Kerry Ikin, daughter of Tony Ikin (Brisbane) and Glenda Matsen (Mackay), were married on 14.2.99 in the North Mackay Adventist church. Bob Possingham

Oaklands—Monson. Quentin Oakland, son of John and Myrna Oaklands (Newcastle, NSW), and Rochelle Monson, daughter of Lyle and Beverley Monson (Perth), were married on 3.1.99 in the Carmel Adventist church. Andrew Skeggs

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Don't Forget!

Snitch—Featherstone. John Paul Snitch, son of Paul and Linda Snitch (Dayboro, Qld), and Julie-Anne Featherstone, daughter of Geoff and Marelle Featherstone (Bracken Ridge), were married on 24.1.99 in the Australian Woolshed, Ferny Hills, Brisbane. Mike Brownhill

Voss—Williams. Richard Nowell Voss, son of Nowell and Roberta Voss (Ballarat, Vic), and Lorretta Williams, daughter of the late Norman and Sheryl Kent, were married on 14.2.99 in the Ballarat Adventist church. Kevin Amos

Webber—Tomlinson. Bradley Webber, son of Roger and Margaret Webber (Albany, WA), and Anne Tomlinson, daughter of Jim and Pat Tomlinson (Perth), were married on 3.1.99 at Mulberry Farm, Caversham, WA. Andrew Skeggs

Obituaries

Crooks, Cissie, born in 1920 in Thailand; died 29.1.99 in the Royal Hobart Hospital, Tas. She had been a resident at the SDA Maranatha Retirement Village. She will be remembered for her energy, talents and cheerful outlook. Thank you, Maranatha staff, for your dedication. Graeme Brown, John Horvath

Hodgkinson, Lorraine Liberty (nee Norton), born 3.2.21 at Merewether, NSW; died 28.1.99 in Charles Harison Nursing Home, Cooranbong, after a long illness. She was predeceased by her first husband, William Knight, in 1982. She is survived by her husband, Pastor Ron Hodgkinson; her children, Dayl (Trangie), Craig (Saltash), Julienne Kelly (Mirrabooka); and her grandchildren. Lorraine was a faithful Christian, competent teacher, a good friend, and a loving, caring mother. She will be sadly missed. Ray Dickson, Neal Peatey

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King, Patricia Maud, born 16.3.22 at Gisborne, NNZ; died 30.1.99 in Lismore Base Hospital, NSW. She is survived by her husband, Alty (Alstonville); her children, Laurel Frisby (Tiara), Carol Fehlberg (Mullumbimby), Linda Hopkins, Shirley Dever, Valerie Scott (all of Melbourne, Vic), Graham (Mullumbimby), Dawson (Cooranbong); and her grandchildren.

Harold Grosse, Grant Burton

Marsh, Neville Lloyd, born 23.6.26 at Grafton, NSW; died 29.1.99 at Hervey Bay. On 7.9.49 he married Dulcie Skinner. He is survived by his wife, his sons and daughters-in-law, Ken and Marilyn, and David and Wendy; and his grandchildren. Keith Miller, John Rabbas

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by Don Mansell

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Matthew

25:35,

NIV.