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'INFERTILITY. IT'S HARD WHEN YOU'RE A CHRISTIAN ...'

I find my wife in the bathroom crying. Not a huge, demonstrative, ugly cry. No, this was the silent kind, where tears stream quietly out of your eyes and slide across a desolate cheek in search of hope in despair.

"Are you OK?" I ask. It's one of the stupidest questions we tend to ask in these situations, but it usually comes out when we don't know what else to say.

She doesn't say anything. She just holds up a small white stick.

I know what it is. In that simple gesture she has communicated a lot. She's not pregnant. Again.

This is the third test she's taken in the past few weeks.

"Baby, you have to stop doing this to yourself," I tell her.

Infertility. It's hard when you're a Christian. So many heroes of faith mentioned in the Bible were barren or had mothers who were until they came along. Abraham and Sarah, the parents of Isaac and many nations; Hannah, mother of Samuel; Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist; Samson's mother, and more.

It seems that for the barren women in the Bible, there is always a miracle. As a person of faith, you hold onto the belief that your miracle is always just around the corner. The problem is that they are called miracles for a reason. They are not the norm, not to be expected—they're recorded in the Bible because they were miraculous and unexpected. So what if there isn't a miracle for you? Does it mean your faith is less?

My wife has a health condition which means it's hard for her to fall pregnant. I said hard, not impossible. So there still is a chance. And while there is a chance we remain in limbo.

It's a difficult place to dwell. I once asked my wife what her greatest fear was. I was expecting something usual like heights or spiders. She looked at me thoughtfully and said, "Not ever having the experience of carrying a child." The comment took me by surprise. I realised then how deeply this fear impacted her.

Do I believe in the power of prayer? Yes, definitely. Do I believe we can fall pregnant? 100 per cent. Will it happen?

It may not, and that not knowing is something we both have to process. The problem is that it's easy to believe that your faith is not enough (see Deuteronomy 28:2-4).

A cyclone of emotions whirls around. Guilt for the past, blaming yourself or your partner and—especially subconsciously—blaming God, hoping against hope, giving up hope and then starting the cycle again.

Other people have their miracles. Close friends announce pregnancy news while you grin and try to be excited for them. But really you're struggling to keep it all together.

I haven't given up hope. But I wrestle with these questions often. Do I pray about it? I do now. For a long time I couldn't because I felt like I was unworthy, like it was something I had done or hadn't done. As a human

I try to justify the situation and make myself feel better. I tell myself *we'll have more money, can travel more, be free for mission or ministry. Maybe God has a plan for us that doesn't involve children.* We've talked about other options, including adoption.

So I am somewhat at peace but still unsettled. I know I'm whole in Christ but my family doesn't feel whole. And what

can I say to my wife?

We are seeking treatment, trying to live healthier and praying for our miracle. But after six years and as we get older, the risk of complications increases and it soon might be too late.

So I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge all those who have struggled with infertility and childlessness, all those who have wondered if there is something missing or wrong with them, all those who have cried in the bathroom after another negative result.

I don't have the answer. I haven't found it yet and my wife and I may never find it. But I know God sees us. I know He hears our prayers. I know He loves us. And all I can do is pray and hope.

JARROD STACKELROTH
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**IT SEEMS THAT FOR
THE BARREN WOMEN
IN THE BIBLE, THERE
IS ALWAYS A MIRACLE.**

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EDUCATION

"You should become a pastor." I was in primary school when an older church member first said that to me. As a teenager I had numerous people tell me that I would become a pastor. Often it came in the context that my dad and grandfather were pastors. Sometimes it was irritating because I wanted to establish my own identity. Actually I have uncles, great uncles, second cousins . . . who were all pastors. Being a "Pastor Townend" is not very original. However, people in the Church reflected God's actual calling in my life. As I reflect on this now, it was a beautiful thing and I want all of the children in our churches and schools to have such affirmation.

Seventh-day Adventist schools are growing faster than we can staff them with Adventist teachers—that is true in Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, the Solomons and the rest of the Pacific. Avondale College, Pacific Adventist University, Sonoma College and Fulton College all promote the experience of Adventist tertiary education and the curriculum for teaching and other ministries. The unions advertise the needs for employment but we cannot keep up with the demand. It's a good problem to have. Nearly 60 per cent of the 70,000-plus students in Adventist schools in the SPD are from the general community—this is a huge opportunity to change the lives of future generations for Jesus. The teachers are doing an excellent job—most Adventist schools celebrate baptisms of students and families associated with the school every year. However we need more Adventist teachers who can teach, model and disciple others into a walk with Jesus.

All of us have a role to play. The Church affirms and recognises the giftedness of individuals. So when we see God-given talent in others, even children, we ought to tell them. "You should be a teacher." "God could be asking you to be a nurse." That's how God's movement continues.



GLENN TOWNEND
SPD PRESIDENT
/SPDpresident

BOOK SEMINAR HIGHLIGHTS PACIFIC GROWTH

NATHAN BROWN

The annual meeting of Adventist Book Centre managers has marked the continuing growth and impact of Adventist books and book selling in the South Pacific.

In the past year, two new Adventist bookshops have been opened on the island of Bougainville (Papua New Guinea) and reports showed how books and resources are contributing to the growth of the Church, particularly in PNG and the Pacific islands.

At a lunch with the staff of Signs Publishing, Max Lassah, chief financial officer of the Central Papua Conference, led a prayer of dedication for two new Signs books, including *Following the Spirit* by Peter Roennfeldt.

"This book will be very important to us," said Mr Lassah, reflecting on the use of *Following Jesus* and related resources by church members in PNG.

"We thank Signs for creating these resources for our members and



MAX LASSAH WITH NATHAN BROWN.

understand that we are all part of the team that is making a difference in our churches and communities."

According to Signs Publishing manager Andrew Irvine, these meetings might have been the largest such gathering of Adventist bookshop managers, who came from Australia, New Zealand, PNG, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu.

The meetings took place at Jumbunna Lodge in the Yarra Valley, Victoria, from March 2-7, and included visits to Signs Publishing, Nunawading church and the Victorian Conference Adventist Book Centre.

ADVENTIST ARCHAEOLOGY ICON DIES

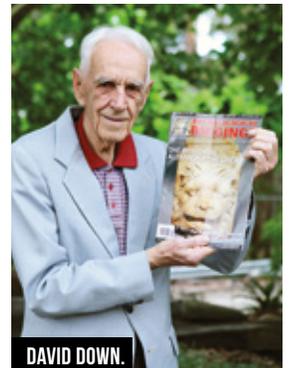
LEE DUNSTAN

The beloved Pastor David Down, publisher of *Archaeological Diggings* magazine for some two decades, passed away on Friday, March 16, just three weeks short of his 100th birthday.

A former missionary to India, where he worked for some 20 years, he established the magazine in his retirement, with the first issue in 1994. He worked as its publisher-editor until 2007, then as editor-in-chief until October 2013 when the magazine was passed to Adventist Media as publisher.

Pastor Down ran numerous evangelistic programs in his retirement based around the archaeology of the Middle East and Egypt, including one in Sydney's Opera House. He took many tours to the Middle East, witnessing to readers representing

a range of faiths. He was the featured presenter in the *Digging up the Past* videos and the *Digging up the Past Bible studies*, both



DAVID DOWN.

of which are still in use.

Despite his approaching centenary and encroaching blindness, his mind remained sharp till near his end.

Pastor Down's work for the Church and, especially his contribution to the world of archaeology, were recognised at his funeral at Avondale College church in Cooran-bong (NSW) on March 23.

BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP INSIGHTS FOR PASTORS AND TREASURERS

TRACEY BRIDCUTT

Trans Pacific Union Mission (TPUM) pastors and treasurers have received important training to help them get a clearer understanding of biblical stewardship.

TPUM tithe auditor Eparama Drou travelled around the Mission for four months, accompanied by the CFO in each country, conducting workshops on local church bookkeeping processes, including clear and simple biblical teaching on tithes and offerings.

The training was prompted by a number of issues at the local church level due to the late reporting of tithes and offerings, making the auditing process arduous. In some churches there had also been a shift away from the biblical teaching of freewill offer-

ings to members being pressured into allocating a large percentage of their income to offerings, leaving little for their families.

Mr Drou spent time building relationships with the pastors and treasurers, and providing them with simple and clear processes to follow. He also equipped them with resources, including new reporting books and copies of the God First edition of *Dynamic Steward*.

South Pacific Division Discipleship Ministries Team stewardship leader Christina Hawkins supported the initiative and provided resources. She said it has brought clarity and fresh respect for the Church's tithe and offerings system.

Already there has been an encouraging upward shift in TPUM tithe payments, with the latest figures showing a 10 per cent rise at the end of January. Reporting, too, is happening more promptly. "They are very receptive to the training; the messages are really positive," Mrs Hawkins said. "It brings clarity, it builds trust. The tithe and offering process is simplified. It liberates them."



EPARAMA DROU CONDUCTS TRAINING.

TPUM STAFF SUPPORT CYCLONE VICTIMS

RONALD STONE/JARROD STACKELROTH

In response to the devastation Tonga suffered as a result of Cyclone Gita, Fiji's Tongan community banded together to send 1600 biscuits to their former homeland.

Tongan Adventists supported the effort, with Dr Ronald Stone, Ministerial Association secretary and Global Mission coordinator, and a Tongan expat, encouraging staff at the Trans Pacific Union Mission (TPUM) to donate.

TPUM staff were eager to help and donated enough money to provide the final number of biscuits needed to round out the shipment.

TPUM president Pastor Maveni Kaufononga, originally from Tonga, presented community leader Sina 'Aholelei Kami with a cheque to assist with the fundraising initiative.

The shipment has since arrived in Tonga.



PACKED CONTAINER READY FOR TONGA.

LIFESTYLE DISEASES CRISIS HIGHLIGHTED TO FUTURE LEADERS

TRACEY BRIDCUTT

South Pacific Division health ministries director Dr Chester Kuma held a series of talks at Solomon Islands National University last month to raise

awareness of the deadly impact of lifestyle diseases.

Dr Kuma hopes that by speaking to the nation's future leaders there will be greater awareness of the gravity of the problem so that the next generation will adopt healthier lifestyles.

"Right now between 75 and 80 per cent of the disease burden in the Solomon Islands is lifestyle diseases," Dr Kuma said.

"Despite the fact that it is the biggest killer in the country it is not

being addressed as one would expect.

"If you want to change the culture, if you want to change the direction of this problem . . . if you can impact the young people there may be a chance."

About 500 people attended each of Dr Kuma's nightly presentations. He is now looking at the potential for collaboration with the university in the area of health research. "Basically, I see the university as a big mission field with a huge potential for disciple-making and church planting," he said.



AT ONE OF DR KUMA'S PRESENTATIONS.

VISION CAST FOR ADVENTIST-JEWISH FRIENDSHIP IN SYDNEY

JARROD STACKELROTH

Although Adventists and Jews both keep the Sabbath and avoid unclean foods, the two groups rarely have interactions in Australia.

Dr Richard Elofer, director of the General Conference's World Jewish Adventist Friendship Centre, based in Paris, spent time in Sydney recently, talking to church members about how to engage with Jewish people.

Dr Elofer presented a series of workshops at Waitara church, which included explaining Daniel 9 and how biblical prophecy relates to Jewish people. He encouraged Adventists to befriend Jewish people and, rather than trying to focus on doctrine, to instead demonstrate God's love to them.

A prayer breakfast was held at Woollahra church on the Sabbath, with Eva Fischl, president of JOINT Australia, as the special guest. JOINT Australia is a Jewish organisation that provides welfare for those impacted by disaster around the world. Ms Fischl spoke on *Tikkun Olam: repairing the world*. Adventist vocal group, Men of Hope, performed at the breakfast. One of their items was a Jewish song, sung by Gluto, a Jewish member of the group who also shared his testimony.

Woollahra pastor Daniel Przybylko has been working on planting a church in Bondi Junction, an area where many

Jewish people live. In the afternoon, Dr Elofer attended Fountain in the City, another Sydney church that has a Jewish community nearby.

The Greater Sydney Conference (GSC) is focused on reaching special ethnic groups and sees connecting with Jewish people as important. Dr Elofer came to cast the vision and get more people interested.

"We are looking for people who feel a calling from God to make a commitment to Jewish ministry," said Dr Sven Ostring, GSC director of discipleship movements.

"Richard wants to support and work with us in training to be effective in reaching Jews. We would like to form mission teams, particularly in Bondi and St Ives—other areas where there are Jewish communities. Our long-term focus is on building relationships with Jews. We'll support them from the Conference office."



L-R: EVA FISCHL, DR RICHARD ELOFER AND PASTOR DANIEL PRZYBYLKO.

CHRISTIAN SERVICES FOR THE BLIND AND HEARING IMPAIRED*



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"Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped . . ." (Isaiah 35:5)

DISCIPLE-MAKING REAPS RESULTS

TRACEY BRIDCUTT

Two short videos launched by the South Pacific Division's Discipleship Ministries Team (DMT) show how disciple-making is reaping results in Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

The Fiji video tells the story of how church members are building close relationships with their neighbours and friends, helping them to know Jesus and planting new churches where they live.

The PNG video shows how members in the Central Papua Conference are inviting their friends, families and colleagues to meet together in Discovery Bible Reading groups. The impact

has been extraordinary, with multiple baptisms each week, leading to the Conference's largest ever number of quarterly baptisms.

DMT leader Pastor Leigh Rice said it is very exciting to see these results. "Many of these people are discovering the life and teachings of Jesus for the first time," he said. "It is wonderful to see their enthusiasm.

"I would encourage our members across the SPD to watch these inspiring videos and see how these disciple-making methods, which are simple and reproducible, are bringing communities to know Jesus."

SPD president Glenn Townend said: "It is great to see people in the Pacific unions catching the vision of becoming a disciple-making movement and putting it into practice. I know there are people in the other unions doing very similar activities. Movement momentum is building."

You can view the videos at: vimeo.com/spddiscipleship.



FIJIAN MAN, NEIGHBOUR, FRIEND.

ADVENTIST PASTORS, PARTNERS EMPOWERED

RONALD LUKE/JARROD STACKELROTH

A group of ministers and their spouses from Goroka, Papua New Guinea, took time out from their usual pastoral ministry activities for an "Empowered to serve" retreat.

The 21 participants spent the long weekend, March 8-11, at Punano 2, a village at 7 mile along the national Highlands Highway in the Kainantu area.

District director Pastor Kona Namaro

stressed that "there is no better way to be effective in ministry than to rest a while at the Master's feet and be empowered to serve".

Each day's program began with prayer and fasting as early as 4 am. During the day sessions focused on certain issues and concerns of the Church.

"The presence of Eastern Highlands Simbu Mission president Pastor Joanis Fezamo and his wife as guest speakers and facilitators was a great blessing to the 16 married pastors and spouses and five single ministers of the gospel during the retreat," said Pastor Ronald Luke.

Punano 2 community members were very pleased to have the gospel workers in their village and stressed that "angels had visited them" over the weekend. They couldn't let their gratitude vanish without a feast in the Eastern Highlands tradition, which closed the retreat program.



PARTNERS IN MINISTRY ITEM.

NEWS GRABS



LIGHTNING STRIKE KILLS 15

Lightning struck Gihemvu Adventist Church in Rwanda on March 10, killing 15 members. More than 130 others were taken to hospital. Church leaders and government officials attended a special burial ceremony on March 11, and have asked church members around the world to pray for those grieving. —ECAD



PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

The President of the Republic of Portugal, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, recently visited Central Lisbon Adventist Church. Just before the special Sabbath morning service, Mr de Sousa addressed church leaders and members, highlighting the long-standing friendship between the country and Adventists. —IED



ADVENTIST FILM WINS BIG

Tell the World, the 2015 docudrama of the history of the Adventist Church, recently took home three Awards of Excellence, which is the highest-level award granted at the IndieFEST Film Awards, an international independent film competition. *Tell the World* won in three categories: Christian, Special Purpose Production and Web Series. —ANN

HOT TOPICS



GET OUT THERE

A new study published in the journal *Child Development* found that young people who volunteered were more likely to eat in a healthy way and had fewer depressive symptoms than their peers who didn't. "Volunteering might affect health by allowing people to feel like they matter, to experience social connection and decreased loneliness, and to feel satisfaction from contributing to others," the study's authors wrote.

—TIME



MONEY MATTERS

Christianity may be the United States' biggest religion, but when it comes to actually donating to religious institutions, a new Pollfish.com survey found Christians fell way behind both their Jewish and Muslim neighbours, donating an average of \$817 annually, compared to the \$1300 donated by Jews and Muslims. It is especially surprising considering most churches view tithing as a biblical mandate. —*Relevant*



JUST THIS ONCE

Pope Francis may have a solution to Brazil's dwindling priesthood: allowing married men to join. The Catholic Church is considering "an experiment for the moment" confined to Brazil. —*Relevant*

SOUTH PACIFIC ADVENTIST YOUTH CHALLENGED TO 'BE THE SERMON'

VANIA CHEW

Adventist youth around the South Pacific Division accepted a challenge from the General Conference to "be the sermon" on March 17.

Global Youth Day (GYD) was first launched five years ago with the support of the General Conference. The objective of the day is to encourage Adventist youth to be the hands and feet of Jesus by purposefully serving their local community.

"There is a lot more to religious faith than simply going to church and listening to sermons," says a statement on the official GYD website. "The true practice of religion involves the revelation of God's love in living out Jesus' gospel commission . . . through all manners of selfless acts that point a desperately needy world to the ultimate hope of the better world He has made possible for us. Grounded in the concluding words of Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan, 'Go and do likewise' (Luke 10:25-37), the theme of Global Youth Day is 'Be the sermon'."

From 21 countries participating in 52 projects during its first year to 124 countries involved in more than 16,600 projects during 2017, the GYD movement is continuing to grow and inspire Adventist youth around the world.

Each year is allocated a specific theme to follow and this year's theme was "Food and Drink". Events were uploaded to social media using the hashtag #GYD2018 and Hope Channel also followed the projects via livestream.

Adventist Record editor Jarrod Stackelroth joined young people in Adelaide

(SA) for a youth rally and on Friday night they handed out hot dogs and bottled water to locals at Henley Beach.

Youth from Victoria provided food for homeless people in their city.

In New Zealand, Dunedin young Adventists visited police stations, fire stations and St John Ambulance services, giving out appreciation packs to emergency services workers. Sodium Youth from Invercargill church travelled to Queenstown where they led out in the worship song service for the church.

Youth from Westport, Nelson and Christchurch spent Global Youth Day serving the community of Westport. About 30 young people assembled on stage in the town centre. As they sang praises, people from the community gathered and joined them for lunch. In Christchurch, more than 370 cans of food were collected for those in need.

The Kokopo community in Papua New Guinea also carried out a food and water drive and churches around PNG participated in a nationwide clean-up campaign on March 18.

Youth in Efate (Vanuatu) served food and water to people in their communities, and Pathfinders in Fiji handed out bottles of Fiji Water and Bible verses at a shopping centre.

Still suffering the aftermath of Cyclone Gita, local people were appreciative of a food drive organised by the Adventist youth in Tonga.

The youth from Kiribati picked, husked and cleaned coconuts and then presented them to hospital patients.



GYD PARTICIPANTS FROM VANUATU.

FLASHPOINT



TIRAU ON THE MAP

After a number of visitors and locals experienced difficulty finding Tirau Adventist Church (South Waikato, NZ), it was discovered that Google Maps had identified the wrong location. After correcting this, the church decided to make its signage more visible. Working with Sheryn, the daughter of one of the church members, who works at local firm Corrugated Creations, a design was developed incorporating the official Church logo into an iconic local theme. Visiting group Grace Notes was very impressed by the sign's unique design. There's no doubt now what the small, corrugated building on the edge of town is all about. —Pauline Downing



ANDREW'S ORDINATION

Family and friends travelled from far and near to Tauranga Adventist Church (North NZ) on Sabbath, March 3 for a special celebration: the ordination of Andrew West. Born in Taranaki, Pastor West is an outdoors man at heart and served for many years as the manager of Tui Ridge Park. In answer to God's call to pastoral ministry, he was appointed as pastor of Tauranga church at the beginning of 2011. In addition to his role as pastor he also served as Conference director and assistant director for Pathfinders and Adventurers in 2015 and 2016. His love for the Lord and ministry, along with his temperament and experience, is highly valued and appreciated within the Conference. —NNZC



BEST KEPT SECRET

Rotorua Adventist School (NZ) was named "school of the week" in the *Rotorua Bay of Plenty Daily Post*. With just two teachers and a teaching principal, the school calls itself the city's best kept secret. "We want everyone to know we're here and we have lots to offer," said principal Lanea Strickland. "I'd encourage people to come in and have a look. Once they get into the school they can see it's a beautiful school." With a maximum of 45 students, the school promotes a *whanau* (family) environment. "No child gets left behind," said Ms Strickland. "Relationships are as important as the learning opportunities. We give as many things a go as possible." —Zizi Sparks



ON FIRE FOR JESUS

Young people from all over Christchurch (NZ), and even some Dunedin youth, recently joined together for their first monthly meeting. Highlights included a "RAW" testimony, "Live & Direct TV" video clips from around the South Pacific Division and "Spoken Word". Praise and worship and special music items were also featured. The special guest for the evening was a young preacher, 14-year-old Jarrod Gali, who encouraged all present to put God first and not to wait until they're older to follow Jesus. An appeal was made for hearts to turn to Christ that night and all the attendees took their stand for Jesus. —Tulaga Aiulopotea



EVERY HOME IN EVERY SUBURB

More than 30 church members from the Suva South, Suva North and Tebara Adventist churches (Fiji) recently attended a Frontline Missionary Training session. The main highlight of the weekend was learning the art of doorknocking and sharing Jesus with the public. On Sabbath afternoon the participants put this into practice as they were grouped into pairs and entered homes in the Pacific Harbour, Mokosoi and Lapanoni villages to share God's Word. The team is now using what they learned to tackle Fiji's biggest mission field, Suva City, with a plan to enter every home in every suburb to share Jesus. —Talatala Joave Naroba



LIVE LOUD

"Live Loud" was the theme of the Greater Sydney Conference youth rally, held on March 10 at Wahroonga Adventist Church. A week of worship was held leading up to the rally. Pastor Michael Polite, associate chaplain at Andrews University (US), was guest speaker for both events. A highlight of the Sabbath program was the baptism of local youths Rosie Fairfax and Mia and Mason Windus (pictured with Pastor Polite). —Tracey Bridcutt



SIGN OF THE TIMES

The witty messages on the Glen Innes church sign (Auckland, NZ) are attracting plenty of attention from passersby. Created by church communication editor Pam Driver, a recent message (pictured above) even made it into the *New Zealand Herald's* Sideswipe column! The reverse side of the sign read: "The godly care for their animals" Proverbs 12:10. —Record staff



CALLED TO SERVE

The Fiji Mission recently celebrated as pastors Arivakisati Niumatiwalu, Thomas Albert, Ralifo Varea and Petero Matea were ordained. With the theme "You are called", the four pastors and their wives were welcomed into ministry by fellow colleagues, family and friends, with the special ordination prayer offered by Trans Pacific Union Mission general secretary Pastor Bob Larsen and Fiji Mission president Pastor Luke Narabe. —My Mission—Fiji Facebook

CHURCH SEEKS GREATER RELIGIOUS PROTECTIONS



The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia (AUC) is advocating for legislative changes to enhance religious protections for individuals and faith-based organisations.

In its submission to the Australian Government's review into religious freedom, the AUC recommends the introduction of a Freedom of Religion Act. The review is examining whether Australian law adequately protects the human right to freedom of religion.¹ It is being conducted by an expert panel chaired by former attorney-general Philip Ruddock. More than 16,000 submissions were received by the panel*.

In addition to making its own submission, the AUC has been party to submissions made by Freedom for Faith, Christian Schools Australia (in conjunction with Adventist Schools Australia) and Neumann Turnour Lawyers (in conjunction with ADRA Australia and Seventh-day Adventist Aged Care in Australia).

ADRA Australia and Adventist Schools Australia received invitations to meet with the expert panel, with Mark Spencer, executive officer of Christian Schools Australia, representing the Adventist school system, and AUC secretary Pastor Michael Worker representing ADRA Australia and Adventist Aged Care at the respective panel interviews.

The AUC submission calls on the Government to reframe anti-discrimination laws to provide positive protections for religious freedom.

"Currently people of faith are being left with the view that any [religious freedom] exemptions that are being provided, are being done so grudgingly," the submission says.

"We know both historically and currently that when expressed in the form of exemptions the beneficiaries are far more vulnerable to attack by those who think differently to them. Positive protection can be achieved through extending the coverage of federal anti-discrimination legislation so that religious freedom is a protected attribute."

According to the submission, an area of significant concern to the Adventist Church is the lack of reasonable protection of religious belief in the workplace.

"This can be achieved through amendments to the Fair Work Act. As a Church, there are many occasions whereby the Church has needed to actively advocate on behalf of members and other citizens beyond the Church where employers have required them to work at times prohibited by their religious belief.

"In the past, through careful negotiation and at times legal interventions, many of these matters have resulted in a satisfactory outcome. Notwithstanding many positive outcomes, these processes have often come at significant expense and emotional turmoil for employees at the centre of the debate."

Another key area of concern is the current push by some groups to have charitable tax exemptions and statuses

withdrawn from churches and faith-based charities.

A separate parliamentary inquiry has been looking into the current status of laws protecting the freedom of religion or belief in Australia. The committee released an interim report in November 2017. In the Chair's Foreword, MP Kevin Andrews said, "legal protection of religious freedom in Australia is limited". "While a culture of religious freedom has thrived, and the common law has respected religious freedom to a large extent, the legislative framework to ensure this continues is vulnerable."²

AUC secretary Pastor Michael Worker said this is why these matters are so important and need to be considered carefully so that Australia remains a peaceful and tolerant society where people are not afraid to express their views. "The Seventh-day Adventist Church is thankful that the Government is holding these inquiries and has welcomed the opportunity to have its voice heard as part of the Ruddock review."

** Due to the large volume of submissions, the panel was granted an extension to deliver its report, which is now due by May 18.*

¹ <https://www.pmc.gov.au/domestic-policy/religious-freedom-review>

² https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Freedomofreligion/Interim_Report/section?id=committees%2freportjnt%2f024110%2f25420

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Relaxing instrumental music plays softly in the background. People sit around tables in small groups, happily tucking into a variety of breakfast foods and engaging in animated conversation. Every now and then, someone gets up to refill a plate or get a glass of juice.

“Come sit with us,” urges a woman, beckoning me over to her table. “And make sure you have something to eat—there is plenty!”

It’s a laid-back atmosphere where people can eat delicious food and learn more about each other. But it’s not a café—it’s church.

“Sabbath Brunch is somewhere you can escape from the hustle and bustle of the busy working week,” says founder Andrew Perry, who notes that, for most Adventists, Saturday is a rushed and busy day while Sunday brunch is usually the time when we relax and connect with our friends and family.

He sees Sabbath Brunch as an opportunity for people “to unwind, chill out and forget all about your

worries”. In other words, reclaiming what Sabbath should be.

Visitors are invited to show up around 10:30am on the first Sabbath of every month. During brunch, people take time to get to know one another by responding to thought-provoking question cards on their tables. Past questions have included, “If 40 was the average life span, how would you live your life differently?” and “What is something you love, and what actions have you performed recently to demonstrate that love?” There’s also a short but challenging talk by a guest speaker and the whole event usually wraps up around midday.

Sabbath Brunch has proven successful so far, with attendees stating that this is the type of event they can comfortably invite non-Christian friends and family to. It is an initiative of the Parramatta Central church plant in western Sydney.

VANIA CHEW ASSISTANT EDITOR.
/vania_chew



"I took change from the offering basket ..."



I remember passing by a church, a mosque and two shrines before arriving at school in the early '90s, back in my home town in Albania. They had been turned into warehouses for cooperatives during communism, but when democracy came they got quickly brushed clean and warmed up with candles.

On exam days, many of my school friends would stop by and put their coins in the cracks of the walls of these "holy places" so that God would help them. On our way to the end-of-year exams they did the same. I suppose the atheist in me got all stirred up and I pulled a banknote out of my pocket, saying "Look, I have this

money and I will not throw it in the shrine. Let's see if God makes me fail the exams."

This was my pocket money! My dad gave it to me so I could treat myself after the exams. Which I did. Also, I did do better than I expected at those exams.

But by the end of that decade I found myself looking for answers bigger than the ones on the exam papers. It must have been the second or third time I had visited the Adventist church in my town when around came the offering basket. I pulled out the only banknote I had in my pocket and put it in the basket and then took out some change for the bus home. The

deacon's jaw dropped and I realised perhaps this was not a good idea. In my mind this was still my money and I was being generous because I really liked the mission story and I wanted to help. I did learn to plan my giving ahead after that.

I left Albania and went to study in Rome, where God surrounded me with loving Adventist church friends who would openly talk about their joys and struggles of tithe and offerings. About this time I started seeing money as being more God's than mine. I started giving tithe from the little salary I earned at my part-time job, student sponsorship, birthday money, etcetera.

Later on, when I got married and moved to Ireland, the joy of my first salary was so great because now I could return tithe! What a blessing to experience God's provision and be able to respond to Him with a "thank you" in a tangible way through tithe. Having reflected on this aspect of my faith journey, I'm humbled.

From an atheist to a follower of Christ. From "this is my money" to "this is all His".

"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And try me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, 'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it'" (Malachi 3:10, NKJV).

LINDITA VANI COMMUNICATIONS AND WOMEN'S MINISTRY, SOUTH NEW ZEALAND CONFERENCE.

THE EDITOR, ADVENTIST RECORD,

Thank you for publishing what we, the undersigned health professionals, consider a very important article by Carly Moore, entitled "Celebrating Junk Food" (December 2, 2017).

Carly passionately believes that, when it comes to functions involving children, we, as church members, could be subverting our long-held principles of health to the allures and convenience of junk food. This sets our children on a pathway to adult ill-health indistinguishable from the rest of Western society.

At least partly due to the Adventist health message, 50 years ago it was unusual to see an obese Seventh-day Adventist. This is no longer the case, where it appears that we differ very little from the 63 per cent of adult Australians and the 27 per cent of children aged 5-17 who are overweight or obese. Overweight and obesity was responsible for 7 per cent of the total health burden in Australia in 2011, 63 per cent of which was fatal burden. In 2011-12, obesity was estimated to have cost the Australian economy \$A8.6 billion. Australian adults eat more than one-third of their daily caloric needs in junk food.^{1,2} Those figures have already risen and are set to rise more dramatically in the next decade.

Obesity-related type 2 diabetes is a major cause of potentially fatal kidney disease, blindness, stroke and heart attack. Obesity itself is linked to a number of cancers.¹ Mexico and the UK have been forced to enact sugar taxes^{3,4} to try to stem the drastic effects of sugary drinks on the unacceptable levels of type 2 diabetes. According to the SAGE group, "We estimate that 86,000-134,000 critical limb ischaemia-related amputations occur in Mexico . . .⁵ Over the last 20

years, the prevalence of diabetes in Mexico has more than doubled."^{6,7} That means possibly 100,000 or more prosthetic limbs every year!

Carly rightly describes the use of sugar-based foods and drinks being used as rewards, inducements or even a normal diet for children at various church-based activities, including Adventurers, Pathfinders, Christmas parties, birthday parties, school functions, youth socials, church potlucks, church picnics etc. Even a basic understanding of Pavlovian conditioning tells us that, by doing so, we are setting up our youth for an almost unconquerable future craving for sweet food and drink. This will lead inevitably to a huge increase in obesity-related disease, especially type 2 diabetes, already one of the major health burdens of Western society.⁸ How many amputations do we want our children to face in later life?

Over a century ago, Ellen White stated, "Far too much sugar is ordinarily used in food."⁹ Considering that sugar in her day was a luxury that was sparingly used because of price, how would she react to today's enormous consumption?¹⁰

We write out of loving concern for the health of the future generation of Adventists, not to mention the current one. This is not alarmism. Attempting to assuage our consciences with the sometimes-heard, "Well, at least it's vegetarian" is no excuse for promoting junk food to our children. If the Adventist health message is to be believed by the world, it has to be lived. Let's determine that our children are given the head-start in life that God wishes for all . . . to be healthy examples of the Edenic diet.

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Full reference list online.



RADICAL GARDENERS

Stewardship

We are God's stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use. We acknowledge God's ownership by faithful service to Him and our fellow human beings, and by returning tithe and giving offerings for the proclamation of His gospel and the support and growth of His church. Stewardship is a privilege given to us by God for nurture in love and the victory over selfishness and covetousness. Stewards rejoice in the blessings that come to others as a result of their faithfulness. (Gen 1:26-28; 2:15; 1 Chron 29:14; Haggai 1:3-11; Mal 3:8-12; Matt 23:23; Rom 15:26, 27; 1 Cor 9:9-14; 2 Cor 8:1-15; 9:7)

It was the golden hour on a cool spring evening in Canberra when I first stepped into Rosa's little oasis on the edge of the CBD. The immaculate garden was bursting with colourful flowers and a vibrant variety of plants. Rosa told me that when they had purchased the house a year earlier, the garden was totally overrun by weeds and long grass. I was surprised.

Rosa is an extraordinary gardener. She is also a steward—an honest guardian of the many plants and flowers she has been given responsibility for.

Rosa's garden is a tangible expression of her love and careful responsibility for nature.

WHAT'S IN YOUR GARDEN?

How often do you stop to think about what God has blessed you with and given you responsibility for? My "garden" is definitely not bare. But I must admit, sometimes I'm tempted

to focus on what is missing from my garden, and struggle to be a content and cheerful giver in every season and situation as Paul encouraged (2 Corinthians 9:6,7 and Philippians 4:12).

To stop me from falling into the discontentment and comparison trap, I've found it helpful to contemplate all the blessings (temporal and spiritual) and other gifts God has given me responsibility for—to cherish, protect, manage and nurture, daily. He has entrusted me with life and love, family and friends, time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, the blessings of the earth and its resources, and the assurance of salvation.

Jesus' sage advice in Luke 6:38 also helps counter any discontent: "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over . . ."

In 2 Corinthians 8:2,3, Paul affirms the Macedonian churches for their generosity. Despite their hardships,

they experienced deep contentment in Christ, which I believe undergirded a spirit of benevolence and generosity, giving "as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability".

RADICAL STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship is where the rubber hits the road. It's a matter of the heart. Imagine the radical kingdom impact we would see today if all Jesus' followers did what the Macedonians did: "They even asked and begged us to have the joy of giving their money for God's people . . . They gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us, just as God wanted them to do" (2 Corinthians 8:4,5).

Imagine if we, as stewards, developed habits of spending our God-given time and resources wisely. Unrestrained, God-directed generosity. Just as God requires.

Which sometimes presents me with a practical dilemma. How do I best



manage and prioritise (steward) the responsibilities I have? Are some more important than others? Does God really mind if I give my tithes and offerings or not? Yes He does! He wants His treasury to be full so His work can be extended and we can learn to gain victory over selfishness and covetousness. While there are many ways to use our gardens to serve God, I've learned that I'm more blessed by giving 10 per cent and living His way, than withholding 10 per cent and living 100 per cent my way.

But Jesus warns us in Matthew 23:23 not to be so concerned with "doing" stewardship that we "neglect the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness". So while I invest my spare time fulfilling my role at church, maybe He is warning me to stop and ask the single lady with the expensive car how her spiritual life is, or to be more responsible for waste that is contributing to environmental degradation.

THE "LEAST OF THESE"

A popular and beautiful passage about stewardship is Malachi 3:10 (Bring the entire 10 per cent into the storehouse . . . then I will open the windows of heaven). But while tithing is an important expression of faith and obedience, I have come to understand that as a steward, my treatment of the "least of these" is perhaps even more significant.

In Matthew 25:32,33 Jesus said that, when judgement day comes and the sheep are separated from the goats, He will say to the sheep "come . . . for when I was thirsty you gave me

something to drink . . . in as much as you did to the least of these you did to me." When Jesus says this, He is teaching us an important lesson about stewardship. Jesus was passionate about people. He's the ultimate steward of people.

Instead of picturing the "least of these" as helpless children and the powerless poor in developing countries—as is often portrayed in charity ads: stripping people of agency and dignity and soliciting our distant empathy and donations but little more—I have a new picture of those who Jesus may be describing.

If He were here today I can imagine Him saying something like this: "When I (a new convert) was thirsty (for friends) you filled my cup with love and acceptance. When I (a refugee family) was hungry (for knowledge and support about health and wellbeing), you spent time with me, guiding my family to wholistic health. When I was a stranger (an ex-prostitute) you accepted me as I was."

Often, we wonder where they are but "the least of these" are all around us. They could be the first-time mum without any family nearby; the university graduate who has just moved to town to start a new job; a church member who has experienced a relationship breakdown. Especially the children: precious gifts given to parents to steward, love, protect and nurture. I can only imagine how the rates of child abuse, malnutrition and neglect would be reduced if children were all seen and treated as precious gifts from God.

In our unique gardens, God has given us responsibility for more people than we realise. Am I a faithful steward of His children? Do I see them as "gifts"? Do I see my own life as a gift?

STEWARDSHIP OURSELVES

Sometimes I struggle to see myself through God's eyes. But as I've been

beautifully reminded, "God entrusts us with responsibility for ourselves . . ." I am also one of the "least of these" whom Jesus is telling me to care for! Doing things that strengthen our spiritual, physical, mental or social health is also a form of faithful stewardship.

There is power and truth in the lyrics of the hymn, "Fill my cup Lord". I'm encouraged each morning knowing God is waiting to fill my cup so it can overflow to those around me. I believe He asks me to spend the day emptying my cup—by doing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with Him—so He can demonstrate daily His ability to bless others through my garden.

THE MASTER GARDENER

Imagine if every Christian was an honest steward, not only with tithes and offerings but with all of God's blessings.

Without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus' example of ultimate stewardship, my life as a steward would be empty and my gifts would be meaningless. That's why I have been challenged to daily come to Jesus to be refilled, allowing Him to guide me as I grow my garden and redistribute my God-given gifts.

As I spend more time in God's garden, allowing Him to cultivate the Fruit of the Spirit in my heart, I hope my security will be rooted even deeper in His love, so I can more generously use my time, talents, treasures and temple to bring glory to Him.

After all, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who dwell in it" Psalm 24:1 (NIV).



SONJA KAMA

Program Officer, CARE Australia, Canberra.



STOP, LISTEN *and* LEARN

Bartimaeus, sitting in the dust by the Judean roadside begging¹, belonged to that 5 to 10 per cent of the population known as “expendables”, for whom society as a whole had no need. He was a stereotypical beggar of the times—he had a disability, which meant that he was unable to work and had to beg.

The parable that Jesus tells just a few verses earlier (Luke 16:1–13) gives insight into the cultural attitudes toward begging. He quotes the shrewd manager as saying he’s not strong enough to dig and he’s too ashamed to beg. But Bartimaeus’s need overruled his pride. Bartimaeus the expendable: a drain on society’s scarce resources.

Today we don’t use the label “expendable”. We have other labels for people, using skin colour, body size, ethnic background, gender and ability. The term disability, for example, often carries with it the idea of something negative, something a person cannot do, something lacking, and is treated as a problem of the individual.

STOP

We can imagine the effects of stereotyping on Bartimaeus. He could easily have sat by the roadside with an overwhelming sense of hopelessness at his non-existent prospects, depressed and lonely.

In 2015 some research interviews were conducted on people with phys-

ical disabilities in the Adventist Church in Europe. Participants described experiencing similar feelings when they met stereotypical attitudes from church members. One lady, who is blind, said, “Coping with the disability is easy compared to how people treat you sometimes. I often wonder if they think that you don’t have feelings like other human beings.”

One of the main problems with stereotyping is that it makes us insensitive to the individual. As one theologian has said, “People look alike only when you cannot be bothered to look at them closely.” Stereotyping hinders us from looking closely at individuals. Have you ever taken the time to “look at” or engage personally with a disabled person? When you do, you’ll soon realise that you begin to notice the person and forget the disability—something to think about as you prepare for the General Conference’s Special Needs Emphasis Day on April 21.

This is the first lesson we learn from the story of Bartimaeus: stop stereotyping. If we are to create churches that are welcoming to all, we need to make a conscious effort to resist the tendency to stereotype people who live with impairments.

LISTEN

Crowds are noisy gatherings, especially moving crowds. As Jesus approached Bartimaeus, people would

have been calling out for His attention. Yet when this beggar—one of the “undeserving poor”—called Jesus, he was rebuked and shushed. He was hindered from having a voice. It is as if the people didn’t want his voice to be heard. Why? Why shouldn’t he be heard?

The story accurately portrays human experience. Bartimaeus’s struggle to be heard is typical of many living with a disability. One of the most “disabling” activities impacting people with disabilities is to have others patronisingly talk about them and on their behalf, but not to listen to them. Deborah Creamer, a theologian who lives with a physical disability, puts it very pointedly, “The community of faith has failed to honestly engage with people who have disabilities, to seek out and listen to their stories, and instead tends to only speak to or about them or does things for them.”²

While we may not personally or corporately tell a person with a disability to be quiet, we can nevertheless be guilty of ignoring their voice. One of the goals of the upcoming Disability Awareness Sabbath is to give a voice to this often-neglected group. Some may be like Bartimaeus, shouting even louder when they’re resisted or ignored. But others, who are less bold, are easily ignored. Make it a habit to listen often and regularly, not just today.

As disciples of Christ our aim is to

be like Jesus in character and practice. Jesus' question to Bartimaeus is quite striking: "What do you want me to do for you?" (v 41). It's obvious what a blind man wants. But if you take the time to listen to the stories of disabled people, you will hear them describe numerous instances where people have assumed they know what the disabled person wants. One young man, who is wheelchair dependent, described how, sitting at the side of a road, minding his own business and deep in his own thoughts, a good Samaritan came up behind him and proceeded to push him across the road, assuming that he was waiting to cross!

Jesus didn't assume anything with Bartimaeus. He gave him a voice. He treated him with the respect he deserved as a human being and listened to him articulate his need. This is the second lesson from Bartimaeus's story: listen. So be more like Jesus, who listened to him, rather than the crowd who attempted to silence him.

LEARN

Next, notice how Jesus is described as "Jesus of Nazareth" (v 37). He is referred to in terms of His geography. Some people in the crowd viewed Him only as a man from Nazareth. It's a natural and obvious way to describe someone. But Bartimaeus has a more sophisticated view. He calls Jesus "Son of David" (v 38), which is a messianic term. He recognised Jesus as the Promised One. News must have reached him of what Jesus had done,

which corresponded with the Old Testament descriptions of the Messiah. And thus a flame of faith and hope was kindled: *If only I can meet this Man, I too can be healed!* His faith allowed him to see more than meets the eye.

There is much we can learn from people with disabilities: in this instance, how to have a faith outlook on life. It's one of many things that impress you when speaking with disabled people. One woman said she feels that having a disability has drawn her closer to God than perhaps would have been the case otherwise, because it has made her more reliant on God. That's another important lesson for us: no matter our abilities, we are all dependent on God.

Perhaps the way we get to learn most from people with disabilities is to invite them into ministry and leadership positions. In verse 43 we read that Bartimaeus "followed Jesus, praising God". And when those about saw this, "they also praised God". He turned the critical tone of the crowd into one of praise! Too often people with disabilities are seen as liabilities, a drain on resources—receivers of charity rather than givers with personal resources to offer.

If we truly believe in the priesthood of believers, a way to show it is by exhibiting inclusivity towards our Church's disabled. One blind member of many years described how he merely attended weekly. Then about five years ago he was pleasantly surprised to be asked to serve as a deacon. He now refers to life in church as exciting and

fulfilling. Why? Because he is offering his abilities for use in the church.

Bartimaeus had his eyes cured by Jesus, but it would also be correct to say that the real healing came about as a result of his acceptance into the community, no longer an expendable. He was healed when the community followed his lead in praising God. This teaches us that even if people aren't ever cured of their impairment, our churches can still be places of healing if we include all in fellowship, allowing them to flourish.

So the third lesson from the story of Bartimaeus is to learn. We are to approach people with an expectant attitude that we can learn from them no matter their physical or intellectual status, viewing them as valuable and gifted individuals who help make the body of Christ complete by their presence there.

Take a look at the strapline on the General Conference Special Needs Ministry logo below this article. It reads, "All are gifted, needed and treasured." And to make this a reality in your church, begin by practising the three-word title of this article: "Stop, listen and learn."

1. Luke 18:35-43.
2. "Toward a Theology that Includes the Human Experience of Disability," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health*, 7 (2003), p. 60.

PATRICK JOHNSON MINISTERIAL SECRETARY
AND DISCIPLESHIP COORDINATOR,
TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION.

Ideas and resources for your local church's Special Needs Emphasis Day are available online at <hop.ec/CSFBHI>, including Sabbath School and church programs, inspirational stories, even a sermon.

If you have a passion, skills or just an interest in developing a church ministry for those with special needs—mental or physical disability, the Blind and the Deaf—join Elder Larry Evans from the General Conference's Special Needs Ministry at a Special Needs Conference, sponsored by Christian Services for the Blind and Hearing Impaired, at Catalina Conference Centre Rathmines, on Lake Macquarie, NSW, April 25–28. Go to <hop.ec/CSFBHI> for information and an application form. Or contact Lee Dunstan on 02 9847 2296 or <leedunstan@adventistmedia.org.au>.





KEEP FITNESS IN THE FAMILY

Finding enough time to exercise amid the chaos of family life can be tricky. But just because you can't make it to the gym doesn't mean you have to miss a workout. Try adding some incidental fitness into family time. Exercising as a family can be fun, cost effective and easier than you might think. It will help you add more movement into your week, up those steps on the Fitbit and get the kids moving too: win-win! In fact, the University of Cambridge found that kids were 10 per cent more likely to work out if their parents were active. With more than 1 in 4 Aussie kids now classed as overweight or obese, any chance to pick up a skipping rope rather than a remote is a positive swap. Why not try some (or all!) of these fun ideas to get the whole family up and moving:



Recipe of the Week

Sanitarium
Health & Wellbeing

Roast sweet potato (kumara) and feta pizza

Enjoy a night in with friends with this roast sweet potato (kumara) and feta pizza, which is great served with roast beetroot and walnut salad or fresh green salad.

Find this recipe and hundreds more at:

Australia: sanitarium.com.au/subscribe
New Zealand: sanitarium.co.nz/subscribe

 Sanitarium Health and Wellbeing is now on Facebook!

AFTER DINNER DELIGHT

Make the most of cooler evenings and take a walk around the block after dinner rather than flopping on the couch to watch TV. Your waistline will be thankful for the extra steps and it's a great time to relax and chat as a family. The kids will love exploring their world at dusk and you can even encourage them to spot nocturnal animals. Being mini Dr Dolittles can add to the fun.

IN IT TO WIN IT

As competitive creatures, nothing will encourage exercise more than a challenge. A step counter and simple track chart will get everyone moving and the little ones will love it if daily milestones come with a special reward. They'll also get a kick out of seeing their name alongside mum's and dad's.

DOING THE SCHOOL SHUFFLE

Sounds simple, but starting the day with a stroll will put the whole family in a happy mood. If you're lucky enough to live within walking distance of your child's school it's an easy habit to master. But if you're a little further out, consider parking a block away and taking an extra 10 minutes to walk away the morning stress. Extra points for hopping or skipping!

Find us on Facebook and let us know how these tips work for your family.

TURN SCREEN TIME INTO FITNESS TIME



GET INSTRUCTIONAL

Love them or loathe them, screens are a part of our daily lives so why not use them to get the kids up and moving? YouTube is a hot spot for healthy tutorials (from exercise explanations to dance routines). Pinterest can also be a great spot for home exercise routine infographics.



GAMIFY

Gaming consoles now feature body motion tracking technology and wearable tech can connect right to your smartphone. Activity trackers can be a great incentive for the whole family to keep active. Introduce a bit of friendly competition and keep a family leaderboard of steps for the week.



MAKE THEM EARN IT

If your kids are moaning to stay on their screens, make them work out for it. Try equal active time for equal screen time.

It doesn't have to be anything too crazy—get them to walk the dog or kick a ball around in the park—just as long as it involves getting moving. It may be hard to resist joining in too!



LIVING HIS WORD

WITH WAYNE BOEHM

WHAT DOES STEPHEN HAWKING HAVE IN COMMON WITH ABRAHAM?

It has been a few weeks since Stephen Hawking's passing. Throughout his life, the renowned scientist most likely challenged every tenet of Christianity, causing people to reflect deeply on their faith. On the occasion of his 70th birthday, while speaking to a leading cosmologist, Hawking said, "look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see, and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious." Is there something profound in Hawking's statement given God's request to Abraham?

CONSIDER Genesis 15:1-5. What was God trying to teach Abraham through this experience? (This is the first of three occurrences where God addressed Abraham directly: 15:1, 22:1, 11).

What had God asked Abraham to give up in order to fulfil the call? Up to this point, he had been asked to leave his family and land. In addition, Abraham would request his wife to pass herself off as his sister not once but twice and together they would take the promise to be a great nation into their own hands, seeking to fulfil it in their own way. At this point, they were looking to their toes rather than the stars. Through these life-changing experiences, God shaped Abraham, his family and what would become a new community of faith—it was this trust and faith in the promises of God that resulted in justification.

CONSIDER Romans 4:1-4, 9-12, 16-22 and Genesis 15:6 (this is the first verse in the Bible that explicitly speaks of faith, righteousness and justification). What lessons can you learn from Abraham's "righteousness by faith" experience that will transform your own walk with God?

Maybe it's time to follow Abraham's example and take a walk outside to see the stars and be reminded of the great things God has asked of you.

Meet Samuela Kaloulia. At 22 years of age, Sam is the president of the Adventist Students Association (ASA) in Fiji. Each university campus has an ASA president and Sam and his team oversee all of the campuses.

I met Sam at University of South Pacific's main campus in Suva, where he is in the third year of a Bachelor of Commerce degree, studying land management and official statistics. Last year he was ASA vice-president; this year he stepped up to the top position.

University of South Pacific is a cultural melting pot, with attendees from all over the South Pacific travelling to Fiji to study.

"Our mission this year is [to focus on] returning Adventist students and reaching new students," he tells me.

ASA Fiji aims to keep Adventist students engaged with the Church by keeping them connected while they are at university. At the recent orientation, Sam shares that they had about 150 Adventist students sign up to be part of the ASA and around the same number of non-Adventists. He tells me they like the fellowship and activities.

The year is already planned. They have discipleship training this month and they are planning a baptism as part of a Pacific-wide "Harvest" program in July. Sam expects there to be 100 souls saved.

Each week there are prayer meetings at the various campuses. Sam and his executive team travel around to the different meetings to encourage

and support the groups. They also run "classes" called Bible Study 100, free for anyone to join.

"There is a good opportunity for us to make an impact through these Bible studies," says Sam.

ASA's theme for this year is Revolutionising 4, taken from Luke 2:52, where the Bible describes a young Jesus growing in wisdom and stature before God and men. Sam says the four things that will be revolutionised are four ways young people can grow: social, physical, mental and spiritual.

Sam grew up in a single parent family. While he didn't have a great deal growing up, after reading the story of Mary, standing at the cross in front of Jesus, he asked himself, *What can I do for Jesus?*

His first test was to run a Bible study for his peers. "I loved it," he says. "To dive deep with students in their spiritual life. I love to show them what I know through Jesus' guidance."

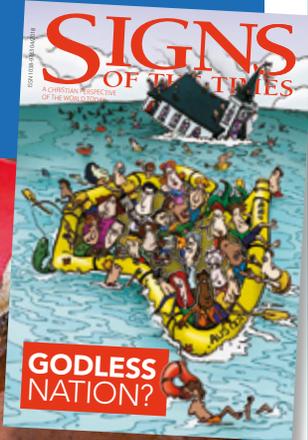
Since that first Bible study, he has never looked back.

"Now I live like a rich man," Sam shares. "I have everything I need . . . He has been amazing to me.

"My main vision is for more souls to be converted and that no-one should fall back. I like to give back what I can. My main goal is to seek and save like Jesus and to pass on to others to do the same. Seek and save!"

JARROD STACKELROTH EDITOR.
@JStackelroth

THIS MONTH IN



GODLESS NATION?

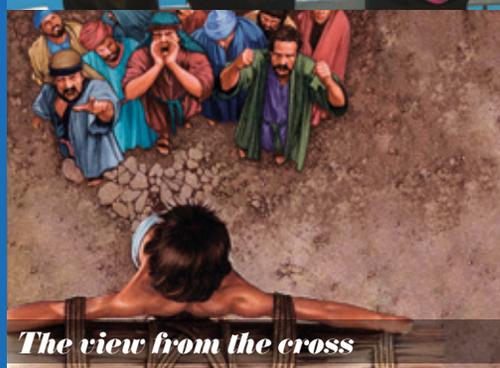
Aussies choose "no religion"



Violent media and your soul



Helping Kiwi kids beat the odds



The view from the cross

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HI KIDS!

KIDS SPACE

CROWD TRIES TO WORSHIP PAUL AND BARNABAS

In Lystra Paul and Barnabas call upon God to heal a man who had been disabled from birth. When the crowd sees the man walk, they declare that Paul and Barnabas are gods in human form and want to offer sacrifices to them. The apostles stop them and tell them to worship only the living God. Some Jews turn the crowd against Paul and Barnabas. The people stone Paul, drag him outside the city and leave him for dead. Paul gets up and goes back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas leave to carry the gospel to Derbe.



MAZE CHALLENGE

FOLLOW THE PATH TO THE DESTINATIONS IN THE CORRECT STORY ORDER TO FILL IN THE MEMORY VERSE.

CHRISTIANITY
 SERVANTS

1 Disabled man

2 Worshipping Barnabas and Paul like gods

3 DERBE

People throw rocks at Paul

MEMORY VERSE

"1 _____ each other's 2 _____, and . . . you will fulfil the law of 3 _____." (Galatians 6:2, NIV).



WAITING FOR THE BUS

Recently, while waiting for the bus back to Rushworth at the Southern Cross Station in Melbourne, I went into the prayer room and read some of the literature on the table.

I was impressed with the *Adventist Record* and am interested in taking out a 12 months subscription to it, to be received by mail.

Bus Passenger

GOD'S GLADIATOR

Your article on Pastor George Burnside was great ("Ode to George: remembering a one-of-a-kind evangelist", *Record Rewind* March 3). It told of some facts I was unaware of and overall it was much appreciated by myself and undoubtedly others as well.

Towards the end it was mentioned "He became concerned with changes in the Church—teachings he considered error—and was reluctant to accept advice . . ." As you are aware, other retired evangelists held the same view as George.

George and others were proved to be correct by the GC Glacier View investigation into Dr Des Ford's theology, which cost the Church about \$A1 million and tens of thousands of souls lost their way because of Ford's errors.

I was one of the people who went to George's place on Sabbath afternoons. He was one of God's gladiators for truth and Bible knowledge and this part of the well-written article was disappointing to read.

Alan Harker, *via email*

TALKING ABOUT JESUS

[Re: "The end of the One project", March 17]. Our culture, the way we do

church, the music and style of worship will continually change but what we should never change is who we worship. When we focus on Jesus, on God, the Holy Spirit and His teachings—that cannot change. Our Church must remain relevant to all people so that our worship can usher in the power of God. His teaching is where there is power.

"Talking about Jesus is still 'the best and most important conversation' for our Church—and is perhaps all the more necessary, if that were possible. It is precisely this same Jesus who is the Church's only hope, who offers the power for its healing and who prayed for its unity." So true. Thank you Nathan.

Martin van Rensburg, *Qld*

CLEAR FOCUS

I will deeply miss the One project ("The end of the One project", March 17). It did more to reconnect me with the Jesus we love and serve than virtually anything I've been involved with in years.

I still find it difficult to get my head around the criticisms of the One project. An event that focuses entirely on Jesus as the One would seem to me to be what Adventism is all about.

Our focus is and has always been on prophecy as a call to repentance, the three angels' messages (which are all about the true worship of Jesus as Creator and Redeemer), and even the very book of Revelation is after all the Revelation of Jesus. How such a focus could create fear and anger amongst any Christian believers defies belief.

I fear some of those taking the high moral ground in attacking such a clear Jesus focus may discover to their shock that they are not, after all, the remnant, but are doing the work of the one who has always sought to attack the Son of God.

Tony Knight, *Vic*

POOR JUDGEMENT

Publishing "The end of the One project" (March 17) article was a very poor error of judgement.

The tone of the article and glorification of the existence of the One project are deeply disturbing.

I for one, along with many others, am relieved that the One project has ended. The criticism it received was wholly warranted and Bible-based and it is a testament to the times we are living in that any conference supported the One project. I praise God for having some of His people

awake in order to sound the warning trumpet.

I watched a number of "sermons" from the One project so I'm not going off hearsay. As Seventh-day Adventists we need to start thinking more independently and with spiritual discernment as there are wolves in our ranks who are sowing deadly seeds and not everything that is endorsed by a conference is good and true and pure. Jesus warned us of being deceived (Matthew 7:15-17; 7:21,22; 24:4,5; 2 Timothy 3:13; Acts 20: 29,30), yet that is exactly what has happened to all the young (and not so young), innocent, indiscernible minds of those who got behind the One project.

May the Lord give us wisdom so another One project never happens again and, if it ever does, that we will sound the trumpet much louder and sooner and call out the error for what it is.

Natalia Matejko, *Vic*

NOTE: Views in "Have your say" do not necessarily represent those of the editors or the denomination. Comments should be less than 250 words, and writers must include their name, address and phone number. All comments are edited to meet space and literary requirements, but the author's original meaning will not be changed. Not all comments received are published.

Obituaries



BATCHELOR,

Marjorie Yvonne (nee Tomlinson), born 18.12.1928 in Spion Kop, NSW; died 18.8.17 in Wahroonga. On 9.2.1953 she married Geoff Batchelor, who predeceased her in 1993. Marje is survived by daughters Dianne Hilton and Coralie Batchelor; son-in-law Alwin Hilton; granddaughter Rebecca Hilton and grandson Samuel Hilton and his wife Zoe (all of Sydney); and brother John Tomlinson. Marje was a nurse at Sydney Adventist Hospital, becoming the operating theatre supervisor. A wonderful cook, she catered for many weddings and functions at Wahroonga church. She was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2015 for service to nursing, the Nepal plastic surgery and Adopt-A-Clinic programs. She loved her family, church and helping those in need.

Alban Matohiti, Richard Reid, Alwin Hilton, Lloyd Grolimund

BUTLER, Hilda Gwenneth (Peg) (nee Peacock), born 23.7.1922 in Ryde, NSW; died 4.3.18 in Cooranbong. On 8.5.1946 she married Lance, who predeceased her in 2004. Peg is survived by sons Robert, Donald and Rodney (Barnsley); 10 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. Peg had a wonderful love for beauty and a keen sense of values that were reflected in her very talented artwork. She always presented with dignity, refinement, respect and love. Her faith in Jesus was the compass for every aspect of her life. Many gathered at the Avondale Memorial Cemetery to celebrate the life of a beautiful person who will be sadly missed. Peg awaits the resurrection call of her Saviour when families will be reunited, God will be with His people and His people will be with their God.

Eric Winter, Roger Vince.

COOKSON, Bruce Nightingale, born 1937 in Auckland, NZ; died 1.1.18 in Whakatane. In 1972 he married Jennie (nee Cannell), who predeceased him in 2015. Bruce is survived by his only son Brendon (Rotorua). Bruce was a faithful lifelong employee of The Farmers' Trading Company. In retirement he loved to travel the world. He was loyal to the end in his deacon duties at Whakatane church.

Bob Larson



CURNUCK, Milton Robert, born 2.6.1951 in Adelaide, SA; died 25.9.17 in Oberon, NSW. On 17.2.1974 he married Jenny. He was predeceased by his brothers Kevin, Brian and Vernon. Milton is survived by his wife; children Ben and Kat, Lindy and Andrew, Jesse and Susannah; seven grandchildren; and brothers and sisters Alen, Beryl, Ivan, Shirley, Colin and Evelyn. Milton was an elder and often preached at Oberon church. His greatest hope was to meet all of his friends and family at the second coming of Jesus.

James Toogood

DOUGLASS, Yvonne (nee Jackson), born 30.3.1937 in New Lampton, NSW; died 14.2.18 in Sydney. On 30.3.1975 she married Norman Douglass, who predeceased her in 1982. She is survived by her stepchildren Dr Julie Douglass, Dr Bronte Douglass, Stephanie Megevand and Jenny-Lee Lee; eight grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren; and sister Audrey Jackson. Yvonne's faith in God was unwavering. She was an inspiration to her family and she dearly hoped to see them again at the resurrection.

Geoff Youlden

HAWKES-SMITH, Esther Evelyn, born 2.12.1944 in Toowoomba, Qld; died 31.1.18 in Caloundra. Esther was predeceased by her first husband Alvan Hawkes in 1997. In 2001 she married Paul Smith. She is survived by Paul; children and their partners Kerry and Heretta, Edric and Dao, Dan and Debbie, Neree and Theo, and Aldo and Hye-Jin; and seven grandchildren. Esther was greatly loved and her family look forward to seeing her again when Jesus comes.

Scott Wareham



PAGE, Gwen (nee Parsons), born 19.9.1927 in Harden, NSW; died 21.1.18 in Cooranbong. On 4.10.1948 she married Albert Page, who predeceased her in 2010. She was also predeceased by her daughter Roslyn in 2008. She is survived by her children Dawn Dixon (Narromine), Pam Page (Central Coast) and Noeleen Rowsell (Bishops Bridge); 14 grandchildren; and 21 great-grandchildren. Gwen loved God and her family. She was a wonderful wife, mother and grandmother. She was also an artist and musician who used her talents for God. Over the past 30

years she faithfully served God at Cessnock church. Gwen loved to play the piano for church and did so joyfully every week until she was 90 years old. Gwen was always praising God and saying how good He was to her.

Talai Mohr

MIKLAVCIC, Frank, born 20.10.1920 in Slovakia, Yugoslavia; died 30.11.17. Frank emigrated to Australia in 1951 and took up work in the Queensland sugarcane fields. After meeting Catherine in Bathurst, NSW, the couple married and set up home in Oberon, where Frank worked in a sawmill. They then returned to Bathurst. In 1967, they moved to Greystanes in Sydney where Frank worked at Alcan until his retirement. Frank and Catherine later moved to Wyong on the NSW Central Coast to be closer to daughter Pat and her husband Noel. They joined the local church and made many new friends. Frank loved Catherine and was devoted to her all of his life. Frank's love for Jesus never wavered. His faith in Christ's soon return ever burned brightly in his heart.

David Hay, Lyndon Schick, Daniel Brunt



RIGG, Guy Stanley, born 26.7.1943; died 19.2.18 in Cooranbong, NSW. On 26.12.1973 he married Glenys (nee Kuchel). Guy is survived by his wife; sons Anthony and Jaki (Qld) and Andrew (Cooranbong); and grandchildren Jed and Eden (Qld). Guy graduated from primary teaching at Avondale in 1970, and then taught at Mt Gambier (SA), Croyden (Vic), Oakley (Vic), Aore High School (Vanuatu) and Wahroonga (Sydney). Leaving teaching, Guy returned to his electrical trade with Sanitarium in Cooranbong for 14 years. At this time Parkinsons forced him into retirement and the care of his wife. Guy moved to Adventist Senior Living in 2008 and remained there until his passing. The much-loved husband, dad, pa and brother awaits the Master's call to newness of life in Avondale Cemetery.

Kenn Duke, Roger Nixon

TRENOWDEN, Maxwell Roy, born 29.4.1929; died 3.2.18. He is survived by his wife Jean; children Tim and Andrea; many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Maxwell was a faithful servant of the Lord for many years, including time as a literature evangelist.

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He always considered the plight of those in need. He was an avid and faithful supporter of the Africa Project in Uganda.

Trevor Mawer

to share. RSVP to Gordon Fietz on (08) 89273311, 0417 276 115 or email <gyfietz@bigpond.com>

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Finally . . .

There are no prerequisites for worthiness. —Brené Brown

NEXT ISSUE: ADVENTIST WORLD, APRIL 14

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POSITIONS VACANT

ASSISTANT EDITOR—ADVENTIST MEDIA WAHROONGA, NSW

Adventist Media is seeking an assistant editor to be part of a team producing a variety of print and online content. The role involves working with dedicated professionals to communicate key messages that will inform, educate and nurture church members across the South Pacific Division. Applicants must have excellent oral and written communication skills, high attention to detail, a positive work ethic, and an ability to meet deadlines and work in a collaborative team environment. Ideally, they will be digitally focused, with experience in social media and online platforms. Interested applicants should send a resume and a letter of application, including CV and references, to the Office Manager at Adventist Media: <corpserv@adventistmedia.org.au>. **Applications close April 30, 2018.**

SENIOR RISK OFFICER—LOSS RESOLUTION, RISK MANAGEMENT SERVICE WAHROONGA, NSW

Working in Risk Management Service your primary objective as senior risk officer—loss resolution is to resolve insurance losses and respond to enquiries to assist church organisations with their insurance needs by interpreting and analysing policy documents. You are responsible for the resolution of all losses within the scope of the risk transfer/insurance operations. This role suits a professional who would enjoy applying their detailed analytical skill and financial acumen with compassion, understanding and a “ready to help” attitude. For more information about the role contact Jonathan Hale on 02 9847 3375. Applicants must be legally entitled to work in Australia. RMS reserves the right to fill this position at its discretion and close applications early. **Applications close April 18, 2018.**

OP SHOP VOLUNTEER MANAGER—ADRA TOowoomba, QLD

Do you have a passionate heart to minister to those in need? Do you have proven leadership or management skills that you can use in God's service? ADRA Toowoomba is looking for a volunteer op shop manager to oversee its busy op shop and emergency relief service—it's a real centre of influence. You'll be responsible for managing a team of volunteers and overseeing the daily running of the op shop, working alongside the management committee. ADRA Toowoomba will reimburse car maintenance costs (insurance, registration, fuel) on a pro rata basis. The role is best suited to someone who is a practising Seventh-day Adventist, as connecting with the Adventist community will be key. If this role sounds like your calling, then please email your CV to Irena Larking, ADRA director <irena.larking@adventist.org.au>. **Applications close June 17, 2018.**

CARE MANAGER—ADVENTIST RETIREMENT PLUS YEPPoon, QLD

An opportunity exists for an experienced care manager at Capricorn Adventist Retirement Village, Yeppoon. This role is supported onsite by an operations manager who oversees the non-clinical services for this 66-bed residence. As care manager you will be responsible for the clinical/care service components of the strategic plan and work towards our organisational vision, values and signature behaviours. You will be accountable for clinical leadership and mentoring, support of residents' care needs, meeting the residential accreditation standards and funding requirements under ACFI. The successful candidate ideally would be a baptised practising member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. To apply or obtain a copy of the position description, contact: Chief Executive Officer, Adventist Retirement Plus, on 07 3218 7777 or email <headoffice@sdaac.com.au>. www.arplus.org.au. **Applications close April 27, 2018.**

BUSINESS MANAGER—ADVENTIST AGED CARE WAHROONGA, NSW

Adventist Aged Care Sydney, operating under the authority of the Greater Sydney Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is focused on serving the aged community and their families. We are seeking a talented, highly skilled and experienced individual to lead the team. The role involves responsibility for the administration, maintenance, IT and shared HR of both residential aged care and independent living units. Hours of work: full-time (38 hours per week). Please submit your interest by sending your resume, along with a cover letter, to the Human Resource Officer, Adventist Aged Care, 79 Mt Pleasant Ave, Wahroonga or email: <asmiramusk@adventist.org.au> or phone 02 9487 0658. **Applications close May 11, 2018.**

VIDEO PRODUCER—ADVENTIST MEDIA WAHROONGA, NSW

Adventist Media is seeking a full-time video producer who will be based in Wahroonga, NSW. The chief responsibility of the successful applicant will be to organise and oversee the creation of a number of video productions. Projects include short content designed for social media platforms through to longer programs for TV broadcast. Interested applicants should request a copy of the job description from the office manager at Adventist Media: <corpserv@adventistmedia.org.au>. To apply, send a letter of application, addressing the knowledge, skills and experience as outlined in the job description, along with a copy of your resume, to the office manager at the above email address. **Applications close April 9, 2018.**

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