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ADRA’s Adventure Plus gets “served”

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

On August 11, the South Auckland Adventist School held a fun run to raise money for the Adventist Development and Relief Agency’s (ADRA) Adventure Plus program.

Karen Saifoloi, assistant principal and Year 3 and 4 teacher at the school, felt this was an important project for the students to take on, so this year, instead of a week of prayer, the school opted for a “week of service.”

All 306 students spent their “You got served” week washing faculty members’ cars, planting trees for the city council and picking up rubbish.

They also donated one of these service days to the Adventure Plus fun run on their school oval. Each student found sponsors to donate per lap run, with 28 students raising more than $NZ100 each, and a seven-year-old taking the prize with $NZ410.50.

In total, the students raised $NZ9500. They donated $NZ2500 of this to Middlemore Hospital’s new birthing unit and the remaining $NZ7000 to ADRA’s Adventure Plus.

The school handed the cheque to the Adventure Plus team on September 4, who were able to use it to buy an urgently needed new truck. —Tara Lewis
Fallen

Something is desperately, dangerously and diabolically wrong.

Angel 2: “Babylon is fallen—that great city is fallen—because she seduced the nations of the world and made them drink the wine of her passionate immorality” (Revelation 14:8).¹

In his book LIFE AFTER GOD, Douglas Copeland has one of his narrators describe TV footage of a zoo in Miami, Florida, in the flooded aftermath of a hurricane: “There were pictures of ducks and tall elegant birds swimming in the wreckage except they didn’t know it was wreckage. It was just the world.”²

He describes the situation in which we find ourselves. Most of the time we swim placidly amid the wreckage of the world in which we live. We look at the brokenness, tragedy, sorrow and evil by which we are surrounded and are tempted to assume it’s “just the world.” Indeed, we almost find it impossible to imagine life without the presence and influence of evil. We begin to take evil for granted, ignoring the fact that so much with which we are at least superficially comfortable is profoundly wrong.

Then every so often we are surprised by an obvious outburst that reminds us of the underlying malevolence of what evil has made of our world. A personal loss or grief, a national tragedy, a humanitarian disaster or some violent outrage lays bare the fallenness and brokenness. From the terrifying and heartbreaking headlines to the quiet desperation of our individual disappointments and despair, our eyes are opened again—albeit briefly—to the wreckage.

It is to this reality that the message of Revelation 14’s second angel calls our attention. All is not right with the world. In fact, something is desperately, dangerously and diabolically wrong. The story began with a world created wonderfully good by a great and loving God but evil entered the story. We live among the fallout from that story. And the inevitable result of this trajectory is utter hopelessness and self-destruction.

In the context of the gospel story (see Revelation 14:6), this is exactly what we need saving from. In our honest moments, we can recognise this fallenness within ourselves. We can readily name the evil elsewhere but, before turning our attention to fighting the wrongs around us, we confess our own failings and admit we see at least the seeds of that same evil in our thoughts and actions.

But this story is also played out in the big picture of our world. In the presence of evil, the power structures of our world tend to work against God, His people and His intentions for this world. The political, economic, religious and social systems of our world are seasoned with this bias toward brokenness. The oppression, tragedy, outrage and injustice of human history are the all-too-obvious results. And so—as people of God—we must resist and actively work to counter the forces in our world that seek to co-opt, subvert, exploit and destroy all that God created and He described as “good.”

Yet, at the same time, the systems of this world also seek to hijack our allegiance, styling themselves in the position that belongs only to God as our Creator and Redeemer. The Bible regularly employs two images to describe the way evil works in the world. The prostitute or adulteress whispers seductively, tempting us to a life of self-centred pleasure and luxury, picking the best the world has to offer and taking profit only to God as our Creator and Redeemer. The beast demands attention, threatening and often using violence to force its will, embodying a regime in which only the strong survive and those who don’t are obviously too weak to be of any real value.

But another voice calls from heaven, “Come away from her, my people. Do not take part in her sins, or you will be punished with her” (Revelation 18:4). God is not threatening, so much as—in His love—alerting us to what the end result of evil must be. Mercifully, evil can never be forever.

When we are tempted to complacency in the face of the horrific reality of our world, the second angel calls us to awareness of the fallenness in which we live and to lift our eyes beyond the wreckage we have mistaken for the real world to the “everlasting Good News” God proclaims.

¹All Bible quotations are from the New Living Translation. ²Douglas Copeland, Life After God, Washington Square Press, page 85.

Nathan Brown
Adventists attend Australian Christian forum

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

On August 6 and 7, more than 300 politicians, prominent citizens and academics met in Canberra to review the contribution Christianity has made to the development of Australia as a nation as part of the first Australian Christian Heritage Forum (ACHF).

Although Australia is largely considered a secular country, with religion being a private matter that has no role in public life, the ACHF aimed to advance an "alternative" perspective, focusing on the important role Christianity has played in shaping the nation’s values, institutions, professions and government.

The forum also worked to encourage Christians in their efforts to make positive contributions to society by finding a constructive voice and continuing with positive work. Many denominations were represented at the ACHF, with the emphasis being placed on Jesus rather than a specific denomination or church.

Representatives for the Adventist Church attended the forum, including Dennis Reye, Pastor Eric Davey, Julie and Ken Welslake, Melody Tan and Drs John and Vivienne Wateupi and Adventist College, public affairs and religious liberty liaison for the South Pacific Division, represented the Australian Union Conference at the ACHF and says, "It was an interesting conference, which was not as ‘aggressive’ with a political agenda as I thought that it might have been. There was a strong emphasis on the Christian heritage in the history of Australia, but no specific recommendations or resolutions as to where to go with it in the future."

The plenary addresses at the forum explored Australia’s Christian heritage and character, as well as Australia’s perspectives on Jesus and values. Seminar topics included culture and education, business and commerce and politics and law. Tim Costello, Ken Duncan and Roger Corbett, as well as a number of academic historians, were among the speakers at the forum.

Speakers emphasised the need for Christians to be more involved in society, not less, but to remember they have to earn the right to be heard, rather than assuming it as a divine “right,” with the focus on debate instead of dogma.

In his opening plenary address, Geoffrey Bolton, chancellor of Murdoch University, said, “Christian concepts and imagery are enmeshed in much of what we regard as Australian self-concept and Australian myth: egalitarianism, sacrifice, innocence betrayed, the ideal of a good society.”

“Because most of the sessions were taken up by the presentation of various papers, there was very little participation or group discussion that might have led to the formulation of specific actions, so in some ways it was not as fruitful, nor as harmful as it might have been,” Pastor Coombe comments.

“Tim Costello struck a very good balancing note on the opening night by warning against an American-style right-wing lobbying of government, but highlighting the importance of not backing away from the reality of our Christian heritage, and the importance of those values in our culture. There was an obvious presence of some committed Christian politicians, but they did not dominate nor did others attempt to politicise the program too much.”

Christian politicians attending the ACHF included Kevin Rudd, MP, Guy Barnett, MP, and Senators Steve Fielding and Barnaby Joyce.

Both Mr Rudd and Mr Barnett pointed out that the right and left are not religious categories and that no political party has an exclusive claim to Christian values.—Adèle Nash/ACHF/Ray Coombe

More @ www.australianchristianheritageforum.com.au

College Park is the first urban church in the South Australian Conference to adopt a smaller country church, Port Augusta.

This marks the start of increased cooperation between churches in South Australia. The arrangement is envisaged to provide both spiritual and physical support to the smaller church. “College Park have been wonderful in adopting us,” says Robert Dorante, minister of Port Augusta church. “We are really grateful to them, and without their assistance we wouldn’t be able to do all the things we can now do”—Grapevine

The leaders of the Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM) office in Lae participated in a groundbreaking ceremony on September 1 to celebrate the commencement of work on their new office complex. The two-storey, 50-office building will cost some K3.5 million and will take two years to build. The new building is being built next to the current office, which was built in the 1970s. Some departmental directors are currently working from a temporary office nearby as the current office building does not have enough space.—Matupit Darius

The instant popularity of the new lunch ministry at Papatoe-toe church, NZ, took everyone by surprise. Each week, around 200-250 people are choosing to linger after church for food and fellowship. Original anticipation was 100-150 diners would stay for lunch. But a few weeks into the ministry numbers reached almost 300 people. Regular eaters help out by contributing toward the cost of the food. Members are also using this time to step out of their comfort zone, sitting with someone they don’t know and engaging in conversation.—Jacinda Turnbull-Harman

Almost A$3500 was raised by Years 7-10 students from Sydney Adventist College, NSW, recently—in just a few hours. The students volunteered to go door to door collecting funds for the 90th annual ADRA appeal.—Graciela Rasailes

IN YOUR HANDS — HAVE YOU GIVEN AWAY YOUR SIGNS YET?

September 30, 2006
ASANZ Convention attendees meet with New Zealand and Indonesian politicians

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

From June 27 to July 2, tertiary students and supporters from New Zealand, Australia and America gathered in Wellington to attend the Adventist Students Association New Zealand (ASANZ) 2006 Convention. Held at the El-Rancho Waikanae Christian Convention Centre, the theme was “Called to serve!” and featured international speakers Ron Clouzet from Southern Adventist University, Tennessee, Pastor Dan Augebur from Michigan, and Pastor Bien Tran. The incumbent Philippines Ambassador to New Zealand, the baton of the church’s 60-voice choir, under the leadership of Pastor Mau Tuaoi, the New Zealand area president of the Pacific Union Conference youth director, Pastor Nick Kross, from the South Pacific Division Youth Department, and Pastor Bob Larsen, the regional church pastor, were all present for the opening night, with Pastor Kross remaining for the entire convention.

Students attending took part in daily outreach activities, which included tree-planting along the Kapiti coastline as part of the Nga Uruora project and distributing copies of Steps to Christ and Sanitarium Up & Go drinks in central Wellington in exchange for participation in a brief religious survey. More than 120 copies of Steps to Christ were given out to the general public by a handful of students in two hours, while 160 new trees were planted at the same time.

A visit to the Indonesian Embassy in Wellington was arranged in order for canned food items and used clothing collected by the ASANZ students to be formally presented as a contribution to the victims of the Yogyakarta earthquake in Indonesia, which occurred in the early hours of May 26.

As the Indonesian Ambassador to New Zealand had yet to be appointed, the ASANZ group was officially received by the Chargé d’Affaires Minister Counselor for Mrs Marlina S Tahrir, who graciously accepted the expression of sympathy and extended gratitude on behalf of the Indonesian citizens debating the current tertiary issues of involvement with the tree-planting project. During this meeting an opportunity was given to share with the minister and his officials the vision and mission of ASANZ students as Adventist young people, emphasising the community aspect of ASANZ’s outreach efforts.

While at Parliament the ASANZ group met with Hon Chris Carter, Minister of Conservation and Ethnic Affairs—a result of involvement with the tree-planting project. During this meeting an opportunity was given to share with the minister and his officials the vision and mission of ASANZ students as Adventist young people, emphasising the community aspect of ASANZ’s outreach efforts.

Days and offerings: October 14—ADRA Appeal Support Offering: Spirit of Prophecy Day
Day of Worship for Melbourne schools

MELBOURNE, VICTORIA

Growing faith—the essence of Adventist education” has continued to be the focus for Adventist education in Victoria in 2006, and has been taken on in context of both students and teachers.

In a first-time event, August 18 saw all Melbourne Adventist schools come together for a Combined Adventist Schools Day of Worship—“Magnify.” The morning program was for the primary students, and more than 1000 students and staff from the seven primary schools came from as far away as Geelong and Warburton for a worship program focusing on “Sharing Jesus.”

The afternoon program was for the secondary students, with more than 800 students and staff sharing thoughts on “Getting Jesus out there.”

Every school was involved in presenting various parts of the programs, such as prayer, praise and worship, musical items, testimonies and introducing speakers.

Each school also had the opportunity to share a short visual presentation—“This is my school”—to enhance a sense of fellowship.

Students attending the programs were given age-appropriate challenges from Pastors Wayne Boehm and Derek McCutcheon to share Jesus with others.

Tania Calais, schools development officer for the Victorian Conference, says, “It was a fabulous opportunity for students to see a bigger picture of what our Adventist schools stand for, and also for the Education, Children’s Ministries and Youth Departments of the Victorian Conference to work together in focusing on evangelising the 1800 students in our schools.”

“Growing faith—the essence of Adventist education,” the theme first presented by Lanelle Cobbin from the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference at the 2005 South Pacific Division’s Principals Conference, and the theme was further expanded on by Mrs Cobbin at the Victorian Conference’s teachers meetings in April.

At the beginning of August, a special “Week of spiritual emphasis” was also organised for the teachers in Victoria, with readings, discussion and sharing times during morning staff worship focusing on the book of Hosea and God’s love.

The week culminated in a special Sabbath worship program for teachers, with guest speaker Dr Norm Young and featuring music from First Love, a musical production written by Lindsay Morton, a teacher at Gilson College, Victoria.—Tania Calais/RECORD staff

◆ Xtreme Conversion, a Christian reality-TV show that compares the all-out commitment of extreme sports enthusiasts to the focus needed to be a real Christian, is set to air on various television stations, including Hope Channel. Each half-hour program tracks the real-time progress of Christians who, through the power of Christ, are making powerful changes in their lives. There’s testimonies and tips from Christians who have gained victories over life challenges such as drugs, pornography, alcoholism and obesity. “The parallels between extreme sports and Christianity are not only amazing, but also thoroughly biblical,” says Dwight Hall, host of Xtreme Conversion and an elder of the Coldwater church, Michigan, USA. Xtreme Conversion adds thrill and imagination by uniquely mixing clips of surfing with baptism and skydiving with prayerful testimony. Mr Hall’s goal is to get viewers to make the ultimate decision—to ‘jump out of the plane’ so to speak.—Barry Champion

More @ xtremeconversion.com

◆ The Fresno Westside church, California, USA, ran a community baby shower with games, food and gifts on June 25 for almost 300 women and their young children. Many of the guests were from two area rehab facilities, a refuge for victims of domestic violence and a local emergency housing agency. The party culminated six months of outreach activities, including weekly parenting classes. Catherine Ruff, the ministry’s coordinator, says, “We’d been Bible-studied to death so we changed it to a witnessing class.” Her class began going door to door on Sabbath afternoons, meeting and praying with the neighbours. If no one was home, a card was left telling the resident that they’d been prayed for and to call if they wanted a visit. Most neighbours wanted prayer for themselves and their families and followed up phone calls and visits were also made.—Caron Oswald
Former RECORD editor launches book in Australia

SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES


A compilation of articles written by Pastor Garne and published in Seventh-day Adventist magazines around the world over a period of 50 years, Pastor Garne sees the book as “a token of praise to God for the goodness he has shown me over the past 30 years of my life.”

Pastor Garth Bainbridge, secretary of the Ministerial Association in the Greater Sydney Conference, spoke at the launch while Dr Eric Webster, editor of Signs of the Times in South Africa, provided a prayer of dedication for the book.

“This book has been crafted by a deep love and concern for others and a passion for Christ,” said Dr Webster during the prayer.

The book was dedicated to the “ministry of finding the lost, pointing the way to the Saviour, encouraging the saints and in anticipation of the glories of life eternal.”

According to Pastor Garne, now a retired pastor living in Auckland, his vision for the book is that it will be bought by Adventists to give to their non-Adventist family and friends.

Melody Tan
Still the Best News Ever! is available at Adventist Book Centres for $A14.95 or $NZ18.95.

Sanitarium launches new products

BERKELEY VALE, NEW SOUTH WALES

Sanitarium has introduced two new offerings to its range of Vegie Delights meat-free meal bases, opening up more easy-to-prepare options for people wanting delicious, tasty dishes in the quickest time possible.

Vegie Delights Mince and Stir-Fry Strips are made from textured vegetable protein and are perfect for a host of contemporary cafe-style recipes. Both are 99 per cent fat free, cholesterol free, a great source of iron and zinc, are high in vitamin B12 and meet the Heart Foundation’s strict nutritional guidelines for the Tick logo.

Susan Wilson, Sanitarium group product manager, says the new additions to the Vegie Delights range are an ideal fit for those looking to cook more vegetarian meals.

“Newspoll research conducted in May 2006 shows one in two Australian women eat at least one vegetarian dinner a week. Combined with the already broad Vegie Delights range, the Mince and Stir-Fry Strips provide even more simple options for people looking to create delicious vegetarian meals quickly,” she said.

There are now more than 20 products in the Vegie Delights range.

More @ www.vegiedelights.com.au

• Members of a Presbyterian megachurch in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA, have decided overwhelmingly to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church, making it the largest congregation to do so. More than 1000 members of Kirk of the Hills Presbyterian church turned out and voted 967-to-36 to affirm a vote by church elders to leave. The group then voted to request affiliation with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). The decision comes after the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church adopted a policy that some pastors say will allow gay pastors in the church.

• A bulk supermarket that gives away all its food has provided a helping hand to 18,000 Christchurch families and individuals during the past four years. The 0800 Hungry Ministries Trust warehouse in Wainoni has hundreds of pallets of groceries lining their shelves. “You name it, we probably have it,” says manager Debbie Drain. “Everything was going to the dump until we came along.” Goods are donated by suppliers, most of it close to its use-by date or having damaged packaging, but still perfectly usable. 0800 Hungry aims to provide churches with a tool to connect with their local community. When people phone for food, the organisation contacts a local church, which is asked to provide volunteers to pick up the parcels from the warehouse and deliver them.

• Christian groups are outraged by a new law passed in the Indian state of Chhattisgarh, which requires government approval of any religious conversion. The bill has been amended to say that “returning to one’s original religion will not be treated as conversion,” which Christian groups believe is a way to allow Hindu organisations to reconvert Christians back to Hinduism. —Christian News Today

• A report shows Lakewood church, Houston, USA, is currently the fastest-growing US church with 12,000 additional members this year. The annual report listed the top 100 fastest growing churches in America—52 churches were not in last year’s top 100. —crosswalk.com
ADRA receives grant for Disaster Volunteer program

WAHROONGA, NEW SOUTH WALES

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has been successful in two Australian Federal Government grant applications totalling $A98,219, made through the National Emergency Volunteer Support Fund (NEVSF).

Funding from both grants will be used to further develop ADRA’s National Program support for its Disaster Recovery Volunteers. This includes improvement of volunteer recruitment, training, equipment, operational resources and database development.

Gary Christian, ADRA–Australia’s National Program director, says, “This is a significant achievement for ADRA and the growth of our Disaster Recovery Volunteers Program. This not only allows us to grow and improve the quality of our program but also illustrates the confidence that NEVSF have in the organisation and the credibility of ADRA’s work in Australia.”

“This funding will make possible significant improvements to our program, that will help ADRA be more efficient, responsive and enhance capacity, when an emergency happens,” says Chris Olafson, ADRA–Australia’s Disaster Response coordinator.

The two grant applications of $A55,000 and $A43,219 were submitted on March 2 and were recently approved for the full amount requested.

Currently the ADRA Disaster Recovery Volunteers Program has resourced more than 2000 volunteers throughout Australia. The program provides emergency accommodation services to evacuees and emergency management personnel.

ADRA–Australia is fully accredited with the Australian Government’s Agency for International Development (AusAID). It is signatory to the Australian Council for International Development Code of Conduct, which requires members to maintain high standards of corporate governance, public accountability and financial management.—ADRA–International

Community HIV/AIDS centre highlights issue of child abuse

LAE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Child abuse occurs in many rural villages in Papua New Guinea. This information was shared with participants who attended a recent Konigi child-abuse prevention training program for community and village leaders in the Watabung Sub-Districts in the Eastern Highlands.

The program was organised by the Muki Community and held at their newly built HIV/AIDS Resource Centre. It was funded by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency–PNG through AusAID’s PNG Church Partnership Program. Training, which lasted for a week, was facilitated by the Adventist Health Department, Watabung Police Commander Senior Constable Peter Dix and the child-abuse section of the Eastern Highlands police department.

The 36 participants were given information about forms of child abuse, how to prevent it from occurring, possible situations, who to contact if reports are made and how it is related to the spread of HIV/AIDS in PNG.

Adventist health program manager James Ghahare told the participants that by looking at the statistics in the country, child abuse is shown to be a major indicator for many who contracted the HIV/AIDS virus under the age of 19.

Adventist health is working in many parts of PNG to raise HIV/AIDS awareness.—Martina Darius

Adventists add voice to global concerns

SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, USA

Continuing concern for the deplorable living standards and threats of violence facing people in many parts of the world was expressed by Jonathan Gallagher, an Adventist representative from the General Conference’s Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL), who joined more than 2500 other delegates from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at the United Nations (UN) building in New York for the 59th Annual NGO Conference.

Their mission? To draw up a better and more effective means of forming global partnerships to protect security and foster development worldwide. Meeting under the theme “Unfinished business: Effective partnership for human security and sustainable development,” the leaders of civil society and government present committed to finding practical methods to make the world a safer and more humane place.

As UN General Assembly president Jan Eliasson reminded conference participants, such goals require immense commitment. “We have such huge tasks now that I sometimes ask myself, ‘Will we make it?’” But he was quick to add that they could certainly be accomplished. “Working together, creating international structures, creating strong and effective international cooperation, strengthening the United Nations, is a good thing for the world.”

Mr Eliasson also emphasised the need for contribution to be made by NGOs, and encouraged them to work with the UN to develop and secure human rights.

“Adventists are committed to social action, recognising that our interest is in the whole being of what makes us human—mental, physical, social and spiritual,” said Pastor Gallagher. “Consequently we are very much involved in making this world a better place through humanitarian action that includes health, education, disaster relief, development aid, social development programs and so on. We believe that by so doing we are following the example of Jesus in caring for all the needs of humanity.”—PARL/ANN staff

September 30, 2006
Live to give

BY BRAD WATSON

IF GAVE YOU $100,000 IN CASH, $50 notes, you’d be excited, wouldn’t you? And if I said you could spend it on whatever you wanted, when you wanted, with no strings attached, how would you feel then? What would you do with it? You could pay all those bills and buy a new car. You could go on the holiday of a lifetime and fulfil your dreams! Maybe you could retire—even if it was just for a while.

Now, instead of giving you $100,000 to spend, what if I asked you to raise that amount for mission work? Your task—if you accepted it—would be to settle in Cooranbong, establish a fundraising organisation for mission work, and lead Avondale College students in fundraising for 27 years. During that time you would participate enthusiastically in everything from endurance walks, to curry days, money-can collections, car washes, food stalls and music events. Hold it there! I know you’re eager to accept the challenge but before you go getting all enthusiastic you should consult an expert like Charles! Ninety-six this year, Charles Pointon is known to a generation of Avondale College graduates.

Until recently he was the oldest student at Avondale College and most know him as the elderly man who sits patiently in the cafeteria with a sign asking for donations. Recent students know him as the old guy on the orange scooter. Others know Charles as a bearded gentleman with a heart for poor children. And just about anyone who has met Charles knows of his passion for COSMOS.

COSMOS is a campus charity that has raised more than $100,000. “COSMOS has been like the mustard seed, small at first but grown into a big tree.” When asked if he had enjoyed giving away all the money to the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Asian Aid and other humanitarian organisations he replied, “The world is full of those in need and it gives me great joy to spend the money for their good, rather than for mine. I’m surprised I’m still alive at 96.”

Ever the optimist, Charles says, “Life gets better and better as you get older. I’ve got so much in my mind to think about and life is getting more interesting. My mind is clearer than ever before. My body is getting a bit weaker but generally life is greater and more wonderful as the years go on.”

Charles admits to knowing the well-kept secret of living well and long. If you ask him he is likely to look you in the eye and say, “I’ve been a vegetarian for 70 years. I have never smoked and never drunk alcohol. I have a strong faith in God and I pray regularly. I’ve always been very fond of Jesus. My mother taught me that from a young age.”

Finally I asked if Charles had any advice for all us young people who want to make a difference. “Oh yes,” he replied enthusiastically. “Every person should be a witness and missionary for God, at home and at college, as well as getting trained and equipped for the work. “God is the one,” Charles says. “God has inspired me to serve.”

Charles is proud of the achievements of COSMOS and thanks all the supporters over 27 years of fundraising. “Special thanks go to Dr Bruce Lo, Eugene Landa, Warren Scott and Astar Alexis for inviting me to join with them in the idea of a missionary club at Avondale. They left me to carry the baby,” he says with a grin. COSMOS continues to operate on the Cooranbong campus of Avondale College by raising funds for selected charities, including ADRA and Asian Aid. “Avondale is proud of Charles Pointon’s commitment to helping needy people,” says college president Dr John Cox. “I would like to express my personal appreciation of his fundraising work, which has earned him the admiration and respect of the entire Avondale College community.”

By Brad Watson

Brad Watson is a lecturer in international development at Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales.
Hard heart

BY SUSAN JOHNSTONE

I can’t breathe—it’s agony wondering where you are. Picture me on my knees—have you run too far? Can you hear ... can you hear the sound of my heart break with each step you take? Can you feel ... can you feel me when I say: ‘Please come back to me. I miss you; will you come to your senses? Please come back to me.’*

The loving father pleads for his prodigal son. The son—broken and contrite—was ready to fling himself at his father’s feet begging for forgiveness. Meanwhile, the “sensible” brother lurked in the shadows, watching the spectacle with disdain.

Which one are you?

Do you wonder at the enthusiasm of other Christians and think you just don’t get it? Are they faking it or is this something you can have, too? Is it something you want? A flame minutely flickers in your heart, yearning to be fanned into a blaze, but it wavers feebly in indecision.

Do you think sometimes of the icy blackness in the corner of your heart—a hardness that sometimes threatens to overwhelm, a hardness that produces your prideful thoughts, your flashes of anger, your cold feelings toward those you should love?

This is the hard heart that only you know about—only you and God. He sees it. He knows your ache to be healed, paralysed by an apathy and despair that tempts you to think, Maybe this is as good as it gets. That’s why He’s offered to give you a heart of flesh to replace that heavy weight, your stony heart (see Ezekiel 36:26).

Although your feelings tell you something different, don’t ignore the truth that God cares. Even at the shopping centre you see sparrows darting about between the cars searching for crumbs. Such tiny creatures—oblivious to the wider world you live in, yet cared for by your heavenly Father. Aren’t you worth more than many sparrows? (see Matthew 10:31).

God knows all about your hypocrisy—the times you strive to be “good” but inside you know it’s all a pretence. He knows your inability to create your own joy and zeal for worship. He knows your stagnation and the feeling that you are just going through the motions of “doing church.” Yet there is no condemnation; just a plea to come back to the true Source of life. Why subsist on chlorinated tap-water when the springs of living water are offered for free?

When Jesus stood at the Temple steps and denounced the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, there were tears in His eyes. His face contorted with sorrow and anguish, He proclaimed their sins of pride and hardness of heart. While God condemned these leaders, He still nursed compassion for the individuals.

Jesus cried, “How many times have I wanted to put my arms round all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me!” (Matthew 23:37, TEV). This is not the wrath of a fed-up God but the emotional weeping of a loving heart cut deeply. It is a gut-wrenching plea to come back to the shelter of His arms.

It’s not too late for you.

Whatever you do, wherever you go, God’s love is there. In black and white you read that nothing can separate you from the love of God (see Romans 8:38). But it’s not just black and white, it’s reality. Even as the weeks and months slip past when you turn aside from time with God, preoccupied with other things, God’s love is there. When you look at the Bible on the shelf and pass it over for a magazine or turn to the TV remote control, God’s love is still there. As you come to church with a smile pasted on your face and your thoughts drift to your plans for afterwards while others listen to the sermon, God’s love is still there.

Though you don’t feel it, God’s love is still there. He is searching relentlessly for you, His lost sheep. He is calling you.

What will you do? R


Susan Johnstone writes from Stanthorpe, Queensland.

September 30, 2006
Seeing the invisible

BY GEOFFREY GARNE

As part of humanity’s continuing exploration of the universe, humanity has succeeded in launching exploratory probes on the planets Mars and Jupiter in recent years. The photographs transmitted back to earth can only be described as awesome. Yet no trace of life has been found there. No evidence of a Supreme Being has been detected. So millions of people are asking, Why should I believe in God? How can you believe in Someone you’ve never seen, of whom there is no tangible evidence?

This is not a new question. It has vexed the human mind and spirit for centuries. In Job, though by scholars to be the most ancient book in Scripture, the question is asked, “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” Job 11:7a. For us tiny creatures to try to comprehend everything there is to know about God is like a colony of ants trying to figure out everything there is to know about humanity.

When God chose Moses to lead the Hebrew people out of slavery to their own land, Moses wished he could see God. God’s answer to His wish was, “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live” (Exodus 33:20). Yet the Bible tells us “he endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27). To Moses, God’s presence was as real as though he could actually see Him. He saw God with the eye of faith and experiencing times of deep distress and trial. Yet seeing God? I have had such a wish, especially in the 21st-century pilgrims, God’s presence can be as real as if we could actually see Him. Peter tells us, “Whom having not seen, ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).

Let’s consider six suggestions I have found helpful toward experiencing this reality:

1. We can see God in His handwriting. A Westerner was travelling with a Bedouin through the desert. After their first night’s stopover, the Bedouin said, “There were camels passing our tent during the night.” “Really?” responded the Westerner. “How do you know? Did you hear them? Did you see them?” “No,” responded the Bedouin with a smile. “I did not hear or see them, but I can see their footprints in the sand.”

Similarly, we may not be able to see God, but we can see His footprints in the sand. We can see His handwriting in every fragment of flower, in every leafy tree, in every bird in flight, in the honeycomb of a bee. We don’t need to look outside our own bodies to see evidence of the master mind of a creative Genius: the structure and function of our eyelids, our fingers, our knees, our tongues, our skin, our hair, our voice boxes, to mention only a few of a million wonders of the human body. Like David we have reason to exclaim, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well” (Psalm 139:14).

A brilliant Jewish scholar, Dr. Gerald Schroeder, has written a remarkable book entitled The Hidden Face of God. The author, a professor at the Hebrew University, in Jerusalem, sets out to demonstrate that although God’s face is hidden from us mortals, we can see Him encoded in the mystery of DNA, in the miracle of the human mind, in the marvel of nerves and muscles, in everything that comprises the universe around us and within us. It makes intriguing and inspiring reading.

2. We can see God in His providential leading in our own lives, in the lives of others, and in history.

Here is just one example from the annals of history:

Published in 1611, the King James Version of the Bible has been a staple in Christian literature for more than 400 years. Although its language is now somewhat old-fashioned, it has spoken to the hearts of untold millions of readers all over the English-speaking world. But consider this: On November 5, 1605, a group of disgruntled citizens plotted to blow up the British Houses of Parliament at a session they knew King James I would be attending. The plot was miraculously uncovered and foiled. Guy Fawkes, the man who had placed the explosives, was tried and hanged. But for that, King James would almost certainly have lost his life. The British monarchy would have been in disarray and the country would have fallen into the hands of an anti-Scripture faction. Instead, the Christian leaders of England were spurred on to produce an Authorised English Version of...
Scripture. It was completed and presented to King James six years later. Hundreds of fascinating stories like that could be cited from the pages of history!

3. We can see God in His Word, the Bible.

The Bible is a revelation of God. What kind of God does it reveal Him to be? When Moses longed to see God, “the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty” (Exodus 34:6, 7).

I encourage you to read the stories recorded in the Bible of people God has dealt with in this way. Whenever you’re feeling discouraged or confused about some situation you find hard to handle, open the Bible and read a story that reveals God’s dealing with people. Keep a Bible with you in your car, and whenever the going gets tough, open it and read. Read the about Job, Daniel, Esther or Jonah. Read the Gospels or the book of Acts.

In all these accounts you will see the invisible God interacting with ordinary people like you and me, in the kind of human situations and crises we have to endure from day to day.

4. We can see God in Jesus.

Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God—a revelation of His character, love, power, redeeming grace, wisdom and His plan of salvation. Twenty-four times in the New Testament Jesus is referred to as the Saviour. When everything else has been said, the God of the Bible is the God of John 3:16: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

In His preaching Jesus referred to God as “our Father” no fewer than 60 times. Because He is your Father, you are His child. He loves you and cares about you. You are precious in His sight. There is nothing in the world that is for your good, that He would withhold from you. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

5. We can see God in our worship of Him.

Look at the awesome picture of what happened to Moses when he came to the tabernacle to worship Him: “And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (Exodus 33:9, 11).

Moses couldn’t actually see God; the cloud veiled Him from his sight. But his communion with God was as intimate as if he could see Him. They spoke to each other “as a man speaks to his friend.”

We too can have the enriching, uplifting experience of the Divine–human encounter when we worship Him in church, in our homes, in the quiet place of prayer. As we lift our minds heavenward and open our hearts to Him, He will reveal Himself to us and lift the burdens that threaten to crush us. He will speak to us personally, as a man speaks to a friend, as a parent speaks to a child.

6. We can see God reflected in the lives of beautiful people.

The poor and homeless of Calcutta saw God in Mother Teresa. She summed up her philosophy of life in these memorable words: “Jesus comes to meet us. To welcome Him, let us go to meet Him. He comes to us in the hungry, the naked, the lonely, the alcoholic, the drug addict, the prostitute, the street beggars. If we reject them, if we do not go out to meet them, we reject Jesus Himself” (Mother Teresa, In My Own Words).

The people of central Africa saw God in David Livingstone, the Scottish missionary–explorer who opened up the then Dark Continent to the gospel. He died on his knees, praying for Africa. The British authorities instructed that his body be brought back to England for burial. But the people of Africa protested, “He belongs to us. Let us take out his heart, then we will send his body to England.” Their request was granted. After they had removed his heart and buried it in mud, they tenderly carried his body on their shoulders to the coast, where it was shipped to England for burial in Westminster Abbey.

We see God every time we sing one of the hymns of Fanny Crosby who, although totally blind throughout her 95 years, wrote hundreds of beautiful hymns reflecting her love for her Saviour.

We see God when we listen to the magnificent music of Beethoven, including his much-loved “Hymn to joy” in his Ninth Symphony, who could not hear much of the music he wrote because he had become completely deaf during the later years of his productive life.

Look around you, and you will see God in the lives of beautiful people near you today!

Seeing the Invisible

“Moses endured as [if] seeing him who is invisible.” You and I will never be called upon to endure as much as he did. But whatever it is we may have to endure, we can bear it as if seeing Him who is invisible—seeing Him in His handwork and seeing Him in His providences in our lives and the lives of others, seeing Him in His Word, seeing Him in Jesus, seeing Him in our worship of Him, and seeing Him in the lives of beautiful people who reflect His love.

And some day, when the battle is ended and the victory is won, we will see His face! He promises us this in His Word: “We shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). Then the God we now “see” will be visible: “His servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads” (Revelation 22:3, 4).

*All Bible quotations are from the King James Version.

Geoffrey Garne is a former editor of RECORD, who writes from Auckland, New Zealand.

September 30, 2006
What’s going on here?

BY JOHN GATE

One way of maintaining control is to set the agenda.

But, in outreach, that can be disastrous. In Jesus’ method, He looked for the agenda in people’s lives, and came on board with their agenda, won their confidence and led them to know and accept Him. In our outreach ministry, we need to adapt that principle. It means we need to be open to people, open to their needs, and open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. That requires adaptability and emphasises the importance of prayer in outreach, especially video ministry.

It is convenient to have a one-size-fits-all approach. But it’s not real. People are different, and it takes tact and thought to be able to adapt our approach in video ministry to where people are at and what their agenda is. We have already seen how the video minister commences as a courier but then becomes a friend, and as time goes on even a close friend and confidant. The video minister needs to act appropriately at each point of the growing friendship.

Jesus won people’s confidence because—as our strategy statement reminds us—he listened to people, sympathised with their needs and responded in some positive way. People—especially postmodern people—are wary of sham and put-on religion. Postmodern people are slow to respond, yet they value friendship. When they see someone is genuine and authentic, they are more prepared to listen seriously to what they have to say and what they have to offer. By focusing on people and their needs and agendas, the video minister will win people’s confidence and open the way for the work of the Holy Spirit as He speaks to them through the friendship and through the videos.

Friendship is a vital key to effective video ministry.

Discovering people’s agenda is not difficult. By simply asking general questions about family, work, hobbies or any things of interest, recurring themes soon become clear. People love to talk about members of their family or extended family. As people share, it soon becomes clear what brings joy or sadness to them. These are the things that the video minister is listening for, praying about and desiring to respond to in such a way as to be of help and assistance.

Remember our strategy statement: “Jesus mingled with people as one who desired their good.” He was mixing with people and building friendships, but taking notice of their needs and responding to them. That is what the video minister is doing as he or she delivers videos and meets people week by week.

This is part of a series of articles exploring video ministry and how it can work in your community.

John Gate is director of the Adventist Discovery Centre.
How not to advertise?

MARIOS AND LEISA COBACOGLO, QLD

What’s going on with the recent full-page Sanitarium So Good advertisement in RECORD (page 31, August 12)? This is the type of advertising you’d expect to find in any worldly magazine, but definitely not in RECORD.

RECORD is a church publication and all advertisements should be representative of this. Our family and friends all found this not only appalling but offensive in this context. You can’t say that a strappy bikini-clad woman is not being used to sexually promote So Good.

Rosalie Wainwright, NZ

Since when did RECORD become a pornographic magazine? I strongly object to Sanitarium’s recent So Good ad showing a nearly naked woman. Totally out of place in our lovely magazine.

Christine Taylor, NSW

I was shocked to see a full-page Sanitarium advertisement for So Good displaying a couple on the beach in their swimwear. The picture portrays the guy piggybacking the girl while they seem to be having lots of fun in their lack of clothing.

I felt really uncomfortable, and showed this to my husband, who agreed and felt the same way I did. We were surprised to see such an advertisement in our church magazine. We are not old, nor are we religious fanatics, but felt that this was definitely inappropriate advertising.

Sure, we can go down to the beach and see this and worse displayed wherever we look. We have become so desensitised within our society to what is right and wrong that morals have slipped out the door. They could have had a little more clothing on so as not to suggest any sexual overtones, which is definitely loud and clear in this advert.

What are we saying to the world? Do we have to resort to sex to sell our products? Are our products different enough anyway so that people will just want them, where they stand out on their own as good and pure? What are we saying to our young people? We are told to be separate from the world. Philippians 4:8 urges us to think on things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely and of good report. We should be putting away any hint of sin in our lives, not promoting it.

RESPONSE: REX SHEEHY,
MARKETING MANAGER, SANITARIUM
HEALTH FOOD COMPANY

On behalf of Sanitarium I would like to offer my sincerest apologies for any offence caused by this advertisement. We have considered the comments received and will take them into account in future.

The image in question was not chosen to stimulate sexual attraction, but as an image conveying a message that links back to the health and wellbeing aspect of Sanitarium’s mission statement: “We inspire and resource our community to experience happy, healthy lives.”

The intent of the photograph in this advertisement is to show—in the context of our product So Good Active—healthy and happy Australians who have the physical fitness to enjoy nature, companionship and the benefits you can get from a plant-based diet.

Sabbath voting

PHILIP SMITH, QLD

My wife and I voted on Saturday in the recent Queensland state election. The electoral commission in Queensland sends all electors a guide explaining how and when to vote. The guide states clearly that an elector may vote before election day for a number of reasons, one of which is if “your religious beliefs prevent you from voting at a polling booth on election day.”

Sunset on September 9 was at 5.38 pm—some 20 minutes before the poll closed at 6 pm.

Since we live just 10 minutes walk from our nearest polling booth, my wife and I left home a little before Sabbath closed, pausing for prayer at sunset while waiting in the fields outside the venue. We then went inside and proceeded to cast our vote prior to the booth’s closure—along with several other people making a dash to beat closing time.

Some church members may feel that this risks an encroachment on sacred Sabbath hours. However, since our Sabbath commitment ends at sundown, how can we justify not voting on Saturday when there is clearly enough time to attend a polling booth after Sabbath but before voting closes?

It may be convenient for us to assert our supposed entitlement to a pre-poll or postal vote on religious grounds, but is it not wrong and potentially illegal to not vote on Saturday in circumstances when it is possible to do so?

September 30, 2006

Is it not wrong and potentially illegal to not vote on Saturday in circumstances when it is possible to do so?

Thinking alternative

J E FORBES, VIC

“New cancer vaccine” (Adventist World, September 9) was an informative article, but the little aside at some “natural” products is not helpful. The majority of these products are sold at health stores or by naturopaths, not “pyramid schemes” as the article suggests.

The huge amount of documented and “covered up” side effects of medical drugs are what are leading many people to seek “natural” remedies, which at least “first do no harm” in the majority of cases. Just because something is “untested and unproven” according to standards set out by medical bodies, does not mean some benefit is not being experienced with some natural products.

In both the drug and natural field, it is important not to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Note: 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. See masthead (page 2) for contact details.
**Volunteers!**

Volunteers needed—Adventist Alpine Village (Jindabyne, NSW). General maintenance, bushwalking, summer activities. Time: 12 months. Stipend paid and accommodation provided. For more information, contact Hayley O’Donnell.

Email: volunteers@adventists.org.au

For more positions, check the web on <www.adventistvolunteers.org>

Tel: +61 2 9847 3275

**Obituaries**

Conn, Christopher Thomas, born 1.6.1958 in Melbourne, Vic; died 23.6.2006 in Bethesda Hospital, Melbourne. He is survived by his wife, Marion; his children, Dianne, Jenny, Christopher and Fiona; their spouses; and his 13 grandchildren. Chris had a close relationship with God and looked forward to the Resurrection. A memorial service to farewell Chris was held at Gicultural church on 9.7.06.

Anne Karagianes

Farrar, Valery-Lane, born 27.6.1939 at Mackay, Qld, died 14.7.2006 at Mackay. He is survived by his wife, Jean; his children and their spouses, Vivian and Edmon, Graeme and Indie, Rod and Tracey and his grandchildren, Theodore and James.

Hodgkin, Terence (Terry) Raye, born 22.1.1929 in Gold Coast, Tas. On 22.1.1949 he married Nola. He is survived by his wife; his children and their spouses, Steven and Julie, Steven and Julie, Ashan Rodrigo, son of the late Horace and Louisa Steed, were married on 3.9.06 at Woodside Heritage Chapel, Perth, WA.

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Lyn Bryson

Rick Ferret

Advent Funeral—Adventist business serving our church community. Sydney: Wollongong/central coast/Newcastle. Phone: 1300 751 182; fax: (02) 648 1016; email: david@adventfunerals.com.au.

Creative flowers, fresh flowers, bouquets, birthdays, funeral tributes. For further information phone: Ken Killoway (03) 5966 5147; or Arthur Johnson (03) 5966 5147.

Northpine Childcare and Early Learning Centre—Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland). Applications are invited for the position of Trust Services Director, Team Leader and Children’s Assistant, to commence operations in January 2007. Detailed job descriptions are available on request. Applications should be received by Monday, October 9, 2006. Email: positions@adventist.org.au.

**Positions vacant**

- **Trust Services Director**—Greater Sydney and North New South Wales Conferences are seeking an executive of integrity for the position of Trust Services Director. Preference will be given to applicants who hold ministerial credentials. Applications should be sent to General Secretary, 4 Cambridge Street, Essendon, Vic 3040, or contact <secretary@adventists.org.au>, Applications close Monday, October 9, 2006.

- **Northpine Childcare and Early Learning Centre—Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland).** Applications are invited for the position of Trust Services Director, Team Leader and Children’s Assistant, to commence operations in January 2007. Detailed job descriptions are available on request. Applications should be received by Monday, October 9, 2006.

- **Primary and Secondary Teachers—Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland).** Have you considered joining the exciting ministry of Adventist education? Consider a move to the Sunshine State! Due to ongoing development and growth, vacancies exist for both Primary and Secondary Teachers in a range of schools in 2007. Expressions of interest are welcome and should be sent to the Director of Education, email: olivia@adventists.org.au.

For church-related employment opportunities visit the Employment section on the SFD website: <www.adventists.org.au>

- **Park SDA church** seeks part-time and full-time volunteers to celebrate their 25th anniversary, November 18, 2006. Thanksgiving service commences at 10:00 am, followed by a celebration lunch. Afternoon program 3.00 pm. Phone Office: (02) 6672 1113; or email: <post@parkadventists.org.au>; RSVP October 17 for lunch.

- **Rural Work!** Creative flows, fresh flowers, bouquets, birthdays and funeral tributes. For more information phone: Ken Killoway (03) 5966 5147; Ken Knight (03) 5966 5147; or Arthur Johnson (03) 5966 5147.

- **Advent Funeral—In Adventist business serving our church community. Sydney: Wollongong/central coast/Newcastle. Phone: 1300 751 182; fax: (02) 648 1016; email: david@adventfunerals.com.au.**

- **Canonhanging Florists (NSW).** Creates flowers for all occasions—weddings, flower bouquets, birthdays and funeral tributes. Network for flowers worldwide. Jean Wilkmann, 7 Abell Road, Canungra, Phone: all hours (07) 4977 2477.

- **Encore Flower—study film strips and audio tape** are sold for use with a person with special needs. Phone Paul Colin Dunn on (02) 6658 2668.

- **Receive the Hope Channel and 3ABN Network**—Contact: <info@thestoryfactory.com.au>; or contact us freecall 1800 452 133.

- **Amazing Facts, Your Story Hour, Empowered Living Ministries and 3ABN products. Visit The Story Factory Online Store for quality Christian products**—<www.thestoryfactory.com.au>; email: <info@thestoryfactory.com.au>; or contact us freecall 1800 452 133.

- **Finally**

  Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly.—Robert Kennedy
LONGBURN ADVENTIST COLLEGE
A Year 7-13 Boarding School
In The SDA Tradition

Situated near Palmerston North in the North Island of New Zealand, Longburn Adventist College has established itself as one of the premier colleges in its local area. With a rich boarding and day school heritage dating back to 1908, LAC has much to offer. In 2005/6, 100% of Year 13 LAC students achieved University Entrance.

LAC’s charter demands that the SDA Christian ethos remains the centre of its value system. Our boarding students have clearly stated that the SDA Christian boarding environment has played a vital part in their decision to follow Christ.

AN AFFORDABLE OPTION!
All-inclusive fees per year (approximate)
Including boarding/dinner/uniform/other costs
AUD$9,000
NZ$10,700

WANT TO KNOW MORE?
Email info@lac.school.nz
Phone 64 6 3541059
Fax 646 3551350
Website www.lac.school.nz

We encourage early applications for the 2007 school year.

"In Christ, we educate, encourage and empower"