AMN provides Pacific Focus

WAHROONGA, NEW SOUTH WALES

A new resource, Pacific Focus, has been launched by the Adventist Media Network (AMN). True to its name, it will focus on church news from around the South Pacific.

“Pacific Focus is the result of our vision to connect, resource and inspire church members in the South Pacific,” says Dr Allen Steele, CEO of AMN. “We hope to create a sense of community and belonging within the wider church with this production.”

A collection of short five-minute video clips, Pacific Focus showcases the stories and activities of church members.

From stories about the first missionary pilot to Papua New Guinea to testimonies, interviews and a vegetarian cooking segment, viewers can choose to watch it in the comfort of their own home either on DVD or on Hope TV, download it from the church’s members site, spd.adventist.org.au, or show it at church at an appropriate opportunity, such as part of or before or after worship services.

Pacific Focus is the first of several new projects by the entity formed to fully harness the communication and media potential of the Adventist Church, particularly in

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Jesus leads into a description of a life lived with a different set of priorities.

The sins of Sodom

If I were to ask about the “sins of Sodom,” chances are there would be those who would almost automatically launch into an almost perversely vivid description of various sexual and other depravity. After all, that’s where the term “sodom-ity” is derived and “Sodom and Gomorrah” have become bywords for a plethora of lascivious and decadent behaviour.

Interestingly though, that’s not the answer the Bible gives. “Sodom’s sins were pride, laziness, and glutotony, while the poor and needy suffered outside her door” (Ezekiel 16:49, NLT). Contrasting with our assumption of sexual outrage, Ezekiel’s focus is on economic injustice.

And it’s not something confined to Ezekiel. From Amos’ description of the rich women of Samaria as “fat cows” (Amos 5:1) to Mary’s song describing how God has “sent the rich away with empty hands” (Luke 1:53) to the “anti-Beatitudes” Luke records, which contrast the blessing of the poor with “wise to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort” (Luke 6:24, NIV), to Paul’s repeated condemnation of the greedy (see, for example, Ephesians 5:5, Colossians 3:5, Titus 1:7), it seems the Bible has something against the rich and their/our accumulation of wealth.

Perhaps this biblical concern has its high point in Jesus’ parable of the rich fool (see Luke 12:21). This story “gives no indication that the greed being condemned involves anything other than the accumulation of wealth by legitimate means” (Brian Rosner, Beyond Greed). But through this parable Jesus leads into a description of a life lived with a different set of priorities (see Luke 12:22-34). Jesus is critiquing an approach to life that is “measured by how much we own” (Luke 12:15, NLT).

In Seven Types of Ambiguity, Australian writer Elliot Perlman describes this all-pervading measure of life: “The relentless pursuit of the bottom line is the siren song of the times and the song is played over the public-address systems in banks, in stores and supermarkets . . . It has never been so loud. It’s never been so ubiquitous. It has never before so routinely, so blatantly, ousted and nullified citizenship and notions of the common good. . . . It has never before so successfully colonised men’s souls.”

The economic mythology criticised by both Jesus and Perlman is the supposed “trickles-down” effect of prosperity. While economic prosperity can bring some benefits to all, generally only a small portion “trickles down” to the people who most need it. This is compounded when the economic growth is driven by exploitation in its various forms—people, labour, the environment and other resources. So a small portion of the gains are “generously” made available to alleviate the suffering from which those gains were derived. It is a downward spiral with a veneer of economic growth and upward mobility.

And if the prosperity is derived from unsustainable development in whatever form, the prosperity will only ever be an illusion bought at someone else’s expense, whether it be at the expense of the working poor, those marginalised by society, developing countries or future generations.

Clearly this is not the way of God. “Economics built on destruction and exhaustion must be replaced with economies that model hospitality and care. We need to see that our economic lives give the most honest portrayal of how we understand salvation” (Norman Wirzba, The Paradise of God).

The connection of economics and our appreciation of salvation is one usually only employed in announcing the offering at church, but it isn’t limited to that small part of our income. It’s about all our lives, how we arrange all our finances, our priorities in our work, our families and our faith. Jesus said, “A person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God” (Luke 12:21, NLT). One evidence of that “rich relationship” is our focus on material resources and what we do with the resources we are given.

In the midst of our market-driven, consumer-focused and advertising-saturated culture, the economics of the Bible call for a radical reordering of our priorities. As Will O’Brien has put it, “When we truly discover love, capitalism will not be possible and Marxism will not be necessary” (quoted by Shane Claiborne, The Irresistible Revolution).
Women’s ministries condemns domestic violence in PNG

PORT MORESBY, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The Women’s Ministries Department of the Central Papua Mission and local churches used the Child Abuse and Violence to Women Awareness Week of August 20 to 26 to raise awareness about these problems in society.

Jeanette Egu, women’s ministries director for the Central Papua Mission, organised a committee of 11 people to arrange presentations aimed at helping to tackle these problems. United Nations statistics state that 67 per cent of women in Papua New Guinea suffer abuse of some kind.

Women in Port Moresby churches ran a three-night seminar about child abuse and domestic violence early in the week, which was designed as an in-reach to local churches.

Mrs Egu says, “The women’s ministries department in each church worked really well with the pastors and other departmental leaders and ran a very successful in-reach and outreach program on abuse and violence. Professional speakers, including those from government departments, were invited by churches to give talks against abuse and violence—it was eye-opening for many who attended the program.”

The programs were advertised on local television on the EMTV Toksave program in Tok Pisin, as well as on radio stations. “We also issued a press release on the subject for radio stations so everybody around Central Province heard our message,” says Mrs Egu.

Following the seminars, the churches in and around Port Moresby organised a procession of floats around the city. The procession started late in the morning and ended at the Sir John Guise Stadium for the conclusion of the program.

“The purpose was to raise public awareness about child abuse and violence to women,” Mrs Egu says. “Each church organised one or more floats, with women and young people putting on displays and acting out dramas that spoke against abuse and violence. Women and young people used megaphones to speak to the public about these problems as the trucks took them along the streets.”

Four government speakers spoke to the people who congregated at the stadium, including Ume Wainetti, the executive officer of the consultation, implementing and monitoring committees for the Abuse and Violence Office, and Dame Carol Kidu from the Office of the Ministry of Community Development.

The other speakers were from the Women Policing and Welfare for Children Departments of Community Development.

“They gave us good talks and the program was very encouraging,” adds Mrs Egu. “Dame Kidu pointed out that the government could not stop the abuse and violence problem. Governments and members of the public need to work together to fight abuse and violence in the country. Together we have to break the silence. We must put a stop to abuse and violence against our children and women.”

Mrs Egu believes the week’s programs were successful, saying, “We got the message out to the public that abusing our children and causing violence to women are against God’s intention. God intended us to be happy and enjoy the life He has given, and we have the right and freedom to live happily and safely, just as any other human being, rather than live a miserable life caused by the evil or thoughtless people of this world.”—Adelle Nash/Jeanette Egu

Weet-Bix’s website supporting the Socceroos at the recent FIFA World Cup in Germany has been archived by the National Library of Australia as a publication of lasting cultural value. The National Library of Australia will add the website to a comprehensive collection of Australian publications to ensure that Australians have access to their documentary heritage now and in the future. The library has traditionally collected items in print but in this modern era is also committed to preserving electronic publications.—James Tipple

ADRA-PNG staff put into practice its philosophy and beliefs in September when two raskols held an ADRA driver at gunpoint in the office car park with a handmade gun (pictured) and stole the ADRA four-wheel drive. Even though the vehicle was returned, the raskols were beaten badly by the police. In a country where the usual way to repay a bad deed is by payback, ADRA staff decided to forgive and visit the two raskols. A rehabilitation program was arranged for them, food provided and painkillers and medical supplies were also given to treat them for their injuries sustained at the police station.—Tok Save

Luke Thomas, a Year 5 student at Prescott Primary Southern, SA, achieved the highest mark in his year level for the state of South Australia in the English International Competition and Assessment for Schools. Ms Gay Thompson, local Member of Parliament, attended assembly to present Luke with his award.—Mitsy Bullas
SA schools celebrate 100 years

ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

In 1906, Adventist believers in Adelaide opened their first school in South Australia with 15 students, and Nellie Mountain as the teacher at Prospect,” says Marion Shields, director of Adventist education for the South Australian Conference.

One hundred years later, on September 30 and October 1, Prescott Primary Southern, Prescott Primary Northern and Prescott College, together with hundreds of parents and students, as well as current alumni, celebrated a centenary of South Australian Adventist education.

At the worship service, attendees were encouraged by addresses from the South Australian Minister for Education, the Honourable Dr Jane Lomax-Smith, and the national director of Adventist Schools Australia, Dr John Hannson.

Mrs Shields says, “School captains from all three schools honoured the alumni and schools of the past, while musicians and singers enhanced the congregational praise throughout the program. In a fitting climax the three school choirs united on stage at the end, with a hymn of commitment, joined by the audience.

“On the Saturday evening, an excellent concert displayed the talents of past teachers and students from the different decades as well as current alumni.”

The weekend concluded with a fair at Prescott College and tours of the current facility.

The Prescott school system first began with one classroom, which was attached to the rear of the Prospect Adventist church.

In 1936 the school was transferred to its present location in Koonga Avenue, Prospect, with the primary school levels dividing into new schools in 1952.

Students empty closets for charity

COORANBONG, NEW SOUTH WALES

More than 3000 articles of clothing were donated to a local women and children's refuge on September 4 following a clothing drive at Avondale School. After an intensive campaign throughout the K-12 school, students proudly handed over piles of winter clothing.

“We believe it is important for children to be involved in helping others,” says the event organiser and assistant head of primary, Ruth Webster. “Each year we engage in a service project, rotating between supporting a national project, a local project and a church project. This year we supported a local project. We were not really surprised at the level of participation. Enthusiastic teachers lead to enthusiastic students.”

Avondale School students with bags of donated clothes.
Adventist counselling centre opens in WA

PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

A new counselling and mediation centre located in Perth can now be accessed by Western Australian Adventist families.

Danny Bell, the centre’s manager, says, “The most important thing we want people to know is there is now a counselling service specific to the beliefs and culture of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to go to.”

“Going to secular or other Christian counsellors may expose members to unsympathetic and even prejudicial outcomes over sensitive issues about our faith and practice. Sometimes Adventist family disputes involve our unique belief system and way of life and cannot be given the sympathy deserved in secular counselling settings.”

Australian Family Court legislation requires that the disputing parties first negotiate their dispute out of court with a mediation service provider. Mr Bell says, “This gives us a tremendous opportunity to work with families and rescue the situation instead of heading for the graveyard of failed marriages.”

The All Families Meditation and Counselling Centre is also being used as the base for a new church-plant group currently meeting once a month.

Mr Bell says, “One of the spin-offs we hope to accomplish through this association is to feed people who access our service into the group’s various outreach activities currently operating in the area. People are already requesting information and access to some of our clubs, meetings and Outreach program.”

AMN provides Pacific Focus

(Continued from page 1)

the South Pacific region.

AMN is the result of a merger of the Adventist Media Centre, the Communication and Public Relations Department of the SPD and Signs Publishing Company.

A major Web development that will see better integration with conference and union websites, a research of public opinion on their awareness and understanding of the Adventist Church and improved ways of promoting the church and its products to the public are some of the upcoming projects for AMN.

Pacific Focus is available on DVD as a 30-minute television program, and 10 episodes will be produced annually. Individual clips will be available for download on the church’s members site, <spd.adventist.org.au>, soon. A free copy of the DVD is available with this week’s RECORD.

Pacific Focus replaces the quarterly Adventist News, which ran from 2002 to 2005 and was produced by the SPD Communication and Public Relations Department.

Melody Tan

Contact the Adventist Media Network on <info@adventistmedia.com.au> or +61 2 9847 2223 if you have stories about your church or for a VHS copy of Pacific Focus.

Victor Garcia

AMN provides Pacific Focus

(Continued from page 1)

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Christians flee Iraq in war’s wake

BAGHDAD, IRAQ

Civil unrest in Iraq—home to the cities of Nineveh, ancient Babylon, Ur of the Chaldees and even the biblical Garden of Eden—is taking a toll on the already small Christian community. Many who can leave the country, including Seventh-day Adventists, are continuing to do so in the face of daily terrorism.

“Yes, some are still leaving [Iraq] from our church,” said Pastor Basim Fargo, president of the Iraq Field. “Of course, those who are leaving are [educated], well-to-do; those who are staying are poor people who cannot afford to leave.”

Pastor Fargo said there are now approximately 75 Seventh-day Adventist church members in Iraq, down from around 150 before the 2003 invasion and subsequent domestic disturbances.

He spoke by phone with Adventist News Network in the wake of an October 17 New York Times report documenting a general departure of Christians from Iraq.

According to that report, the total number of Christians in Iraq is unclear: a 1987 census—the last conducted—listed 1.4 million Christians; today, estimates range between 600,000 and 800,000.

Whatever the number, Iraq’s Christians are feeling uncertainty in the wake of the war and from external factors, such as the recent controversial remarks of the Roman Catholic pontiff, Pope Benedict XVI, about Islam.

“The declaration of the pope has caused a bit of opposition and an unhappy situation [for Christians] with the people in the country,” Pastor Fargo said.

“This ignited a fire in the country. Most people go by tradition [in their religion]. When things like this happen, it affects them very badly,” he added, speaking of Muslim believers.

“Such effects roll over to the Christian community,” he said.

“Some people can stand it, some cannot, so they have to leave the country looking for their safety.”

“The situation that is in the country will not allow us to practise our services freely. It is not safe to go [out] from home,” he said. “We are meeting every Sabbath, but it is very difficult. We expect an explosion any time during the day.”

Pastor Fargo said Iraqis hope for better times ahead.

“We hope that in the near future, things will be better, at least what we hear from the news, we expect that in the coming months things are going to improve. But no-one knows except God,” he said.

In a comment addressed to Adventists worldwide, he said, “We ask that you keep us in your prayers, [fellow] believers around the world.” —Mark Kelner/ANN

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Some 58 riders and support staff pulled into St Luke’s Anglican church, Miranda, NSW, on October 14, ending a 4100-kilometre Bike for Bibles ride. The Perth–Sydney ride raised more than $120,000 for an HIV/AIDS project in Kenya and Uganda. Bike for Bibles was started in 1984 as a fundraiser for Bible distribution around the world and has now spread to more than 25 countries. In Australia, more than $1.1 million has been raised for Bible literacy projects and more than 760,000 kilometres ridden by more than 30,000 riders. —Bible Society NSW

Elders of Henderson Hills Baptist church, Oklahoma, USA, recently decided against proceeding with a church-wide vote on a proposal to remove baptism as a requirement for church membership. Four Henderson Hills elders discussed the issue with a “recognized Baptist theologian and author” for 19 hours at his home, beginning at 9 am and concluding at 4 am the next day. “Sentiments among members ranged from very supportive to very much against the proposal,” says Henderson Hill’s minister, Dr Dennis Newkirk. “Our concern is for Christians in two categories: those who physically cannot experience immersion due to a disability and those who are under the mistaken conviction that sprinkling is baptism.” —BPNews

Twentieth Century Fox has launched a movie distribution label targeting the Christian community, with the goal of releasing at least six “faith-based” and “inspiration” theatrical films a year. The label, “FoxFaith,” will house both DVD and theatrical faith-based films that have a clear Christian message or are based on material by Christian authors. FoxFaith also will market the movies to churches and ministry organisations.

One Night With the King, a $US20 million film on the book of Esther launched in October, played at more than 1000 theatres across the USA. —Baptist Press/Jason Anthony

More at www.foxfaith.com

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IS YOUR CHURCH DOING SOMETHING EXCITING, INNOVATIVE OR INSPIRING? EMAIL RECORD@SIGNSPUBLISHING.COM.AU

November 18, 2006
Pitcairn road completed

ANGWIN, CALIFORNIA, USA

ECORD readers who gifted money in the mid-to-late 1990s in order for an all-weather-surface road to be laid on Pitcairn Island will be cheered to know the difficult and complex construction project is now complete,” says Dr Herb Ford, director of the Pitcairn Island Study Center, based at Pacific Union College, California.

Thousands of people from the South Pacific Division and throughout the world donated funds to complete the new concrete road, replacing Pitcairn Island’s former roads, which were often muddy and landslide prone.

Dr Ford adds, “Hundreds of Adventist schoolchildren gave funds through their schools, and a number of world notables, including the late King Hussein of Jordan, gave funds to the project. Governmental and bureaucratic red tape delayed the start of construction for years, but work finally began in mid-2005 and was completed in mid-2006. The new road up Pitcairn’s steep ‘Hill of Difficulty,’ leading from the island’s boat landing at Bounty Bay up to the little village of Adamstown, has finally been finished.”

Pitcairn Island, one of the world’s most remote islands, was a base for sending Adventist missionaries to other Pacific-island countries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

“From a population high of some 230 inhabitants in the 1930s, Pitcairn’s population has dwindled to about 50 persons today. From a once near 100 per cent of its inhabitants being Adventists in earlier years, the number today has fallen to below a dozen, though an Adventist pastor ministers on the island, and upwards of half of the population often attends Sabbath services,” says Dr Ford.

The Pitcairn Island Study Center houses the world’s largest collection of information and artifacts about various elements of “The Bounty Saga.”

New VC appointed for PAU

PORT MORESBY, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

A senior lecturer in the School of Theology has been appointed as the new vice-chancellor of Pacific Adventist University (PAU). Dr Branmir Schubert, 45, originally from Croatia, is a naturalised citizen of Australia. He is married with two sons. His wife, Daniela, is also a lecturer in the School of Theology at PAU.

Dr Schubert will take over from Dr Neuman Tausere, who has served as vice-chancellor for five years and requested a return to Fiji at the end of year.

Prior to coming to PAU, Dr Schubert was principal at Pakistan Adventist Seminary. He has also served as a church pastor of two churches in Melbourne, Australia. He holds a Master of Teaching Ministry and a wealth of experience in various capacities.

His appointment was made by the South Pacific Division’s Executive Committee. When accepting the appointment he said, “I feel very humbled. To be selected for such a role brings feelings of excitement and joy, but this is heavily tempered with feelings of total dependency on God and His grace.

“The job is too big for one person. So, if we all work as a team, having God as our leader, we will make the difference that will contribute to the development of God’s work here in Papua New Guinea as well as the Pacific region.”

In a letter of appreciation to the PAU community he said, “PAU is a special university—God is the leader and we all follow Him in various capacities. My dream is to see PAU grow, not so much numerically, but in quality and influence. PAU can be the best privately owned university in the country.”

More @ www.pitcairnstudycenter.org

Two new books feature Signs writers

WARBURTON, VICTORIA

Two new Christian books, published by Strand Publishing, have been released featuring writers for Signs of the Times magazine.

Australian Stories to Inspire the Heart and Australian Stories for Teens are part of the “Australian Stories” series, which aims to encourage and inspire readers with often-humerous real-life stories by Christian authors. Both books contain more than 40 stories, covering topics like grace, love and overcoming fear.

Signs writers Linzi Aitkin, Braden Blyde, Kellie Hancock, Greenvale Kent, Nathan Brown, Alan Holman and Robert Wolfgramm contributed stories to the collections.

A number of well-known Australian Christian personalities also contributed to the books, including Kel Richards, Darlene Zschech, Tim Costello and Geoff Bullock.

--- Adele Nash

November 18, 2006
God seems to love to surprise the human beings He has made—to shake them from their lethargy, to save them from mediocrity, to put a new spring in their step, to hurry forward the work of His kingdom. So almost as far back as recorded human history reaches, God has been at work in the world, always doing something new.

Imagine an old man and an old woman—striking figures, impressive, powerful leaders, but way past child-bearing. And God, needing both, takes this man Abraham and this woman Sarah, and from their dignified, but ageing flesh, He fashions a baby and launches a family and a nation.

But He isn’t done yet, even though the plan looks as if it is derailed. The family—the big family now—is saved from starvation in Egypt, but then becomes marooned in Egypt, and finally enslaved in Egypt.

But God is not overwhelmed. He simply does something new. He sets a bush on fire that never burns up. Successful with bushes, He decides to do it with humans. He sets Moses on fire and he never burns up either.

Moses puts a path through the sea, wrings water from a rock in the desert, drops supernatural food into hungry mouths. God is doing something new.

But there’s more. In even the darkest of days, when this big family—nation that He loves is down and out—slaves again, in Babylon and then Persia—He’ll try something new. Witness a courageous girl locked in a deep hold of prejudice. Esther: marginalised because she’s Jewish; marginalised because she’s a woman—and what can a woman do anyway? There’s no doubt about what a woman can do by the end of this story.

God is talking to Himself: “I love these humans so passionately but there are things they don’t realise. They don’t really understand that I want the whole human race reached with My love. They are trapped in a groove of ethnic prejudice with Israel at class one, and all the rest at class two, so how can I reach My world? How can I grow My kingdom?”

They are locked into other kinds of prejudice too. A first-century Jewish prayer illustrates the problem. With deepest sincerity and piety a first-century Jewish man could pray this prayer: “Thank You, God, that I was not born a Gentile; thank You, God, that I was not born a slave; thank You, God, that I was not born a woman.”

So God initiates the most incredible new thing of all. “I’ll need a woman,” He says, “so I’ll select one—a teenager. She won’t let Me down. Teenagers don’t let you down when you trust them and empower them and believe in them. She’ll have the energy, the resilience and the raw courage—and how she will need them all.”

And God leaps down from high heaven. He takes on flesh. He nestsles in the womb of that teenage woman. He comes to the people He loves. The One who made them and fashioned them, the One who longs to be with them, does the most spectacular new thing in all of human history. He takes on human form. He takes our pains, our joys, our sorrows, even our sin and rebellion, and makes them His own.

He does this because He has a vision of a new humanity: a new community of people overwhelmed by His grace, a new community bathed in forgiveness. He sees...
a new community capable of reaching into every seemingly God-forsaken and desolate corner of this planet with good news. A new community where artificial barriers and walls of distinction are gone. A new community lives out the breathtaking description of itself we read from Paul: “For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptised into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26-28, NRSV).

So God launched this new community. His sons and daughters did—and still do—prophesy (see Acts 2:17) and the walls started to come down (see Ephesians 2:14).

And then God asked Himself, “How will I nurture this new community? This community is My chosen way of reaching to the ends of the earth. I could write in the sky spectacular things to tell the world I love it and want it back. But My best way of telling them is through this new community, this body I will call the church. So how will I nurture the church, how will I empower it to do business for Me? I’m not sure that I want to carry on with the old way. I nurtured My people Israel through a line of hereditary male priests. Some of them made Me proud, but some of them made Me cringe.

“So let’s do something new,” says God. “Instead of focusing most leadership gifts on the hereditary line of male inheritance, let’s gift every member of this new community. Let’s flood it with the power and energy of the Spirit, and let’s tell everyone, ‘You are absolutely crucial to the mission of this new community, the community called the Christian church. If the church and the world misses out on your gifts, your uniqueness, your energy, your passion, then the church and the world will be forever impoverished. Because it needs you, Jesus needs you.’”

God listed the gifts He was pouring out: teaching, healing, encouraging, evangelising, giving, hospitality. And then if people were still locked into the old hereditary way of thinking, He said it another way. Through Peter He exclaimed, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9, NIV).

“If you want to think ‘priest,’ that’s OK. But just know,” says God, “that every last member of My new community is a priest.”

He goes on. “Now I need a way to encourage and nurture all My gifted people. I need them to know that they are supported, that they are not alone. I need them to fly, and I need them to be encouraged as they learn to fly.”

So God poured out into His church one gift along with all the others that was really the gift of coaching and nurture. He called it pastoring. This gift often works best when people express it in a full-time way. It’s no more important than all the others, and it certainly does not make the people who have this gift more holy or more valuable to God. Never. But when people with this gift are willing and able to put their time into using it, then God smiles and says, “Watch My community grow now. Watch the people learn to fly. See the dark corners of the planet lightened. See My kingdom advance.”

And in the new community God has established through Jesus, there are no restrictions on who may receive the gift of being pastor, coach, nurturer. The biggest threat to the new community was that people were tempted to think that the old barriers were still there—barriers of race, social standing and even of gender.

But God would have none of that. He was doing something new. His servant Paul almost weeps with passion as he shouts across the miles to his new friends in Galatia, “You are one in Christ Jesus.”

God did something new when He called a tiny group of Christians 160 years ago to put their energies into advancing His kingdom. He was desperate for the world to be reminded there was a better day coming, that His kingdom would triumph, that Jesus would return. So He poured out those gifts again—the same ones with which He started the kingdom journey 2000 years earlier. The gifts went to everyone, and they were diverse gifts. God saw no difference between men and women, young and old, Anglo-Saxon or African as He lovingly poured out His gifts.

And God is still doing new things today. When we recognise and affirm the gifts, abilities and passion of a new minister, we are recognising that God still uses people in special and new ways.

What we are doing is reminding everyone in the congregation how valuable this person is to God. We are also reminding ourselves that He has gifted us all and that there is no first and second class in the new community He is building. We are celebrating and acknowledging the fact that another of God’s gifted ones is willing to put full time and full energy into his or her particular task, which is to be coach, nurturer and encourager of all of God’s gifted people.

In recognising these gifts of ministry, we are saying no to status and privilege. We are saying no to a view of ministry that puts power and authority above service and nurture. We are saying no to gender exclusiveness that would deny more than half the members of God’s new community an opportunity to express their gifts as coach and nurturer when God so gifts them.

When we recognise God is still doing new things among us, we are saying yes to God’s call. We are opening our hearts again to the Spirit He wants to pour out on us. We are saying yes to the specific gifts we know He has lodged in each and all of us.

“This article is adapted from the sermon preached by Dr Lyell Heise at the commissioning service of Kylie Ward at the Ferntree Gully church (Vic) on August 19 (see “Celebration as ministry is affirmed,” News, October 28).

Lyell Heise is director of the South Pacific Division’s Institute of Worship, based at Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales.

November 18, 2006
Contemplating compassionate ministry

BY ARIANNA KANE

SERVING HUMANITY IS NOT A SUGGESTION; IT IS AN ACT MOTIVATED BY OUR FAITH.

As my mind took in these words, a panorama of Jesus’ life began to unfold before my eyes. I sat back to watch.

Filled with compassion and a love beyond understanding, Jesus left heaven and entered the world of humanity. He came as a poor man so that through His poverty we might become rich (see 2 Corinthians 8:9). He took up the mission to save a despairing world with the knowledge that it would cost Him His life.

Jesus entered communities as a humble man with a servant’s heart. Radiating a deep love and care, He ministered in the streets and associated with the outcasts. He saw past their faults and empathised with their situations and struggles. He spoke passionately for humanity, developing a presence and forming friendships, which can open windows into people’s lives. We need to get acquainted with those who are working in the community. This may be government or non-profit agencies, law enforcement, churches, education institutions and other welfare organisations. Their knowledge and experience can provide valuable insight into our communities. In all of this, we need to commit our desires and plans to the Lord in continual prayer (see Ephesians 6:18).

God does not ask or expect us to be all things to all people. He is the best person to enlighten, guide and equip us in the areas in which we can make a difference for Him.

We do not need to take Jesus to the community. He is already there. Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me” (Matthew 25:45, NIV). And He is also there working among these people, through us and others.

My contemplation had come full circle and the conclusions were obvious. One of the reasons I am a Christian is because of my admiration of the ministry of Jesus Christ to people in desperate need. I am compelled to follow this ministry, to reach out, to love, to care and to save—“with Christ’s help”—“the least of these.”

Arianna Kane writes from Auckland, New Zealand, where she works with the North New Zealand Conference.
The video minister’s prayer is that, on the basis of the friendship and from the information seen on the videos, people will make positive decisions in favour of Jesus and His salvation. But video viewing is an entertainment media. How do you know people are thinking about what they’ve seen? How can you find out without being confronting, threatening or intrusive? Small decisions pave the way for larger decisions. And, in video ministry, people have made many small decisions from when they requested the first video.

Here is a simple but powerful way of finding what people are thinking about a subject. Ask three questions, which are non-threatening, non-invasive and non-confronting. They are easy to ask and can be worded in different ways. The three questions are: Is it new? Is it clear? Is it doable?

These three questions, asked in sequence, can be asked of any subject. By asking the first question, you don’t have to go any further.

These questions are all closed questions: the answer is either yes or no. “Is this subject new to you?” If no, ask: “Where have you heard it before?” (You’ll learn a lot from this.) If they answer yes, ask the next question: “Is it clear and did it make sense to you?”

In response to the question Is it clear? if the answer is no, ask where the confusion is and offer a video on the same topic from another series to help make it clearer. If the response is yes, you can then go to the third question.

If the subject is clear, you want to encourage them to do something about it. So you can ask the third question something like this: “Is there anything preventing you from following Jesus by [for example] keeping His Sabbath?” The answer to this question again is either yes or no, leading to further discussion. It’s an opportunity to minister, and to pray and help people work through their problem in responding and acting upon what they know. If they answer no, the video minister can simply ask: “I invite you to accept Jesus and to follow Him” by whatever the question may be.

One of the most challenging aspects of any outreach is asking for decisions. Not everybody is comfortable doing this, but often people want to respond. It takes courage, prayer and tact to put those questions to people. But they are vital in leading people to making decisions and also to finding out what is going on in people’s minds so supportive ministry can be offered.

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

John Gate is director of the Adventist Discovery Centre.
Deciding factors

DAVID CHESNEY, VIC

There used to be fiery disputes in the church about whether Paul was describing his pre- or post-conversion experience in Romans 7:14-25. It seems statistical analysis rather than theology has answered the question (“What difference?” Perspective, October 7). Using the experience of converted Adventists as a guide, we would have to say Paul was describing his post-conversion experience, unpleasant though it was.

I have sometimes branded statistics as this article did and concluded that the emphasis on “cheap grace” has caused much of the problem. However, occasional introspection leads me to believe I ought to be all in favour of “cheap grace”—what the article refers to as “a legal and technical change in our standing with God.” But the article justifiably asks if Adventists who are just like worldly people morally can really attract people to the church.

It seems too many of our church members are like the emperor who thought he was clothed but was actually naked. They are spiritually naked. John said so (see Revelation 3:17, 18), and wasn’t happy about it. He advised buying “gold refined in the fire . . . and white clothes to wear, so that you can cover your shameful nakedness” (Revelation 3:18, NIV).

As we believe, the gold includes genuine love—the first fruit of the Spirit—and such genuine love would solve most of the problems the article lists. That we are told not to love the world, but to love God and people, implies we have some control over where our affections are directed. But on the “burning issue: How?” question, I can only suggest God will eventually solve the problem in the furnace of affliction.

Children matter

MAYE PORTER, NORFOLK ISLAND

Congratulations to RECORD staff for providing a whole centrepiece for children and the young at heart in the October 21 issue. Scott Wegener (“Happy birthday, God!” Feature) has given us another example of his real gift for writing children’s sermons. And the children’s contributions were delightful. We need more such pages.

Thank you, too, to Julie Weslake (Editorial), for the timely reminder that we each have “a legacy worth leaving.”

The only jarring note in the whole ministry to children theme was the letter attacking a previous article, “What my parents passed on to me.” I recall that article and still failed to find anything in such a beautiful tribute to the training given the writer by his godly parents that could be construed as a put-down. For sure, today we have many more resources that can be used in leading our children into a faith relationship with their Lord. And every set of parents will choose what models and resources they wish to use to achieve that aim.

But Bible study, family worship, church attendance and parental example should never be regarded as “dated behavioural absolutes” in a Christian home.

Sadly, many children miss out on the blessing of Bible lessons at an Adventist school. And as a primary Sabbath school teacher, I am reminded each week just how little most children know about the Bible, let alone the stories in it or the wonderful verses they should be committing to memory during the week at home.

By the way, if my pastor–husband neglected to attend prayer meeting or board meetings, I would consider it a poor example both to his immediate family and the church family at large. I applaud all those who manage to balance home responsibilities, work responsibilities plus church responsibilities so none are neglected.

Stand up and . . .

KRISTINE STAHL, SA

Regarding the article “Adventists and noncombatancy” (Feature, October 21), I have just one question for all Adventists who would choose to join the army and bear arms. How can a Seventh-day Adventist choose to take up arms against their brothers and sisters of other nationalities, when they have been called by God Himself to bear a message of salvation to all people, irrespective of nationality?

We are asked to seek and save the lost, not to destroy and alienate them. The armies of the world are engaged in a battle for earthly supremacy. This is not a battle Adventists want to be involved in for the sake of a fuzzy notion of patriotism.

The man of nature

ISOBEL SUTHERLAND, QLD

I have no idea of the late Steve Irwin’s thoughts on salvation or his standing with God. While the letter writer (“Croc hunter question,” Letters, October 14) may be correct, he has no right to point the finger at others. Judgment is the prerogative of God and I am content to leave such matters in His hands.

TRUDI CARTER, QLD

Praise the Lord for Steve Irwin and his family who obviously practise what they preach! Perhaps Steve was put here for such a time as this to speak up for God’s creatures. He had a loving, intelligent and compassionate perspective and because he lived his passion for the environment, it now radiates through his family and into the community. What a life and what an impact for good he had and has! Perhaps Adventist Christians could learn a lot from Steve’s example and the Bible verse that says, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21, NIV).

Thanks to Mike Brownhill for his kind perspective (“ Mourning the Crocodile Hunter,” Feature, September 23).

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.
Obituaries
Andreas, Marion Paterson (formerly Groom, née Burgin), born 5.9.1922 at Invermay, Vic; died 13.8.06 at Invermay. She was survived by her husband, Bob; her son, Calvin Groom and Margaret; her daughters and sons-in-law, Leonie and Karl Brunton, and Julie and Graeme Rennick; her sisters and their spouses, Marita and Jim Brophy, and Florence and John Anderson; and her seven grandchildren. Marion was known for her caring nature and her hospitality. She will be sadly missed by her family and friends.

Lawrence O’Toole

Rennie, daughter of Del (Chancellor Park, on 8.10.06 at Tondoon Gardens, Gladstone, and Rose Jones (Gladstone), were married Neil and Robyn Nicoll (Gladstone, Qld), married on 14.10.06 at Our Lady Help of Australia Retirement Village Nursing Home, Mounts. He was predeceased by his wife, Ruth (nee Mann). He is survived by his children and their spouses, Janice and Kelvin, Christine and Don and Ivan and Robyn. Donie will be sadly missed by his family and friends, and they are comforted by the fact that he left years with God. “He will see us again.”

Cox, John Bruce, born 1911 at Drummond, Sydney, NSW, died 1.10.06 at Port Stephens Garden Nursing Centre. In 1939 he married Minnie Joyce Choules, who predeceased him. In 1962 he married Dorothy McPhie. He is survived by his wife, his son, Dr John Cox (Avondale College) and daughter, Jenny Shaw (Port Stephens), and their families. Bruce was a highly valued and respected State school principal in NSW. He was a notable leader in church and community, his sermons resulting in numerous baptisms. He is remembered as one who loved his Lord, embraced the amaranth of the soul, and lived according to its principles.

Lincoln, Heddie Gallett, born 21.1.20, at Mentone, Vic, died 29.10.06 at Cornella Retirement Village, Narellan. On 18.4.42 he married Edith Ulhorn. He was predeceased by his son, Lloyd, on 10.10.06. He was survived by his wife, his children, his grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. He was a devoted family man, a mariner in service, a man of noble spirit, a down-to-earth Aussie, who loved metaphysics and life in general.

Jean Amelia (nee Hort), born 13.4.12 at Richmond, Vic; died 28.9.06 at the Sydney Adventist Hospital. She was a quiet achiever, with her greatest loves being family and God, and her family and friends were comforted by the fact that she died at the Resurrection.

Kew. On 30.3.40 she married Len, who predeceased her in 2005. She was also predeceased by her husband, her children, Ian, Rhonda, Leona and Colin (all of Melbourne); and their families. Eunice was always a devoted daughter and a loving mother. She blessed the lives of her nine grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. We will remember her as a kind, gracious and gentle woman.

Joh, Edna Mary (nee Milner), born 25.5.1908 at Kent, Vic, died 19.9.06 at Calderm Clinic, Kent. On 9.1.40 she married Len, who predeceased her in 2004. She was predeceased by her son, Norman. She is survived by her husband, her children, Ian, Rhonda, Leona and Colin (all of Melbourne); and their families. Eunice was always a devoted daughter and a loving mother. She blessed the lives of her nine grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. We will remember her as a kind, gracious and gentle woman.

Dene Maurice, born 28.11.1922 at Invermay, Vic; died 11.9.06 in Allamanda Hospice, Ballarat. On 6.4.63 he married Joy Laing, who predeceased him in 2002. She was also predeceased by her husband, her children, Ian, Rhonda, Leona and Colin (all of Melbourne); and their families. Eunice was always a devoted daughter and a loving mother. She blessed the lives of her nine grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. We will remember her as a kind, gracious and gentle woman.

November 18, 2006
Positions vacant

- **Secretary to the Youth Department**—North NSW Conference is seeking the services of a Secretary to the Youth Department. This is a busy department involving planning for summer camps, Pathfinder events and youth rallies. The successful applicant will possess the following attributes: well organised and self-motivated, willing to participate in youth events, well-developed people skills, particularly with young people, committed to the teaching values and mission of the SDA Church.

- **Administrative Secretary—North NSW Conference** is seeking the services of a Secretary to the General Conference and Chief Financial Officer. The successful applicant will have appropriate secretarial/administrative qualifications and experience, a working knowledge of the SDA Church structure and organisation, well-developed people skills, excellent oral and written communications skills, able to work to a deadline, self-motivated and well-organised.

For further information contact the General Secretary, Mr R Dale, PO Box 7, Wallabadah NSW 2327; or email Rdale@adventists.org.au (phone (02) 6341 6900; applications close December 1, 2006).

- **Nurse Manager—Bethesda Home and Hospital (Manukau City, NZ)** is seeking a registered general or congenent to nurse with current practising certificate, preferably with a postgraduate qualification related to the industry. Requirements include: strong clinical skills; experience in Human Resource management in nursing; the ability to work effectively with interdisciplinary teams and patients; fantastic interpersonal and rapport skills; and professional experience in managing hospital units.

Applications in writing (including CV) should be forwarded to CEO, Bethesda, Private Bag 5000, Manukau City, Auckland, NZ, or email—nurse@bethshome.org.nz no later than November 27, 2006.

- **Karlslund Aboriginal Education Centre (Menindee, WA)** is seeking expressions of interest in the following positions for 2007: Cook, Male Dorm Parent, and 2 Teachers (Years 1–5 and 6–9). For job descriptions and general inquiries please contact Glenn Gray <administrator@karalundi.wa.edu.au>; phone (08) 9981 2000. 

Applications in writing (including CV) should be forwarded to Administrator, PMB 6, Menindee WA 6342.

- **Accountant, Macquarie College (Wallsend, NSW)**. The Macquarie College is seeking to appoint an experienced and qualified Accountant to oversee and administer the financial, financial and property operations of the college.

Job description:

- principal@macquariecollege.nsw.edu.au

- Essential criteria: Proven member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, financial management experience, and reference to tertiary and professional qualifications. Applications in writing (including detailed resumes and reference should be forwarded to the Principal, Macquarie College, PO Box 112, Wallabadah NSW 2327) no later than November 30, 2006.

- **Macquarie College teaching opportunities**—Macquarie College (NNSW) is seeking qualified teachers in the following disciplines: Senior Mathematics, Bible History, Business and Social Sciences. Job descriptions and applications—principal@macquariecollege.nsw.edu.au; phone (02) 4944 6222.

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

Advertisements

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Author Unknown

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