The North New South Wales Conference’s layperson training centre was held at the Stuarts Point Convention Centre from March 16 to 23. This marked the centre’s third year of operations and saw the first graduating class of six people—Iris Minchin, Jennifer Darko, Gordon Hilleary, Pamela Osmond, Barbara Clancy and Lesley Howie—receive their conference-awarded “Lay training certificate level one.”

The course consisted of a week of residential classes and two home-church assignments for each subject undertaken. Four subjects are undertaken each year in the three-year program, and cover topics like church governance, Adventist heritage and children’s ministries.

With the skills acquired from the course, church members trained through the centre gain an understanding of many aspects of church life and specific ministries they can provide support for in their local churches.

Dr Joe Webb, senior pastor at Wallsend church and lay training centre coordinator, says, “We’re extremely excited about this lay training centre, because it is clearly having a great impact upon the participants.”
Are we willing to make that sacrifice, to take up our cross and follow Him?

“Greater love hath no man”

A solemn, respectful peacefulness lay over the large, pillared chamber. As quiet as a church, the cavernous room echoed with my footsteps. Others milled around in different corners of the building, yet I was left alone with my thoughts and had tuned out the world.

The impressive memorial—a constant reminder of horrors past—seemed to crown this bustling metropolis, looking out over Australia’s second largest city, Melbourne. I had not been to Melbourne’s Shrine of Remembrance before but, being new to Melbourne, I decided I had to see it.

In the middle of the floor of the main chamber is an open square, surrounded by wreaths. The inscription at the bottom of the square reads, “Greater love hath no man,” in crisp, golden letters. On November 11, Remembrance Day, at exactly 11 o’clock, a ray of sunlight filters through the roof and illuminates one word: Love.

The phrase sums up the sacrifice the Anzacs made for peace, for their homes, families and friends, the reason for the memorial, for the ceremonies and for the families and friends, the reason for the Anzacs made for peace, for their homes, for the reasons we all celebrate the mateship we pride ourselves in.

In the same way, the celebration of the cross and the knowledge of our redemption should ensure we pray not to fall into the same sinful traps as those that plagued us before we accepted the sacrifice. Yet we can join Paul in saying what we do not want to do, we still do (see Romans 7:18-20). The memory of Calvary puts the responsibility on us to accept the grace we have already been given and separate ourselves from sin, closing the gap back to God.

Both Moses—patriarch of Israel—and Paul—early father of the Christian faith—understood this sacrifice and were willing to take it up. In Exodus 32:32, Moses tries to bargain with God for the lives of his people: “But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.”

Similarly, Paul in Romans 9:3 says, “For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race.” This is no trivial lip-service. The self-sacrifice demonstrated in these sincere heart-pleadings is immense and Christlike. These men have truly understood the concept of love.

The question is, are we willing to make that sacrifice, to take up our cross and follow Him? To give of our time, our money, our health, even our lives to see the gospel reach the world? It is time our worship and acceptance of the sacrifice made for us filled up more of our lives than a few hours on Sabbath morning.

If those Anzacs could bleed for home and country, and Christ could bleed for all humankind, when will we join the fight to ensure the faith we cherish is more than just ritual and memorial, but a living sacrifice lived and fought every day?

*Bible quotations are from the New International Version.


Jarrod Stackelroth
TRY-athlon celebrates 15 years

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

Celebrating its 15th year in New Zealand, the Weet-Bix Kids TRY-athlon attracted more than 15,000 participants across the seven consecutive Sundays events were run. The series began on February 11 in Hamilton and concluded on April 1 at Narrowneck Beach in Auckland.

The series received a lot of positive feedback from participants and their parents, who were impressed with the way the events were organised and had encouraged young participants to get involved and be active.

The New Zealand Herald covered some of the TRY-athlon events and featured a young disabled girl, standing at the water’s edge on her crutches about to begin the swim leg of the course.

Robyn Donaldson, Sanitarium New Zealand’s customer relations consultant, says, “We were all inspired by her ability to confidently swim without using her legs. This is what the Weet-Bix Kids TRY-athlon is all about—children achieving, giving it a go, and inspirational stories of lives changed.

“Sanitarium believes that this event fulfills its mission statement—‘We inspire and resource our community to live happy, healthy lives.’ God has truly blessed this event.”

Hamish Carter, a champion triathlete who won the Triathlon World Cup 12 times and gold at the Athens Olympics, is Sanitarium’s ambassador for the TRY-athlon.

Mr Carter recently announced his retirement from triathlon competitions, but has agreed to be involved with the Weet-Bix series for as long as required.

Many of the current top 10 triathletes in New Zealand came to events throughout the Weet-Bix series. Triathlon New Zealand is a supporter of the TRY-athlon and for the past two years has supplied personnel and their expertise to help Sanitarium run the program efficiently and smoothly.

The TRY-athlon series was the brainchild of Jim Rennie, marketing manager for Sanitarium in New Zealand 15 years ago. Tanne Andrews now manages the Weet-Bix brand for New Zealand, and Hayley Findlay is the TRY-athlon manager. This was Ms Findlay’s first year managing the TRY-athlon, which she describes as being an “overwhelming experience—a truly fantastic event to be involved in.”

She adds, “The smiles on the children’s faces as they cross the finish line, their excitement and enthusiasm, more than make up for the huge effort that’s involved in making sure the event runs smoothly week after week.”—RECORD staff/Robyn Donaldson

◆ The Blenheim church, South New Zealand, has proved that one can never be too young or too old to letterbox. Members of all ages have helped deliver flyers to the local neighbourhood, including three-year-old Myles (pictured) and 87-year-old Pearl Jackson, for a variety of programs. The Quit Now! campaign is one program operating in the tiny town of Picton, which saw eight people successfully quit smoking. The program was completely staffed and operated by church members. The church has also letterboxed for the Search video advertising and a vegetarian cooking school that has 24 people already registered to attend.—Paul Gredig

◆ Year 7 students at Prescott Primary Northern, SA, have chosen to give the money raised from a musical they performed for staff and students to Asian Aid. The students were given a choice of where the money would go and agreed it should be sent to Immanuel College, an Adventist school in India, to provide them with books and equipment. The musical was a drama of “Moses and the Ten Commandments” and raised $A695 for Asian Aid. The whole class was involved in production and some students even had to practise during their lunchtimes.—Joy Stackelroth

◆ Carlisle Christian College, Mackay, Qld, recently celebrated a bric-a-brac, fun day for parents, friends and members of the community. Activities included face painting, bric-a-brac, a live band, a fire truck from the local fire brigade and plenty to eat. The day was almost cancelled because of rain in the morning but the sky cleared and the event went on as planned.—Terry Rogers

AVONDALE COLLEGE, DEGREES WITH A CHRISTIAN FOCUS @ WWW.AVONDALE.EDU.AU
ADRA continues work in Solomons

HONIARA, SOLOMON ISLANDS

With an estimated 5500 people currently displaced and almost half of the 100,000 people living in the Western and Choiseul Provinces thought to have been affected by the tsunami that hit the Solomon Islands on April 2, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is coordinating its assessment and response with the local government, UN agencies and other international nongovernmental organisations. These are providing essential health care, equipment, supplies and resources.

More than 32 people are thought to have been killed so far and 100 people are still missing. Reports that a Seventh-day Adventist pastor and his wife had been killed in the earthquake on the island of Simbo have been corrected. The pastor and his wife are now known to be from the Uniting Church.

Based on ADRA’s assessment, it is distributing emergency supplies to an estimated 168 families—approximately 1000 people—in the coastal areas of the Choiseul, Ranoggah and Vella Lavella islands.

Each emergency kit contains construction tools, nails, plates, cutlery and a set of cooking pots, according to minimum international standards. Because of the tsunami’s impact on agricultural production and people’s household gardens, ADRA is also supplying basic tools needed to harvest the root crops commonly grown on the islands.

Other needs include mosquito nets, tents, storage tanks and containers for potable water, cooking utensils, gardening and fishing tools, and construction materials. These non-food items will help survivors re-establish their livelihoods.

While meeting the immediate needs of the survivors, ADRA is also assessing the long-term needs of the community to determine the scope necessary for a rehabilitation project that can address the water and sanitation requirements of the targeted communities. ADRA has appealed to private donors for help with immediate needs as well as long-term needs.

Teams of local volunteers are assisting in the initial emergency distribution to each particular island, travelling to assist targeted families by canoe and boat, with some journeys taking up to two hours. ADRA is working directly with the local population to distribute, monitor and manage the intervention.

“Trips between islands represent a common and ordinary way of life for local staff and volunteers, who are more than willing to assist in the distribution. ADRA boats will possess appropriate safety equipment needed to act as mentors to the younger students at the school. “The amount of bullying that takes place has definitely been lowered,” says program coordinator Eleanor Masters. “And when it does take place students are taught that it is OK to report it.” All of Avondale’s 96 Year 7 students will take part in the mentorship program starting in second term. The high mentor-to-student ratio is something unique and exciting about the program. “It’s not something you would see at other schools,” says Mrs Masters.—Braden Blyde

◆ Staff of the Charles Harrison Memorial Home, Cooranbong, NSW, participated in the World’s Greatest Shave to raise funds for the Leukemia Foundation. Organised by Tara Cranney, staff and residents had their hair coloured or shaved, raising $A1300. “This was an initiative driven purely by the staff,” says David Knight (pictured), managing director of Adventist Retirement Villages in North New South Wales. “It is an extremely worthwhile cause and I just wanted to help out in any way I could.”—Margaret Manners

◆ Instead of a holiday, Wolfgang and Lyn Joy Jenke from Innisfail and Tully churches, Qld, decided to take part in two overseas evangelistic campaigns. The couple travelled first to Tamil Nadu, in southern India, where 45 evangelists from the United States and Australia conducted evangelistic campaigns in villages around...
Literature evangelists impacted by SI tsunami

WARBURTON, VICTORIA

A literature evangelist in Gizo has lost his daughter and his house in the tsunami following the earthquake that hit the Solomon Islands western provinces on April 2.

John Saru, a literature evangelist in Gizo, lost his daughter. She was swimming to save her mother when she was hit by a log that was being carried along by the tsunami.

Her mother survived but is now in hospital. Mr Saru, along with a fellow literature evangelist, Jeffery Ghabu, lost his house and everything in it.

“Florence Eddie, the Adventist Book Centre (ABC) shop manager, also lost her home and just escaped with the clothes she was wearing,” says Ken Read, associate director and South Pacific islands director of the Publishing Department.

Contrary to earlier reports, the ABC and literature evangelist book depot survived the earthquake and tsunami, along with most of the stock. Mr Read says, “Surprisingly, Florence found the key to the ABC shop in the area where her house once stood.”

People in the area are currently living in tents supplied by the Red Cross and, Mr Read says, “They’re facing tough times and have to replace their homes and contents. They need our prayers and help. It’s taken them time to get their homes established and to have lost it all is traumatic for them.”

According to Mr Read, the literature evangelists based in Choiseul were safe, although the province has suffered considerable damage.—Adele Nash

First graduates from lay training centre

(Continued from page 1)

Madurai. The evangelists were then assigned to a village that had been prepared by one or two Bible workers. In the Jenkes’ village, 38 were baptised. During the campaign, organised by sharehim.com, more than 3000 were baptised. From India Mr and Mrs Jenke flew to the Philippines, where they conducted a self-supported program in a gymnasium on the island of Negros. It was attended by 200 to 300 people each night and 41 were baptised.—Wolfgang Jenke

◆ For the second consecutive year, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) International has received a coveted four-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent evaluator of charities. “Receiving four out of a possible four stars indicates that your organisation excels as compared to other charities in America, in successfully managing the finances of your organisation in an efficient and effective manner,” says Aziza Musa, program analyst for Charity Navigator. “This consistency in your rating is an exceptional feat, especially given the economic challenges many charities have had to face in the past year.” An independent nonprofit organisation, Charity Navigator provides the public with the most accurate and reliable information regarding America’s largest charities. Every year, they evaluate more than 5000 charitable organisations to ensure that donations given are being used judiciously.—ADRA/ANN staff

◆ Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) in partnership with UNICEF has designed and produced a much-needed teacher’s manual for use in schools in Pakistan. The manual addresses every aspect of school life and maintenance, including water sanitation, tent maintenance, teaching techniques and safety in the playground. The manual will be issued to all schools in the northern part of the country, and is intended as a teacher’s aid to provide them with support and advice. The manual is written in both Urdu and English, and each section is brought to life by the colourful illustrations of ADRA’s own artist and country director, Jan Barta.—Peter Kern/TED staff

HAVE YOU SUBSCRIBED TO SIGNS @ WWW.SIGNSOFTHETIMES.ORG.AU
Vice-Chancellor inspires staff and students at PAU

PORT MORESBY, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The newly appointed Vice-Chancellor of Pacific Adventist University (PAU) has challenged staff and students to make a difference in achieving the university’s mission and vision.

In his maiden commencement service, Dr Branimir Schubert said that his dream is to see PAU preparing the best graduates possible in an atmosphere of care, which he described as standing for “Cherishing our Christian heritage, aspiring to high ethical and moral standards, respecting differences and expecting quality.”

PAU has a vision to be the best provider of quality tertiary Christian education in the Pacific islands.

Dr Schubert encouraged the university to remain Biblically sound, Educationally valid, Spiritually challenging and Technologically relevant.

He also noted the importance of PAU’s mission to prepare its graduates to strive for excellence and serve their community and God.

“This I believe is worth investing all my energy into. This is worth investing my efforts and life into! I am passionate about PAU. And I am convinced we are the ‘difference makers.’ I believe we are part of the solution and my dream is to increase the positive influence we already enjoy and have,” he said.

Dr Schubert also called on his colleagues in the administration, faculty, staff, as well as the student body to join him in the “amazing adventure” that will be the academic year at PAU.

He said, “The new academic year brings new hopes and new challenges. There is a renewed emphasis on why we are here and what we aim to achieve.”

Dr Schubert also called on his colleagues in the administration, faculty, staff, as well as the student body to join him in the “amazing adventure” that will be the academic year at PAU.

“We're really happy with the result and lots of people have already visited the site and downloaded the information and resources.”

“It Is Written” website launched

WAHROONGA, NEW SOUTH WALES

Earlier this month, the “It Is Written” Oceania website was launched. This website is a key component of the media ministry and enables television viewers to access a range of evangelistic offers and resources to complement the broadcast of the program (“It Is Written” returns to Australian TV,” News, April 7).

The website includes a video-streamed welcome by Pastor Gary Kent and a full list of upcoming programs. The programs from each week will also be available to download. Other offers include a prayer request section, registration for an e-newsletter and information about the ministry.

The site was designed by Kel Naughton, a professional designer from Queensland, and built by Hala Talanoa from the Fountain in the City church in Sydney.

“It Is Written” Oceania’s manager, Neale Schofield, said, “Both Kel and Hala have worked very long hours to develop this website. Because it’s fully funded through private donations, this was their way of contributing. We’re really happy with the result and lots of people have already visited the site and downloaded the information and resources.”

Dr Schubert also called on his colleagues in the administration, faculty, staff, as well as the student body to join him in the “amazing adventure” that will be the academic year at PAU.

He said, “The new academic year brings new hopes and new challenges. There is a renewed emphasis on why we are here and what we aim to achieve.”

Dr Edna Worri

More @ www.itiswrittenoceania.tv

IS YOUR CHURCH DOING SOMETHING EXCITING, INNOVATIVE OR INSPIRING? EMAIL RECORD@SIGNSPUBLISHING.COM.AU
Record enrolment, but lower than expected

COORANBONG, NEW SOUTH WALES

Enrolment at Avondale College continues to break records, but the increase this year is lower than in the past two years, despite a record number of applications.

The 1265 students studying at the college this year is 43 more than the previous record set last year. Enrolment grew more than 18 per cent that year and almost 15 per cent the year before. It has grown 3.5 per cent this year. The increase is 7.3 per cent when measured as equivalent full-time student load, as the proportion of full-time students has increased. The increase is not as high as the record set in 2006 (15.6 per cent). However, it compares favourably to 2005 (8 per cent).

The allocation of 56 new Commonwealth-supported nursing places this year helped undergraduate enrolment at the Sydney campus increase by almost 30 per cent, from 132 to 162. While dean Dr Paul Race says the places are “undeniably” the most influential factor, the quality of the course, its reputation and the location of both the Faculty of Nursing and Health and the Sydney Adventist Hospital also have appeal.

The Bachelor of Education (early childhood) course, offered for the first time in 2005 and now also by distance education, increased in enrolment from 14 to 32 students.

The Faculty of Theology also increased enrolment from 85 to 110 after restructuring its bachelor and graduate diploma course. The faculty now offers a two-year Associate Degree in Theology Studies and a four-year Bachelor of Theology/Bachelor of Ministry. Postgraduate students have the choice of either a one-year Graduate Diploma in Theology or Ministry, with most students choosing to take both courses concurrently. The addition of the associate degree “provides an exit point for those who don’t want to complete four years of theology,” says dean of the faculty, Dr Ray Roennfeldt. He notes theology students this year are younger, with many straight out of high school.

An advertising campaign over summer seems to have worked for the college’s School of Aviation, which has enrolled a record 20 students this year.

The Bachelor of Nursing is the most popular course at Avondale, with 200 students, and has the highest number of first-year students (89). The need to build new accommodation for the residential students on the Lake Macquarie campus has eased, with about the same number of students requesting rooms as in 2006.—Brenton Stacey

American Christians march for peace

WASHINGTON, DC, USA

On March 16, about 20 Adventists joined 3000 other Christians in The Christian Witness for Peace in Iraq March, and subsequent candlelight vigil, in Washington, DC.

The evening began with a two-hour prayer service that ran simultaneously at the National Cathedral and hundreds of other churches across the country, including Adventist churches in Hollywood and Maryland.

The march, which took place on the eve of the fourth anniversary of the war in Iraq, included participants from a variety of faith backgrounds. Many were Christians but with a sprinkling of Muslims and even agnostics.

Differences did not matter as thousands passionately united for peace. Those who participated took a pledge of nonviolence that included promising to be positive examples of Christ’s love for all people and grounding all acts in shared worship, prayer and study of the Bible.

According to many Adventists interviewed, joining this peace march was in keeping with the church’s teachings.

Charles Sandefur, president of Adventist Development and Relief Agency International, said that as a Seventh-day Adventist Christian he has long believed that “Christians are called to live in peace and nonviolence and are called to live that way publicly.”

“I think it is a very important part of Christian witness to say that the way of Jesus is about peace and peacemaking,” explained Doug Morgan, professor in the History and Political Studies Department at Columbia Union College, and founder of Adventist Peace Fellowship in nearby Takoma Park, Maryland.

“Adventist history is a unique thing because our founders have been public activists for things like abolition and prohibition; supporting peace is no different,” said Ryan Bell, pastor of the Hollywood Adventist church and a member of Adventist Peace Fellowship.—Taashi Rowe/ANN/Peace Messenger

Jews for Jesus explain Passover’s Pesach

COORANBONG, NEW SOUTH WALES

Avondale’s College church celebrated Passover on March 28 with a presentation from Jews for Jesus missionary Gabi Goldstein about the Jewish festival.

Mr Goldstein spoke about the Passover as it is celebrated among the Jewish community today. He described the symbols of the Pesach, or feast, and how he believes they relate to Jesus as the Son of God.

The presentation featured a table covered with food, such as diced apple, boiled egg and horseradish, along with four cups of wine and matzo— unleavened bread, which is placed in a pouch with three compartments for the ceremony.

Mr Goldstein explained the traditional use of each item, and how the ritual and symbols of feasts represent Jesus. The most prominent symbol is the matzo ceremony, which involves taking the bread, breaking it in half and hiding one half of it for the children to find and return to the table— representing the way in which Jesus was broken, buried and brought back to life.

“I understand the Last Supper so much better after Gabi’s presentation,” said staff member Chris Thiele.—Kristin Thiele
The call for radical purity

BY BRUCE MANNERS

Here’s the word God has for sex: “Yes!”

Sexual intimacy is a healthy part of a marriage relationship. We’re designed to be drawn to another, to desire another and to enjoy another in a sexual way. This is a gift from God, and any gift from God is an act of grace.

Some may want to imagine God turning up in Eden one day and being shocked to have Adam and Eve step out from behind some bushes and say, “Guess what we just discovered.” Not so.

And forget any idea that sex was given only for reproduction. God could have found more boring ways for that. Here he’s bringing romance into our lives and desire for our beloved. He’s bringing excitement, anticipation and physical intimacy in a healthy, wholesome way.

God has a word for sex, and it’s “Yes!”

Paul talks about sex

Except for the Song of Solomon, which is a celebration of romance and sexuality, there’s little said about sex in the Bible—a few verses here and there. What is said, though, places it firmly in the context of marriage.

The apostle Paul is the clearest on this, despite arguing that all should be as he is—celibate. He concludes, however, that because of sexual immorality “each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.” If you can’t control yourself, he adds, go ahead and marry because “it’s better to marry than burn with lust” (1 Corinthians 7:1, 2, 8, 9).

Paul was writing to the church at Corinth, a city with two seaports nearby—one to the east, the other to the west. Sailors had helped it become a sex capital of the ancient world. Around the Mediterranean, the term “Corinthian girl” had become a synonym for prostitute and to “Corinthianise” was to lead an immoral life.

This loose morality had infiltrated the church and Paul attempts to deal with this in both his letters to the church. Paul calls the church to take a stand for morality, for the good and for God. He’s pulling them back to purity and placing sex firmly within marriage.

There’s evidence that his counsel worked for the broader church because pagans marvelled at Christians’ faithfulness to their spouse. In this the early Christians were countercultural.

Jesus talks about sex

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) is a stunning revelation of the kingdom of God. In chapter 5, Jesus tells us how the kingdom of heaven is like no other kingdom. The gentle, the poor in spirit and the merciful are its heroes, and lights to the world. Turning the other cheek, going the second mile and loving your enemies are its ideals.

This is stunning! He turned the thinking of the hearers of His day—and ours—upside down. Might does not make right. Power is not the goal. Culture should not define how we live.

In the middle of chapter five, Jesus says His kingdom is built on law that transcends that of Moses. Anger is equated with murder; lust with adultery. And in case you’re wondering, He’s against murder and adultery. The One speaking the Sermon on the Mount is the One who carved the commandments in stone.

Note what Jesus said: “You have heard that the law of Moses says, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust in his eye has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27, 28).

Here is a call to radical purity. It isn’t only about the deed, it’s about the thought. It isn’t only about the body, but the mind. It isn’t only the act, but the desire.

Radical purity in an impure world

When Jesus preached His sermon most women were married by about the age of 14, and most men by 18 or 20. This fact alone should lead us to look at today’s situation with understanding hearts.

There’s incredible pressure on the unmarried to be sexually active simply on a physiological level, without the added and constant pressure from the media and society. The current average age at marriage is 28. This is 15 and more years after puberty—a long time to remain chaste.

Puberty is occurring earlier, with some studies showing signs of it as early as eight years of age. The bad news for teens is that maturity, with functions of self-control, judgment and mature emotions, is actually coming later than once thought.

Mark Twain once questioned the wisdom of God in parcelling out to humans a source of universal joy and pleasure that’s at its peak in teenage years then forbidding it until marriage and restricting it to one partner.

Few ask the question now. When Wilt Chamberlain—arguably the best basketball player to play in the USA’s National Basketball Association—brought out an autobiography in 1991, he claimed to have had sex with 20,000 women.
This caused a furore. The claim was challenged as impossible (one per day from the age of 15); deposed because it tended to reinforce African-American stereotypes; and seen as acting irresponsibly because of the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Only a few pointed out that this was morally wrong. Chamberlain defended his action this way: “I was just doing what was natural—chasing good-looking ladies, whoever they were and wherever they were available.”

This type of attitude is what makes Jesus’ call for purity so radical.

It’s a call that should be taken seriously because there’s something frightening about the scene in the final episode of Friends when Rachel suggests to Ross, “Sleeping together is the perfect way to say goodbye.” This demeans sex to the level of a handshake or a hug—it has to be something more than that.

**The battle with lust**

Jesus’ comment about lust is a challenge in a lust-inducing world that’s fired by constant images, innuendo and talk, and the ready availability of real and film and cyber sex.

That this is nothing new is well illustrated in a frank article that appeared in Leadership in 1982. Its anonymous writer begins apologetically, saying this is not the kind of article that would normally appear in a magazine for Christian leaders. He then chronicles his 10-year battle with lust.

“How is it possible?”

Twelve things happened that gave him new direction: the discovery that by harbouring lust he limited his own intimacy with God; and he visited a pastor friend he admired for counsel only to discover his friend had a secret sexual life that was destroying him.

“The combination of grave fear struck in me by my pastor friend’s grievous story and the glimmer of hope that a quest for purity could somehow transform the hunger I had lived with unabated for a decade prepared me to try once again to approach God in confession and in faith.”

“I cannot tell you why a prayer that has been prayed for 10 years is answered on the 1000th request when God has met the 999 with silence. I cannot tell you why I had to endure 10 years of near-possession before being ready for deliverance. . . . God did come through for me. . . . I prayed, hiding nothing (hide from God?), and he heard me.”

He writes of the agony of telling his wife: “In spite of that pain and the vortex of emotions that must have swirling around inside her, she gave me forgiveness and love. She took on my enemy as her enemy too. She took on my thirst for purity as her thirst too. She loved me, and as I type this even now, tears streak my face because that love, that awesome love is so incomprehensible to me, and so undeserved.”

He wrote the article some 12 months after telling his wife and records a failure about a month later when he was “pulled” (as if forced) into a peepshow. After 10 seconds he could watch no more and ran out of the building.

He had changed. “Previously I had felt safe when I had given in to lust, because the war inside died down for a moment, but now I felt safe away from the temptation.”

His story demonstrates how difficult it can be to be radically pure in a sex-soaked culture.

**Imagining the possible**

I recently met a delightful, attractive, 28-year-old woman who had married about six months earlier. Her husband, a student, had worked as a fireman before they’d married.

She described this as a rough environment—a “man’s workplace,” she called it—where sex talk was common. These men were stunned and then fascinated when they learned that both she and her husband would be virgins when they married.

What fascinated her more was how interested their girlfriends and wives were. They all came to talk to her about it to ask, “How is it possible?”

How is it possible? Only by radical purity.

God has a word for sex and it’s “Yes!” Jesus then calls us to radical purity in an impure world. That’s what puts sex in its right place. R

---


2. ibid, page 4.


---

Bruce Manners is senior pastor of the Avondale College church, Cooranbong, New South Wales.
Logging, Comments, Friends. It’s all the rage these days with the internet craze called MySpace.

For those who are less internet savvy, MySpace is simply a website you can personalise, and where you inform “friends” about what you are up to and what you have been doing with your life. You can post photos, videos, music, anything really. And other people can write comments to you on it as well. Not a bad creation.

But like all good things, there is always the chance to abuse it.

Don’t get me wrong; I love it and use it regularly. It’s an awesome creation where people can interact with each other on a casual level. It’s less confrontational and more informal than email or phone calls. Another great thing about it is that I’ve been able to locate people I haven’t heard from in a long time and read what they’ve been doing and where their life is now headed. And then I can post a comment to them on their page. It’s an awesome way to keep in touch.

But here is the dilemma.

As great as MySpace is, it is amazing how many of us will spend hours and hours on it each day but won’t even spend a few minutes conversing with our creator God. We spend endless amounts of time chatting, commenting and blogging, often for no apparent reason other than “because I could.” Yet some days we won’t even open our Bibles.

It causes me to wonder where our priorities are. Don’t get me wrong. MySpace has a lot of good things to offer, but are we spending more time in the “unnecessary” instead of the “necessary”? Doesn’t the Creator of the universe—the God who has provided everything we could ever want or need, the Jesus who died to give us hope and a future—deserve a whole lot more than most of us give Him? God does not demand our attention, but He is surely more than worthy of it.

And it may not just be MySpace. It could be work, sports, hobbies, TV or anything that takes up large amounts of our time. These are not necessarily bad things. They can even be good things when used properly. But they should not take over our lives and become more important than our Christian walk.

The Bible makes it quite clear who should have priority. Matthew 6:33 says, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (NKJV).

In order for us to be effective Christians, we need to know the God we serve and love. We need to be connected to Him daily, regularly, constantly, putting in the effort to grasp how great our God really is and how He deserves our highest praise.

Granted, there are times when spending time with God and searching for answers becomes frustrating and difficult. But the assurance is that when you seek God with all your heart, He will take you as you are. He will take your efforts to know Him—however big or small—and use you in an amazing and powerful way. To be used by the Creator of the world should be the most privileged opportunity that exists, ever!

King David put it this way: “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him” (Psalm 37:4, 5, NIV).

And Ellen White also stressed the need to spend time with God, because “by beholding we become changed” (see God’s Amazing Grace, page 224).

Using MySpace, it is awesome to be able to keep in touch with people regularly, especially those random ones you discover with whom you once crossed paths a long time ago.

But for the God who has given us everything we could ever need—and more—don’t you think He deserves more of our time and attention than most of us are really willing to give Him?

Just like any relationship and friendship, in order for it to grow and develop you need to spend time together. And you make the effort to do so.

The same applies to a relationship with God.

What will you do with the time you’ve been given? R

Colin Chuang writes from Cooranbong, New South Wales.
Where have all the diamonds gone?

BY ELIZABETH OSTRING

It is just a nailfile that I hold in my hand—but the best I have ever used. It is made from diamond dust. It is also special because it once belonged to my father, and today is the first anniversary of his death.

Diamonds have been in our family thinking for other reasons. Both our children got engaged a few months ago, and diamonds were the way they expressed their joy and commitment. Diamonds have sparkle and they last. Perhaps not the prettiest, they are certainly the superstars of the jewel family.

People are like diamonds, and appear to come as two classes. Most of us aspire to be the sparkling type of diamond. Teenagers don’t want to be “singers”—they want to be “pop stars,” sparkling and shining for the whole world to adore. Students don’t want to be “scientists”—they want to be “famous” scientists. For many young people the only way to be famous is to be infamous, so they drive recklessly and behave dreadfully. The media gives them what they want. The chances of hitting the headlines by being “naughty” are a great deal higher than if you are well behaved and help elderly ladies with their grocery shopping.

For those of us who are older, reality has made us modify our aspirations to stardom, to the other type of diamond. We try to be content by being the “useful” nailfile type of citizen. We hope this will somehow make us valued by at least a few. We grind away at jobs we don’t really like, wishing that our usefulness would fill the aching void in our souls, the longing to be appreciated, respected, esteemed and, most important of all, cherished.

This might seem like a sad commentary of our society in general, but it is also a picture of our church life. The megamultimedia evangelist, or the platinum CD singer is seen as the apex of Christian achievement. But there is another way for the majority to attempt to attain Christian value, and that is by being useful to the rest of the church.

All too often nominating committees recommend positions on the basis of church need rather than individual aptitude. How often have we seen someone cling to church office long after they should have had a break, simply because without the office that person would have lost their sense of worth? And yet, if we are really honest, how many of us have refused an office simply because we wanted to be stars and not simply useful? This shows that usefulness is the primary value in what we have been asked to do.

But neither usefulness nor sparkling lustre makes a diamond a diamond. It is its character qualities of incredible hardness and reflecting transparency. And so it is with people. It is not the job we do, however useful, or the position we hold, however public and famous, that makes us valuable. It is the character we display to the universe.

Sadly, in our modern rush for fame and fortune, the value of character seems to have been forgotten. Honesty does not necessarily come with position or usefulness. Persistence can be displayed just as well vacuuming the floor as it can welcoming others at the church door. Compassion is needed more at home than it is by the aid worker. Faithfulness is a great deal better than charm in a spouse or an evangelist.

The problem with the diamond’s character is that it did not come accidentally or easily. Diamonds—as we know—are just lumps of coal that have been transformed by incredible forces and heat. When the radiant, newly engaged young woman shows us the diamond on her finger, we don’t say “Humph, that’s really just a lump of dirty black coal!” Sadly, we rarely recognise the powerful forces that shaped that sparkling symbol of lasting joy.

The Holy Spirit is in the process of transforming lumps of coal into priceless gems. Sometimes we fail to see emerging gems because we persist in remembering the dirty lumps of coal they used to be. Sometimes we fail to appreciate that something as homely and useful as a nailfile does its job well because it really is a diamond. And unfortunately, not all those who sparkle are diamonds. Bits of glass can shine too—for a while.

Diamond people are those whose characters have been made by the power of God, to be available for His purposes—either to shine like jewels or be useful tools in His hands.

And so I look at the nailfile in my hand. What really counts for eternity are the lasting qualities of character we develop through the power of the Holy Spirit. Nothing else.

Elizabeth Ostring writes from Christchurch, New Zealand.
Be still

BY ROSLYN SKINNER

Be still—and listen carefully to what God has to say. Be still—listen prayerfully and God will show you the way.

Be still—and He’ll instruct you in the ways that you should go. If you but listen faithfully, God’s promise you will know.

Be still—listen quietly and you’ll hear the Master say, “I will counsel you and teach you, and be with you every day.

“For My eye is all around you and I’m working in your heart, So be still—and listen carefully to the message I impart.”

Be still—listen silently and hear your Master speak. Quiet your heart and hear His voice as He leads you while you seek.

Be still—God’s speaking softly. Can you hear His still, small voice? Can you hear His gentle pleading, asking you to make the choice

Of whether you are willing to follow where He trod
And walk the straight and narrow way that leads upward to God?

“So, come,” He’s saying sweetly as you open up the door.
“Come—give your heart to Jesus and be His forevermore.”

So stop—and listen carefully or you’ll miss your sweet reward
And never know the blessing that comes from Christ our Lord.

Your life will slowly pass you by and for something you will yearn,
And what it is you’ll never know, for you simply didn’t learn

To stop—and listen carefully and heed God’s still, small voice
And let it echo through your life. For God, please make the choice.

Roslyn Skinner writes from Townsville, Queensland.
God knows

CHRISTINE MOFFAT, QLD

I would like to add to “End-of-life issues” (Letters, March 17). I believe a person has the right to end one’s life rather than prolong it in the case of daily, severe pain. It should be left to the decision of that person.

I have had a severe back injury, dealing daily with pain, medications and an implant. Does anyone else know what my quality of life is? We cannot judge others in their pain.

God alone knows why some may not want to prolong life without quality.

Ordination “rights”?

PETER SCHAPER, QLD

“Pastors, not priests” (Letters, March 24) highlights the problem I’ve always seen in those who advocate the ordination of women. This is the fact that they do so on the basis of women’s “rights,” whereas ordination is not a right but a solemn responsibility, one I would feel unworthy to seek. I believe people who consider themselves worthy of it—male or female—are probably not fit for it.

If you believe you have a special calling, you should simply follow it, serving God to the best of your ability regardless of official recognition or status, as did Hosea with his whoring wife and Jeremiah in the cesspit. You don’t need to be formally ordained to do what God wants you to do.

STEPHEN FERGUSON, WA

Thank you for the “Pastors, not priests” letters—they hit the mark. The priesthood of Aaron is gone, fulfilled in Jesus (see Hebrews 7). We are now all priests (see 1 Peter 2:9), equal before God, regardless of gender or any other bigoted worldly classification (see Galatians 3:28).

“Equal, but . . .” (Letters, March 24) tells women to “back off” until they can prove from the Bible that “God has reversed his decision to place women under men.” Never heard of the ruler Deborah (Judges 4:4), prophetesses Huldah (2 Kings 22:14) and Anna (Luke 2:36), the female apostle Junia (Romans 16:7) and even Ellen White? God has not only called women to leadership, He has called them to positions of pre-eminence. Leadership over His people.

Let’s not forget that God deliberately called a young girl, the “weakest of the weak,” after two men rejected that calling, precisely to demonstrate the folly of men (see 1 Corinthians 1:20). When will we learn that God does not judge the way we judge (see John 8:15) and that God calls whomever He wishes, whether it be a small child (see Jeremiah 1:7) or a female?

When are we going to stop excluding those God has called to spread the gospel and just get on with spreading it? It is not the messenger who matters but the message (see Mark 9:38-40). If we continue to paralyse ourselves in these pointless debates, God might just have to raise up stones to replace us (see Matthew 3:9, 10).

Women ministering

RON MCGRATH, WA

While I believe women have an important role to play in the church, even in leadership, I don’t believe Galatians 3:28—“There is neither . . . male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (NIV)—can be used to support the idea.

The context explains that in spite of the Jews’ attitude to Gentiles, to the bonded and to women, salvation is available to all because all have sinned and all are sons (and daughters) of God through faith in Christ Jesus (see Galatians 3:26 and Romans 8:16).

Christ’s life and vicarious death broke down all barriers of prejudice and made salvation available to all, irrespective of race, status or gender. Paul maintains this thought in Romans 10:13: “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (NIV).

G R STARK, QLD

Considering the controversy about women being ordained as pastors, I believe some chauvinist males feel threatened and feel they are protecting the church from a female take-over.

But this is not the case. Only women who accept a calling from God to the ministry would apply. And if God calls some women to be pastors, what right has the church to discriminate against them?

I know of many women who perform all the duties of a pastor, yet who are denied ordination on the grounds that it is “unscriptural.” If this were the case, might our church pioneers have denied Ellen White the high position she held in leadership?

It is high time we got out act together as a church and ceased trying to keep women in “their place.”

When are we going to stop excluding those God has called to spread the gospel and just get on with spreading it?

Travelling challenge

DAVID BROWN, VIC

To all the drivers in our church, please remember the members who don’t have vehicles. They like to attend church events too and shouldn’t have to always be the ones who ask you for a lift.

Church members with cars often don’t think to offer others a lift.

If other members have experienced this, it is no wonder some people have left the church.

We are always told the church is like a family. But aren’t families meant to stick together and help one another?

Another view

STEVE THOMPSON, NSW

RECORD readers interested in the issue of Adventists and military service may be interested in articles on this topic that appear from time to time in issues of the online newsletter Peace Messenger. It is available at <www.adventistpeace.org>.

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.
Positions vacant

- Accountant/Accounts Clerk—Karalundi Aboriginal Education Community (Meekatharra, WA) is seeking an Accountant/Accounts Clerk. The position requires competence in all aspects of management accounting, including a good understanding of GST, MYOB, payroll, preparation and lodgement of BAS etc. Formal education in accounting is desirable but not mandatory. Applications in writing should be forwarded to The Administrator, Karalundi Aboriginal Education Community, PMB 6, Meekatharra WA 6642. Applications close May 18, 2007.

- Manager—Wellbeing Centre (Sydney, NSW) is seeking a Manager to establish, create and manage an exciting, innovative and "new" Wellbeing Centre based in inner Sydney. This is the role of a lifetime within a highly regarded professional, church-owned group who support ongoing education and offer enormous career potential. The successful applicant will possess tertiary qualifications in management or health sciences; also have a wide range of skills, including project and operational health-practice management, marketing/promotional skills management, financial management and excellent IT skills. For further information please phone Kate Smeaton on (02) 8921 9840. Applications in writing (including your résumé) should be forwarded to <apply@kingscroft.com.au> quoting reference number 40000. Applications close May 12, 2007.

---

 Appreciation

Chapman, Merv, Gary, Ross, Brian and families would like to thank all those who offered comfort and encouragement follow- ing the passing of Doss, much loved wife, mother, granny and great-granny. The many expressions of sympathy received at that sad time were greatly appreciated. Doss now rests peacefully till Jesus comes.

---

 Obituaries

Bohm, Maria, born 17.3.1922 in Legrad, Croatia; died 21.3.07 at St Thomas’ church, Whitford, Auckland, NZ.

Ian McKeen

---

 Wedding

Priest—Tazollo. Darren Priest and Petra Tazollo were married on 5.4.07 at St Thomas’ church, Whitford, Auckland, NZ.

---

 Advertisements

Note: Neither the editor, Signs Publishing Company, nor the Seventh-day Adventist Church is responsible for the quality of goods or services advertised. Publication does not indicate endorsement of a product or service. Advertisements approved by the editor will be inserted at the following rates: first 30 words or less, $A49.50; each additional word, $A2.20. For your advertisement to appear, payment must be enclosed.

Available to Seventh-day Adventist members, churches and institutions only. See masthead (page 2) for contact details.
10th anniversary ADRA sacred concert, Sydney, NSW—June 30, 2007. 3.00 pm Parramatta church, Hammers Road, Toongabbie; 7.30 pm Wahroonga church, Fox Valley Road. Don’t miss the best ever. Be early! Featuring sopranos, Yola Mielczarek, Susan James, Simone Easthope; baritone, Douglas Gibbs; tenor, David Fuentes; lead violinist, Sohyen Eastham; “Outreach” male quartet; brass ensemble; Graham Fletcher, marimba; vocal duets, piano, organ etc. Proceeds to ADRA.

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.

Data projectors, screens, DVDs VCRs, PA systems etc. Lower prices for SDA churches, schools etc. Australia only. Rural Electronics (02) 6361 3636; or <greenfields@netconnect.com.au>.

Gourmet Vegie D’Lites distributes in SE Qld Go Veg food products. The range includes pies, patties, vegetarian schnitzels, quiches, strudels and crumbles. Contact Leslie on 0433 792 866; or email <gvd@westnet.com.au>.

Volunteer needed—Sumy, Ukraine—to conduct 10-minute health talks in an evangelistic campaign, in August 2007. Others interested in joining the team are welcome. Write to Pastor Arthur Bath, 18 Osley Parade, Dunwich Qld 4183; phone (07) 3409 9070; email <artbath@bigpond.com>.

Advent Funerals—an Adventist business serving our church community. Sydney/ Wollongong/Central Coast/Newcastle. Prepaid and payment plans available. Phone 1300 791 182; fax (02) 4648 0166; email <adventfunerals@aol.com>.

Celebrate 80 years at Ryde. Come celebrate and reminisce on Sabbath, June 30, 2007, at 9.30 am. Bring old photos and food to share. Phone Jan Levett (02) 9638 0137; or email <neilley@pacific.net.au>.

Single teacher needed for US school to teach a multigraded, upper elementary classroom, on a two-year contract, commencing August 2007. Strong classroom management skills essential and a desire to share Christ to the predominantly non-SDA enrolment. Airfares and living expenses paid, plus a generous remuneration. Phone USA 513-751-1255; or email <cjaprincipal@gmail.com>.

Receive the Hope Channel and 3ABN. Complete satellite kit $265 + freight; prime signal areas in Australia only. Full instructions for DIY installation. Installers available. Rural Electronics (02) 6361 3636; or <ruralele@bigpond.net.au>.

Finally

Every morning is a fresh opportunity to find God’s extraordinary joy in the most ordinary places.
A Way of Escape

Doru Tarita with Kara Kerbs

One man’s amazing escape from Communist Romania.

There were no jobs to be had in Communist Romania. Especially for Sabbath-keepers. Money was scarce—and so was food. Many an evening the table held only homemade bread and grapes picked from the garden. And the situation was only getting worse.

Read the spellbinding account of what this family went through to escape . . . and the promises God fulfilled as they stepped out in faith.

Our Price

$A24.95  $NZ31.90

Paperback, 144 pages.

Order from your ABC secretary
or friendly Adventist Book Centre