The Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM) stewardship camp, hosted by the Eastern Highlands Simbu Mission (EHSM), was attended by around 30,000 people, some of whom had walked for several days to attend.

The goal for the camp, held from March 23 to 31, was to nurture church members as disciples and stewards of God's kingdom. The week’s theme was “Growing disciples in the world.”

Stewardship directors from EHSM (Pastor Allen Akili), PNGUM (Pastor Benjamin Kola), the South Pacific Division (Pastor Joseph Talipuan) and the General Conference (Dr Erika Puni) were the presenters for the morning and evening sessions at the camp.

Dr Puni says, “This was truly a historical event in that all of the stewardship directors from the four levels of the denominational structure beyond the local church were present.

“I was moved by the people’s commitment to know Jesus better in the deep level of their Christian experience. Many campers walked long distances to the site carrying their clothes, equipment, food and

(Continued on page 5)
When disaster strikes

I remember when it first struck me. I was slowly pacing the aisles of a warehouse in Venezuela where thousands of mudslide survivors, having lost everything, were crowded together. To relieve their suffering the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) had provided bunk beds, mattresses, hygiene kits and food. The same thought struck me in Kenya as I interviewed survivors of the American Embassy bomb blast and years later as I reported on the Boxing Day tsunami. More recently it was brought to mind as we responded to the Solomon Islands earthquake-triggered tsunami.

What consumed my thoughts across all those years and countries is the reality of how life can change or end in seconds. One moment your family encircles you, your home comforts you, your belongings surround you and your future seems sure. Then a disaster strikes and, in a moment, those things disappear.

The good news is that ADRA, our church’s humanitarian arm, is there to respond. This year ADRA expanded its emergency management program to assist partner offices in the Pacific, Asia and Africa—in addition to Australia—in emergency preparedness and response. Last year, ADRA Australia met survivors’ needs in 21 disasters in Australia and overseas, often by turning to our Disaster and Famine Relief Fund.

The number of natural disasters is creeping higher each year. In 2005, they killed nearly 92,000 people and affected more than 157 million worldwide.* While our hearts were touched last month by the loss endured by Solomon Islands tsunami survivors, disasters equally as devastating were striking around the globe.

The need is perpetually there and ADRA is honoured by the compassion of our donors who contact us wanting to help. How you and I express that compassion, however, is really crucial. Let me explain.

Have you ever excitedly received a parcel, only to deflate as you tear the wrapping away and realise it’s something you have absolutely no need or desire for? You wonder, What do I do with this?

However, when we get a surprise parcel that disappoints us, it’s not the end of the world. Now imagine being a disaster survivor who’s lost everything. You anxiously await the arrival of food, shelter, cooking equipment or sanitation facilities. Instead, you receive a parcel containing a winter coat, boots and canned food (that you’ve never tasted or heard of before) with no can-opener.

This is why the assistance you provide by supporting ADRA’s Disaster and Famine Relief Offering is so valuable. Cash donations allow ADRA to respond immediately. They can be used to purchase goods from local merchants to bolster the damaged economy. This process also protects their dignity and honours the right to own their recovery. While well-meaning, goods sent often don’t match real needs and further damage the local economy as merchants lose out on desperately needed sales. Also, procuring items in the region can often stretch donations further, as money is spent on aid rather than shipping fees. To ensure we meet real needs, ADRA provides items identified in needs assessments conducted by on-the-ground coordinating government agencies or ADRA. This coordination also helps ensure multiple agencies don’t duplicate services or items provided.

Be assured, when disasters strike, ADRA is proud to be your hands and feet on the ground and to represent the collective compassion of Adventist Church members. Your compassion is extended without discrimination, assisting survivors of any gender, race, political or religious affiliation, including Adventists.

Over the last several years, you have responded to this offering with amazing generosity and ADRA is honoured by your support. So when the offering bag is passed on Sabbath, May 26, I hope you’ll remember people like those affected by Cyclone Larry last year, those still struggling to recover in the Solomon Islands today and, sadly, those who will be affected by disasters in the year ahead—and again give generously.


Michelle L Oetman
Director of Marketing and Public Relations, ADRA Australia
“It Is Written” enjoys early ratings success

WAHROONGA, NEW SOUTH WALES

Ratings for the first episode of *It Is Written* (IIW), the weekly Adventist TV program on mainstream TV (“It Is Written’ returns to Australian TV,” News, April 7) has far exceeded expectations.

“After looking at the ratings of other religious programs, we were hoping for ratings of somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 viewers,” says Neale Schofield, manager of IIW Oceania. “Praise the Lord, the ratings show 41,000 viewers watched IIW on its first night. That is probably more people watching IIW throughout Australia than there were Adventists at church the previous morning.”

According to Mr Schofield, the figures mean IIW is “the top-rating religious broadcast in Australia in its first week.”

The broadcast of the weekly half-hour program first aired on April 22 at 3.30 am and focused on the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Following the first episode of IIW, “more than anticipated” numbers of responses to the free offer following the first episode of IIW were also made to the Adventist Discovery Centre. At least 80 requests have been made from people wanting the free DVD *Who is Jesus?*, produced by the Adventist Media Network.

“We were expecting about half-a-dozen requests,” says Pastor John Gate, media ministries director for the Adventist Discovery Centre. “The response has been absolutely incredible and we are delighted by it.”

Every episode of the weekly IIW program will conclude with a free offer. This will be either lessons, Adventist Discovery Centre’s Bible courses, *Search* DVDs or books and booklets that are relevant to the week’s topic.

“The challenge of moving forward is to fund this ministry through private donations,” says Mr Schofield. “Then again, that is God’s challenge. If He can prompt 41,000 people to turn on the TV at 3.30 am and watch an Adventist evangelistic program, surely He can prompt people to support the ministry.”

IIW will continue to air on the Seven Network in Australia throughout the remainder of the year. According to Mr Schofield, “The IIW team will be looking to secure further media coverage to complement the telecast on Channel Seven.”—Melody Tan

More @ www.itiswrittenoceania.tv

◆ A member of the Cambridge church, NZ, has just become New Zealand’s youngest law graduate, receiving her Bachelor of Law degree from the University of Waikato at the age of 19. Janna-Lee Atkinson began her studies at the age of 14 and had never been to school. “I don’t think I’d be where I am now if I hadn’t been home-schooled,” she says. Law initially had no appeal for her but when her mother suggested she sit a university paper to see if she liked tertiary study, she chose the law paper. She liked it so much she decided to complete the full course. “There are so many things you can do with law. I just find the study really interesting.”—Mark Turner/Waikato Times

◆ On Sabbath, March 31, the Ponsonby church, NZ, celebrated “International day.” The full day of programs representing the 15 different nationalities at the church was followed by a cultural concert and international food from all the different groups in the church. “It was outreach at its very best but done differently. Many of the people who came that day were non-Adventists and there is every indication this won’t be the last we see of them—judging from the feedback and their enthusiasm,” said Pastor Paora Teaukura.—Sandra Valaau

◆ Pipi church, near Wabag, Papua New Guinea, is now an Adventist congregation after it was given to the Lenki Seventh-day Adventist church for free. The church, formerly an Assemblies of God congregation, found its members could not concentrate on services due to heavy tribal fighting in the area and stopped attending. The nearby Lenki church used the opportunity to evangelise and bring members back to church, conducting studies with leaders of the Pipi church, who decided to give the church and its facilities away.—Max Zaccias
“Thankathon” links campus in prayer

COORANBONG, NEW SOUTH WALES

Avondale College students publicly thanked God for His providence on April 19 by writing a chain prayer in chalk around the central area of the Lake Macquarie campus.

The Student Associated Ministries (SAM) “thankathon,” led by prayer team members Neil Bustos and Erika Gamburger, began at the cafeteria, followed the footpath past College Hall to the Avondale Library. It weaved back past the Ellen G White Memorial building breezeway and administration building to Andre Hall, past Ella Boyd Hall before ending back at the cafeteria.

“Some of the prayers were deep; others were a little more ‘esoteric,’” says SAM leader Lili Radziszewski. All prayers were anonymous.

Family, friends and food featured prominently, as did passing exams and sleeping in. Basketball and football teams, sunshine and surf even rated mentions.

“We wanted to encourage students to make prayer—even for seemingly small, insignificant things—a public, everyday event,” says Ms Radziszewski.

The activity gained popularity during the day, with several staff members, including college president Dr John Cox, adding their prayers to the chain.

“We ran out of chalk,” says Ms Radziszewski. “Ten dollars worth of chalk and we ran out!”

She enjoyed watching people read the prayers as they walked across the campus. She added, “So even though the aim was to have people write a prayer, the activity had a flow-on effect.” – Brenton Stacey

More @ www.avondale.edu.au/connections

Solomons Adventists raise funds for tsunami relief

HONIARA, SOLOMON ISLANDS

Adventists in the Solomon Islands raised $US$22,000 in a week-long program for victims of the April 2 tsunami that struck the Western and Choiseul Provinces.

More than 100 cartons of mixed goods, including clothing and kitchen utensils, were also gathered.

The appeal ended with a gospel concert held at the Kukum Adventist church on April 14. Members from various churches in and around Honiara gathered for the event, which saw young people performing and pledging their support and assistance to victims of the disaster.

Pastor Johnny Tango, communication director for Solomon Islands Mission, said they were overwhelmed by the support and assistance shown by church members and the public.

“I wish to thank all our church members and the general public for their efforts, help and support,” says Pastor Tango. “This program has been a worthwhile one in- deed—one we know will help our brothers, sisters and children in the tsunami-stricken provinces.” – Solomon Star

◆ Local two- to five-year-olds could be the next Jamie Oliver thanks to a new program at Avondale School, Cooranbong, NSW. The “Early years initiative,” now in its second term of operation, provides a weekly program of both educational and play-based activities while helping children become familiar with preschool and school environments. Parents are invited to bring their children to play at the state-of-the-art Avondale Early Learning Centre. They then enjoy a delicious morning tea and move into their formal activities, with cooking and dance options available for this term. “Having their parents with them offers safety and security for the young ones or those hesitant about being left at a preschool,” says coordinator Karen Zeuschner. After running at capacity during term one with cooking and music activities, term two will see cooking continue every Thursday while Fiona from Fiona’s Studio of Dance will lead two dance classes each Wednesday. – Braden Blyde

◆ It took just 18 days for students from Avondale Primary School, NSW, to run 11,000 km, far enough to circumnavigate the Australian continent. The marathon effort was part of the school training regimen for cross-country events held in early May. Over 18 days the combined student body ran an average of 611 km per day, with every student running during class PE lessons. Eighty-five per cent of students were so inspired they also ran during lunch or before school. “Kids love to achieve a goal,” says sports coordinator Graeme Head. “While there is no set distance each child has to run, they tend to set a goal and go for it.” For Grade 4 student Jonathon Ginn, the goal was quite sizeable—130 km to be exact—an average of more than seven km a day. The training has really paid off, with the school winning the Hunter Region Independent Schools cross-country championships 12 times in the past 15 years. Avondale’s domination has been so

DAYS AND OFFERINGS: ◆ MAY 26—ADRA/DISASTER AND FAMINE RELIEF OFFERING
New associate appointed to Adventist Media Network

WAHROONGA, NEW SOUTH WALES

Adventist Media Network (AMN) has recently appointed a new associate communication director and director of public relations.

David Gibbons joined the Communication and Public Relations Department based in Wahroonga in early March, after working for a publishing and events company for 18 months. He was in charge of initiating and running seminars, conferences and trade shows in a number of cities across the world.

“It was a thrilling experience and made me realise there is a huge world to take the gospel to,” Mr Gibbons says about his previous work experience. “It also gave me additional skills in the secular world that I can integrate into Adventist Media Network.”

Mr Gibbons formerly worked in what was once Adventist Media as the marketing and production manager from 1999 to 2005. According to Mr Gibbons, it caused him to “miss not being on the front line spreading the gospel.”

He says he is looking forward to “using the communication tools we have available to us today to more effectively communicate what our church is doing for our Adventist family and the wider community.”

In July, AMN will launch netAdventist, a project that will enable more than 900 Adventist churches, schools, administration offices and other entities throughout the division to have a web presence. The launch is expected to coincide with the first anniversary of AMN, the result of a merger of the South Pacific Division Communication Department, Adventist Media and Signs Publishing Company.—Melody Tan

30,000 attend PNGUM stewardship camp

Bibles so they could be part of this.”

Dr Puni adds, “In the course of the week, the campers sat out in the open field from 6 am until 11 am, rain or shine, to share this experience of special fellowship. These people love Jesus and they rejoice in hearing the Word preached.”

Beyond the daily presentations, campers witnessed the addition of new members to the church through baptisms, which were a feature of the evening programs.

Dr Puni says of the baptisms, “No-one was happier than Pastor Kola, who had the joy of baptising his parents into God’s remnant church on the last Friday night.”

His father, Kola Bomai, a village chief, had different plans for his son than becoming a pastor and had disowned him when he became an Adventist.

“However,” says Dr Puni, “God had His own plan, which included the call for Mr Bomai and his wife, Martha Kola, to become disciples for Him, and this was the day for this decision to be realised. We can praise God for Christian stewardship that results in the making of disciples.”—RECORD staff/Erika Puni

outstanding that several schools have approached Mr Head to ask why the school has such an edge.—Braden Blode

Following a presentation on March 15 concerning the human rights violations of prisoners in Guinea-Conakry, West Africa, Pacific Union College (PUC) students, faculty and staff donated $US18,745 to aid a prisoner advocacy program. Kimberly Osborn, a social activist who graduated from PUC in 2004, described her former work in the West African country and her decision to return after hearing reports about further violations in the prison system. Osborn said the International Committee of the Red Cross recently stated that about 27 per cent of the 800 men in the prison system, most of whom she says have been illegally detained, are severely malnourished. “If things continue at the rate they are going, one in 10 men entering prison [in Guinea-Conakry] this year will die from starvation,” said Osborn, who helped to establish the prisoner advocacy program in Guinea-Conakry.—Adventist Review

Adventist Heritage Ministry (AHM), the heritage evangelism arm of the Advent movement, is celebrating its 25th anniversary. AHM owns several historic Adventist sites: the Joseph Bates boyhood home in Fairhaven, Massachusetts; the Hiram Edson farm, theological birthplace of the Adventist Church, in Port Gibson, New York; the William Miller farm, birthplace of the Advent movement in North America, located near Whitehall, New York; and Historic Adventist Village, organisational birthplace of the Adventist Church in Battle Creek, Michigan. The historic sites attract many visitors. During the past 25 years, an estimated 80,000 to 100,000 Adventists from every world division of the church have visited an AHM site. An additional 10,000 to 15,000 non-Adventists and former Adventists have also toured at least one location, often attracted by road signs advertising the sites. “The historic sites are pieces of our history our church members can experience for themselves,” says AHM president Thomas Neslund. “AHM reaffirms our faith and gives us clarity, something that is really being sought right now.”—Adventist Review

PROVIDE HELP FOR PEOPLE IN REAL NEED @ WWW.ADRA.ORG.AU
Amazing Facts and 3ABN to unite ministries

SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, USA

Amazing Facts and Three Angels Broadcasting Network (3ABN) announced plans on April 19 to unite the two international Christian media ministries.

The board of directors of both ministries unanimously approved the venture to join the ministries under a new board and constituency, creating a new global platform for evangelism.

For the immediate future, both ministries will continue regular operations. The ultimate goal, however, is to optimise evangelistic impact to the world by consolidating these global operations, leading to more efficient service to the church and better stewardship of resources.

“This union of two dynamic ministries represents a miraculous milestone to fulfill the Great Commission, forging an impressive team who bring their unique talents and assets to the same table,” says Amazing Facts president Doug Batchelor. “By joining hands, we will surely see greater effectiveness and economy in spreading the gospel to the world.”

President of 3ABN Danny Shelton adds, “We’re excited about this development, which will accelerate an array of evangelistic services to reach the multitudes. . . . Time is short—we need to maximise our efforts to reach lost souls.”

Beginning with a 15-minute radio broadcast in 1966, Amazing Facts has provided strong evangelistic ministry for more than 40 years through an array of services. These include evangelistic training using the Amazing Facts Center of Evangelism, a team of travelling evangelists, publishing, radio and television broadcasts, Bible schools and a popular internet ministry.

Founded in 1984, 3ABN began broadcasting in 1986 and now transmits its signal to nine satellites, which carry it to every inhabited continent with a potential viewing audience of hundreds of millions.

The second largest Christian network in North America (in terms of owned and operated UHF stations), 3ABN also has full-power stations in Papua New Guinea, Uganda and the Philippines.—Amazing Facts/Adventist Review

More @ www.amazingfacts.org

Choice names Weet-Bix Kids as top cereal for children

SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES

Weet-Bix has once again come out on top with consumer-rights group Choice naming Weet-Bix Kids and Honey Weets as the best cereals for children.

The “Food for kids” interactive database was launched by Choice on May 1 and is aimed at parents to provide them with information about the nutritional values of breakfast cereals.

Claims made by some cereal manufacturers that their products are a “healthy source of vitamins and minerals” or “high in energy” are translated into a breakdown of how much fat, salt and sugar is contained in the cereal.

Choice claims that 70 per cent of products on the market directly targeting children under the age of 12 are more like confectionary than a healthy start to the day—only five of the 29 products tested had the recommended amount of fibre.

Weet-Bix Kids is the only cereal specifically designed for children aged between one and five years old. Made of 97 per cent Australian wheat, it is also low in salt and sugar.—Sydney Morning Herald

◆ A seven-year-old Catholic boy has amassed an encyclopedic knowledge of the Catholic Church. James Higgins from St Peter’s church, Capitol Hill, Washington DC, USA, has been attending daily Mass since he was three and has not missed it since his first Communion, nearly 200 days ago. He can list any saint’s details and all of the church doctrines. “Day in and day out, even though it’s early, I see his face at Mass and it inspires me,” said the Reverend Bill Hegedusich, associate pastor at St Peter’s. “He’s a child, but he has that enthusiasm we are all called to have.” James is torn between a career in baseball and becoming the first American pope.—Religion News Service

◆ A fascinating new State Library of NSW online exhibition launched on April 23 reveals how churches were established in the environment of political tension that was early Australia and how religious beliefs have influenced Australian society. Religion, Church & Mission in Australia draws from the State Library’s collections of seldom-seen letters and journals, historic paintings, rare books and photographs. The online exhibition features images of early buildings, including Sydney’s St James Church, the first synagogue and St Mary’s and St Andrew’s Cathedrals.—Deb McBurnie/State Library of New South Wales

◆ Church leaders in the US and the wider international community have called for tighter gun control following the tragic mass killing at Virginia Tech University in the US. The General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in the US, the Reverend Bob Edgar, has called for “meaningful” legislation to put a stop to gun violence there. “Faith leaders have spoken up continually about the epidemic of gun violence in our country,” Edgar said. “Despite repeated calls from faith and community leaders to Congress and presidents, nothing ever seems to get done to stem the tide.”—Maria Mackay/Christianity Today
HIV/AIDS training for church leaders in PNG

LORENGAU, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

More than 120 Adventists from Manus Province recently attended a health promotion and basic HIV/AIDS awareness training program in Lorengau.

The aim of the training was to increase the HIV/AIDS awareness of local church leaders and assist them to promote a healthier lifestyle in their communities.

The nine days of training was officially opened by Manus Provincial Administrator Wep Kanawi, who is also the chairman for the Manus Provincial AIDS Committee.

Mr Kanawi praised the Adventist Church for using its resources to bring the HIV/AIDS awareness and health message right down to the community level.

The training was conducted by Adventist Health Ministry’s country director Gad Koito and health program manager James Gahare and funded by AusAID through its Church Partnership Program.

“We hope to help the churches become health-promoting churches by building their capacity to confidently and effectively promote health in a holistic manner in their churches,” says Mr Koito.

“There is also a need for the church to have a provincial health coordinator to organise the health and promotion work for the 25 Adventist churches in the province.”

Mr Koito said plans are underway to appoint a coordinator so the health activities in the province can be organised and achieved.

A resolution was made at the end of the training to look into the possibility of setting up a volunteer counselling and testing centre in the province.

The Adventist health team is preparing to conduct similar training in Kikori, Western Province where a similar number of people are expected to attend.

The health and HIV/AIDS awareness training in Kikori will cover both Western and Gulf Provinces. It will run for two weeks and target youth leaders.—Martina Darius

Sanitarium adds fruity flavours

BERKELEY VALE, NEW SOUTH WALES

You can now enjoy the taste of mango, passionfruit, blueberries and other fruits all year with Sanitarium adding new flavours to Up & Go, Weet-Bix Fruity, Lite ‘n’ Tasty and Granola.

Adding to their existing range of healthy and wholesome breakfast offerings, Sanitarium’s new range of products contain real fruit, ensuring a “nutritious and tasty” start to the day.

The flavours of mango and peach, and banana and honey have been added to the Up & Go line. Sultanas, bran and apple will feature in a new Weet-Bix Fruity cereal, which is 99 per cent fat free, high in fibre and calcium enriched.

Mango and passionfruit have been added to Lite ‘n’ Tasty, which is 98 per cent fat free and contains iron and folate.

Adding to the already successful vanilla and almond flavour of Granola Clusters, blueberry and apple will be added to the line in the coming weeks.—Jaemes Tipple

National cupcake day declared for schools

WAHROONGA, NEW SOUTH WALES

Adventist Education for the Australian Union Conference has declared May 24 National Cupcake Day for Seventh-day Adventist schools in Australia.

Students are encouraged to give a gold-coin donation in exchange for the privilege to come to in school in casual clothes. Proceeds will go to the Cupcake Girls, three women taking part in the New South Wales Variety Bash in August.

Variety is a children’s charity “dedicated to improving the quality of life of children with special needs.” Money raised from the annual Variety Bash goes to help sick, disabled and disadvantaged children.

“Coming to school dressed as a giant cupcake is optional,” says Robyn Cockburn, leader of the Cupcake Girls and a teacher at Avondale School in Cooranbong, New South Wales.

Ms Cockburn, however, is planning to drive from Sydney to Darwin with Brenda Lambert and Averill McLean in a car with a giant cupcake sitting on the top. “What we’ve had difficulty with has been finding a car first registered in the 1970s that adheres to the rules of the bash, and is in good enough condition for us to drive 500 kilometres a day on mostly dirt roads for two weeks.”

The Cupcake Girls hope to raise $A25,000 for Variety. “We have a real passion to help disadvantaged children,” says Ms Lambert, a teacher at Central Coast Adventist School. “And the bash looks like an exciting challenge to be a part of.”

In a bid to raise funds, the Cupcake Girls are organising concerts, cupcake drives and are even approaching businesses for donations. Their biggest bake-off in one evening so far resulted in 600 cupcakes.

The Variety Bash kicks off at the naval base in Sydney on August 5 and will finish in Darwin on August 17.—Melody Tan

Contact <cupcakegirls@hotmail.com> for more information.
Can We Still Believe the Bible?

REVIEW BY JULENE DUERKSEN-KAPAO

Can We Still Believe the Bible? is a fresh answer to an old question. It is not the first of its kind—tackling the difficult questions of the Bible’s relevance today—but it does so in a transforming and challenging way.

Whatever your reason for asking the question Can We Still Believe the Bible? Bryan Ball will tackle your questions with care, insight and depth. Ball outlines that believing does not “mean superstitious or blind belief. We mean belief that is based on evidence that can be verified” (page 6). Dedicated to his young friends in the high school Bible class at Lakeside church in 2005 and 2006, it is obvious that Ball intended Can We Still Believe the Bible? for all ages.

Ball does not slowly step into the topic. Rather he begins with seven reasons why it matters whether we can believe the Bible: “The Bible’s claims, source of information about Jesus, the possibility of a life to come, its relevance to life, its ability to change people’s lives, the basis of Western culture and a source of hope.” Many individuals struggle to buy into the claims and relevance of the Bible, yet Ball states, “If the Bible is not true, it’s all just hype or wishful thinking. But if there is even a remote possibility the Bible can be trusted, that it is indeed a reliable record of Jesus, this in itself is reason enough to think seriously about the evidence presented” (page 16).

Reading Can We Still Believe the Bible? is like sitting with a professor and having a conversation. Ball clearly addresses the many arguments and questions providing ample support and evidence. One cannot read this book and ignore the facts. The strongest argument found is that of hope—and Ball does not hesitate to hold up the life-changing hope offered in Scripture: “Against this increasingly stark background of deepening hopelessness, the Bible speaks constantly of hope. . . . This is the hope . . . Jesus will come again as He promised on many occasions” (page 25).

The question is really “Is there any credible evidence to support belief in the Bible today?” (page 49). One cannot argue with Ball’s explanation of archeology and early manuscripts of Scripture. Ball outlines how much of the Bible is supported by historical texts and artefacts, records that account for the same people and people groups, events and follow the same timeline, and the physical remainders of historical and biblical sites.

“Obviously, the Bible didn’t just fall out of the sky. Nor did God write it Himself, dictate it or send it down to earth ready-printed in a black leather cover with the words of Jesus in red letters. So the questions of its origins are important and deserve careful answers” (page 71). Filled with fascinating information and answers, Can we still believe the Bible? becomes a journey for its reader. Whether agreeing or disagreeing at the outset, each reader will come to a place where they must stop and consider each thoughtful chapter and decide whether they believe.

Ball also investigates prophecy through Scripture, pointing out historical evidence that supports the Bible: the desolation of Babylon, the conquest of Tyre, the destruction of Jerusalem, the abasement of Egypt and the dispersion of the Jews. “If the Bible does contain genuine predictions about future events, it is evidence of the highest quality that the prophets speak with supernatural insight imparted by the God who alone knows the future . . . [and] more than a quarter of the Bible is predictive prophecy” (page 94).

And the questions—and answers—keep coming: “What about translation?” “Is it really inspired?” “Why does it matter to me?” Ball will not disappoint as he reaches through time, history, archaeology and Scripture to bring real, thoughtful and heartfelt answers to these very real and relevant questions of today.

Thought provoking and meaningful, Can We Still Believe the Bible? is not a trivial answer book to slot on your shelf, but it is an insightful piece of evidence to share with a friend, study in a small group or refer to in your own journey with Christ. R


More @ www.CanWeStillBelieveTheBible.com

Julene Duerksen-Kapao is head of Bible at Longburn Adventist College, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

May 19, 2007
New wine and old wineskins

BY IAN RANKIN

The first Christians were sincere Jews, faithful followers of old covenant customs and practices. Their discovery of what it meant to be new covenant believers was a sometimes slow and halting process. And to this day, we still can find relics of this era in different aspects of Christian thinking.

Paul counselled love and understanding toward those new Christians who felt unable to break from old covenant practices (see Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8). He regarded these people as immature Christians, who were to be treated compassionately. But he resisted any attempts by them to make their beliefs the standard for the church.

At Antioch, Paul publicly confronted and condemned Peter and the Jewish members of that church, because they had allowed visiting members from Jerusalem to intimidate them into returning to the old covenant practice of not eating with Gentiles (see Galatians 2:11-13).

At the Jerusalem Council—as it is reported in Acts 15—some Pharisees who had become believers argued that Gentiles needed to be circumcised. They quoted Scripture, the law of Moses, in support of their case. Paul, Peter and others argued against this demand and shared their experiences of how the Holy Spirit had overruled in this matter.

The decision of this first church council was to uphold Paul and Peter and reject the appeal to the law of Moses on the grounds that “it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (see Acts 15:28, NASB). This decision recognised that under the new covenant, believers had a new relationship to the Holy Spirit.

Under the old covenant the work of the Holy Spirit was limited primarily to prophecy, and God’s followers had a passive role as witnesses to His existence and power and as caretakers of His house. But the new covenant believers have a much more active role. They are no longer treated as under-age children; they are now adult sons and daughters (see Galatians 4:1-7). Each one has been given gifts of the Holy Spirit, and under His leadership and teaching is called to play a vital part in God’s plan and purposes (see Ephesians 4:11-16).

This experience began at Pentecost when Christ restored an unrestricted relationship with the Holy Spirit (see John 7:37-39; Acts 2:33). But that experience was not limited to the first years of the Christian church. The final chapters of Acts are being written today. Progress in fully accepting the role of the gifts of the Spirit is still slow.

The imagery of new wine in old bottles does not apply just to the attempt to limit new covenant relationships to old covenant patterns. It applies equally to the attempt to try to blindly impose first-century practices on present-day Christians. The vital need is not to know what practices they established; the need is to understand and follow the practice of how they arrived at their decisions.

The decision of the Jerusalem Council is important, but of more importance is the manner in which they reached that decision. It was reached by consensus after intense and extensive discussion among appointed representatives. Christians had already rejected the authority of the Sanhedrin and its interpretations and traditions, but now they added a new and radical practice. They replaced the authority of the law of Moses with the authority of the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Some Christians interpret this as licence to act as they feel, but the decision of the Jerusalem Council was not an arbitrary action. It was the New Testament church in action, reaching a decision by consensus. Be it a local fellowship or denomination, the pattern is that decisions are to be by consensus, reached after full and free discussion—a decision reached on the basis of the conviction that this was the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The chapters of the book of Acts being written today are not about rewriting history; they are fulfilment. They are not a repetition but a development as the church is led by means of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

These gifts are gender-neutral, but do not abolish gender differences. Their effectiveness in God’s purposes is dependent on their being recognised, encouraged and developed. The full potential of each gift depends on a fellowship where the gifts are not in competition, but are committed in support of one another.

The almost infinite patience of the Holy Spirit is something we all experience. The full experience of being new covenant believers is something the Holy Spirit still waits to impart as we strive toward the goal of the measure of the fullness of Christ (see Ephesians 4:12, 13).

Ian Rankin writes from Wellington, New Zealand.
An inconvenient moral truth

BY BRAD WATSON

We like our conveniences. Cars are convenient. Having friends nearby and being located close to a shopping centre is a plus for most of us. Convenience stores save time, electrical appliances make hard work easier and, with internet, telecommunications and cheap airfares, the world is at our fingertips. Statistically, Australians and New Zealanders are living longer, holidaying harder and embracing new technologies at an amazing rate. In many ways, we are living better than ever before.

But are we hurting the environment in our rush for the good life? Worrying media reports seem to bombard us daily. Sydney’s dams have reached record lows.1 Southern Queensland is chronically short of water. The once mighty Murray–Darling Basin is subject to a $A10 billion dollar rescue package2 and the Australian Government has taken the unusual initiative of banning future sales of traditional light globes. Seasons seem to be less predictable. Weather patterns the world over are changing. Globally, the awareness of accelerating environmental damage is growing with the realisation that Planet Earth is groaning under the pressures of 6.5 billion humans.

The state of the planet

Environmental issues are now an international, national, state, local government and personal concern. I must now install a rainwater tank, insulate and use water-saving shower heads when I build in my suburb. Internationally, Beijing—host to the 2008 Olympic Games—is a stark reminder of the terrible price that accompanies rapid industrial growth. Athletes are expected to struggle with air pollution, where 120,000 new vehicles are added yearly to what is already the world’s most polluted capital. On 20 August 2008, Beijing reached the moon and back seven times, 2 billion people already live in fragile areas—often in poor countries. Sadly, climate change threatens them most.

In 2006, scientists at the world’s leading atmospheric facility in Hawaii confirmed a trend of higher levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere as well as other greenhouse gases.3 In its Global Trends 2015 report, the CIA stated that environmental degradation and shortages of drinking water posed a significant risk to security.4 In 2006, a 155-page report to the US Congress by the Academy of Sciences concluded that average global surface temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere rose by half a degree Celsius in the 20th century, an unprecedented event.

According to the world’s leading scientists, humans now harvest almost 50 per cent of rainwater; 24 per cent of arable land is at risk of permanent loss; 15.2 million hectares of tropical rainforest are cleared annually; 90 per cent of the weight of large ocean predators is missing; 35 per cent of earth’s mangroves have been cleared; 20 per cent of all coral reefs have been destroyed; and 25 per cent of all mammals are at risk of extinction.5 Some experts argue that 27,000 species continue to disappear at an alarming rate. The scientific community agrees the earth is becoming hotter due to human activity but Australia and the USA will still not ratify the Kyoto Protocol for fear that reducing harmful emissions will hurt economic growth. The consequences are profound.

A moral challenge

But imagine this: In 2007, Christians in Australia and New Zealand begin to remind themselves that the first task given by God to Adam and Eve was to care for the natural world. The Seventh-day Adventist Church declares its intention of being a good steward of nature. Already the commercial sector has begun to go green. However, respect for Christians grows in the secular community as Adventists and others take a strong moral stance, seeking justice for all creation. Genesis 2:15 receives fresh attention—"The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." (NIV). Christians wonder why they ever forgot that Adam was first a “minister” to God’s creation.

Unfortunately, this does not seem likely. This is not because Christians don’t care. And it is not because the environmental stress mentioned above is not real; it is a terrifying reality. Environmental stress is a hot topic but informed debate among Christians about the stance we should take is sadly lacking. Many Christians are not fully aware of the seriousness of the problem.

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At the risk of sounding like a doomsday prophet or radical greenie, humans are now treating the earth like a disposable resource. Our colossal population growth and industrial technologies are impacting earth in ways unimaginable even 200 years ago when earth’s population reached 1 billion, or at the time of Christ when world population was about 250 million. To put that in perspective, the USA alone contained 300 million people in 2006. While it took about 1700 years after Jesus for the world population to double, today it takes just 50 years. There is currently no ecological issue more pressing than the impacts of population growth, industrialisation and destruction of nature.

In his documentary An Inconvenient Truth, Al Gore describes the need for change as a moral imperative. That is not a bad effort from a politician. But how far should we go? How real is the problem? How inconvenienced need we be? How can Christian leaders respond to the deepening ecological crisis? Should they?

**How not to**

As followers of Jesus we can ignore it, reminding ourselves that we are in the business of evangetising people rather than defending God’s creation. By such logic we can continue as we are without considering the impact of how we live. We would leave it up to scientists, big business and politicians to sort the problem out. To do this we must conveniently lose sight of the fact that God’s followers are called to oppose anything that harms His children and creates injustice.

Or we can celebrate the crisis. Every piece of bad news about poverty and environmental destruction can remind us that the world is coming to an end. Environmental degradation is inevitable and proof that our prophecies are true. Accordingly, we should be at peace. The loss of respect from the community is an acceptable risk. Anyway, who would be attracted to a church with relevant messages for our time? Our message is as fresh as ever!

Or we could do something really radical. We could accelerate environmental change! We would drive big four-wheel drive and V8 vehicles. We could utilise fleet policies that bring the highest financial return for the most polluting cars. We could build huge, environmentally disastrous houses and buildings, cooled by air conditioners powered on coal-fired electricity. We could use our clothes dryers with abandon and fly as much as possible to pump the maximum amount of fumes directly into the upper atmosphere. We could eat lavishly, bathe luxuriously, shop unnecessarily, vote indiscriminately, avoid recycling, indulge in overconsumption, avoid renewable energy sources, and invest in polluting industries. We could say, “Earth is doomed and will be destroyed anyway. Let’s bring on the Second Coming—although maybe not just yet.”

As a church, perhaps we could be a little more proactive by electing a committee to debate the wording of a statement on our websites affirming commitment to God’s creation. We could publish a few articles like this one. We could delay taking a strong stand and, above all, stay out of the “political” arena. This would effectively sideline the enthusiasm and passion of our youth for causes they can be part of and allow the secular world to take a stronger stance than we do on God’s creation.

**How to**

But we could also react to the deepening ecological crisis with compassion and respect for all that God the creator made. This is what I hope we would consider:

1. **We could humble ourselves before God.** Admitting that we Christians have become just as materialistic and selfish as the rest of society is difficult—but necessary. To do anything meaningful we would have to remind ourselves that the first task given to us was to take care of creation. We would need to accept that it is morally wrong to harm what God has given or to stand by and do nothing while others destroy it.

2. **We could organise ourselves to take a stand on the wrongs of our time.** To do so would mean strategising about how we can lead by example and engage with the wider community. We would start by employing gifted church leaders with a passion for earth ministry, resourcing them to equip us with knowledge and ideas to defend creation. We could take joy in defending what is the Lord’s.

3. **We could make a personal commitment to respect God’s creation.** In the rich world, we have so much choice. We can choose how much we recycle. We can choose what we consume. We can choose what we abuse. Many of us can favour environmentally sound homes.
We can make do with less. We can use smaller amounts of fuel and water. We can spend more on environmentally responsible solutions and less on entertainment. We can lead by example. We can vote, invest ethically and travel lightly. We can prioritise compassion for what God has made. We can sow a seed, plant a tree, cultivate a love for the natural world and take a stand. We can steel ourselves to not make less of what He made good.

What if?

What if, by the end of 2007 or 2027, we have done nothing? In His parable, Jesus condemned the Pharisee for seeing a mugged, hurting Jew and doing nothing. Indeed, Jesus reserved his praise for a lowly Samaritan who, seeing the injured man’s need, acted on his conscience and intervened despite considerable personal inconvenience. In doing so, the Samaritan is remembered as a man of integrity and compassion. The religious man receives only condemnation for his selfishness (see Luke 10:30-37).

What if we do nothing as a church or a people about God’s wounded creation? What if we believers walk on, too wrapped up in our own little world to bother with the world around us? What if we’re the ones doing the mugging? What would Jesus say of us?

Perhaps the greatest challenge to promoting a more sustainable world is the stark reality that few of us are prepared to sacrifice on a personal level. Our way of life demands more of everything. We desire greater comfort, fewer inconveniences, better technology and newer things. When it comes to the crunch, preserving God’s creation sounds good but few of us are prepared to accept the cost. As Al Gore says, it is “inconvenient.” And until now, Planet Earth, in all its incredible bounty and resilience, has been able to cope with our demands. But it seems that has changed.

In the book of Genesis, we read that God saw all He had made and it was good. Today He would probably be looking at the world and concluding that humans are making it less so. Christians should care for the environment! Right? So what are we doing about it?

Even if our efforts are small, we still owe it to God to do our best. It’s called living our faith; it’s called integrity.

7. T Radford, “Most of the world’s resources ‘used up,’” Guardian Weekly, April 8-14, 2005.

Brad Watson is a lecturer in international development studies at Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales.
There and back again

IAN CONNERS, VIC

In response to “Travelling challenge” (Letters, April 28): We as members of the family of God should not use the excuse of “Members of the church won’t give me a lift” so I am going to leave the church.

My wife and I don’t own a car, but we walk to church events and we witness to those passing by. We take the bus and train to church events and we witness for Jesus to the bus drivers and people in the train.

In the Bible it talks a lot about walking. Jesus walked everywhere He had to go!

Yes, if our church friends give us a lift we say thank you. But if they don’t, we don’t get upset and leave the church or miss seeing the family of God. We walk for the good of our health.

God bless all those with cars and also those who walk to church.

Sabbath gathering

PHIL WARD, QLD

I think it is time to re-examine why we go to church. When I ask most Adventists why we go to church on Sabbath, they say, “To worship God.” However, there is almost nothing in the Bible to say we should worship on Sabbath.

There are only two verses that talk about worship on Sabbath. One of them links worship with the Sabbath of eternity (see Isaiah 66:23) and that hasn’t come yet. The other verse says there should be a gate in Ezekiel’s unbuilt sanctuary where people could worship on Sabbath (see Ezekiel 46:1-3). But that temple was never built, so that instruction never applied. That means there has never been any instruction for us to worship on Sabbath.

If our Sabbath gatherings are not for worship, what are they for? One obvious reason is to learn. Could I suggest that another reason for the command for us to gather on Sabbath (see Leviticus 23:3) is for social and spiritual bonding?

So it is not wrong for us to spend long periods of time talking to our fellow Christians at church. Indeed, this is one of the primary purposes of the church gathering.

Who loves Osama?

JOHN WALLACE, NZ

What a sign saying “Jesus loves Osama” (Letters, April 21) doesn’t say is: We, the followers of Jesus, wouldn’t put our names to such a sentiment, but we’re happy to let everyone know that our Leader loves the guy.

We may be embarrassed if we said we love Osama, even though we claim to follow Jesus, but we don’t mind embarrassing Him. He’s out of town for a while!

During the dawn service, not a sound was heard. But not so during this foot-washing service.

JOHN SMITH, EMAIL

People like Osama, Hitler and Stalin must be possessed by devils. What they do is not human. If those people asked for forgiveness in full honesty, I do believe they’d be forgiven. However, some of the stuff they have done is bordering on the unpardonable. Justice must be done, and all the actions and decisions those people made in sending hundreds of thousands to their death in the most atrocious ways possible must have consequences.

DARLENE DOUGLASS, NSW

I was glad to think that some Christians really understood the gospel, and were prepared to risk their church and their reputation to state the “awful” truth.

After 9/11, America seemed to pause, and I dared to hope they would show the whole world what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. What an amazing opportunity to show the non-Christian world the difference between the normal response and that of the follower of Jesus. But they failed the test. They behaved just like the rest of the world. Tit for tat.

That sign on the church was a challenge mainly to those who profess to be followers of the lovely Jesus, and an invitation to sinners to think. We Christians have not been given the role of judge.

Jesus said to let the one without sin, cast the first stone. I am so glad to see some young people with insight and courage. Well done!

Lest we forget

CATHERINE HOWE, EMAIL

While watching the Anzac memorial services on TV, the respect shown for the slain friends, relatives and loved ones was admirable. My mind flashed back to a recent Communion service I attended, and the lack of respect demonstrated. Some were unable to show reverence and respect during the foot-washing service (constant chatter was heard) for our Loved One and Best Friend, who too was slain.

During the dawn service, not a sound was heard. But not so during this foot-washing service.

NAME WITHHELD

As I read “The call for radical purity” (Features, April 28), I assumed it was written by a young married man.

What about the oldies? After being married and knowing love and intimacy, do they have to suddenly endure loneliness as well as no physical intimacy on the death of a spouse?

Often marriage is impossible at an older age due to distance, finance or health. But the love, intimacy and commitment is no less sincere. Often sex is not possible. What level of intimacy is deemed adultery?

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

**Assistant Building Supervisor** needed urgently for Papua New Guinea Union Mission for 12-24 months. For more information contact Hayley. See below.

**Doctor—Vanuatu** needed for Pacific Yacht Ministries in Vanuatu, July 6-20, 2007. For more information contact Sarah <sarah@oneminemission.org.au>

**IS Support Desk Coordinator—South Pacific Division (Wahroonga, NSW).** For more information please visit the Positions Vacant section of the SPD website at <http://spd.adventist.org.au/employment.html>. Applications in writing should be sent to Group Human Resources, Sanitarium Health Food Company, Locked Bag 2, Central Coast Mail Centre, NSW 2252; fax (02) 4449 0699; email <humanresources@sanitarium.com.au>. Applications close May 28, 2007.

**OHS Officer—Sanitarium Health Food Company (Auckland, NZ)** is seeking an enthusiastic, self-motivated and organised individual with a professional attitude to provide OHS for 300 employees at the Auckland Manufacturing Unit. They will ensure corporate compliance, develop, implement and monitor OHS procedures within the corporate framework, accident investigation and reporting, workplace rehabilitation and advise management on OHS issues. The successful applicant will need to have experience in a similar role, appropriate tertiary qualifications, strong communication skills, proficiency with Microsoft packages, NZQA registered assessor and flexibility to work in 24-hour process. Must be eligible to work in New Zealand. Applications in writing should be sent to Lucie Newport, Human Resources Consultant, Sanitarium Health Food Company, Private Bag 9217, Auckland, NZ; email <hr@adventist.org.au>. Applications close May 25, 2007.

**Weddings**

- **Brown—Godefry**, Nathan John Brown, son of Peter and Jillian Brown (Murwillumbah, NSW), and Nerrisa Leta Godefry, daughter of Ian Godefry (Cooranbong) and Raylene Field, were married on 8.04.07 at Burwood Colliery Bowling bong) and Raylene Field, were married 8.4.07 at Ballara Receptions, Eltham.
- **Small—Camps**—Southern.
- **Camps—Southern.** Coral Camps (Mongolia), and Aloma Joy Hopper (Newcastle), were married 8.4.07 at Ballara Receptions, Eltham.
- **Nalwa—Kylma.** Reuben Myles, son of Peter (Sunshine Coast, Qld), and Phyllis Wood-Johnson (Wales, UK), and Catherine Helen Halmai, daughter of Stephen and Judith Halmai (Murwillumbah, NSW), were married on 21.01.07 at Royal Pines Resort Chapel, Ashmore, Qld. Adrian Craig

**Obituaries**

- **Bullock**, Marjorie, born 9.1.1914 at Inglewood, Vic; died 19.12.06 at Coronella Retirement Village, Melbourne. She was predeceased by her first husband, and her daughter, Yvonne Priest. She is survived by her husband, Robert Bullock; her grand- children, Joanne, Jeffrey and David Priest; and her great-grandchildren. A memorial service was held in the Nunawading church on 28.07.07. Amanda Wagner, Trevor Rowe

**Advertisements**

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**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) 9368 0137; or email <neville@pacific.net.au>.


**Giant book sale** (proceeds to church) needs stock, any books, any age, any condition. Books on shelves collect dust! Church library cluttered with books no one reads? Religion, theology, E G White, atlases, travel, birds, flowers, Australia and abroad; in fact ANY book, in any condition. We’ll pick up. Contact Erick, on (03) 9763 7650 (evenings).
A Thankful Life …

From their comfortable unit at Melody Park Retirement Resort, Pastor Larry and Mrs Ruby Laredo reflect on some of the blessings they have enjoyed over their years in ministry and share some of their big thankyou's.

Thank you …

… for Avondale. Larry and Ruby’s journey began at Avondale College, where they met as students in the late 1950s. They were married in 1961, and set out on their new life committed to serving God and others.

… for family. Blessed with two children, the family grew further with the addition of their spouses and four grandchildren. Their church family also includes members from around Australia and New Zealand.

… for opportunity to serve. Over the years, Ruby served at Signs Publishing, Sanitarium, Auckland and Sydney Adventist Hospitals and as a minister’s wife. After several years in the advertising industry, Larry accepted a call to ministry, serving as literature evangelist, church pastor, public relations and departmental director. The Laredos have spent time in Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia, New South Wales and New Zealand.

… for Adventist Retirement Villages. Larry and Ruby were thrilled to move into Melody Park Resort on the Gold Coast in Queensland upon retirement. After years of moving between states and conferences, they have settled at last into a comfortable independent-living unit in the attractive, secure environment of the village. A wide variety of social activities are provided and the facility includes a billiards/games room, barbecue area, indoor heated pool and spa. The Laredos have appreciated the peace of mind that comes with being able to live independently while having the provision of residential care on hand.

“Ruby and I have lived in Seventh-day Adventist Retirement Villages in Western Australia and Queensland for more than six years, and gladly recommend the experience,” says Larry.

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Victorian Conference (03) 9259 2100: Bendigo, Nunawading and Warburton
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Peanut Butter Mighty Muffins

Ingredients
2 cups self-raising flour.
1/2 cup sugar.
3 tablespoons Sanitarium Crunchy Peanut Butter.
1 tablespoon margarine.
3 ripe bananas, mashed.
1 egg, lightly beaten.
1 cup Sanitarium So Good soy milk

Easy Steps
1. Sift flours into a large bowl.
2. Add sugar.
3. Melt margarine with Sanitarium Crunchy Peanut Butter in a saucepan over medium heat.
4. Combine with bananas, egg and So Good soy milk.
5. Add liquid ingredients to dry ingredients and mix until just combined.
6. Spoon into lightly greased muffin tins.
7. Bake in a moderate oven 180°C for 25 minutes or until cooked.

Makes 12 Muffins.

Per Serve: 840kJ (205Cal). Protein 6g. Total Fat 6g. Carbohydrate 31g. Sodium 210mg. Fibre 2g. Calcium 60mg.