Money, money, money

Finance reports are due, tax returns need to be filled, and shops go in to mega-sale mode. Yes, it’s the end of the financial year, and money is on everybody’s mind.

For Christians, money is always a sensitive topic. How often do we find ourselves vacillating between the understanding that “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10, NKJV) and the desire to want more of it? While the act of wanting is questionable, the act of giving is not. The Bible is clear on the importance of giving (Psalm 37:21; Acts 20:35) and giving cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7).

At RECORD, we’re not going to advise you on how you should spend your money. We will, however, share with you two wonderful opportunities for you to help the mission of the Church before the end of the financial year. Keep reading this week’s edition of RECORD eNews to find out more.
Teenage girls find real beauty

This Sabbath’s offering is the “Pacific Island Advancement Offering”. Give generously and help the Church bring more exciting initiatives to the Pacific Islands, like the recent “Real Beauty” Conference held in the Solomon Islands.

Read RECORD

Sacrifice and secret societies were hot topics of last week’s issue of RECORD. In case you missed it, don’t fret! You can check it out online at <record.net.au>.

Watch/download InFocus

This week, equality for children? James Standish comments. The surprising health benefits of cinnamon. And the Chatelier family singers—the story behind the music.
Every nation

One of the very first conflicts within the early Christian church was along ethnic lines. Nearly 2000 years later, it seems some things haven’t changed.
Teenage girls find real beauty

Honiara, Solomon Islands

A three-day conference in the Solomon Islands has helped young women discover their inner beauty.

Ninety teenage girls participated in the “Real Beauty” conference, which was reportedly the first conference of its kind to be run by the Adventist Church in the Solomons.

“It was all about teaching our girls that beauty is not physical, but that it is the inner beauty that counts,” said Erna Johnson, director of Women’s Ministries for the South Pacific Division and a moderator at the event. “That Jesus loves us, He created us and He’s the only One who can make us beautiful as we grow in Him.”

Young women enjoying “Real Beauty”.

The conference was organised by the Adventist Women’s Ministries of the Solomon Islands under the leadership of Beverly Maega. Many mature women came to help as mentors for each group.

“The girls loved every moment of it and told us that they can’t wait until next year when we will offer them another conference, this time with the theme ‘Real Friends’,,” Ms Johnson said.

“Adventist Women across the Division are putting an emphasis on teenage girls and young women as their main goal for this quinquennium. This conference is part of our strategic plans as we work towards engaging our teenage girls and young women in church.”
Twenty-seven years of civil unrest characterised by violence and continued poverty tore East Timor apart. The result? Thousands have experienced, and continue to experience, hardships most of us struggle to fathom. And all of this just an hour's flight from Australia's shores.

We’re neighbours, but our lives are worlds apart.

Maria, a 67-year-old grandmother, lived through East Timor’s darkest times. As a child, instead of going to school, she and her sisters would spend hours each day collecting and carrying heavy jerry cans of water.

As a married woman Maria watched her family suffer continual illness from the dirty water she collected. But with only one source of water there was no other option.

The turmoil of the 1970s as Portugal pulled out of East Timor forced Maria and her family into the jungle. It was the only place some sense of safety was assured. They foraged for food—eating wild cassava, greens and berries. But often there would be days of hunger.

One day, Maria’s daughters, Sofia, 3, and Teresa, 2, came across a creek. Thirsty and tired they drank, unaware that a corpse upstream was polluting the water. In a matter of hours their already frail bodies crumbled. They remain buried in the jungle they called home.

Maria’s heart-breaking story doesn’t end here. After resettling in their hometown post-independence, Maria’s husband fell ill. He suffered from vomiting and diarrhoea for a week before passing away. Again, Maria was faced with the grief of losing a loved one because of unsafe water.

Today it's a different story—Maria no longer worries about getting sick or losing another loved one to water-borne disease. She has been a participant in ADRA’s water and sanitation project and as a result understands the importance of basic health principles including boiling water before drinking and cooking.

ADRA has also helped Maria by working together with her community to establish 12 new boreholes and water stations and build 250 toilets, while providing health and sanitation training to more than 2300 people.

Proverbs 14:21 is just one of the hundreds of texts that call us to examine our attitudes and actions towards others. It reads:
“Whoever despises his neighbour is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor.”

Maria’s home of East Timor, like the many island nations that surround Australia, is undeniably close—neighbourly even. But based on Proverbs, the question of who my neighbour is remains unanswered.

A lawyer once asked that question of Jesus, who told the parable of the Good Samaritan in reply. The conversation concludes:

“Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?” [Jesus asked]

[The lawyer replied] "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise" (Luke 10:30-37 ESV).

What Jesus highlights is that the question is not really about how we define our neighbours. The question is how we treat them.

You can help 22,000 neighbours in need this end of financial year. Your gift of just $40 will help ADRA raise the $800,000 needed before June 30 to improve the health and wellbeing of more than 22,000 people like Maria in Australia, the South Pacific and south-east Asia.

Simply complete and return the form included in the insert, visit <www.adra.org.au/neighboursinneed> or call 1800 242 372.

Mark Webster is CEO of ADRA Australia.
I grew up attending churches in three different countries—Australia, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand—and have attended or visited many churches dominated by a particular ethnic group as well as churches where the proverbial cultural melting pot was bubbling away.

But as fun as cultural diversity might be when it comes to combined church lunches, it’s also a point of friction. One of the very first conflicts within the early Christian church was along ethnic lines: “In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food” (Acts 6:1).

Nearly 2000 years later, it’s sad how some things haven’t changed. I’ve sat in very multicultural churches in Australia and noted that, when it comes to Communion time, suddenly it’s only white men presiding over the table. I’ve known people in ethnic minority congregations to tell someone from another cultural background that they don’t belong. I’ve been present at diverse gatherings in the Pacific and heard the host nation’s language dominate—spoken and sung to the exclusion of many in the congregation, including myself. In some ways I was grateful for this experience, because it’s not often that a white guy feels marginalised. It was an important lesson to learn.

It’s the 21st century and the global village is fast becoming a reality. How are we going to deal with it? Many Australian churches are seeing a rapid influx of migrants. Our denomination in a number of Pacific nations is searching for ways to engage the growing Chinese population.

I’m not going to be prescriptive, because each church has its unique situation. There are good reasons for establishing ethno-specific churches; there are good reasons for keeping them that way (like being a base for intentional evangelism to unreached local people from that cultural group). But sometimes there are good reasons for surrendering to the changing times and making the transition to a multicultural rather than an ethno-specific or blindly “mainstream” church.

In any case, my call is for inclusion rather than exclusion. Open doors and open hearts. Our leadership teams should reflect the diversity of our congregations, not the inequalities of our societies—as Christians we are better than that. We have the technology easily available to provide interpreting services where there are significant numbers of congregants who struggle with the church’s main language. And, on that point: is the church’s main language a matter of tradition or consideration?

I’d love to sing more songs in different languages, using different melodies, rhythms and instruments that reflect the cultures of...
those sitting around me. I’d love to invite more people home for Sabbath lunch to share the cuisine of my heritage. And I’d love to praise my God one day together with the “great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9).

*All Bible verses taken from the New International Version.

Kent Kingston is assistant editor of RECORD.