The changing times

Australian politics captured the world’s attention last week after Kevin Rudd reclaimed his position as prime minister of Australia. A week later, and Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi has been ousted and detained by the country’s armed forces. There’s no denying it: changes—big changes—happen quickly and often.

One man who recently experienced a most dramatic change is burn-survivor Linden Millist. For an update on his condition, and to hear from the man himself, keep reading this week’s edition of RECORD eNews.
**Prayers answered for burnt engineer**

On January 22, Adventist Aviation Services engineer Linden Millist suffered burns to 50 per cent of his body after the plane he was performing routine maintenance on burst into flames. Five-and-a-half months later, Linden is steadily recovering, and well aware of how fortunate he is to be alive.

**The miraculous mind**

As you read this, "your mind is at work, literally a miraculous act of God, processing the ideas that you are reading." Join Dr Sven Ostring as he explores the miracle of the human mind.

**Read RECORD**

Two Sabbaths, two new issues of RECORD. Let the good times roll!

**Watch/download InFocus**

In this week's special holiday episode of Record InFocus, we look back at some of our favourite interviews, including a sit down with Untoxicated founder Matt Urmenyhazi. Is there anything the "straight edge" punk subculture can teach us about living a drug & alcohol-free lifestyle?
Cheesecake gospel

It’s one of Christianity’s fundamental beliefs—“Love your neighbour”. But how many of us have actually stepped outside of our homes and comfort zones to meet our neighbours?

More Editorials
Prayers answered for burnt engineer

It can be disconcerting flying over the highlands of Papua New Guinea, crammed into a small propeller plane. The buzz and bounce over the lush valleys, threaded with glistening ribbons of water, or the sheer cliffs that rise, almost to the height of the plane, their stony faces stern, is an exhilarating experience. Looking up at the towering pillars of cloud you’re flying through and around is humbling.

It makes you respectful of the professional staff of Adventist Aviation Services (AAS), who make these flights every day, descending into funnel-shaped valleys, landing on muddy, bumpy, grass airstrips and bringing food, supplies and the Gospel to some of the world’s most rugged and remote villages. It can be dangerous work, yet it's very rewarding—the smiles of those receiving a delivery show how important it is.

This really is the land of the unexpected. But tragically on January 22, the unthinkable happened.

Linden Millist, 33, AAS engineer and eldest son of CEO, Roger, was carrying out routine maintenance on the newest plane when it burst into flames. Rushed from the hangar at Goroka to Brisbane hospital with burns to 50 per cent of his body, Linden fought for his life. Today, Linden is staying in Brisbane, still undergoing daily physio and occupational therapies and, in many ways, he's lucky to be alive.

“I am constantly reminded of how fortunate I am to be alive and to have pulled through OK thus far,” he said. “It was 14 hours before I got to the Brisbane hospital's Intensive Care Unit. I should have died within those 14 hours. Even in ICU, with 50 per cent burns the chance of survival is well less than 50 per cent.”

There is still work to be done. “It is a long, hard, slow, painful journey, but it is God, family and everyone praying for me that is making the difference.” Linden said his faith remains, and even though he has not yet been able to return to church, he is looking forward to when he can.

Supported by his family, particularly his fiancée, Bri Norton, who moved from Perth to aid in his recovery, and his mother, Carol, Linden had multiple skin graft operations—any patch of skin that wasn't burnt was peeled and stretched to cover what he’d lost. The accident not only affected Linden but also his family and those who have been caring for him.

“Bri has been awesome throughout all this and is doing a wonderful job looking after me,” he said. “By the end of the day we are both very tired.”

Donations and prayers flowed in from across the world to aid in the recovery effort. Linden said this had been very encouraging and was making a difference.

In early June, he flew to America to attend Bri’s sister's wedding, a huge milestone in his recovery. However, it may be two years until he's able to work again.

“My biggest issue is HO calcification in my two elbows and two knees. I have to wait for a year before the calcification stops and then [have] an operation on each joint to fix the limited range and pain,” he explained. “[My] skin is all coming along fine; I am in pressure garments to keep pressure on the skin to stop scarring.”

While Linden has been recovering, AAS has been helped and supported too. The damaged aircraft was shipped back to New Zealand for repairs and is not expected back until the end of the year. AAS purchased a new aircraft, which went into service on June 10. The Pacific Aerospace factory in New Zealand supplied AAS with an engineer to assist with scheduled maintenance on the other aircraft and the chief engineer from Mission Aviation Fellowship has assisted with licence coverage so everything remained legal with the Civil Aviation Authority of PNG. Nathan Leins from Australia will join the team as the maintenance manager until a replacement can be found, at which time, he will start as a pilot. Nathan spent 12 years in the RAAF as an engineer before completing his commercial pilot's licence.

Also, recently retired pastors Colin Dunn (a former AAS chief engineer/pilot) and Warren Price (a former AAS pilot) are assisting AAS by caring for the quality and safety management area, while Jonathan Butcher and his family, from Cooranbong, NSW, spent two weeks painting and doing required maintenance on staff houses.

“Though it has been a very difficult year for AAS and myself personally, we have been blessed in so many ways and seen answers to prayers, which I had almost given up hope on,” Roger said. “I would like to thank the thousands of people around the world who have prayed for, and continue to pray for, Linden's healing and have supported all of us in tangible and practical ways. Those prayers have been answered, and continue to be answered—God is good!”

“Thank-you to everyone all over the world who have followed my journey and been a part of supporting myself and Bri thru thought, prayer, gifts and financial support. Every little [bit of] support has been appreciated and it has all made a difference to the positive direction of my recovery thus far. This is what Church is all about!” said Linden via email. "God's people supporting those in need and upholding each other in prayer. It is powerful and strengthens the winning side in the fight between Good and Evil!"
"God is alive," Linden adds. "He hears and answers every prayer."

*Linden and Bri plan to get married by registry in July. They hope to have a proper celebration in 2014 in the US. The original plan was August this year but Linden says he would like to be out of his pressure garments and having his arms and legs working properly.

The family have set up a GoFundMe account to receive donations in lieu of gifts and flowers. The money will go towards medical bills and rehab, lost wages for Linden’s carers, car hire, food, accommodation and other costs over the next few months.

Prayers and messages of support have flooded in from around the world on the RECORD website, as well as on the Facebook page, “Prayer for Linden Millist & Bri Norton – His fiancé & family.”

Jarrod Stackelroth is associate editor of RECORD.
The miraculous mind

"Well," she said, standing there beside her Cambridge bedroom door with a look that fused curiosity, incredulity and a mild challenge all in one. “Have you ever seen one?”

I gulped. I mean, how could I have ever seen one? I had grown up in materialistic Hong Kong, gone to university in sceptical New Zealand and was now doing research in atheistic England. What was the chance that I had ever really witnessed a miracle occur? Now if I had lived in Papua New Guinea or the Pacific Islands or Africa...

Jane’s question still swirled around in my subconscious as I worked away at my mobile computer networking research for the rest of week. As I continued to think and reflect and explore, I suddenly realised that the miracle that she was asking for had been literally standing before me. It was her, Jane! She was a miracle, in and of herself.

Now, of course, all of her physiological processes were miracles—her DNA, her biological control systems and even her sexuality. The miracle that I was particularly thinking of, though, was the miracle of her mind. Deep within her was a miracle that was literally stamped with the supernatural. Or rather, I should say, was supernatural from its very foundation.

The human brain is an incredible thought processing unit that is just 1.4kg of grey matter that consists of 100 billion neurons. In terms of processing power, the brain is estimated to be equivalent to a 168GHz computer and has an estimated 100GB of memory storage. So, by way of comparison, the human brain is roughly equivalent to my little MacBook Air in terms of weight and memory storage but almost 100 times faster in terms of processing power. That’s quite impressive specs for a computing unit that has been available on the market now for just over 6000 years!

Still, it is not the brain that I am really interested in. It’s the mind. The brain is like the hardware; the mind is the operating system and the software. Because you have a mind, you are conscious and have the rational ability to determine whether something is true or false, right or wrong. Furthermore, you have the amazing freedom to choose. The mind is truly a miracle and powerful evidence pointing to our intelligent Creator.

In fact, it’s the mind that presents one of the most significant challenges to atheism. You see, if atheism is true, then our minds would have had to develop through the naturalistic process of evolution (it’s really the only game in town for an atheist!). However, this means that your mind has been shaped for the purpose of surviving and not for discerning what is true. This is a subtle difference with major consequences. If your mind evolved, then I can trust that you would be effective at fleeing predators, choosing the best reproductive partner and locating good food. However, there is no reason to trust that your beliefs are actually true. This includes all of your thoughts, even an atheist’s beliefs, so we have no reason to believe that atheism and evolution are, in fact, true! Beliefs in atheism and evolution, therefore, literally undermine themselves because they undermine the rationality of the human mind at its very foundation. In contrast, we can confidently believe that our minds are rational and effective because God Himself created our minds from His intelligence. You are a miracle made in His image, and your mind is living proof of that.

Even as you read this article, your mind is at work, literally a miraculous act of God, processing the ideas that you are reading.

Our minds are miracles given to us at birth. There is a greater miracle, however, that surpasses even our individual minds. As Paul says, "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:1-5).

Through the power, the gift and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we can be of one mind, one attitude, one way of thinking. This way of thinking was the way that Jesus thought: " . . . who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:6-8).

Each one of us has a miraculous mind, individually created in the image of God, with the power to think and to choose. But we need the Holy Spirit to work a greater miracle within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific, so that we can together have the mind of Christ, not thinking of what’s best for ourselves, but having the type of thinking that is willing to sacrifice self so that others might live. Just like Jesus did.

Dr Sven Ostring is director of church planting for the Western Australian Conference.
Cheesecake gospel

My neighbour loves cheesecake. He’s not really a dessert kind of guy but he can’t get enough of strawberry cheesecake. So we’ve got a bit of a deal going. We bring home leftover cheesecake from church lunch and drop it off to him and our neighbours on the left. And he provides us with authentic vegetarian curry. I love it. Seriously, we never set out to receive. We just wanted to be good neighbours. But the curry is a bonus.

For a year, we’d nod to him in the car park or see him sometimes when we took the rubbish out. But we didn’t know he lived alone, having separated from his wife, or that he was Sikh (although not strict), that he was vegetarian on Mondays because he prayed or that he was a Fijian Indian.

Now I’d like to think we are friends. We are getting to know each other, sharing things and ready to help if needed. We’ve been in his apartment, he’s been in ours. We’ve also had dinner with our Korean neighbours twice. Knowing we are Christian and having had grace at our place, they asked me to say grace for the meal they provided us. What an honour. This is all in the past few months. What happened?

We were challenged at church to get to know our neighbours. It was time to step out of our complacency, overcome our fears and start building relationships. Yet I struggled. I work at an Adventist institution, and having recently moved to this city, everyone that I knew was Adventist. I had come to the disturbing realisation that I hardly knew anyone not connected with or attending an Adventist church. I would only catch up with people to invite them to a program or meeting.

And so we started getting to know the people who were right around us, literally metres from our door. No target on their backs, no agenda—just friendship.

Good for you, Jarrod, you say. You’ve made some new friends but why is this important to me?

When Jesus said we should love our neighbours, we made it suitably general—our friends, our enemies, the stranger, the other—be nice. But what about our actual neighbours?

In our culture of fear and suspicion, we limit our opportunities to live and share God’s kingdom. We need to create opportunities by leaving our complacency behind and building relationships. Is it easy? No, it’s been hard. The hardest thing is to break out of my comfort zone and risk rejection. I’ve had moments of self-doubt, my knuckles hovering before I knock, praying I say the right thing. I’d rather preach than put myself out there and meet new people. My wife, Lina, on the other hand, may struggle to exegete eschatological ecclesiology but she’s great at this networking stuff! She’s generous, friendly and likes people. She just invites them into our place. That’s who we as Christians need to be—a touch point to Jesus.

The men Jesus made the biggest impact on lived life with Him for three and-a-half years. They broke bread, lived and journeyed together.

Paul did it too. He says, “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us” (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

How many of your neighbours and your networks do you share life with? It’s as easy as sharing your cheesecake.

Jarrod Stackelroth is associate editor of RECORD.