Ready or not?

It’s a comment you’ve probably heard dozens of times before—“young people are the future”. But have you truly considered the ramifications of that statement, or simply brushed it aside? Take note: the little tackers, tweens, teens and tertiary students in our schools and churches today are the ones that will be leading the Adventist Church in the future.

And it looks like they’re ready. Thousands of young adults from across the globe gathered in South Africa last week for the Adventist Church’s world youth conference, with many arriving early to serve in the local communities. But there’s also evidence that our young people are still in need of much nurturing and support. Keep reading this edition of RECORD eNews to find out more.
Students need your support

The values and behaviour of Adventist young adults have changed a lot over the past two decades, according to a recent survey of Adventist students. While there have been positive developments, it’s not all for the better.

Smells like teen spirit(uality)

Kent Kingston was one of the Year 12 students surveyed 20 years ago. Since then, he’s seen many friends and peers walk away from their faith. What’s the key to keeping young people in the church?

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Find out how Godpods and a good breakfast are changing lives across the South Pacific in the latest issue of RECORD.

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Sanitarium helps children get a good start

Sanitarium Health & Wellbeing is celebrating a 10 year partnership with Australian Red Cross running a program that feeds thousands of children across Australia each day.
Renowned brain surgeon Dr Ben Carson this past weekend implored Seventh-day Adventist youth to exercise their willpower and remain committed to God in a series of three speeches to the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s world youth conference.

Carson served for more than two and a half decades as chief of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, United States, and was a key presenter at Impact South Africa. The event has drawn more than 3100 Adventist youth and young adults from around the globe for two weeks of community service, workshops and worship.

“God has given each one of us something that is extraordinarily special. It’s called willpower. You don’t have to give in,” Carson said of things than can divert young people from realising their full potential.

During Saturday morning’s Sabbath worship service, Carson also recounted his experiences in becoming a neurosurgeon, as told in his book *Gifted Hands*. He credited God for allowing him to make an impact through his career, despite it turning out differently than his childhood ambition of becoming a missionary doctor.

“Never get too big for God, never deny God, no matter where he takes you, no matter what roles you’re in,” Carson said. “If you put him first in your life, you will be extraordinarily successful.”

In the audience, Argentinian Ezequiel Durán, 26, said Carson’s speeches were some of the conference’s highlights for him. “He is a good leader and example for young people. He dedicated his whole life to God. I like that.”
Indeed, Shereen Rodney, 24, from the United Kingdom, said she came to the conference for the community service work that some 1000 attendees gave during the conference’s first week. In a stadium seat, she said, “We’re looking to replicate some of these things when we go back home. It’s going to be like a chain reaction.”

Gilbert Cangy, director of the Adventist Church’s Youth Ministries and organiser of the conference, said the event successfully integrated youth from around the world as a family of faith.

“We truly embraced diversity at this event,” Cangy said. “There was a place at this conference for everyone—from every country, from every culture.”

Celina Sunder Singh, 20, from India, said the conference offered her the chance to meet new people in a supportive environment. “It’s nice to know so many people having the same faith as you, and learning a few words in every language was fun,” she said. “My favorite was Spanish.”

More than 18,000 people attended a Sabbath worship service at Lucas Masterpieces Moripe Stadium on Saturday, July 13. The large-scale service was held on the final day of Impact South Africa, the Adventist Church’s world youth congress. [Photo courtesy: Ansel Oliver]

Following the morning service, dozens of attendees traveled throughout nearby neighbourhoods to distribute 20,000 copies of the book The Great Hope. The book is an abbreviated version of Adventist Church co-founder Ellen White’s touchstone book, The Great Controversy.

On Saturday evening, back at the conference’s base at the Saint George Hotel & Convention Centre, a report was given from the final of the denomination’s 13 world divisions. Each regional administration presented throughout the week, with colourful national garb and video reports.

Cangy also thanked his team of organisers, who helped coordinate everything from service projects and workshops to producing evening worship services that featured music and preaching by evangelist David Asscherick.

“By God’s grace we’re finishing well,” Cangy said. “We give God all the glory and we’re grateful for His gracious spirit.”

—see more photos of Impact South Africa at the ANN Flickr account
Community service kicks off youth conference

Pretoria, South Africa

Australian Samantha Lee spent last week here in South Africa working in a home for orphaned and homeless kids, saying the week of service was her treat to herself—a trip to celebrate her 21st birthday.

Samantha Lee, 21, from Sydney, Australia, volunteered last week with friends to teach kids at the Christian Crisis Centre in Kameeldrift, South Africa, as part of the Adventist world church’s youth conference. “The kids loved the camera,” she said.

“I wanted to go somewhere to help someone, not just have a holiday for myself,” she said.

Lee, who spent the week with friends working at the Christian Crisis Centre in Kameeldrift, is one of more than 1000 Adventist young people who came here from around the world for the opening week of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s world youth conference.

The “Impact South Africa: 3rd World Conference on Youth and Community Service” runs from July 8 to 13 and features a week of service projects, followed by this week of general sessions and evening devotionals.

Last week, volunteers served in 60 different projects throughout Capetown, Soweto and here in the capital, Pretoria.

“People had a wonderful time serving and making a real impact throughout the country,” said Adventist Youth Ministries director Gilbert Cangy.

Stefania Sandoval, upper left, a 25-year-old engineer from Venezuela, volunteered last week with friends to gather clothes and food for people in need in Heidelberg. She was one of more than 1000 Adventist young people working in 60 community service projects as part of the Adventist world church’s youth conference.

Simone Thiel, 18, from Germany, described the experience as the “best week of my life.” She said she and a group from Germany painted a church in Dobsonville, Soweto, and worked in an orphanage. The best part, she said, was staying in the home of church members. “In
Germany it’s impossible that 50 people would eat in one room. It’s too small there and we usually like our space.”

Lindsay Foolchand, a 30-year-old tour guide from Mauritius, worked in Soweto to cook and wash clothes at a home for the disabled. He especially enjoyed the local Adventist style of worship songs. “It was so intense, from the heart. Very different from what we are used to,” he said.

Stefania Sandoval, a 25-year-old engineer from Venezuela gathered clothes and food for needy families and repaired floors in a school dorm in Heidelberg. “It was our first time,” she said of laying tile flooring. “We had to learn. But everyone was happy.”

Tapuwa Taps Mathiba, 16, from South Africa, worked with a group to produce a Vacation Bible School for 30 kids in the city of Tembisa. He also helped to remodel a decaying home in Mamelodi. “I don’t think anyone could live inside such a home,” he said of a two-room home that housed a family of eight.

Armando Miranda, an Adventist world church vice president, supervised 11 projects in Capetown. He said a group of Australians, Canadians and Russians worked together to clean up a poor area of town and teach kids how to keep the area clean. “It was really important because they involved the community,” Miranda said. “It was a wonderful experience for everyone and they made a lot of friends.”

A choir performs "Oh Happy Day" on July 8 at the opening of "Impact South Africa," the Adventist Church's world youth conference. More than 3000 people from 97 countries attended the opening ceremony at the Saint George Hotel & Convention Centre in Pretoria.

Last night’s opening ceremony brought together some 3100 youth from 97 countries to the Saint George Hotel & Convention Centre. The evening opened with a parade of nations, with each country represented by a flag bearer wearing national dress. Attendees in the packed auditorium strained to see, many holding up cameras and tablets to capture the action on the stage.

In the back of the hall, as an African choir performed “Amen” with rhythmic movements, 32-year-old Jania Betlinski, from Oregon, United States, watched from a ledge. “I’m very amazed,” she said, “because I didn’t think it would be quite like this—all the colors and music. It’s wonderful.”

Attendees were greeted by Irvin Khoza, chair of the Premier Soccer League in South Africa, who expressed his gratitude to the Adventist Church for his upbringing. Former Youth Ministries director Baraka Muganda, originally from Tanzania, was honored for his service. And Mayor Kgosietsio Ramokgopa of the city of Tshwane invited attendees to keep in their prayers former president Nelson Mandela, whom he said is in a hospital 10 kilometers away.

Cangy, the Youth Ministries director, addressed attendees, citing the meeting’s theme: “Jesus is in the city because you are in the city,” he said, before declaring the conference officially open.
Seventh-day Adventist students have positive perceptions of how home, church and school influences their faith development, according to Valuegenesis II, a longitudinal study of young adults by the Church in the South Pacific.

Lead researcher Dr Barry Gane, head of the School of Ministry and Theology at Avondale College of Higher Education, based the finding on 1359 responses to a 260-item questionnaire completed by students in Adventist high schools in Australia and New Zealand who have at least one Adventist parent. Comparison with Valuegenesis I in 1992 reveals significant trends.

While mothers generally have the strongest home influence on faith development, students now give much more significance to the influence of fathers and grandparents. Affectionate parenting that is not over-protective or over-restraining correlates strongly with the development of Christian commitment, denominational loyalty, self-esteem and social responsibility.

Students now rate worship services as a much more significant contributor to faith development (81 per cent compared to 63 per cent in 1992). The study points to local church-based youth ministry as one of the most powerful influences—the absence of it would seem culpable. Students also gave considerable weight to the impact of service activities and to the influence of summer camps and youth rallies.

One of the most striking developments since Valuegenesis I is the increased importance students place on the influence of Adventist education in their faith development, with an average rise of 31 per cent in the rating of school factors.

Valuegenesis II also shows how important it is for adults to take a significant personal interest in the welfare and spiritual development of teenagers. Eighty per cent of students acknowledged the influence of adults at church, while about 70 per cent acknowledged the influence of adults at school.

The faith experience of students is still strong—87 per cent believe God still loves them when they have done wrong, 77 per cent want to learn about God while they are still young and 63 per cent have a sense of God’s guidance in their lives. However, 41 per cent identified with the statement, “God seems far away and silent when I need Him.” The proportion of Year 12 students exhibiting high faith maturity (measured against 38 criteria) is 50 per cent higher than in Valuegenesis I.

Attitudes to the local church were significantly more positive on almost all criteria. Most students saw their church as friendly and accepting, open to new ideas and encouraging of young adults. However, only 53 per cent felt their youth leaders knew them well, and only 45 per cent thought their minister showed interest in them (both lower than in 1992). Seventy-nine per cent expressed a high level of satisfaction with the Adventist Church (up from 60 per cent) and 75 per cent described the chance they would still be in the Church at age 40 as good or excellent.

Agreement with the Church’s key teachings has declined since 1992, and levels of disagreement or uncertainty have risen. Belief that salvation is a gift from God, in the Sabbath and in the second coming is strong. The areas of greatest uncertainty: whether the Bible is the
sole source of doctrinal authority; the significance of church pioneer Ellen White; the investigative judgement; and the ultimate fate of the wicked.

While baptisms to age 13 are similar to 1992 levels, only 38 per cent of students have been baptised at age 18, compared with 81 per cent in 1992.

Adventist students are much less “at risk” than their peers in the community, though the proportion of students engaging in such behaviours is sizeable and increasing. Forty-three per cent of Year 11 and 12 students reported one or more “at risk” behaviours. Twenty-five per cent had consumed alcohol three or more times in the previous year. Thirty per cent had shoplifted at least once. More than 12 per cent had viewed sexually explicit videos or magazines 40 or more times in the previous year.

The research, supported by a grant of $A60,000, will inform evaluation of church programs, facilitate evidence-based decision-making and influence planning for the future.

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Dr John Cox is editor of Reflections, Avondale College of Higher Education's alumni magazine.
I demand a second opinion! Barry Gane’s Valuegenesis research shows Adventist young people in 1992 were less spiritual than they are now. Surely there’s been a miscalculation—some vital variable overlooked during a dubious recalibration. Because I was one of the Year 12 students surveyed in 1992, baring my soul anonymously to Barry and his clipboard-wielding henchpeople. Only to be told, years after the fact, that I belong to a generation of spiritual dwarfs. Sigh.

They say the truth hurts; in this case it’s certainly revealing. And, sadly, my recollections only serve to reinforce the Valuegenesis stats. There were about six other Year 12 kids attending my church at the beginning of 1992. By the end of the year I was the only one left.

It’s a sobering toll and my experience is not unique. It leaves me wondering: What made the difference between my peers and me? Didn’t God have a plan for each of us? (Yes, and He still does, even after all these years and despite our poor choices.)

Valuegenesis points to the importance of family—that was certainly a key factor in my case. I had parents who modelled a living faith and loving, consistent biblical principles. The research also suggests that quality youth ministry in the local church is crucial. And here I would have to agree, but with an important addition.

It’s not enough to have great programs that keep young people engaged in worthwhile activities and connected with a positive peer group. It’s not even enough to present clear biblical truth and lead soul-warming worship. For me—and I suspect I’m not the only one—the key was involvement.

I was probably only about 15 when I was asked to be on the youth committee for my local church. The young people organised their own Sabbath School and activities, and it was empowering to be a part of this process. Because I was part of the organising team, I felt a sense of ownership over what happened and appreciated the hard work involved.

At the age of 17 I had the opportunity to go on a youth mission trip to Poland. The team would support the work of the public evangelist as well as conducting street ministry. In preparing for the trip I was forced to confront my own spiritual state—was this just going to be an overseas junket, or was I serious about sharing Christianity with others? The reality of my involvement took me to a place of decision where, for the first time, I wholeheartedly gave myself to God.

I've found since that time, that involvement in church life has remained crucial to my faith. Christianity was never supposed to be theory, but a practical religion. I’m glad now that my own teenagers are involved in music and given responsible roles at their Adventist school, Pathfinder club and local church.

And, putting my wounded Gen X pride aside, I will have no objection if, when my boys reach Year 12, it turns out that Barry Gane is right after all, and they’re more spiritual than I was at that age, or any age. Indeed, I’m praying for that outcome.
Kent Kingston is an assistant editor of RECORD.
Sanitarium helps children get a good start

Sanitarium Health & Wellbeing is celebrating a 10 year partnership with Australian Red Cross running a program that feeds thousands of children across Australia each day.

“Our partnership in the Good Start Breakfast Club is a very tangible way to share health, hope and happiness with the next generation of Australians,” said Julie Praestiin, Sanitarium's corporate communications manager.

“Each day, we are ensuring thousands of children across Australia receive the good start they deserve, by giving them the opportunity to start each day with a nutritious breakfast.”

More than 200 Good Start Breakfast Clubs operate in areas of greatest need, with 1200 volunteers serving healthy breakfasts to 5000 children each day.

Among them are the students of Clayton North Primary School (Victoria), where the program has had a positive impact on learning, according to principal Rukshana Verzijl.

“It's hard to learn on an empty tummy,” she said. “Our breakfast club makes it easier for our students to concentrate on what the teacher is saying and to remain focused on their studies.

“Along with increased attendance rates, there has been a marked improvement in the literacy achievement levels of many of our students who now have more energy in the morning. Starting the day on such a positive note has ensured greater school engagement.”

Sanitarium’s accredited practising dietitian, Michelle Reid, said a wealth of research shows a healthy breakfast helps children to learn and positively influences their mood.

“Children consuming a regular nutritious breakfast tend to have a lower intake of fat and higher intakes of protein, fibre, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals, generally meaning a healthier diet overall,” she said.

“Skipping breakfast over childhood and adult years can mean poorer metabolic health in the long term, resulting in higher cholesterol and insulin levels as well as more fat around the waist, all of which can lead to chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

“Children who eat breakfast daily tend to choose more nutritious foods during the day, like fruit and vegetables, and less unhealthy snack foods such as chips, lollies and sugary soft drinks.”
A recent national Newspoll survey commissioned by Sanitarium found that more than one-third of Australians with children in the household have difficulty covering daily expenses such as food and bills—with 56 per cent buying lower quality food to save money, 27 per cent putting off bills to put food on the table, and a quarter eating less than they would have liked to save money or because they couldn’t afford more.

The breakfast clubs are supported by nutrition education including the FOODcents program, helping children and their parents make healthier food choices and promoting healthy habits for life.

Sanitarium has donated more than 4.7 million serves of cereal and soy milk products to the program over the past decade.

For a 12-month period, Weet-Bix 1kg packs sold in IGA stores will have an entire back and side panel devoted to sharing stories and photos from the breakfast clubs.

*Red Cross relies on committed volunteers and donors. You can support the Good Start Breakfast Club by giving monthly or making a one-off donation at [www.redcross.org.au/breakfastclubs](http://www.redcross.org.au/breakfastclubs).*

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*Sharyn Brady is public relations coordinator for Sanitarium Health & Wellbeing.*