Big news

A royal baby was born—and given a name. A former detention centre guard said asylum seekers are being raped and tortured on Manus Island. And just yesterday, 80 people were killed in a train crash in Spain. There’s no questioning it—it’s been a big news week. The asylum seeker situation even prompted our editor James Standish to go on a writing spree. The following items are well worth a read.

- Being a Schindler
- Where and what is Manus Island?
- Language as a weapon

It’s also been a big news week for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

- Consensus statement voted on ordination
- Pope’s brother not an Adventist
- Day of prayer announced for Monteiro

We’d like to draw your attention to that last story in particular. Tomorrow (July 27) will mark the 500th day of Pastor Antonio Monteiro’s detainment in a Togolese prison. To aid in the push for his release, the General Conference has called on members to join in a worldwide day of prayer this Sabbath. It would be great if you and your church community would join the tens of thousands of congregations taking part in this global event.
Things haven’t been quiet news-wise in our “neck of the woods” either. Keep reading this week’s edition of Record eNews for the latest headlines to come out of the South Pacific Division.

Evangelism draws 40,000 despite rain

The threat of rain failed to deter more than 40,000 people from attending The Last Empire evangelistic series at Eriku Oval in Lae, Papua New Guinea this past week.

New president for NZPUC

Dr Brad Kemp has been named president of the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference (NZPUC). Dr Kemp replaces outgoing president Pastor Jerry Matthews, who announced his plans to retire from the position in early June.

Read RECORD

What was happening in the South Pacific Division exactly 10 years ago (July 26, 2003)?

Watch/download InFocus

Graeme Frauenfelder has struggled with his share of difficulties. But his recipe for success and healing involves sharing love and laughter with others.
Adventists prohibited from Sabbath worship

Adventist students attending Presbyterian boarding schools in Vanuatu will no longer be allowed to worship on the seventh-day Sabbath, according to a report from Adventist Media: Vanuatu.

*Are you a vegan and loving your diet? Did you give the vegan diet a go but ditched it? Well, RECORD assistant editor Kent Kingston would like to hear from you. Email your stories to kentkingston@record.net.au.*
A few years ago when I was working in Washington, DC, the American Jewish Committee took me on study tour of Israel. What I found most confronting during the trip was not the wall, the tensions, or even being presented with a Hamas rocket casing shot from Gaza. The most confronting part of the trip had to do with my own homeland: Australia.

During a visit to Jerusalem’s Yad Vashem (Holocaust Museum), I came across a display on the buildup to the Holocaust; the period when European Jews could see the writing on the wall and were desperately attempting to escape the Nazis. To say the free world was indifferent to their plight is an understatement. A ship with 937 German Jews attempted to land in Florida, but the US Coast Guard chased them off shore. Eventually, unable to land, the boat returned to Europe where most of those on board perished in the Holocaust.

But the US was not the only nation turning away desperate Jews. At an international conference in 1938, the Australian Minister for Trade and Customs, T W White, explained his government’s insistence on retaining strict limits on Jewish asylum seekers with words that are now emblazoned in large letters on the wall at Yad Vashem:

“[W]e have no real racial problem, we are not desireous of importing one . . .”

Fast-forward 55 years and Australian author Thomas Keneally’s book is made into Steven Spielberg's Oscar winning masterpiece *Schindler’s List*. And Australians, like people all over the world, flock to the see the film, handkerchiefs in hand. But while Schindler saved around a thousand Jews destined for Hitler’s ovens, what remains unacknowledged is that Australia could have saved tens of thousands by simply allowing Jews a refuge in their hour of greatest need.

Of course, if a second Holocaust was to occur today, we would be a nation of Schindlers, not a nation of T W Whites. Or would we?

Today Australia faces a moral question for our age. This time it isn’t desperate European Jews searching for a sanctuary, it is desperate Iranians fleeing one of the world’s most repressive regimes. It is Iraqi Christians who have been murdered, bombed and beaten unmercifully since the invasion that we were a part of. It is shell-shocked Syrians caught between a despotic ruler on one side and jihadists on the other.

In the face of the most persecuted people on earth coming to our shores, Australia’s two major parties are vying to see who can be the most callous. They are acting so brutally because they believe we, the electorate, want them to. Hence, every Australian has an opportunity. If we communicate clearly and unambiguously that we want a nation that is compassionate, a nation that is generous, a nation that rejects the bullying policies of our two major parties, there is a chance this terrible stain on our national character can be removed.

Today every one of us can be Schindler. Simply look up your local MP and send a note letting him or her know that you do not want.
brutality perpetrated in your name. I hope you’ll join me in making a stand. In 55 years, I hope my children will remember that in this hour of desperate need, their father was on the side of Schindler, not on the side of T W White.

[Separate articles on the deplorable conditions at Manus Island and on the use of misleading language to stigmatise asylum seekers will be forthcoming].

James Standish is director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific.
If you were shown a map of the world, could you find Manus Island? If you would be a little bewildered, don’t be ashamed. No one I’ve asked has been able to come close to where it is (other than those who have been to Papua New Guinea—keep reading and you’ll find out). But maybe even more importantly, do you know what the Australian Government is doing on Manus?

Once again, the chances are very small you do. And that’s not a coincidence.

While traveling in Papua New Guinea this month, I met a PNG national who works in the Australian asylum detention camp on Manus Island (the camp is actually on Los Negros Island, which is joined by a bridge to Manus). He began by telling me that all those working at the camp are forced by the Australians running it to sign a document promising not to talk about what goes on there. To date, the Australian Government has not let a single journalist into the internment camp. This is, of course, a very bad sign. What is it that the Australian Government doesn’t want the world to know about? A lot, it turns out.

The camp worker who sat next to me on an internal flight went on to confide that conditions in the Australian internment camp are deplorable; the asylum seekers are treated in an extremely disrespectful manner, and they are living in dreadful conditions. There is a lot of malaria on the island, it is crushingly hot but they are left in oven-like tents. Although there are saltwater crocodiles in the vicinity, desperate asylum seekers have tried to flee, only to be hunted down by the Australians and dragged back to the internment camp. He shook his head and said, “It is hard to believe people’s human rights can be taken away like this.”

As of last night, we don’t only need to rely on the testimony of a camp worker whose name I can’t reveal. A very brave Australian named Rod St George, who was the compliance officer at the detention camp, came forward and described the atrocious conditions being perpetrated in the name of the Australian people.

He reports heinous crimes ranging from rape to torture against detainees are not being prevented. Further, he states conditions in the camp are so bad, it is not fit to “serve as a dog kennel”. His short interview is something that every Australian should view before deciding whether or not to support the extremely harsh policies of both major political parties (click here to watch the interview).

So, where is Manus Island? It is at the very top of PNG, just a few degrees south of the equator. Why not take a minute to "Google Map" it, and think about the lives of people currently being held there. Is that the way Christ would want us to treat people in desperate need?

James Standish is director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific.
In George Orwell’s 1984, the government employs “newspeak” as a weapon of mass control. Jem Burkes, writing about 1984, observes that by employing “the repeated abuse of language by the government and by the media in his novel, Orwell shows how language can be used politically to deceive and manipulate people . . .”

Today, both major parties in Australia, and much of the media, are misapplying language in the asylum seeker debate. The language employed is in the service of political gain, not candid debate. To understand how this is happening, it is important to examine some of the most widely used distortions of language and concepts.

Jumping what queue?

Let’s start with the much-used metaphor “jumping the queue”. For a queue to function, there has to be an orderly process constructed around shared assumptions and a limited resource. We queue to order at a fast food restaurant, for example, but not to pick daisies in a meadow. Why not in the latter? Because daisies are not presented in a neat order and are generally not a constrained resource.

Similarly, the idea that a world in which there are pockets of unmitigated chaos and misery, fits into a neat little bourgeois queue theory is preposterous. So is the idea that there is a hard limit. There is no reason Australia cannot absorb the modest number of asylum seekers arriving by boat as well as increase our refugee resettlement numbers, as we will see later in this piece when we examine the numbers involved.

Liability or asset?

What do Barack Obama, Steve Jobs and Andy Grove (the man who made Intel what it is today) have in common? They are all tied together by immigration. Steve Job’s biological father was a Syrian Muslim. Barack Obama’s father was a Kenyan Muslim. And Andy Grove, a Hungarian Jew, fled to the US to escape Communism.

Despite the asset that migrants can be to a nation, the political debate over asylum seekers has taken place almost entirely within the assumed construct that asylum seekers are a national liability. It is worth considering how many Steve Jobs’, Barack Obamas and Andy Groves Australia has turned away or is holding in internment camps currently.

Illegal or legal?

Another word that is loosely employed in the discussion of asylum seekers is “illegal”. There is nothing in international or domestic law that makes it illegal to claim asylum. Newspeak aside, these men, women and children are acting within their legal rights—legal rights that
Everyone who believes in fundamental human rights should vigorously uphold. It’s the politicians who have been found in the courts to have acted in illegal ways against asylum seekers, not vice versa.

Numbers don’t lie

According to the Refugee Council, Australia’s overall contribution to refugees is underwhelming. The number of refugees we accept against our population puts us 32nd in the world. If we compare it to our GDP (economic output), we are all the way down at 44th. Imagine the outcry if Australia went to the Olympics and we ended up 44th in the world! Or if our schools were ranked 44th, or our GDP per capita was way down at 44th. We’d be a nation in mourning. We should have the same level of concern when the cold hard numbers show that we, a nation so wonderfully blessed, are so far down the list when it comes to compassion to the most vulnerable people on earth.

As part of the debate on asylum seekers, politicians imply that unless something is done Australia will be overrun and over burdened. Is that true? During the debate over boat arrivals, the number of asylum seekers arriving has been in the 4000 to 5000 range. To put this in perspective, that is roughly .0002 asylum seekers for every Australian. We are hardly being overrun. Even last year, which was higher than usual, the number was only .0007 for every Australian. Put another way, not much in the grand scheme of things. In fact, if you take every asylum seeker boat arrival in Australia from 1976 to 2012 together, the number is a rather paltry 48,856. The Australian population at the time of writing, according to the Bureau of Statistics, is 23,127,011. That is .002 for every Australian—hardly astonishing numbers.

Economic migrants or genuine asylum seekers?

A senior politician recently claimed that many people arriving by boat are coming for economic reasons, not because they have a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of their religion, race, nationality or membership in a particular social or political group. If he is right, economic migrants simply do not qualify for asylum and therefore will be repatriated. However, according the Refugee Council, 93% of asylum seekers arriving in boats over the last four years have been found to have a valid asylum claim.

Selfish or generous?

We call ourselves the “lucky country” and for good reason. Of course what we have comes not only from luck, but from hard work and a good political system. But we weren’t the ones who created the oceans full of fish, the fertile land, the rain and the sunshine, and we certainly didn't put all the minerals in the ground. Jesus says of whom much is given, much is expected. Is it really too much for Australia to accept a few thousand more people tossed and turned by the terrible strife in this world?

Although our politicians frequently claim we are extremely generous, in comparison to other nations, the Australian contribution to refugees is modest. Jordan, for example, is a small country of 6.3 million people, with limited water, relatively little arable land and few natural resources. Currently Jordan is home to more than 500,000 Syrian refugees. In addition, Jordan has assimilated almost two million Palestinian refugees. As previously noted, Australia is languishing as the 44th most generous nation in the world to refugees. Not an impressive place to be.

Callous or compassionate?

Politicians have even had the guile to suggest that their policy of resettling people in Papua New Guinea is being implemented for humanitarian grounds. After all, it is claimed, we need to stop the drowning by stopping the boats. George Orwell would be proud of drafting compassion and empathy in the service of callous indifference to the suffering of others.

The truth is that the policy of sending people to PNG is designed to be punitive. As demonstrated in a previous piece (Where and what is Manus Island?), the situation in the Manus detention camp is appalling. But even should asylum seekers be granted asylum, conditions in PNG ensure they cannot make a life there. According to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, Papua New Guinean cities have high unemployment and significant social problems. Among the latter is very high crime rates, with foreigners often the target. Just this month four Chinese nationals were hacked to death in Port Moresby, for example. But the countryside also presents an impossible settling place, as land is generally not transferable to people outside of clans.

We can do better

So how can Australia show real compassion?

• First, rescind the draconian “PNG solution” in total.
• Second, act like the US does and permit asylum seekers, after prompt health and security checks are completed, to remain in the
community while their claim is heard. They have committed no crime, and should not be treated like criminals.

- Third, grant visas to people fleeing Iran, Iraq and other trouble spots so they can arrive by air. And process claims in an orderly, speedy, non-punitive manner in Indonesia. If we give those fleeing deplorable conditions a good option, they will take it. We don’t have to act like international bullies to stop the boats. We need to dig down deep into the best of who we are, and treat people the way we would like to be treated if we were fleeing persecution. Yes, there are limits on the number of people any nation can take and maintain order and standards. Australia isn’t even close to reaching that limit.

Conclusion

Almost everything we hear from politicians and the media is wrapped in language that distorts reality. There is no global queue and that construct is completely irrelevant to the reality of asylum seekers. Those coming to our shores are not doing something illegal, they are not economic opportunists, our politicians are not being generous, nor are they acting in the best interest of asylum seekers. They are playing on people’s prejudices to stigmatise and marginalise the most vulnerable people on our planet. That is something that no Australian should support. We can, and we should, do better.

James Standish—whose German ancestors sought asylum in South Australia to escape religious persecution—is director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific.
Consensus statement voted on ordination

By a vote of 86 to 8—a ratio of almost 11 to 1—delegates at the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) agreed on Tuesday (July 23) to approve a consensus statement on an Adventist theology of ordination. The action was an early endorsement of the goal of TOSC leaders to move unitedly through the challenging issues surrounding the Church’s discussion of ordination.

According to the statement, “Seventh-day Adventists understand ordination, in a biblical sense, as the action of the Church in publicly recognising those whom the Lord has called and equipped for local and global church ministry.” Biblical examples of ordained persons include elders/supervising elders and deacons, the document says, as well as “elders who were itinerant and supervised greater territory with multiple congregations.”

Explaining the role of an ordained person, the statement continues: “In the act of ordination the Church confers representative authority upon individuals for the specific work of ministry to which they are appointed. These may include representing the Church; proclaiming the gospel; administering the Lord’s Supper and baptism; planting and organising churches; guiding and nurturing members; opposing false teachings; and providing general service to the congregation.”

Unlike the beliefs of some other Christian faiths, however, Seventh-day Adventist ordination “neither conveys special qualities to the persons ordained nor introduces a kingly hierarchy within the faith community.”

The statement concludes by noting “the ultimate model of Christian ministry is the life and work of our Lord, who came not to be served but to serve.”

The approval of the document came on the second day of the second 2013 gathering of TOSC members, who met at a private, non-church conference center near the Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport. Delegates included church pastors, lay members, scholars and officers from throughout the Seventh-day Adventist global community, with Artur Stele, a general vice president of the world church and director of the General Conference Biblical Research Institute, as chairman. Geoffrey Mbwana, another general vice president, is vice chair.

“This is the first time the Church has taken a serious study to develop a theology of ordination,” Mbwana said shortly after the vote. “It’s critical that before we discuss any issue of ordination, we actually understand a theology of ordination. Today, I think a milestone is beginning to happen: that a consensus statement has been accepted to be recommended to the General Conference, the Annual Council and then to the [GC] Session to be adopted as a statement of a theology of ordination.”

Agreeing on a theology of ordination is preparatory to the TOSC’s other task, discussing the ordination of women to the gospel ministry.
The subject has been debated among Seventh-day Adventists for years, with the worldwide General Conference Sessions of 1990 and 1995 declining to permit such ordinations. The TOSC is charged with producing material for discussion and making recommendations that will be acted upon at the Church’s July 2015 world session, due to be held in San Antonio, Texas.

According to Bill Knott, *Adventist Review* editor and a member of the TOSC, “If the Church can reach consensus on a common theology of ordination, it offers hope that it may also find a solution that honors the strongly held convictions on both sides of this issue.”

Committee meetings continue through Wednesday, July 24.
Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has responded to rumours claiming Pope Francis has an Adventist brother.

Dr John Graz, director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty for the General Conference of the Adventist Church, said such claims have no basis in reality.

"There was a similar rumour circulating when John Paul II became Pope," said Dr Graz.

James Standish, director of Communications and Public Affairs in the South Pacific Division, said "these kinds of sensational rumours get people excited, but ultimately breed cynicism. We need to keep our eyes firmly fixed on Christ, and not on conspiracies."

*For more on conspiracy theories, click here.*
Day of prayer announced for Monteiro

By ANN/RECORD staff
Published on: 19 July, 2013

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

The General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is calling on its members to join in a worldwide day of prayer for imprisoned pastor António Monteiro on July 27.

The event—titled “500 Days of Injustice”—will mark the 500th day of Pastor Monteiro’s detainment. The Adventist Church held a similar worldwide prayer event in December last year.

Pastor António Monteiro has remained in prison for nearly 500 days without a trial. He is being held at the Lomé Civil Prison in Togo. [Photo courtesy: Monteiro family]
Pastor Monteiro, the Family Ministries director for the Adventist Church’s Sahel Union Mission in West Africa, was detained in the Togolese capital of Lomé in March 2012 for conspiracy to commit murder after a Togolese man implicated him and two other Christians, one an Adventist, as conspirators in an alleged criminal ring that trafficked human blood.

Church leaders say that, despite no evidence of his involvement, Pastor Monteiro was imprisoned on March 15, 2012.

“To say that Monteiro is innocent goes without saying,” said John Graz, director of the Adventist world church’s department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty. “The accusation against Monteiro is that he, as an Adventist pastor, conspired to have women killed to use their blood in a religious ceremony. It’s an absolutely unbelievable and bizarre charge.”

According to Adventist News Network, officials from Cape Verde—Pastor Monteiro’s home country—recently announced their plans for continued diplomatic efforts to secure the release of Pastor Monteiro and fellow Adventist Bruno Amah. Cape Verde president Jorge Carlos Fonseca is sending an ambassador to Togo specifically for this case, according to an online update posted on July 9.

Togolese newspapers have also called for the release of Monteiro and others who are held without a trial, thus violating Togo’s constitution guaranteeing a right to a trial.

Adventist leaders remain hopeful of Pastor Monteiro’s release. “We would want reconciliation with the Togolese government after Monteiro is released from prison,” said Guy Roger, president of the Sahel Union Mission and Pastor Monteiro’s boss. “But for now, we just want him out.”

In prison, Pastor António Monteiro, left, participates in a feet-washing ceremony, which is a tradition of the Lord’s Supper and one of the sacraments of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Despite the publicity surrounding Pastor Monteiro’s imprisonment, Adventist leaders in Togo say members are eager to continue serving the community, sponsoring mentoring events for youth and helping those in need through charity work.
There are nearly 6000 Adventist Church members among the Togolese population of about 7.1 million. About 30 per cent of the population is Christian, 20 per cent are Muslim, and about 50 per cent hold indigenous beliefs.

For a full chronology of events surrounding Pastor Montero’s arrest and detainment, visit <news.adventist.org>. For more information, including a video overview of the situation, visit <pray4togo.com>.


0 comments

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We would want reconciliation with the Togolese government after Monteiro is released from prison. But for now, we just want him out.

Related Articles
Lae, Papua New Guinea

The threat of rain failed to deter more than 40,000 people from attending The Last Empire evangelistic series at Eriku Oval in Lae, Papua New Guinea (PNG) last night.

The three-week campaign, organised by the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Morobe Mission in partnership with It Is Written Oceania (IIWO), has seen a continual growth in the number of attendees since the program opened to an audience of 15,000 on Sunday. Monday’s event drew a crowd of 30,000, with an estimated 40,000 people packing the oval on Tuesday night.

“The people of PNG are a spiritual people who have a hunger for God and truth and are keen to study the Word of God,” said Pastor Kent, IIWO director and presenter of the series in Lae. “We have a window of opportunity right now to spread the Good News of Jesus across this nation that may never come again.”

Pastor Gary Kent presents on "The Signs of the Second Coming" at the Last Empire evangelistic series in Lae, Papua New Guinea on Monday (July 22).

The Last Empire series is being broadcasted live on three PNG radio stations.

According to Pastor Kent, rain on Sunday afternoon was so intense that program organisers had a genuine concern that people would not attend. “In desperation we took the matter to God in prayer,” he said. “While we were praying the rain subsided and then stopped. There was no further rain until our program was over that night.”

Rain did fall during Monday night’s event, but it had little effect on the 30,000 attendees. “The rain came, however the people stayed right to the end of the message,” said IIWO general manager Geraldine Przybylko. “God was in control.”

The campaign has seen a continual growth in the number of attendees since the program opened to an audience of 15,000 on Sunday, July 21.
The Last Empire series takes an in-depth look at the connections between biblical prophecy and world history. During the opening night program, a 10-metre high plastic blow-up statue of the image described in the second chapter of Daniel was inflated, much to the amazement of attendees.

The evangelism series in Lae—which wraps up on August 10—is part of the Adventist Church’s global "Mission to the Cities" strategic initiative to take place in 2013/2014.
New president for NZPUC

Dr Brad Kemp has been named president of the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference (NZPUC). Dr Kemp replaces outgoing president Pastor Jerry Matthews, who announced his plans to retire from the position in early June.

“It’s a real honour to serve as part of the NZPUC,” said Dr Kemp, who will leave his position as associate general secretary of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—a role in which he has served since 2005. “[My wife] Coree and I are looking forward to moving to Auckland and working with the NZPUC team.”

Aside from his role as associate general secretary, Dr Kemp spent 12 years in Papua New Guinea (PNG) working in a number of leadership positions, including general secretary and communication director for the Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM) from 1996 to 2000. Dr Kemp has also served the Adventist Church as a minister, area supervisor and Family Ministries director (in PNG).

“We are delighted to welcome Brad to the NZPUC team,” said union secretary-treasurer Graeme Drinkall. “Brad has many years of administration experience and we look forward to working with him.”

NZPUC headquarters in Howick, New Zealand.

Dr Kemp will travel to New Zealand next week to meet with NZPUC officials. It has not been confirmed when he will commence his presidential work.

Dr Kemp’s wife, Coree, currently teaches Grade 3 at Central Coast Adventist School, New South Wales. The Kemps have two adult children, Amanda and Sharn.

The NZPUC oversees the Adventist Church’s operations in New Zealand, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Cook Islands, Wallis and Futuna Islands, and Pitcairn Island.

Outgoing president Pastor Matthews has served in the role of NZPUC president since 2005.
Pastor Jerry Matthews has announced his retirement from his position as president of the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference (NZPUC).

“It was with a twinge of sadness that I announced to our staff in the [Union] office this morning that I will be retiring next month,” said Pastor Matthews in an email statement. The NZPUC oversees the Adventist Church’s operations in New Zealand, New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Pitcairn Island.

Pastor Matthews has been serving in the role as NZPUC president since 2005. During his 25 years of full-time ministry, Pastor Matthews has worked in a number of church administrative roles, including general secretary of Eastern Highlands Simbu Mission in Papua New Guinea and president of the North New Zealand Conference.

Prior to entering the ministry, Pastor Matthews also worked as a literature evangelist in his home state of Queensland.

Pastor Matthews acknowledged that retirement would take some time getting used to. “It is uncharted territory for me,” he said. “[But] I am looking forward to spending lots more time with [my wife] Cheryl, doing the things together that we haven’t had time to do up to now.”

Pastor Matthews and Cheryl have three adult children.
Adventists prohibited from Sabbath worship

Adventist students attending Presbyterian boarding schools in Vanuatu will no longer be allowed to worship on the seventh-day Sabbath, according to a report from Adventist Media: Vanuatu.

The decision was made by the head office of the Presbyterian Church following an “Assembly of the Church” meeting in late June.

In a letter to Adventist Education director Willie Luen, representatives of the Presbyterian Church also said it had advised Vanuatu’s Ministry of Education not to select Adventist students to Onesua College and other Presbyterian schools beginning in 2014.

The Adventist Education Authority has been unsuccessful in its attempts to convince the Presbyterian Church’s governing body and education representatives to change their position. Discussions between the churches and Vanuatu’s Ministry of Education are set to continue.

Mr Luen said it is up to Adventist parents to decide whether or not they enrol their children in Presbyterian schools, but cautioned worship on Saturdays at boarding schools would not be tolerated. Adventist students would also not be exempted from working on the Sabbath.

Adventists celebrate the Sabbath from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday, while the Presbyterian Church keeps its Sabbath on Sunday.

Aore Adventist Academy, a boarding school with 60 non-Adventist students currently enrolled, has allowed members of other Christian faiths to worship on Sunday. These students are also exempted from working on Sundays, with their work-line hours made up during other times of the week.