Time flies

September 11, 2001. Can you believe we’re 12 years removed from what many have described as the most terrible day of our age? Those of you who have children preparing for Year 12 exams, get this—your kids were four or five years old when the World Trade Centers in New York City came crashing down. Those of you who own an iPhone, here’s a thought—in 2001, you were still six years away from getting your hands on the first iPhone.

Much has changed in the world since September 11, 2001. No doubt much has also changed in your personal life, for good and bad. However, in the midst of all this change, one thing has stayed the same. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever,” Hebrews 13:8 (NKJV). Praise God for being our constant in a forever-changing world!

While we’re on the subject of change, be sure to check out this week’s edition of Record eNews for news on some exciting developments taking place right here in the South Pacific.
Marmite returns to Aussie shelves

Australians are soon to be reunited with Marmite, Australia’s original yeast spread. When exactly? Click on the link to find out.

New president for WA Conference

Pastor Terry Johnson has been named president of the Western Australian Conference. Pastor Johnson takes on the position left by Pastor Glenn Townend, who accepted the role of president of the Trans-Pacific Union Mission in May.

Tassie turnaround

Read Adventist World

A missionary venture brings life and hope to people in Honduras, Central America. Read all about it in the latest issue of Adventist World.

Watch/download InFocus

A call for compassion for asylum seekers in the wake of a tough election, a defence of the Gospel of John, and why diet foods don’t always live up to their claims.

More News

Check out the latest eGIVING videos for
Tasmania is one of the most beautiful places on earth, but a difficult place for the Church to grow. And yet, it’s happening. How? And what’s the secret of church growth?

**Patron saint of real estate**

Sometimes it seems the risk of the property market is the only area in life that we’re prepared to leave in God’s hands—basically because we’re forced to.
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Berkeley Vale, New South Wales

Australians are soon to be reunited with Marmite, Australia’s original yeast spread, which has returned to Australia and will be available on supermarket shelves from early October.

Marmite has not been available in Australia since March 2012, due to earthquake damage sustained at the Sanitarium factory in Christchurch, where Marmite is produced. This resulted in a Marmite shortage, as Marmite fans horded, rationed and scraped their way through the Marmite drought (dubbed by New Zealand media as ‘Marmageddon’). The Christchurch factory has since been repaired and strengthened, with Marmite returning to New Zealand in March, however production and distribution had to be stabilised in NZ before Marmite could be sent to Australia.

“It’s been great to see the interest in Marmite from Australian consumers, and we would like to thank everyone for their loyalty and patience,” said Julie Praestin, Corporate Communications Manager, Sanitarium. “We’re excited to be reuniting Australians with their much-loved Marmite, and look forward to supplying this product to Australia for many years to come.”

Join the Marmite Facebook page to stay updated (www.facebook.com/MarmiteNZ).
Pastor Terry Johnson has been named president of the Western Australian (WA) Conference. Pastor Johnson takes on the position left by Pastor Glenn Townend, who accepted the role of president of the Trans-Pacific Union Mission in May.

“It's certainly an honour to have been considered and voted as [president],” said Pastor Johnson in a statement on his Facebook page. “It's going to be a challenge as well as a privilege to serve in this new ministry role.”

Pastor Johnson has served as a youth director for the WA Conference’s Adventist Youth Ministries for the past seven years. During this time, he has become a very popular figure amongst the youth and young adults.

“I'd like to say a huge thank you to the young people I’ve had the honour and privilege of working with over the last 7 years,” said Pastor Johnson. “Y'all made it so easy and blessed to work in youth ministry. You are the true stars and godly leaders who motivate and do the work of heaven.

“Love y'all and looking forward to more time together albeit in a different capacity!”

Pastor Johnson talks about Adventist Youth Ministries. [Video courtesy: WA Conference, 2009]

Pastor Johnson has been a minister for 22 years, serving in three different countries. While studying his Masters in Divinity at Andrews University (Michigan, United States), he worked as a student pastor under Pastor Dwight Nelson, helping to lead a congregation of more than 3000 people at Pioneer Memorial church.

Pastor Johnson is a fourth-generation Adventist pastor. He is the son of Pastor Eddy Johnson, manager of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Community Centre in Blacktown (NSW), and Mrs Erna Johnson, director of Adventist Women’s Ministries in the South Pacific.
Pastor Johnson and his wife, Kimberley, have two children, Kyrstin and Alec.
Tassie turnaround

If you're looking for an enjoyable walk, why not try the Overland Track in Tasmania? You'll need some warm gear—it has been known to snow at the higher points even in summer. And some tough legs—it takes six days to walk it. But it will be worth it. Lonely Planet ranks it among the top 10 hikes in the entire world—and the highest rated in the South Pacific. But even if you don’t concur with Lonely Planet’s ranking, you would no doubt agree that Tasmania is one of the most beautiful places on earth.

However, it's not an easy place for the Church to grow. In the entire state, you can expect to find around 600 people in an Adventist church on any given Sabbath. That's out of a population of slightly more than 500,000.

There are many reasons for the Church’s struggles. Due to limited employment and education opportunities, young people often head to the mainland. And in the Adventist community, many go to Avondale College—only to find their one true love from dusty, dry places or unbearably hot regions, and for inexplicable reasons, they decide to settle there. As a result, the Church is greying. There has also been less immigration to Tasmania; in Sydney and Melbourne some churches are growing due to immigration but that's not happening in the Apple Isle.

That's the environment in which Burnie Adventist church Pastor Mark Goldsmith works. It would be easy to relax, enjoy the natural beauty and babysit his church into a natural extinction. But that isn’t the way Pastor Goldsmith approaches ministry. He believes a living Christian faith is a sharing Christian faith.

Last year he began his evangelistic efforts at his other church in Devonport in the usual way—mass distribution of fliers. Ten thousand in all. But from those thousands of handbills, only six people came to his series. And none of them lasted the series. It was dismal by any standards.

Pastor Goldsmith noticed, however, that the people who came with church members because of the relationships they had, stayed. It comes down to basics: relationships are the key to evangelism, just as he found while working in Western Australia.

That's when he started a new approach—using a very old technique. Along with his church of around 35 active members, they began knocking on doors taking a community needs survey. During the survey process, they met many people they had never talked to before. During the follow-up to the survey, they invited people to a community dinner at the church hall. The first dinner attracted 30 people; the second 27. The evenings were very casual affairs. No sermon. No commitments. Just simply people eating a delicious vegetarian meal together and getting to know each other.

At the third dinner, Pastor Goldsmith announced he was starting an Ancient Mysteries prophecy seminar. He also announced other programs the church was offering based on the survey responses—including vegetarian cooking classes, marriage enrichment, quit smoking and the Beyond DVD series. When he started the Ancient Mysteries series, 10 precious souls from the dinners attended. Two dinners = 10 attendees; 10,000 fliers = 6 attendees. Apparently relationships work.
And an added bonus? Because the dinners were held in the church hall, there was no need to hire a neutral venue. An upshot, the budget was in the range of 15 per cent of the public program—primarily the cost of the food at the dinners and nibbles at the seminars. "It pays to invest in good food and tasty nibbles rather than expensive public venues and mass distribution of fliers," Pastor Goldsmith observes. "At the Sabbath morning service after our first Ancient Mysteries seminar, we had five of the folk attend and they really enjoyed the love and fellowship together with the message from the Bible."

"Of course, no-one likes knocking on doors—and neither do I. But we can’t sit in our bunkers and expect people to come to us. We have to go to them. Get to know them. Meet their needs. And only then invite them to follow Jesus. That’s what our approach is all about. And, yes, the numbers aren’t spectacular. But remember, our church only has around 35 active members. It’s my hope that through this process of relationship building, we can grow the church 10 per cent per year. Not because I want growth for growth’s sake, but because I want souls brought to Jesus; the ultimate relationship.”

Pastor Goldsmith also acknowledges the dedicated Burnie church members. “It has been interesting to note that although all members are not knocking on the doors, when it comes to the community dinners, the Ancient Mysteries seminars, vegetarian cooking classes and the other community needs offered, the church pulls together and as a combined effort we are more united, and the spirit of love continues to grow," he says. "I praise God for my active church members because without their dedication and love, we cannot grow."

The secret of church growth

If there is one thing Adventists like to write about, it’s how to grow the Church. I know this, because we receive an extraordinary number of articles on one variation of this question or another. The problem is that most of the pieces are based on a theory, rather than practice. Now, don't get me wrong, I can waffle on with the best of them about who should do what and how. But when thinking about tackling the knotty question of church growth, we've decided to focus on pieces by people who don't think they know how to grow the Church, they are actually doing it. After all, church growth isn't about numbers; it's about souls. And how best to employ the time and talents entrusted to our community in spreading the good news is far too important a question to leave to armchair experts. So over the next few months, we'll be featuring stories of men and women with runs on the board. And if you know a story we should include in our series, just send it along. No theory please. We are looking for results.

James Standish is editor of RECORD.
We’ve left it a bit late, but at nearly 40 years old, my wife and I are looking to buy a house. Or build one. Not sure which yet. It’s a leap into the unknown, the contemplation of which can cause violent swings between giddy visions of dream houses and paroxysms of six-figure dread.

It’s funny how the human mind works. If we can get ourselves into a safe and stable position—a steady job, a happy marriage, reasonably well-behaved kids, stable accommodation, good health—what do we do next? We throw our lives into financial and relationship chaos and embark on a risky 30-year voyage towards the distantly glimmering harbour of home ownership.

It’s almost as if we want a challenge. In the West, especially, we’ve got nearly every aspect of our lives buttoned down—carefully controlled. But it’s not enough: we want to take risks; to live an adventure. We need more.

One of my favourite times in church is when the congregation is invited to spontaneously thank God for His blessings. (Some worship coordinators avoid this practice: you never know who’s going to stand up and regale the congregation with a 15-minute convoluted semi-miracle from 1993. I think it’s worth it anyway, but I digress.) I’ve noticed a theme emerging at these occasions. A beaming couple take the microphone and say they’ve been buying or selling a house and how they prayed for a particular dollar figure. In the best testimonies, there’s some kind of unexpected twist at this point, where all seems lost. But then God comes through and said dollar figure is met exactly (or exceeded for the sellers; or discounted for the buyers).

Don’t get me wrong; I don’t doubt the veracity of God’s intervention in these cases. But I have found myself muttering more than once: “patron saint of real estate”. Because sometimes it seems the risk of the property market is the only area in life that we’re prepared to leave in God’s hands—basically because we’re forced to. Everything else is tightly under our control. We don’t need God to be Lord over any of the stuff we can organise ourselves, but we will allow Him the limited role of patron saint of real estate. When we’re facing the chasm of the unknown that stands between us and our dream house, we presume to wheel God into position and point Him in the direction we think He needs to go.

When I first came to this realisation, of course, it was from a smug position atop my rental high horse. But now that I’m scrolling through real estate websites and chatting up mortgage brokers, it’s not so simple.

And I’ve realised something about God: if the only area of life you’re going to let Him in is real estate, He’ll use it. God wants so desperately to connect with us that He will blow in through any window we leave ajar. Of course He wants more; He knows we need Him much more than that. But He’s not going to wait until we’re perfectly and completely open to Him before He begins His work. I think He’s hoping that if we begin to trust Him with one of life’s scary unknowns—parenting teenagers, cancer scares or real estate deals—then maybe
we’ll begin to learn that we can trust Him with other stuff too.

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