Appealing times

Here we are, almost halfway through the month of October. Spring is in full swing, it’s the home stretch of the school year, and the countdown to Christmas has officially begun (pay a visit to your local shopping centre if you aren’t convinced).

Yes, there’s much that’s appealing about this time of year. But October thus far has also been ‘appealing’ in a different sense.

If you haven’t yet heard, this month is Knocktober, and doorknockers across Australia are already out in force raising money for the ADRA Appeal.

Meanwhile in the United States, Adventist pastor and senate chaplain Barry Black has made a passionate appeal to the US government—and to God—to end the shutdown "madness" that is gripping the country.

And our last ‘appealing’ matter comes in the form of this Sabbath’s (October 12) offering—the Appeal Expense Offering. Let’s dig deep and give generously.

Also, be sure to check out the latest Adventist news and views in this week’s edition of Record eNews. Yes, consider that an appeal too.
Bittersweet centenary

There are stories from the history of Mona Mona that contain chapters which we wish could be changed. And yet, if you listen to other stories that many of the past residents tell, you'll mainly hear happy memories.

Too much of a good thing

Believe it or not, the truth is we all like bureaucracy—even Adventists. But is our allocation of resources too administration-heavy in our Church?

Read Adventist World

Adventists are engaging those who live in the world's largest metropolitan areas. How exactly? Find out in the latest issue of Adventist World.

Watch/download InFocus

The hands that once held bombs and guns, now hold the Word of God. Hear Michael Jeffry’s incredible testimony of how God took him from a violent political strongman in India, to a Christian evangelist.
Adventists not involved in reported exorcism

Four defendants on trial this week in France for performing an alleged exorcism are not members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as mistakenly reported by several news agencies.

Adventist woman bitten by deadly snake in Nepal

An Adventist woman is recovering in hospital after being bitten by a venomous snake in Nepal.

South New Zealand president re-elected

Pastor Damien Rice has been re-elected as president of the South New Zealand Conference (SNZC).
New CFO for Greater Sydney

The Greater Sydney Conference has appointed Eva Ing as the new chief financial officer (CFO).

from Linden Chuang, RECORD editorial assistant

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They don't call it Knocktober for nothing.

The term may not yet have passed into common circulation, but the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) hopes it will ring true—doorbell pun intended—as doorknockers fundraise around Murray Bridge this month.

Click here to read more.
Knocktober: Nita Clarke will be raising funds for the Adventist Development and Relief Agency this month.

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Regular recruits Ron and Nita Clarke will lead the charge, starting at a local supermarket this week.

"We'll mainly be collecting at Coles," he said.

"We do that every year and have been for 10 years.

"We'll be there three days a week for three weeks."

Funds raised will go to education and training for people living in poverty in Australia and overseas.

Last year's campaign funded, among other projects, refugee settlement and community meals programs in South Australia and improved access to food and water in Vietnam and Cambodia.

Anyone interested in donating to the campaign can also visit www.adra.org.au or call 1800 242 372.

Donations of $2 or more are tax deductible.
It was on a long drive through the Atherton Tablelands in far north Queensland some years ago that Aunty Val Green opened up to me about the history of the nearby Mona Mona Aboriginal mission—run by the Adventist Church from 1913 to 1963. Under Aboriginal “protection” policies of the day, local Djabugay people, as well as members of surrounding tribes, were placed by the state under the care of missionaries to be educated and “Christianised”. Some came willingly. It was considered a compassionate policy in the light of the preceding century, during which at least 10,000 Queensland Aborigines died violently as white settlements expanded.

Aunty Val told me that some things were not as they should have been. For example, there were couples who lived at the mission who had their young children taken away and put in dormitories. She said some of the kids didn’t even know who their parents were. The rules were strict and English was the only language allowed. Troublemakers were sent to the much harsher Palm Island government reserve, off the coast of Townsville.

When the children grew up, some were told by the missionaries who they were to marry. These decisions included consideration of skin colour, with darker people matched with light-skinned spouses.
In 1998, the Seventh-day Adventist Church officially apologised to Indigenous Australians who were forcibly removed from their families and placed in institutions run by the state and the churches, such as Mona Mona. It is apparent that there are stories from the history of Mona Mona that contain chapters which we wish could be changed.

And yet, if you listen to other stories that many of the past residents tell—as they did at the mission’s centenary celebrations at Mona Mona (September 21-26)—you’ll mainly hear happy memories of horse riding, swimming in nearby Flaggy Creek and the brass band.

“Every girl, I think, that was on the mission learnt how to play the piano,” said Aunty June Grogan, who grew up at Mona Mona, “and the boys the cornet—the trumpet—they were in the band.” For some years the mission also grew enough fruit and vegetables to feed everyone on the property, which was some 200 families in 1963, when Mona Mona was closed under new “assimilation” government policies.

So were the years of Mona Mona, the glory years, or years of regrettable, cultural and human insensitivity? The uncomfortable answer, according to those I spoke to during the centenary gathering, appears to be “both”. While some of the Mona Mona staff appear to have willingly participated in separating families and dispossessing Indigenous people from their land, language and culture, it has to be conceded that those who served at Mona Mona were fairly successful in preparing a generation of tribal Aboriginal people for a transition into the 20th century, imparting literacy and important work skills. And it’s clear they did this largely in a spirit of evangelism and sacrifice—even love, which was clearly felt by those they came so far to help.

“I learnt to love Jesus,” said Aunty Flo Brim with tears in her voice, during Sabbath centenary meetings. “I learnt respect, I learnt
discipline—just like all the elders here. I wouldn’t be here today if it wasn’t for the upbringing the Mona Mona people gave me.”

The old mission hymns were sung again during the centenary celebrations. The dwindling number of original residents in the choir was boosted by Mona Mona descendants, some of whom hold a more pessimistic view of their history and have pushed for compensation and land rights over the 650 hectare property. But they sing together.

It’s clear Mona Mona mission operated in a different era, with different cultural assumptions and values that are difficult to justify today. But it’s a time looked back on fondly by many who attended the celebrations. Pastor David Blanch, who retired from the presidency of the Greater Sydney Conference last year, grew up at Mona Mona as a staff child. Despite cracked ribs from a recent car accident, he was determined to attend the celebrations and told the congregation how an older girl by the name of Rosie Grogan “smacked my bottom more than any other Aboriginal person here at Mona Mona”. And as the laughter died down: “I have her to thank for keeping me on the straight and narrow, and that I am a pastor today.” That girl was taken out of school at nine years old to look after the non-indigenous children. She’s now Aunty Rose Richards, an active Adventist, respected community worker and an elder in the Cairns region.

In the historical display tent, I was sorting through a series of historic Mona Mona ID photos with Aunty Rose, the surnames flipping by in alphabetical order—Aplin, Brim, Grogan, Mitchell, Riley. Suddenly she stood up and walked away. Later she told me the images and the memories had upset her. “Seeing those old boys, those singers . . . I cry when I hear those hymns you know—I can hear the voices.”
Kent Kingston worked with Indigenous people in Adelaide and Far North Queensland for a number of years. He is now assistant editor of RECORD.
Too much of a good thing

We all like bureaucracy. Don’t believe me? Well then why have we set up a bureaucracy in virtually every entity of any substance? Google? Got a bureaucracy. Government—almost nothing but a bureaucracy. Church? Well, we all know about church bureaucracy, don’t we?

Bureaucracy in itself isn’t a bad thing. After all, how do you do big things over a large stretch of time without having teams of people and processes in place to do them? The problem comes, however, when a bureaucracy becomes inefficient, ineffective or simply too expensive.

An example of this last phenomenon was the literature evangelism (LE) work. LE sales in Australia and New Zealand dropped substantially each year between 2006 and 2011. In total over that six-year period, the dollar sales halved. By 2011, the administrative costs of running the program in Australia and New Zealand almost equalled the total annual gross sales.

So the Publishing Department reduced the number of administrative positions, and used the savings to transition managers to sales, cut the book prices and raise the commission for the independent LEs. The result? Sales rebounded in 2012. Put another way: more books, in more homes, for a better price and a fairer deal for the LEs. That’s the magic of aligning resource allocation with goals.

Which raises the question: Is our allocation of resources too administration heavy in our Church generally?

The Adventist Church first adopted the local church > conference > union > general conference structure in 1894. Australia had the distinction of being the first union in the world. Departments were formed in 1901. Divisions were added in 1913, only to be abolished in 1918, and then reinstated in 1922. That’s still where we are today.

Put another way: in 2013, we’re working with a structure developed for a 1922 world. It’s fair to say that the 1922 structure has served our Church extraordinarily well. It has seen our church morph from a small American community, to a truly global, multifaceted community. But just because the Adventist Church has progressed under the current system, doesn’t mean it’s the best system for the future. In an age where entities are flattening their organisations and capitalising on the enormous productivity gains from new technologies, we have an opportunity.

It’s not only that our structure is yet to respond to the modern world, it’s that our region is particularly administration heavy.

- The Texas Conference in the US, for example, administers more than 50,000 members and a territory covering roughly 464,000 square kilometres (two-thirds of Texas).
- New South Wales, in contrast, has three separate conferences and a division headquarters. Granted NSW is a larger area, but the
NSW population is far more geographically concentrated than in Texas. And the number of Adventists in all three NSW conferences combined is actually less than half the membership of the one Texas conference.

- Similarly, New Zealand is about half the geographic size of the Texas Conference and has roughly a quarter of the membership, but has two conferences and a union.
- In Fiji you’ll find the Fiji Mission Office in one part of Suva and a few kilometres away the Union Office, with many facets replicated.

We also replicate functions at each level. We have education departments at the conference, union and the division level, for example.

All this administration: costs a lot of money; can make coordinated action difficult as each entity within each level has its own decision-making process; absorbs talent in administration that might better be employed in frontline positions; and prevents economies of scale.

Streamlining is possible. In 2000, the two Australian Unions were consolidated. In 2007, for example, the three separate Solomons missions were consolidated into one. And today the Australian Union is studying ways to make the organisation more efficient. So who is stopping the Adventist Church from streamlining across our territory? You and I are. How? Whenever a tangible idea to streamline administration is brought to a constituency meeting, it faces tremendous resistance. Why? Because we equate administrative bodies with influence, and therefore we hold tightly onto them. As long as we do, we will lug ourselves through the 21st century proudly dragging with us a structure that worked brilliantly—in 1922.

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_James Standish is editor of RECORD._
Paris, France

Four defendants on trial this week in France for performing an alleged exorcism are not members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as mistakenly reported by several news agencies.

The defendants were arrested on charges of kidnapping, acts of torture and barbarism after French law enforcement officials discovered a teenage Cameroonian girl bound to a mattress in a southern suburb of Paris. Officials said the girl had endured a weeklong crucifixion-style exorcism.

All four alleged perpetrators were expelled from the Adventist Church before the 2011 exorcism, local church leaders said, adding that they were “appalled” by the incident.

“‘The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not condone or practice any type of action that inflicts bodily harm for the purpose of driving out spirits,’” said Jean-Paul Barquon, Communication director for the Church’s Franco-Belgian Union.

An October 10 press release from the church’s Inter-European Division similarly condemned the exorcism, underscoring the Adventist Church’s strong belief in protecting human rights and dignity.

In comments to French media, Barquon said the Adventist Church would offer prayer on behalf of a person in psychological distress, but would never practice “degrading behavior” to drive out a spirit. Church leaders at headquarters in the US state of Maryland agreed.

“While Seventh-day Adventists believe in the power of Christ, through prayer, to bring relief to persons suffering demonic attacks, we do not approve of exorcism as practiced by many Christian denominations,” said Kwabena Donkor, associate director for the Adventist world church’s Biblical Research Institute.

There are nearly 13,000 Seventh-day Adventist Church members in France.
An Adventist woman is recovering in hospital after being bitten by a venomous snake in Nepal.

Delmae Ryan was travelling with her husband Jack Ryan, principal of Brisbane Adventist College, in the Nepalese city of Pokhara in late September when an Asian pit viper bit her on the foot while she was getting into a car.

“IT felt like a smack on my leg, a hard hit and pain,” said Mrs Ryan. “All I could see was two blood spots.”

The Ryans headed to the local hospital with Mrs Ryan’s leg swelling rapidly. However, Nepal’s hospitals did not stock the appropriate anti-venom. With Mrs Ryan, a registered nurse, also concerned about hygiene at the hospital, the Ryans decided to return to Australia, despite initial resistance from the local Nepalese doctors.

Following a 20-hour flight—which included stopovers in Kathmandu and Hong Kong—the Ryans arrived back in Australia. But instead of going to a hospital in Brisbane straight away, Mrs Ryan decided to visit her local GP.

“Before I flew out, I thought the flight may be bad for it. I did fear for my life,” she said. “However, I did get a bit complacent when I arrived home. I could see the redness on the leg was less. In my mind it was improving.”

Mrs Ryan was admitted to Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH) a few days later after swelling in the leg failed to subside.

Doctors soon discovered the identity of the snake, sparking a nation-wide search for anti-venom. More than 80 calls were made to zoos, anti-venom suppliers and universities around Australia. The anti-venom was eventually located at Melbourne's Monash University and
administered to Mrs Ryan on Sunday—more than a week after she was bitten.

“This was a very complicated and challenging process,” said PAH emergency physician Colin Page. “We had very little experience with overseas snakes in Australia.”

Pit vipers are found across Asia, from India to China, and the Pacific Islands. [Photo courtesy: Wikipedia]

Mrs Ryan is expected to make a full recovery, but blood tests have revealed just how much danger she was in.

“At any one of those times she may have fallen over, hit her head, and potentially suffer a life-threatening haemorrhage in the brain,” said Dr Page. “[Her blood's ability to clot] was completely off the scale. This is measured in seconds—10 or 20 seconds [is normal] but her [blood's ability to clot] was greater than 200 seconds.”

Mrs Ryan said she is extremely blessed to survive the ordeal.

“We had lots of people praying for us,” she said. “We had many answers to prayer in a short period of time.”
**South New Zealand president re-elected**

**Christchurch, New Zealand**

Pastor Damien Rice has been re-elected as president of the South New Zealand Conference (SNZC). The announcement comes following the Conference’s 65th Constituency Meeting held this past weekend in Christchurch.

Pastor Rice served as a pastor and chaplain at a number of churches in New South Wales from 1997 to 2008. He took up the position as general secretary of the Vanuatu Mission in 2009, serving for three years before stepping into the role of president of the SNZC in 2012.

Pastor Rice and his wife, Leisha, have two sons, Denim and Javis. They also have three adopted children from Vanuatu—Zoe, Coco and Jasper.

“**Pastor Damien Rice and his family. [Photo courtesy: SNZC]**

“It’s great to have Pastor Rice on board for a new term,” said New Zealand Pacific Union Conference secretary-treasurer Graeme Drinkall. “Pastor Rice received strong support from the delegates, who prayed together a number of times during the Constituency Meeting seeking God’s guidance on the various agenda items.”

One such item was the announcement that chief financial officer Brigid Peddie would not be available for re-election. The SNZC appointments committee will meet on November 17 to consider Mrs Peddie’s replacement, as well as the role of general secretary. Both of these positions are part-time roles.
Epping, New South Wales

The Greater Sydney Conference has appointed Eva Ing as the new chief financial officer (CFO).

Mrs Ing will commence her new role in early November. She has held various positions in corporate finance and higher education for almost 30 years; having previously worked at institutions such as Westpac, JP Morgan Chase, Arab Bank and the University of Western Sydney. She spent the last six years at UWS College where she was senior manager of the finance and infrastructure division.

After finishing her Higher School Certificate at Sydney Adventist College, Mrs Ing went on to complete a Bachelor of Economics at The University of Sydney and an MBA from Deakin University. She is also a certified practising accountant, and prior to appointment as the CFO of Greater Sydney Conference, served as a board member of Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Greater Sydney) Ltd.

“We are excited about this appointment, given the passion that Eva has for the mission of our church, and the experience and skills that she brings,” said Pastor Michael Worker, president of the Greater Sydney Conference.

Mrs Ing attends the Epping Church where she is currently the senior elder. Happily married to Victor, they have two sons, Michael and Kieran.