Fifty years on

Today (November 22) marks the 50th anniversary of one of the most iconic events in modern history—the assassination of John F Kennedy. Even after 50 years, the fatal shooting of the United States president continues to generate a tremendous amount of interest, with a number of conspiracy theories still prevalent in today's media.

To commemorate the anniversary of this tragic event, Australia’s Channel 7TWO will be airing an It Is Written Oceania (IIWO) program, The Shooting of JFK, today at 4 pm (AEST). The program will also feature on Prime regional channels.

Today is also the 50th anniversary of the death of C S Lewis. A special ceremony will be held in Westminster Abbey to celebrate the life of the iconic Christian author and apologist. Among the attendees will be Dr Debbie Higgens, the first Adventist and the first academic to serve as on-site director and warden for “The Kilns”—the Oxford home where Lewis spent the last twenty years of his life.

For more exciting news and views keep reading this week’s edition of Record eNews.
Typhoon Haiyan: aid distributed, more needed

Just a reminder that an emergency offering will be collected in churches across Australia and New Zealand tomorrow (November 23) in support of ADRA’s response to Typhoon Haiyan. Tax-deductible donations can also be made online at <egiving.org.au> or <www.adra.org.au>.

Samoan Church grows 15 per cent

More than 1000 people were baptised at the end of the Last Empire evangelistic series in Apia, Samoa, on November 3. All up, 1440 people have been baptised in the Samoas/Tokelau Mission (STM) this year.

Voting continues on women's ordination

On the web

A group of Adventists are foregoing schoolies to serve in the community. And a “racist killer” believes he’s going to heaven. What else is going on around the world? Visit the “On The Web” section of our website.

Watch/download InFocus

Nutritionist (and qualified dietitian!) Sue Radd says up to 90 per cent of chronic diseases can be improved through healthy eating. And aid worker Beryl Hartmann recounts her recent visit to the Middle East, where she encountered Syrian refugees firsthand.

Like RECORD magazine? Want to join in on the online
The Trans-European Division (TED) has unanimously affirmed a report from its Biblical Research Committee that calls for “an inclusive and gender-neutral ministry”.

Church leaders look at reality of exodus

The first global summit focusing on Seventh-day Adventist Church membership retention is revealing the rate and reasons members slip out the back door.
Wahroonga, New South Wales

This Friday will mark the 50th anniversary of the assassination of John F Kennedy. To commemorate the occasion, Channel 7TWO will be airing an It Is Written Oceania (IIWO) program on the shooting of the former United States president.

The program, called *The Shooting of J.F.K.*, looks at the circumstances surrounding the tragic event and some of the conspiracy theories that have developed since the fatal shooting.

“It’s one of the most iconic and well-known events in recent history,” said Geraldine Przybylko, director of Adventist Media Network’s Media Ministries. “Its impact is still felt today, and it’s great to be able to contribute to the understanding of the event, as well as provide a Christian perspective on the tragic shooting.”

*The Shooting of J.F.K.* will air on Channel 7TWO and Prime Regional Channels this Friday at 4 pm. Parental guidance is recommended.
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Dr Debbie Higgens, a fan of C S Lewis since picking up his book *Mere Christianity* during her student days, is both the first Adventist and the first academic to serve as on-site director and warden for 'The Kilns'—the Oxford home where Lewis spent the last twenty years of his life. Previous to this appointment she taught at Southern Adventist University for 17 years.

It was the simplicity of *Mere Christianity* that appealed to Dr Higgens. In a video interview released today, she says that his appeal is in his ability of "shredding away everything except Jesus Christ Himself".

As well as *Mere Christianity*, Lewis is best known for his children's series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and for *The Screwtape Letters*. All three, Dr Higgens says, are very powerful representations of the gospel.

A researcher in both the writings of Lewis and J R R Tolkien, Dr Higgens shares her views with candour in the video report below. You can also watch a fuller interview with her and Rod Rosenquist in this week's edition of 'FaithTalks' on Revelation TV.

In early 2014, Dr Higgens will share her own personal faith journey from atheism to faith, and to the world of academia in a special edition of *In Conversation* filmed on location at 'The Kilns'.
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Leyte, Philippines

Thousands of families have received emergency food aid through the first stage of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

Fritz Neuberg from ADRA Germany noted after the food distribution in the north of Cebu Island, “An elderly man came to me. ‘Thank you very much,’ he said in broken English, ‘Thank you!’ Four times he came to me. Repeatedly he expressed his appreciation for ADRA's work. ‘Thank you!’”

Government estimates of the number of people affected by the November 8 super-storm have been revised up to 13.2 million with over 4.4 million people displaced. Two weeks after the typhoon hit, critical needs continue to be food, safe drinking water, basic shelter and sanitation.

ADRA is in close consultation with the United Nations and other aid agencies to ensure survivors are reached quickly with life-saving supplies. With vast areas of devastation along the trail of the typhoon, estimates indicate that over a million people are yet to be reached.

“Portable water purification systems have been deployed and the distribution of water has commenced in Capiz Province,” said Beryl Hartmann, Humanitarian coordinator for ADRA Australia. “One unit will provide 15,000 litres of purified water per day for surrounding communities and the district hospital.”

The next phase of ADRA's response will see the distribution of larger food packs, shelter kits and hygiene kits to prevent the spread of disease.

Adventist churches across Australia are invited to participate in a special offering this weekend to
ensure food, water, hygiene and shelter packs can be rapidly delivered to survivors. Tax-deductible donations can be given online at <egiving.org.au> or <www.adra.org.au>, or by calling 1800 242 372.
Mission to the cities: Samoan Church grows 15%

Samoa. Land of a thousand churches. The palatial churches dwarf all the other buildings on the island. With around 98 per cent of the population identifying as Christian, religiosity is at Samoa’s heart.

Even Samoa’s national motto, Fa’avae i le Atua Samoa, proclaims: “Samoa is founded on God”. Saturation is high—making evangelism hard work. Add to that the country's recent move to the western side of the international date line, with its impact on Sabbath worship, and there were fears the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Samoa would struggle for traction and distinction.

This makes the more than 1000 people baptised at the end of the Last Empire program (November 3) so miraculous. All up, 1440 people have been baptised in the Samoa Tokelau Mission (STM) this year—including those baptised in the revival in the lead up to the Last Empire and during the program itself.

Pastor Jean-Noel Adeline (right) baptises a woman with the help of a translator.

This represents an increase of more than 15 per cent in the membership of the Mission as church membership at the end of 2012 sat at 9000.

“This comprehensive evangelism has come to us as a blessing,” said Pastor Uili Solofa, STM president. “[The program was] a great opportunity to witness for the Lord. But above all, it has come to us as an answer to the most challenging time [the date line change]. We have been blessed to have it in our country.”

Apia was the final of four cities chosen for the South Pacific Division’s Mission to the Cities initiative. STM made the most of the opportunity and, with the help of Living Ministry Media, webcast the programs to 23 sites around the islands of Upolu, Savaii and American Samoa, instead of just focusing on the city.

The main meeting was held in the modern Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi Building, which held around 500 people each night. The final Sabbath programs and baptisms took place at the Lalovaea church on the STM compound.

The modern Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi Building in Apia.
Health talks addressing Samoa’s modern lifestyle disease epidemic were presented by SPD associate health director, Dr Chester Kuma—attended by government officials and health professionals. This was followed by more traditional Adventist prophecy presented dynamically by Pastor Jean-Noel Adeline and translated into Samoan.

On the final night, many responded to the call for baptism—young and old, professional and plantation worker, from all faith backgrounds and no faith background.

It was an historic program, both for the number of baptisms and the number of sites simultaneously running the same message. “This is the first time we have used the internet uplink and (as far as I know) we are the first of any church in Samoa to run a program like this,” Pastor Solofa said. “It is very unique. Our people are very excited.”

The paramount chief of Lufilufi village, Selelimalelei, is baptised at the Fusi Saoluafata/Vailoa Anoamaa site. The downlink site had the most non-Adventist attendees of any site during the Mission to the Cities campaign in October/November.

With the challenges the Church here has faced, it's no wonder the people are excited. Their excitement was harnessed and the good results achieved not just by chance, but by faithful work and prayer.

“[Prayer was] the key to the program,” Pastor Solofa said. “Church members who worked in the city would gather at the meeting venue on their lunch breaks to pray.”

STM general secretary, Pastor Sione Ausage, took Pastor Adeline out to a different downlink site every morning at 6 am for prayer. At Fasitootai church, a group would sometimes hold vigil from 12 am to 6 am, sleeping in the hall and praying an hour at a time through the night. Follow up teams were formed and people were fasting. There was also a revival program before the evangelistic series began.

But the STM understands that this is only the beginning. Some of the new converts are under pressure from their families and villages.

Salome and her family, from Fiji, were baptised during the Last Empire campaign.

“The big challenge we are facing now is nurturing these people,” Pastor Solofa said. “This is the challenge for the Church—we must help to fully accept and integrate them into church life.”

That process has already begun: three new churches have been planted to care for the needs of the new converts, like Salome, who shared her testimony on the final night: “Jesus not only called us from Fiji to work but to see the truth. We were baptised this morning and are looking forward to serving the Lord in the SDA church.”

Visit our Flickr page to see more photos from the Last Empire in Samoa.
Jarrod Stackelroth is associate editor of RECORD. He was in Samoa for the final weekend of the program.
Voting continues on women’s ordination

The Trans-European Division (TED) has unanimously affirmed a report from its Biblical Research Committee that calls for “an inclusive and gender-neutral ministry”.

The recommendation was made by the TED Executive Committee during its year-end meeting on Monday, following a two-hour discussion on the “Theology of Ordination” report. The report also covered issues such as biblical hermeneutics, terminology, and the significance of the laying of hands.

A statement on the TED website said it hopes the Church will “[approve] a revised policy” at its 2015 General Conference Session, “in which unions, whose constituency meetings in session have voted approval and whose division committee has voted approval, be allowed to maintain an inclusive pastoral ministry which removes all gender distinctions within the work of the church in that union territory”.

Pastor Bertil Wiklander, president of the TED and chairman of its Biblical Research Committee, said the team has been “astonished” at what the 19-month study into the biblical roots of ordination had revealed. “The report gives good reasons for the Church to review its practices in order to let them harmonise more with the Bible,” he said.

Pastor Wiklander has been outspoken in his support for women’s ordination in recent months, saying he “would die for it” during a presentation on the subject at Newbold College in September. Following Monday’s vote, however, Pastor Wiklander noted the importance of the world church working together and moving forward in unison.

The North American Division, Inter-European Division and South Pacific Division affirmed reports recommending the ordination of women earlier this month.
Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

The first global summit focusing on Seventh-day Adventist Church membership retention is revealing the rate and reasons members slip out the back door. It’s the first time the matter has been spotlighted in such a major way, prompting church leaders to renew their emphasis on making fruitful and growing disciples of Christ.

The Adventist world church, now with nearly 18 million members, has lost at least 1 in 3 Seventh-day Adventist members in the last 50 years, according to summit organisers. Also, in this century, the ratio of people lost versus new converts is 43 per 100.

“There are too high,” said David Trim, director of the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research. “There’s a theological point to this and it’s that God’s mission is to seek the lost.”

For three days this week, 100 attendees from six continents have gathered at the denomination’s world headquarters for the Summit on Nurture and Retention to examine data, which is offering a clearer picture of trends beyond long-held assumptions gained from anecdotal evidence.

Veteran Adventist Church researcher Monte Sahlin said the reasons people drop out of church often have less to do with what the church does and its doctrines than with problems people experience in their personal lives—marital conflict or unemployment, for example. What the church does that contributes to the problem, he said, is not helping people through their tough life experiences.

“The notion of people dropping out because of something the church does or a doctrinal disagreement is not apparent in the data,” Sahlin said. “It’s been shown that a member of a church board is just as likely to disagree with one of the church’s 28 Fundamental Beliefs as someone who’s been disfellowshiped.”

David Sedlacek presents a review of literature of Why Young Christians Leave the Church at the Adventist Church’s Summit on Nurture and Retention on November 18 at the denomination’s world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States. Sedlacek is a professor Family Ministry at the Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States. [Photo courtesy: Ansel Oliver]

Several presentations showed that the Adventist Church has learned how to better conduct more realistic outreach by learning from past examples. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, many Adventist groups sponsored extravagant evangelism events—complete with mass choirs and large, multi-screen presentations. But while many sponsoring organisations were eager for the once-in-a-generation chance, many newly baptised converts joined the church thinking it was their ticket to gaining their own wealth. The church there lacked a long-term strategy and denominational infrastructure, and most of those new converts soon stopped attending church.
One presentation revealed that in South Africa, the rate of accession of new members had slowed, but membership had significantly increased due to retention. That fact prompted Harald Wollan, an associate executive secretary of the Adventist world church, to suggest to the group that future evangelism efforts should focus on nurturing members.

“What if the church used some evangelism funds for our own members’ care? We might see a similar increase in numbers,” Wollan said.

“We will have to do that,” responded Adventist world church vice president Armando Miranda, who was chairing the afternoon session.

One delegate, Jimmy Adil, from the Philippines, asked why conferences feel pressure to increase membership, often from the parent unions, whom he said feel pressure from the divisions. He asked if the world headquarters was exerting pressure for growth.

Adventist Church executive secretary G T Ng replied, “There’s no pressure for growth. Do we pressure a papaya tree to produce? . . . If so, we may stunt its growth.”

Jimmy Adil, from Mountain View College in the Philippines, asks Adventist world church Executive Secretary G T Ng why there is pressure to add new members to the records.

Trim, the research director, said the problem, though, is common in some regions. On Tuesday, he revealed that 30 percent of church clerks in one particular division had been pressured to inflate baptismal numbers. “It’s a sin to lie about anything in the Adventist Church, but for some reason, too many people think it’s OK to lie about membership numbers,” Trim said.

Increasing membership audits by divisions are combating incidences of membership inflation in some regions. Trim said several regions have made the audits a priority, including South America, Southeast Asia and West Africa.

“Accurate membership records: that’s a secretary’s contribution to [the church’s current focus on] Revival and Reformation,” said Onalapo Ajibade, secretary for the West-Central Africa Division, based in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. “We must have accuracy. God cannot bless a lie.”

On the meeting sidelines, the youngest attendee, Cheryl Simpson, said she was encouraged by the summit because she said it showed church leaders wanted to encourage young adults like her.

Simpson, who is a senior psychology student at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States, said she was glad that church leaders were willing to look at reality.

“For me, this is essential because it’s showing me that theologians aren’t afraid to face the facts,” Simpson said.
Brisbane Adventist College students have opted to forego schoolies in favour of helping the town of Mungindi


by: Hayley Sultanie

Elijah Atherton, Kriti Gupta, Mitchell Hassen, Emma Jaroslawski and James White from Brisbane Adventist College will give up their schoolies to head to a small country town and volunteer as part of a program to help steer seniors away from alcohol and towards positive endeavours. Pic by Sarah Keayes Source: News Limited

A GROUP of Brisbane Adventist College students has decided to forego traditional schoolies celebrations this week in favour of helping others.

About 22 of the school's 36 school-leavers have joined a mission to the country town of Mungindi, on the border of New South Wales and Queensland, as part of the college's faith-based StormCo program.

The program sends students to small communities to help in any way they can.

School chaplain Alina Coccetti said it was all about making a difference.

"We try to hit communities that wouldn't normally get this sort of help and we do anything ranging from cleaning and construction to volunteering at preschools," Ms Coccetti said.

"It gives students a healthy alternative to schoolies and the response this year has been great with over half the students choosing to come on the trip.

"It's also a great opportunity for these guys to connect with their peers in a positive environment."

As well as volunteering, Students will also run games evenings, sausage sizzles and movie nights for local children.

Student Emma Jaroslawski said she would rather help others than get "wasted" at schoolies.
"Most of us are Christians and would rather go and serve rather than getting wasted," Emma said.

"Most of our grade is really excited about going. Our class is very community focused and we want to help others.

"It's enjoyable too. It's not a chore."

Kriti Gupta said she had the rest of the summer to party.

"Uni doesn't start until March and this is only a week," she said.

"Some kids spend $2000 to go to schoolies for a week and they don't really remember much at the end."
White supremacist serial killer Joseph Paul Franklin in CNN interview days before execution

by: STAFF WRITERS

JOSEPH Paul Franklin will be executed on Wednesday.

The 63-year-old white supremacist, known as "The Racist Killer", went on a killing spree between 1977 and 1980. Franklin was convicted of eight murders and is thought to have killed a total of 20 people, most of whom he stalked and shot with a sniper rifle.

Just days before his execution date, Franklin spoke to CNN reporter Kyung Lah. Franklin told her he'll be going to heaven.

"Well I'm hoping to get a stay (of execution). It might not happen, but if it does, I'm willing to accept the will of the Lord," Franklin said.

"It's not a burning hell because I'm serving the Lord though. It'll be the kingdom of heaven for me because I've repented."

Convicted murderer Joseph Paul Franklin. Photo: AP/St. Louis Post-Dispatch  Source: AAP

Franklin has no shortage of crimes for which to repent, but he was sentenced to death for one in particular, the murder of Gerald Gordon. Franklin shot Gordon dead in front of his wife and three children outside a synagogue.

"I felt like I was at war. The survival of the white race was at stake," Franklin told CNN. "I considered it my mission, my three-year mission. Same length of time Jesus was on his mission, from the time he was 30 to 33."

He targeted Jews, black people and interracial couples.

"I figured once I started doing it and showed them how, other white supremacists would do the same thing."
Franklin says his hatred for other races sprung from an abusive childhood, which led him to join white supremacy groups and read Adolf Hitler's manifesto, *Mein Kampf*.

"I had this real strange feeling in my mind," Franklin said. "I've never felt that way about any other book that I read. It was something weird about that book."

Franklin was born with the name James Clayton Vaughn. At the age of 26, he adopted the names Joseph Paul, in honour of Nazi propaganda minister Paul Joseph Goebbels, and Franklin, in a reference to Benjamin Franklin, one of America's "Founding Fathers".

The killer claims his development was slowed by a poor diet.

"I've always been at least 10 years or more behind other people in their maturity," he said.
Magazine publisher Larry Flynt in 1999. Source: Supplied

Even at this late stage, there is a slim chance that Franklin's execution could be delayed. Missouri's governor Jay Nixon just denied his request for clemency, but one of Franklin's victims, Hustler magazine publisher Larry Flynt, has filed a last ditch legal motion with the American Civil Liberties Union.

"The government has no business at all being in the business of killing people," Flynt said. He's fighting for the principle, not the man.

Franklin tried to kill Flynt after seeing photos of an interracial couple in Hustler.

"It just made me sick," Franklin said. "I think whites marry with whites, blacks with blacks, Indians with Indians. Orientals with Orientals. I threw the magazine down and thought, I'm gonna kill that guy."

He managed to shoot Flynt twice, paralysing him from the waist down, but the publisher survived. Now Franklin talks about him like an old friend.

"My old pal Larry! Tell him I appreciate that. Thanks," Franklin said when Lah brought up his unlikely ally.

Franklin in 1981. Photo: AP Source: AAP

Franklin says he's no longer violent or a racist. He claims to regret his crimes. Faced with execution at the hands of the state, his attitude seems to be one of mild disapproval.

"It's just not a system that operates according to the Bible," he said. "The scriptures tell us when someone repents, God forgives them. Everything is forgotten, once forgiven. But the state doesn't think that way."

Franklin may have repented, but he remains a hero to America's white supremacist groups. That doesn't seem to bother him at all.

"I'd rather people like me than not like me, like most people," he said. "I'd rather be loved than hated."

Franklin's execution is scheduled for 12:01am Wednesday, local time.

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