All about love

Cutout hearts, chocolates, cute little teddy bears, and countless bunches of roses. Yes, it’s that time of the year when “love is in the air”.

Whether you immerse yourself in the spirit of Valentine’s Day or not, we hope you’ll take some time today to think about how much you are loved—by family, friends and, most importantly, your Father in Heaven.

Speaking of feeling loved, imagine flying from country to country, meeting politicians and spending time with thousands of Christ-adoring friends. Well, that’s precisely what Adventist world church president Pastor Ted Wilson has been doing this week on his tour across the South Pacific.

To find out more about Pastor Wilson’s travels and the lovely people he has met along the way, keep reading this week’s edition of Record eNews.

GC president on South Pacific tour

Pastor Ted Wilson, president of the Adventist world church, and his wife Nancy Wilson are visiting Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands and Fiji this month, where 75 per cent of the South Pacific Division’s (SPD) membership resides.

Solomons PM meets President Ted Wilson

Prime Minister Gordon Darcy Lilo met with Pastor Ted Wilson, General Conference president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, during a courtesy visit on Monday, February 10.
Fulton College opens new campus

A new era began for Fulton College on Wednesday as approximately 600 people gathered to celebrate the opening of the Sabeto campus by General Conference president Dr Ted Wilson and Fiji Education minister Filipe Bole.

Ultimate family

What could be better then spending time with your friends and representing your country in a game of Ultimate Frisbee?

The volume of reverence

Sshhh! Be reverent in church! It's a phrase you’ve probably heard dozens of times. But is “reverence” really just a churchy synonym for “quiet” as many people seem to assume?

The Australian Christian Lobby’s Lyle Shelton says both major parties have lost enthusiasm for gambling reform.

Registered dietician and nutritionist Sue Radd says cruciferous vegetables help reduce the risk of contracting breast, prostate and colon cancers.

And bush pilot Roger Millist is outgoing CEO of Adventist Aviation Services, which is celebrating 50 years of operation in Papua New Guinea this year.

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Pastor Ted Wilson, president of the Adventist world church, and his wife Nancy Wilson, are visiting Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands and Fiji this month, where 75 per cent of the South Pacific Division’s (SPD) membership resides.

Government protocol in Papua New Guinea dictated that Pastor Wilson’s tour be given the same priority as a visit from a head of state, with security on hand and a police vehicles escorting the presidential motorcade through the streets of Port Moresby, attracting curious stares and friendly waves from locals.

Pastor Wilson, together with SPD president, Dr Barry Oliver and PNG Union Mission president Dr Leigh Rice, met with the prime minister, Peter O’Neill, as well as the opposition leader, Mr Belden Namah, and the Speaker of PNG’s parliament, Mr Theo Zurenoc. With each leader, Pastor Wilson offered spiritual counsel and prayer, thanking the prime minister, in particular, for the religious freedom enjoyed in PNG.

Following his visit with Pastor Wilson, Mr Namah, an Adventist, said he was moved by the Bible verse the General Conference president used during their discussion, encouraging Mr Namah and his opposition colleagues to refrain from a negative spirit in their work and to instead “overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21) as they work with the government for the good of the country.

Speaker Mr Zurenoc used his visit to explain his recent orders that a number of traditional carvings be removed from Parliament House. He reiterated his concern that the totem pole in the Great Hall represents immorality and witchcraft and showed the Adventist delegation a concept drawing for a proposed “Unity Pillar” that he hopes will replace it.
Pastor Wilson meets PNG opposition leader Belden Namah.

Prior to Pastor Wilson’s arrival, a series of evangelistic meetings at Port Moresby’s Jack Pidik Park, with the theme of “Immortal Decisions”, had been attracting large and enthusiastic crowds. But the main speaker, Pastor Chris Moses, secretary of the Central Papua Conference (CPC), ceded the pulpit to Pastor Wilson for the final three meetings, which included the Sabbath morning service. Up to 15,000 church members and other Port Moresby locals crowded into the park.

“It’s good to see that when our world leader comes to Papua New Guinea, he opens the word of God,” said CPC president, Pastor Kove Tau, a key host for the Port Moresby visit.

Pastor Wilson preaches to a crowd of 15,000 in Port Moresby.

Pastor Wilson and his delegation travelled to Solomon Islands, where they met with the prime minister, Gordon Darcy Lilo, who, according to a government media release, informed Pastor Wilson about the role of Christian churches, including the Adventist Church, in nation building, particularly in the areas of education, health, youth development and spirituality. The Adventist leaders also travelled to Kukudu in Solomon Islands’ Western Province, the site of the establishment of the first Adventist mission 100 years ago this year.

The final leg of the trip was to Fiji, where Pastor Wilson officially opened the new campus of Fulton College at Sabeto, on the outskirts of Nadi.
Honiara, Solomon Islands

Prime Minister Gordon Darcy Lilo met with Pastor Ted Wilson, General Conference president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church during a courtesy visit on Monday, February 10. President Ted Wilson, who arrived in the country on Sunday, was visiting Solomon Islands as part of his South Pacific tour.

During the meeting at the Prime Minister’s office, Mr Lilo told Pastor Wilson that Solomon Islands was honoured to host him and his delegation, which included Dr Barry Oliver, president of the South Pacific Division (SPD). Prime Minister Lilo also used the opportunity to inform Pastor Wilson about the role of Christian churches, including the Adventist Church, in nation building, particularly in the areas of education and health as well as youth and spiritual development. These church contributions have culminated in the Government’s recognition of the importance of connectivity amongst the Church and the people.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of the mainstream Christian churches in Solomon Islands. Since its arrival and establishment in Solomon Islands 100 years ago, the Church continues to run schools and health centres throughout the country.

In response, Pastor Wilson said he was very honoured and impressed by the warm reception he received on arrival both in Honiara as well as in Gizo and Kukudu during his visits to Solomon Islands’ Western Province.

Despite the extra time and expense involved in getting to the Kukudu regional meeting, the side trip was considered important, as this is close to where the Church’s earliest mission work was established, not long after Australian pastor Griffiths F Jones sailed to the island of New Georgia on the Advent Herald in 1914. Centenary celebrations will be held at Viru Harbour in June this year.

“It is the first time for me to be in this part of the world and this is a historic visit for me. I will make sure I inform the Church members worldwide of your wonderful country and people,” President Wilson said.
A new era began for Fulton College yesterday as approximately 600 people gathered to celebrate the opening of the Sabeto campus by General Conference president Dr Ted Wilson and Fiji Education minister Filipe Bole.

The $FJD20 million construction is almost complete, with classes scheduled to start March 10. The buildings, including staff and student housing (for 240 students and 20 married units), classrooms, admin block and a multi-purpose centre, are completed but yet to be furnished.

After a number of legal cases and disputes with the traditional landowners at Fulton’s Tailevu site, the decision was made in 2007 to relocate. The relocation schedule released in 2007 had the site opening in March 2010, however as Principal Dr Stephen Currow joked it was better late than never. “So today we are only 1420 days late in opening this new campus. But we are here.”

Dr Currow thanked former Fiji mission president, Pastor Waisea Vuniwa for his role in finding the current site. The development was assisted by a General Conference thirteenth Sabbath offering and donation of $US1 million.

The decision to move had its detractors. However the new site, 15 minutes from Nadi International Airport, is perfectly placed to cater to the up to 60 per cent of Fulton’s students who come from overseas.
Tribute was also paid to Barbara Allen, who attended on behalf of her late husband, Graham, the original project manager for the new site. His nephew, Greg Allen and Mike Dickson had taken over the project after he was killed in a cycling accident.

Distinguished guests included the Solomon Island’s minister for education, representatives of the tribes who own the land, officers of the South Pacific Division, Trans-Pacific Union and the Fiji Mission.

Both Dr Wilson and Mr Bole were given the opportunity to present a keynote address.

Mr Bole praised Fulton and the role it played in not only in Fiji but in the whole South Pacific region. He recognised that Fulton would be producing the region's future leaders.

“Without a well-prepared human mind, the abundance of information available can be a cacophony not a symphony,” said Mr Bole. “Your education at Fulton will prepare you to conduct the orchestra of the world’s information.”

Dr Wilson remarked on the progress that had been made in the three years since he had visited the Sabeto site. “To see how God has blessed, I know this will be an incredible institution.”

In his address, he alluded to the Mountain of the Sleeping Giant that Fulton rests at the feet of and reminded the audience of another sleeper, Jacob. He described Jacob’s dream when he was running from his brother, Esau, and claimed the promises that God made to Jacob for the new campus. “Surely God is in this place. Let it be the Bethel, for many students who need to meet the Lord, may this be the place they meet God.”

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A crowd gathers around General Conference president Dr Ted Wilson and Fiji Education minister Filipe Bole.

On such an historic day for the 109-year old college that has trained so many Pacific ministers, it seemed fitting that the first official event after the opening was an ordination.

That evening, Pastor Ragoso Tagaloa’s call to ministry was recognised, in front of his fellow lecturers of Fulton College and his parents who had come from Brisbane.

With four presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church present—Drs Wilson and Barry Oliver of the South Pacific Division, as well as Trans-Pacific Union Mission president, Pastor Glenn Townend, and Fiji Mission president, Pastor Luke Narabe—every level of the Adventist church was represented.

The Nadi English church choir provided stirring music as the Tagaloas were welcomed to ministry. One of the highlights of the evening was the speech of Kelera Suka, also a lecturer at Fulton, as she welcomed Pastor Tagaloa’s wife, Dorothy, as a partner in ministry and outlined the challenges and highlights of being a pastor’s wife.
Fulton College's Maranatha Singers.

Pastor Tagaloa worked in American Samoa before accepting a call to Fulton to lecture in the theology department.

Ragoso and Dorothy have seven children.
Ultimate Frisbee is often described as a cross between American football and netball. The offensive team attempts to score by catching the frisbee in the end zone (like a try zone in rugby). But like netball, players are not allowed to run with the frisbee when in possession of it. It is non-contact and the defensive team has to stop the offensive team from completing a pass either by intercepting the frisbee or forcing a turnover if the frisbee hits the ground or goes out of bounds. Those are the rules. The reality is, it is fast action and fabulous fun.

I’ve been fortunate enough to play ultimate frisbee at the highest competitive level, representing Australia on two occasions on the Open team, and most recently on the Open Masters team in Japan. It’s not quite like getting a baggy green or hearing Advance Australia Fair as you stand on an Olympic podium, but it is enjoyable and—at least in the ultimate frisbee community—a real career highlight.

When I started playing in Sydney in 1996, within three years I knew the majority of players regularly coming to league games, as well as a number of interstate players. Ultimate frisbee in Australia has grown a lot since then. My experience is that when you meet another player whether you know them or not, there is a common bond and camaraderie that binds you in a degree of commonality and friendship. When you go overseas representing your country, these bonds often strengthen, and it's noticeable in the wider international frisbee community that bonds of friendship are frequently formed and remain for many years. I suspect this is true of many communities of people who form clubs, associations and societies born out of a common interest in some sport, hobby, pastime or professional field.

The camaraderie in ultimate frisbee is aided by what is called the “spirit of the game”—it is self-refereed even up to world championship level. This means that players call their own fouls and violations during the game, and so it requires trust in both your own team and the opposition team members for fair play to ensue. For the most part this works really well.

Being an ultimate frisbee player and a Seventh-day Adventist has been an interesting mix. Each time I travel, I catch up with the local Seventh-day Adventist community. I choose not to participate in competition on Sabbath; instead my commitment to worshipping God with fellow like-minded believers is the priority. What I have noticed when doing this is something even more remarkable than the camaraderie I find with my fellow frisbee players, as nice as they are. That is, fellowship in the Spirit. Unlike the “human spirit”, which is flawed and even with the best of intentions can be abused as part of the spirit of the game in the heat of competition, the Holy Spirit instead binds believers as one (see for example Ephesians 4:3). This is a most remarkable and wonderful thing as a believer. I am sure I am not alone in this experience. Let me illustrate.

My first international tournament was in Hawaii in 1999 and I attended a small community Adventist church not far from the fields where the tournament was held. On Sabbath the church held 20-30 people at most, but I was welcomed with open arms, invited home for lunch and looked after for the rest of the afternoon. I felt at home in my spirit from the moment I found the church. My soul had found rest.
Similarly, when I was competing at the World Championships in Heilbronn, Germany, in 2000, I went searching for the local Adventist church. I finally found it, was welcomed with kindness, escorted to the appropriate Sabbath School, and somebody was even assigned to translate the sermon from German to English for me. I subsequently ended up at the translator’s house for lunch and a pleasant Sabbath afternoon. We kept in touch for a few years after that, and again, there was a feeling of coming home in my spirit from the moment I found the church till the moment I left my kind host's place.

My last international tournament in July 2012 took me to Osaka, Japan. Having checked the internet I was pleasantly surprised to find there was an English-speaking service at the central church, and also directions to find the church. As you might imagine, travelling on the subway in Japan is a bit daunting being a foreigner with limited Japanese skills, especially when changing subway lines a couple of times was required before I came to the right stop. The Osaka Adventist church is situated next to a river surrounded by a lot of medium to high density housing, but it has a large cross with “SDA” in bold letters written on top of the building, visible from a distance. When I spotted this, it was like spotting an oasis in the desert—my nervousness turned to relief, praise and thanks to God, and again my spirit felt at home. I felt safe the moment I found the church. I was again looked after with company for the afternoon and then invited out for dinner in the evening and treated most kindly. It was as if cultural barriers were overcome by a common bond and relationship with Jesus. I firmly believe the Person responsible for this is the Holy Spirit.

Although I have found friendship, acceptance (despite not playing on Sabbath) and hospitality amongst the ultimate frisbee community, there's nothing that beats having your heart knitted together with other humans when the Holy Spirit is the Author, and this is exclusively found in the Christian community. I was again reminded of this at a recent wedding where I was reunited with many old friends from my church youth group of years gone by, and my spirit again felt at home—a most beautiful, sublime experience, and one I can only imagine is a small taste of what God actually intended “community” to be—a big happy family. When Christian believers are together in the Spirit worshipping God on Sabbath, our souls find rest. I can truly attest and thank Jesus for this rest He offers, which indeed is an easy yoke and a light burden for the soul (Matthew 11:28-30). These three occasions I found rest for my soul among my fellow believers in three different cultural groups.

One can only imagine how good heaven is going to be when we meet not only our friends and relatives, but thousands and thousands of people who are all bound together by the Holy Spirit because of the same theme—their love for their Saviour Jesus. If it is good here on earth, imagine how much better it will be in heaven. I can’t wait for that day.

Dr Andrew Pennington is a GP obstetrician working at Sanitarium Sanctuary, Prymont, NSW.
Sshhhh! Be reverent in church! I’m not sure how many times I heard that as a child. I still hear variations of it today, sometimes in church board meetings where concerns are raised about the noise level during worship services.

But I’ve often wondered: is “reverence” really just a churchy synonym for “quiet” as many people seem to assume? Time for some research . . .

My favourite Bible search website, BibleGateway.com, lists 15 occurrences of “reverence” in the NIV, and five occurrences of “reverent”. A quick scan down the list reveals that reverence is associated with bowing, falling prostrate on the ground, standing, serving, purifying, submitting, worshipping and, surprisingly, treating people fairly (Nehemiah 5:15).

There are certainly references to reverence during worship but it appears reverence can also be expressed by the way we live. And the context doesn’t seem to suggest that this means living by tiptoeing and whispering all the time.

Hmmm . . . time for a concordance. What exactly does “reverence” mean in biblical Hebrew and Greek? Cue BibleStudyTools.com:

In the Old Testament, “reverence” occurs as the translation of two Hebrew words, yare’ and shachah. The root idea of the former is “fear”. It’s used to express the attitude toward God Himself, as in Psalms 89:7 (KJV); or toward His sanctuary, as in Leviticus 19:30; 26:2. So the group of ideas there would be “fear”, “awe” “reverence”. The root idea of the second is “falling down”, as prostration of the body . . .

In the New Testament “reverence” occurs as the translation of three Greek words, aidos, phobeomai, and entrepomai. In the first, the idea is “modesty” (Hebrews 12:28; compare 1 Timothy 2:9). In the second, “fear” (Ephesians 5:33). In the third, the idea is that of the “self-valuation of inferiority”, and so sets forth an attitude toward another of doing him honour (Matthew 21:37; Mark 12:6; Luke 20:13; Hebrews 12:9).

OK, so humility, submission and being generally awestruck are fairly key ideas here. But, strangely enough, nothing about quietness.

So does that mean you can be both reverent and loud?! “During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission” (Hebrews 5:7).

Other translations render “fervent cries” as “strong crying” or “loud cries”. Another concordance check reveals that the Greek word used here, krauge, can also be translated “outcry” or “clamour”.

The volume of reverence
Yes, reverence can be loud. But in the end, it’s not important whether reverence is soft or loud. Really, it’s neither. To focus on external appearances is to miss the point. Reverence is not a behaviour. It’s an attitude.

So who was irreverent when the priests and teachers of the law complained about the children shouting “Hosanna” in the temple courts (Matthew 21:15)? Was it the noisy kids, forgetting where they were and jumping up and down in excitement for seeing Jesus? Or was it the religious leaders, grinding their teeth in smouldering indignation?

Yes, there are times for quiet, or even total silence, in worship. It’s distracting when someone makes noise during these moments. I get it. And not everyone appreciates boisterous praise music. But judging the noisemakers as “irreverent” fails the test of good theology. It may also fail the test of loving Christianity.

Kent Kingston is an assistant editor of RECORD.