The power of prayer

It’s been a bad news week. Not “bad” as in dull—“bad” as in devastating.

• It’s now been a week since the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370. Seven days of intense searching has yielded little on the fate of the plane or its 239 passengers and crew.

• Horrific details of Reeva Steenkamp’s tragic death continue to emerge, as the Oscar Pistorius trial enters its second week.

• The decade-long hunt for Queensland boy Daniel Morcombe’s killer has finally ended, after a jury on Thursday found Brett Peter Cowan guilty of the murder.

In the midst of so much tragedy, sometimes we may feel there’s nothing we can do. But we can.

“Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:14-16).

Never underestimate the life-changing, world-changing power of prayer.
Shining a light of hope for Syria

A worldwide candlelight vigil at sunset this evening (March 14) will commemorate the three-year anniversary of the crisis as part of a global movement to end the violence.

Adventist church attacked by arsonists

Arsonists attacked the Seventh-day Adventist church building in Ashburton, New Zealand, on Sunday morning (March 9).

Church launches Ellen White encyclopaedia

A Seventh-day Adventist Church historian has called a recently released encyclopedia on Church co-founder Ellen G White the "most important reference work" in half a century.
century.

WATCH: "Record Keeper" series on standby

The release of an innovative video series that re-imagines the cosmic battle between good and evil has been delayed.

Angels and Devil priests

With most of the nations in the South Pacific already "Christianised" and marching rapidly toward modernisation, are the opportunities to serve and spread the Gospel still available?

Greg Hirst has a long history with the Brotherhood Christian Motorcycle Club and wants to share his passion with the world. His third TV series, Temporary Australians, is now airing on Australian free-to-air TV.

Record poll

Does your screen time:
• Interfere with your faith?
• Build your faith?
• A bit of both?
• Have no impact on your faith?

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Google generation

In an age of uninterrupted access to technology and the internet, the temptation to replace authentic Bible study for a Google search is all too real.
Shining a light of hope for Syria

Wahroonga, New South Wales

In response to the ongoing crisis in Syria, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Australia is renewing its appeal for support for those affected by the civil war.

Three years since the peaceful protests and uprising began in Syria, and following the brutal repression by the government, the situation has continued to deteriorate, with more than 100,000 people killed and almost half of the population displaced. The United Nations estimates more than nine million Syrians need urgent humanitarian assistance, including 6.5 million people forced to flee from their homes and living as internally displaced persons (IDP).

A priority during this crisis is to return children to appropriate education to ensure the long-term rebuilding of Syria and the re-establishing of peace. Many children have not been in school for up to three years, and the impact of this will continue to be felt after the conflict ceases.

To meet this need, ADRA is establishing an education program for Syrian children to ensure their learning and development can continue. However, ADRA requires at least an additional $100,000 to ensure these services can be provided.

ADRA has already responded to the crisis in Syria by assisting more than 20,000 people through a number of projects. In Jordan, ADRA has provided cash assistance to Syrian refugees, including the elderly and families with young children, to help them secure accommodation, and has also distributed warm clothing and other essential household items to refugees in the lead up to the region’s freezing winters.

In Lebanon, ADRA is providing women’s health services to 3300 women and secondary health services to 1000 Syrian refugees living in temporary settlements in the Bekka Valley. This is ensuring vital obstetric and genealogical care, as well as providing medicines and treatments for those with serious illness.

A worldwide candlelight vigil at sunset on Friday, March 14, will commemorate the three-year anniversary of the crisis as part of a global movement to end the violence. ADRA is joining with Act for Peace, Amnesty International, CARE, Caritas, Oxfam, Save the Children and World Vision to call on the Australian community to do all it can to ensure the conflict ends.

You can join in and support those affected in Syria by attending an organised event, by holding your own vigil in your home, church or prayer group, and by donating to ADRA’s Syria Crisis Appeal. A public event will be held at 7:30pm in Federation Square, Melbourne, where you can gather together to stand in support of Syrians suffering from the crisis.

You can also take part in the vigil on social media by using the hashtag #WithSyria. Remember to tag ADRA Australia on Facebook and
Twitter so we can share it globally.

For more information, visit <adra.org.au> or call 1800 242 372.
Adventist church attacked by arsonists

Canterbury, New Zealand

Arsonists attacked the Seventh-day Adventist church building in Ashburton, New Zealand, on Sunday morning.

According to the South New Zealand Conference, two fires were lit inside the church around 7am, damaging the foyer and other areas of the building.

Ashburton church pastor Paul Gredig said fire officials were quick to respond to the blaze, and that church officers are working closely with police and the insurance company.

Pastor Gredig said the crisis has complicated an already difficult situation regarding the Ashburton church building, which was damaged in the Canterbury earthquakes.

A few days before the fires were lit, church leaders at a business meeting voted to put the property up for sale.

The church community has been meeting in the Baptist Church Youth Hall since the earthquakes.
Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

A recently released encyclopaedia on the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s co-founder Ellen G White gives an overview of her stance on numerous topics and offers an opportunity to dispel misconceptions on the life and literary influence of the denomination’s most known figure, publishers said.

*The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, published by Review and Herald Publishing Association, includes articles on White, biographies and her writings on an array of topics—from salvation, psychology and politics to legalism, diet and makeup.

“The Ellen White encyclopaedia is undoubtedly the most important reference work produced by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in a half century,” said Adventist Church historian George Knight.

The encyclopaedia consists of 1300 articles with descriptions of places White lived and the people in her life, rarely seen photographs and her position on hundreds of subjects she wrote about during her ministry.

Editors Denis Fortin, former dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States, and Jerry Moon, chair of the Church History department of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, worked with 180 contributing authors over the course of 14 years to compile the encyclopaedia. It was arranged so “both new and long-time readers [of White’s writings] will find reliable information, often presented from fresh new perspectives,” Fortin and Moon said.

The vision to create this encyclopaedia began in the late 1990s with Knight, an Adventist historian and emeritus professor at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. In 2000, however, with an approaching retirement, Knight delegated the project to Fortin and Moon.

White, who died in 1915 at age 87, is credited with shaping the mission and vision of the Adventist Church, especially through her writings. During her ministry she wrote approximately 100,000 pages, and more than 100 books have been published from her writings. She is also the most translated American author, according to The Ellen G. White Estate. Her most translated book, *Steps to Christ*, a how-to guide on being a Christian, has been translated into more than 165 languages.

Controversy around White’s writings often stems from her work that has been taken out of context or wrongfully used to support controversial subjects. The encyclopaedia was envisioned to be the standard reference work for anyone who has questions about White’s positions, Knight said.

“Ellen White has been the most influential person in Adventist history, and yet there is a lot of misinformation about what she wrote and why she wrote it,” Knight said. “Up until this time there has been no reference work that can answer most of our questions.”
Jim Nix, director of The Ellen G. White Estate, said he was pleased when he received early manuscripts of the encyclopaedia.

“I am excited about the wealth of information regarding Ellen White and her ministry that is contained in this book,” Nix said. “I am impressed with the depth and scope of what is contained in it.”

Now, anyone who wants to learn more about White and her contribution to the Adventist Church will have the opportunity to expand their knowledge on White’s life and writings in the single resource.

“I cannot imagine anyone who is interested in Ellen White and her writings that will not want a copy of this book,” said Nix. “It’s that valuable.”
Maryland, United States

The release of an innovative video series that re-imagines the cosmic battle between good and evil has been delayed.

The Record Keeper uses the look and feel of a “steam punk” science fiction movie to look into the conflicts between good and evil angels over the character of God and the destiny of mankind.

February’s release date has been and gone, but without the promised web series appearing.

The delay has prompted a flurry of activity on social media, with some saying the production’s style is inappropriate for such important spiritual themes.

But the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which is helping produce The Record Keeper, says more work is being done on the release strategy, and that the series will be delivered.
As a boy, my young mind was captivated by the stories of men and women who chose to move overseas to spread the Gospel. I would spend hours reading about them on Sabbath afternoons—discovering new tribes in Africa, under attack from cannibals in the Pacific, experiencing strange, new and uncomfortable situations—and wondering just how Jesus would finally break through to these people who knew nothing about Him. It was exotic, it was uncomfortable, it was fulfilling, it was adventurous, it was glorious.

But what about today? With most of the nations in the South Pacific already “Christianised” and marching rapidly toward modernisation, are the same sorts of opportunities available?

Meet Peggy Kendall (Hockey) and Ron Hockey from Queensland. Peggy is CEO of the Atoifi Adventist Hospital in Solomon Islands, while her husband, Ron, is in charge of maintenance. Peggy’s eyes light up when she talks about their experience.

“The past year has flown by,” she says. “There's always something happening, something to look forward to.” Her passion bubbles out, while Ron quietly affirms with a nod or a comment here and there.

Nestled on the slopes above Uru Harbour, Atoifi is a beautiful place. With green mountains standing like sentinels behind, the ground in front of Atoifi opens out onto a beautiful blue lagoon.

“Good fishing,” quips Ron.

But it's not always smooth sailing in paradise. And this is no vacation. Peggy is the hospital's first female CEO with a medical background. Without her prior contact with Atoifi, she feels it would have been a real challenge to build up the trust of the local chiefs. But more on that later.

The challenges are those faced by most outpost hospitals—particularly a 90-bed, church-run facility that provides free health care to villagers. There's the challenge of affording up-to-date equipment and medicines. Every month, Ron takes a 10 to 12-hour boat ride into town to buy supplies.

Then there are more naturally occurring challenges: frequent (although thankfully not large) earth tremors; rain every day; and when it's not raining, it's humid. Nothing is ever dry and it's a constant battle to keep buildings, tools and heavy equipment mould and rust free.

“Keeps me busy,” smiles Ron.

Then there are the "natives".

“I was sitting on the toilet one day and a huge rat ran across my feet,” explains Peggy. There are rats everywhere. Big ones, the size of cats. Once when Peggy and Ron had travelled into town a rat got in and chewed a hole in their long-life milk carton. The resultant spill meant
that by the time they had returned, the pantry floor was writhing with maggots.

“It took a while for me to get used to,” Peggy admits. “I would lie in bed at night wondering if something was going to crawl over me. I always check under the bed before turning in for the night.”

Turning in is always at 9 o’clock. After that, the hydro power may shut down. “You have to be a good Scout or Pathfinder and be prepared. Have a torch by the bed. It really makes you appreciate things; it makes you more tolerant.”

The real highlight, however, is the people. Peggy counts herself as friends with some “devil priests”, has won the respect of the local tribes and loves the challenge of getting to know people and learning about their culture.

One of the major accomplishments for the hospital this past 12 months has been to build a specialised tuberculosis (TB) ward. Local superstitions meant some people were uncomfortable with treatment taking place in the same building as the obstetrics/maternity ward so the decision was made to build a separate ward for TB patients. A lot of consultation was needed but it was a challenge that Peggy loved. “We have learnt so much about the culture. We were sitting in our lounge room having a lovely, funny conversation about periods with the devil priests. This experience is so unique.”

It marks a shift from some of the attitudes in the past. When Peggy first arrived, she remembers hearing someone say that Atoifi was a Seventh-day Adventist Hospital so it should be for Adventists.

“When we first got to the hospital, we went out and found a village up behind the hospital with about 20 people,” Peggy explains. “They were not Adventist but they really wanted to build a church.” The team has taken the four-hour walk a number of times now, singing songs and telling stories for the village people. They lived so close to the hospital but it seemed no-one had really reached out to them before.

“After that I took a staff worship on how it’s important not to stay in our own circles,” Peggy says. “[As a hospital] we may have missed opportunities but that is changing.”

As she tells her story Peggy is incredibly excited. They have been invited up to the village, where her friends the devil priests live, to stay a few nights. According to their friend, an anthropologist from James Cook University, she is the first female to be asked there since 1990. It’s a great honour so she didn’t want to do anything culturally inappropriate.

“I asked if I should bring toilet paper,” she laughs. “Apparently I can’t but they will show me the big, non-scratchy leaves!”

Peggy Kendall (second from the left).

It’s not only the local people benefiting from Peggy and Ron’s presence. Staff at the hospital are learning a lot from Peggy’s 38 years of nursing experience.

The first thing Peggy did as CEO was to organise a staff survey to get to know what the staff thought about working at the hospital and what they needed. One strong message that came out was a lack of communication—from the top down as well as between departments. So she has really been working on this with team building days and staff BBQs, welcoming any feedback and creating an open working environment.

Inconsistent phone and internet connections make it hard to stay in touch with people back home. But Ron and Peggy have made friends and family with the staff and people of Atoifi.

The lack of equipment can be a challenge—very different from when she worked as the after hours hospital nurse manager at the Mater Hospital in Brisbane.

With limited finance, the hospital relies on donations from churches and the community—something the couple really appreciate. After all, their own journey with Atoifi began in March 2011, when Peggy’s church, Park Ridge Adventist (Brisbane), organised a short-term mission...
They asked Peggy if her husband, a painter, would like to go with the team. Although not an Adventist, Ron said he would go. Peggy and her daughter, both registered nurses, also decided to go.

While there, Peggy had an experience that would change her life. Helen, a young obstetrics patient, had lost her baby and was bleeding badly. She had lost eight litres of blood, had a cardiac arrest and had to be given 14 bags of blood. The local pastor came to pray over her as doctors said she would surely die. But somehow, at this remote island hospital, Peggy and her daughter managed to save Helen's life. Eight days later she was discharged. Helen’s father was overjoyed. Every day he came to Peggy and said, “you are angels sent by God”.

Peggy went home, knowing that she had to do something. So she started Atoifi Angels, a group who take a medical team from Australia every eight weeks to help at the hospital. This built up the trust and respect of the local chiefs and the hospital staff, who had seen Peggy work alongside them and coming back regularly.

Such is her exuberance that she now has three hospitals and a number of churches donating and collecting for the hospital. Springwood church (Brisbane) donated 150 chairs for the hospital visitors, who had nowhere to sit and would often lie on beds meant for patients. Ipswich, Esk and Parkridge churches have recently sent a large number of donated items for Atoifi. A doctor from Melbourne donated a washer and dryer. Before this, the clothes and bed sheets had to be hand-washed. They’ve even had a lot of paint donated by Ron’s former employer.

Sometimes it’s the small things that make a difference. Soap and pyjamas have been useful in keeping patients clean and tidy. In fact, Atoifi Hospital was rated by a government inspection team as having the “best infection control in the country”.

Finding resources for the hospital is not their biggest challenge, however—it’s the expense of transporting the donations. It costs Ron and Peggy $A3000-4000 per container to ship the gear.

The other need is for short-term teams of volunteers, both health teams and tradies, to help with the projects.

But as the Atoifi Angels' motto says: “Energy and persistence conquer all”.

“We’ve had a very busy year,” Peggy says. “We focused on the nursing side of things and have really achieved a lot; the staff are happy, the patients are happy.”

And Peggy is happy. The island diet of fresh fruit and vegetables is doing wonders for her health and she has lost 15 kilograms. She even ran in the Honiara marathon, where she came 64th out of 100. She hopes to better her time next year.

“When I came back to Australia, people expected me to look a bit haggard. It has been a busy year. But I feel the best I have in a long time.” This is ironic as more and more Pacific Islanders are introducing Western processed foods into their diets and the incidence of lifestyle diseases is skyrocketing.

Ron has had some interesting milestones of his own—transporting his first dead body and assisting with a birth in the back of a tractor.

There will certainly be a number of other firsts for Ron and Peggy as they work to help the people of Atoifi.

“We have put everything on hold in Australia,” Peggy says. “But I don’t really class this as mission work. It’s a dream.” Peggy wasn’t born in the Church but as a young person had a dream to be a missionary nurse. And all these years later, it has come true.

Has it all been worth it? We’ll leave the last word to Ron: “I wish we’d done it earlier. We would have had more time.”

For short term mission opportunities at Atoifi email <peggykendall9@gmail.com>.

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Jarrod Stackelroth is associate editor of RECORD.
I’ll admit it—I’m part of the “Google Generation”. I have a Gmail account, I use Google Maps to get around and I’m a bit of a [recovering] YouTube junkie. When I need to find out something, I don’t search through books or seek out the counsel of a wise and learned individual. I go to Google.

In the past couple of weeks, I’ve googled everything from the crisis in Syria to the Canadian National Anthem (did you know the anthem used to be in the Adventist hymnal?). I’ve also looked up information on lyrebirds, The LEGO Movie and the life of Nelson Mandela.

It’s quite handy having the answers to all my questions just a few clicks away. But as great as that sounds, there is a downside.

In making the wealth of the world’s information so easily accessible, Google has created an undesirable breed of “instant experts”. All it takes is a few minutes of searching and one can suddenly talk about topics in which they have no business.

“Boy, that was a great game by the Seattle Seahawks in February. They absolutely dominated the Broncos. That defence by Chris Clemons at the end of the first half was huge. Kam Chancellor also came up big!”

I didn’t watch the Super Bowl. In fact, I’ve never watched a game of NFL. Yet all it took was a quick Google search for me to become a so-called “expert” on one of the world’s biggest sporting events.

This sort of research isn’t really research; it’s regurgitation. The information is quickly consumed and just as quickly disposed. This process fails to produce real, lasting knowledge.

Why is this important? Well, it’s not if we’re talking about trivial matters like the Super Bowl. The issue becomes serious, however, when it comes to our knowledge of God and the Bible.

“Your word I have [googled on my phone], that I may not sin against you.”

In an age of uninterrupted access to technology and the internet, the temptation to replace authentic Bible study for a Google search is all too real. I’m guilty of this as much as anyone. I did it a few weeks ago for one of my editorials. Instead of taking the time to open my Bible, I opened my web browser. It took only a minute for me to find the verse I wanted. No worries, no time wasted, but no real knowledge. I can’t even remember the location of the verse.

This approach simply isn’t good enough. I need to do better; my God deserves better.
You don’t see too many Bibles these days with copious amounts of notes scattered across pages. And that’s a shame. Messy as it may be, the scribbles serve as a sign of a person earnestly seeking to learn more about God.

Maybe it’s time we brought the messy Bible back into fashion. After all, if we want to get to know God and to please Him, we need to be more than “instant experts” with a fleeting knowledge of Scripture. We need God’s Word etched in our minds and hearts.

“Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11)*.

Let’s spend less time on Google and more time in the Word of God.

*This verse was not googled.

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