In need of prayer

Flash flooding has killed at least two people in Honiara, as heavy rain continues to cause havoc around the Solomon Islands capital. According to *Australia News Network*, as many as 10,000 people have spent the night in a temporary evacuation centre.

Floodwaters are also affecting Solomon Islands Mission (SIM) headquarters. “The area out the front of SIM is a vast lake,” said South Pacific Division Health Ministries director Pastor Kevin Price in an email. “It is nearly up to the Maranatha [conference centre] floor level.”

The rain is also putting an upcoming health campaign at serious risk. “We are about to start the Health Promoting Churches Initiative training program and were expecting more than 600 people, but it has rained heavily non-stop since we arrived,” said Pastor Price. “We need your prayers to turn off the rain.”

We ask that you will find time to pray for our church leaders, members and the people of Honiara during this devastating period.
WATCH: Adventist aviation celebrates 50 years

Aviation enthusiasts recently gathered at Avondale Memorial Church in Cooranbong, New South Wales, to commemorate 50 years of Adventist aviation in the South Pacific Division (SPD). If you missed out, don’t worry—there’s a second jubilee event coming up soon.

A fresh vision of church

Strange things are happening in North New Zealand. Church services are being held at 5pm. Conference departments have been abolished, and they no longer have a “president”. What’s going on?

Read Adventist Record

Two weekends, two new issues of Adventist Record. No, we’re not “fooling” you.

Watch/download InFocus

Should Australians have the right to say things that are racially offensive? The Australian Christian Lobby’s Lyle Shelton weighs into the debate.

Thousands of children around New Zealand and Australia earn a gold medal and a sense of self-respect every year during Weet-Bix Kids TRYathlon events. Series coordinator Dave Martin explains.

And Dr James Wright explains who is at risk of being hit hard with the H1N1
Hovering in midair

“But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you . . .” (Job 12:7). Find out what hummingbirds reveal about creation and our Creator.

More Features

Sexuality and slavery

Said Dr Robert Cargill of the University of Iowa: “Let me say this to those who oppose same-sex marriage—ESPECIALLY IN THE NAME OF GOD: You are deserving of all public shame, chastisement, loss of reputation, and abandonment of friends and colleagues (both secular and Christian) that accompanied those who freely chose to defend the divinely ordained institution of slavery.” Is Dr Cargill correct? James Standish explores.

More Editorials

Will you stand #WithSyria?

March 15, 2014 marked the three-year anniversary of the beginning of the Syria civil war. Here's your chance to help make this the last anniversary of the devastating conflict.

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Complementary or competitive?
“We do not gain anything by having ministries set up that duplicate and thus compete with already established church ministries,” says Dr Barry Oliver. “Stretching our combined resources too thinly will not bring maximum results for anyone.”
Honiara, Solomon Islands

Flash flooding in Honiara this past week has killed 16 people and left thousands of others homeless, as heavy rains battered the Solomon Islands capital.

According to Australia News Network, 16 bodies were recovered on Friday morning, with an unconfirmed number of people still missing.

The Solomon Star newspaper is calling the floods “the worst disaster the nation has seen”.

Locals take shelter under the Panatina Pavilion. [Photo courtesy: ADRA]

Floodwaters also affected the Adventist community in Honiara.

“The area out the front of the Solomon Islands Mission is a vast lake,” said South Pacific Division Health Ministries director Pastor Kevin Price in an email on Friday. “It is nearly up to the Maranatha [conference centre] floor level.”

Pastor Price, on the ground in Honiara, said the rain was also putting an upcoming health campaign at serious risk.

“We are about to start the Health Promoting Churches Initiative training program and were expecting more than
600 people, but it has rained heavily non-stop since we arrived," said Pastor Price.

The rain also shut down Honiara airport for a few days. An Open Heart International team from Sydney, Australia was due to land in Solomon Islands on Thursday afternoon, but the flight was diverted back to Brisbane.

_Flooded home in Burns Creek. [Photo courtesy: ADRA]_

Concerns that the storm would develop into a tropical cyclone appear to have subsided, with the Australian Bureau of Meteorology on Friday night forecasting the storm to move west over the Coral Sea over the weekend.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and other humanitarian aid organisations have been deployed to assist victims in Honiara.
Cooranbong, New South Wales

Aviation enthusiasts recently gathered at Avondale Memorial Church to commemorate 50 years of Adventist aviation in the South Pacific Division (SPD).

The jubilee weekend kicked off with vespers on Friday, February 28, led by Pastor John Kosmeier, president of the Adventist Aviation Association in North New South Wales. Approximately 150 people were present. It was the first of many opportunities throughout the weekend for pilots and engineers to share their testimonies.

"The best part of the weekend was hearing stories of how people’s lives have been changed through aviation—it’s not just about flying planes," Pastor Kosmeier said.

Close to 800 people filled the church the next day. Highlights included interviews with pilots and pilots’ wives and inspiring reports from representatives around the Division.

Len Barnard and Colin Winch, pioneers of Adventist Aviation, received citations from the SPD in recognition of their commitment and dedication.

The weekend concluded with flying and a barbecue at Cessnock Airport on Sunday. Several planes were present, including a well-known Cessna 206 affectionately known as “Charlie”. One of
the most memorable moments that day was former Adventist Aviation Services engineer Linden Millist taking up a Cessna 182, 14 months after the accident in Goroka, Papua New Guinea, that burnt up to 50 per cent of his body.

Linden Millist going up with Leighton Judd.

“This was a real milestone for me,” said a delighted Mr Millist. “After being able to drive again, flying was the next milestone I wanted to achieve.”

“It was a blessing to see Linden flying again,” noted one participant. “His determination and courage is inspiring.”

The jubilee was also an opportunity for future pilots and engineers to learn more about aviation and what it involves. “This weekend has been amazing,” enthused 15-year-old Stephen Aveling-Rowe. “I definitely want to be a pilot one day.”

The 50th jubilee celebrations of Adventist Aviation Services in PNG will run from July 3-6 in Goroka.

For further information, contact Colin Dunn at <cdunn02@bigpond.com>.
It's about 10 o'clock on a sunny Sabbath morning when I arrive at Auckland Adventist High School, the venue for Calvary Community's worship services. But the congregation isn't there.

I wait outside until a battered sedan pulls up and I'm greeted by the driver, Dave Letele, one of the church elders. He's wearing a red T-shirt, hoodie and shorts, and his car smells like cigarette smoke.

It's a “scattered Sabbath” this week, Dave tells me. The members of Calvary Community are out visiting people who don't normally attend church—relatives, friends or other community contacts. “When we visit though,” says Dave, “we invite them to Alive@5.” The 5pm worship service is aimed squarely at the unchurched—it's informal and contemporary and you can wear what you like. On “gathered Sabbaths” every second week, the morning worship format is more traditional and focused on nurturing the congregation—“Heaven@11” says Dave with a grin.

Friendly invitations to Alive@5 are given a few more times that morning as Dave and I visit a number of nearby suburban homes owned by his family’s Grace Foundation, a charitable trust that operates in close cooperation with Calvary and provides supported accommodation for people at risk of homelessness. I meet a woman who lived on the street for years, a teenager recovering from abuse, a camera-shy transsexual, people struggling with mental health issues, and the most incredible house parents—committed Christians with their own histories and problems who live together with the residents, offering guidance and support, and sharing Jesus.

And although these people seem to be more motivated by love than anything else, Calvary Community is seeing the benefits. “We just had 10 baptisms last week,” says Dave. “We had about six baptismal services in 2013—we make it a big deal; a celebration that takes two to three hours.”

David Letele (right) with house parent (left) and resident.

It's my first visit to New Zealand’s North Island, and I'm impressed by Auckland's beautiful harbour, efficient motorways and attractive buildings. But what I really didn’t expect is this Spirit-led passion for innovation and community connection. And it seems that church growth is the natural result. In 2008, there were 8700 Seventh-day Adventists in North NZ. And now?

“I believe we’ve gone over the 10K mark by now as I have been informed of a number of baptisms since October of 2013,” says an email from Shane Palipane, chief financial officer for the Conference. It's an impressive number,
especially considering the constant leakage of members seeking educational and employment opportunities in Australia.

Maybe I shouldn’t be so surprised. Auckland is home to the largest Adventist congregation in the South Pacific Division—at Papatoetoe in the southern suburbs. And my conversation the previous Friday with Pastor Eddie Tupa’i, who leads the North New Zealand Conference, reveals that the spirit of innovation starts at the top.

Munching on a gourmet vegeburger at a shopping centre near his Manakau City office, Pastor Tupa’i outlines the changes to the Conference’s structure that have been implemented over the last few years. Departments have been all but abolished and a relentless focus on developing leaders has seen pastors organised into clusters and receiving regular mentoring from each other, led by a regional pastor. Each cluster sets its own agenda, emphasis and goals.

“I never go to cluster meetings,” says Pastor Tupa’i. “That’s their safe place. All I want is a one-page report of how they’re meeting their goals, once a quarter. I have a review meeting with every pastor annually, with their regional pastor present.”

That sounds great, but I’m still stuck on the “departments abolished” aspect of these changes. “What about the Youth department?” I ask. “Don’t you have a Youth director?”

“We treat our youth director as a regional pastor who supports youth and children’s leaders.”

It’s starting to make sense. Sort of.

*Pastor Eddie Tupa’i.*

Pastor Tupa’i has also changed his own job title to “lead pastor”, feeling that “president” has an institutional or administrative tone and detracts from the apostolic nature of his role. “Apostolic” is a word that’s being used more in North NZ, and seems to carry the notion that leaders aren’t there to dominate or micro-manage but to mentor, train and facilitate grassroots initiatives.

“Regional pastors are modelling apostolic leadership that isn’t about constantly hovering over a church,” says Pastor Tupa’i. “Instead local lay leadership is empowered. It’s the vision for all pastors in the conference to be regional pastors by 2020.”
And at the rate churches are being planted—33 over the last three years—it soon won’t be realistic for pastors to “hover” over their congregations.

I have to ask if all this retooling isn’t all a bit much for some of the older or more conservative members. Pastor Tupa’i admits it’s taken a fair bit of persuasion—including at “town hall” meetings around the North Island—and that not everyone is totally convinced. But it probably doesn’t hurt that he and the other church leaders have developed a culture of transparency.

In my conversations with both him and CFO Shane Palipane, I’m treading carefully, thinking I’m venturing into sensitive political questions. But it’s amazing how often the answer is “it’s all on our website”. Browsing through <www.nnzc.org.nz> I discover executive committee reports, local church member numbers, tithe statistics and announcements about difficult issues the Conference is facing.

Grace foundation parent Button Matthes (left).

I’m wishing I had the time to explore what’s happening in churches outside of Auckland, but it’s my last Sabbath here and my plane is leaving later in the evening. The last stop before the airport is Mizpah Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mangere, where the majority of the members are from a Tongan background.

I arrive in time for the noon English church service and, afterwards, am promptly invited for lunch. Numbers are down today because the youth are away at a regional event in Palmerston North, but, in their absence, their elders have nothing but praise to offer.

In mid-2013 Mizpah supported their youth in running an evangelistic series. The young people were in charge of organisation, music and preaching and decided to run the meetings in English, a move that attracted friends from a variety of cultural backgrounds. The church is now growing and the English worship service has been added to cater for the growing diversity in the congregation.

“My philosophy is a family based church,” says Mizpah’s pastor Pelikani Esau. “Older people give the vision and direction and the young people stand up and do the work. I’m working with the pastors in my cluster to take this philosophy to the ethnic churches in North NZ.”

My cultural stereotypes of status-conscious Polynesians have been shattered—I’m surprised to see Mizpah’s leaders and elders surrendering “serious” church tasks to their youth who have also travelled overseas to run evangelistic programs. But the older people are not sitting idly by.

“Come,” says one of Mizpah’s elders to me after lunch. “This is the powerhouse of our church.” I follow him to a small room where about 10 women and a few men are gathered. They’re kneeling with Bibles open in front of them. Their eyes are shut and the room is full of heartfelt prayer.

Kent Kingston is assistant editor of Adventist Record.
F-35 fighter aircraft have been designed to meet requirements of three different US military branches. Australia plans to purchase the F-35A air force version for the RAAF, the navy F-35C is modified for use on aircraft carriers and the marine F-35B has the ability to hover and land vertically. It turns out that engineering F-35s to hover has not been simple. In fact, some blame the engineering challenges of the F-35B for many of the issues that have cropped up in F-35 development. Hovering is a lot harder than you would think.

Interestingly, hovering flight is no less challenging when it comes to birds. Just as the F-35B looks much like other fighter aircraft, particularly its F-35A and F-35C siblings, hummingbirds look much like other birds in that they have two wings, a tail, feathers, a beak and so on. But underneath their skin and its covering of jewel-coloured feathers, they are dramatically engineered to allow them to hover and even fly backwards; something other birds are incapable of.

Like irreducibly complex molecular systems, the package of adaptations that allow hummingbirds exceptional flying abilities challenges Darwinism, particularly if the Darwinian requirement that each incremental change somehow increases the fitness of the intermediates is kept in mind. Uniquely among vertebrates, hummingbirds use their wings in a way similar to hovering insects such as bees. In hummingbirds a large portion of the wing is composed of fused wrist and hand bones. The shoulder joint is modified to allow the usual up and down motion of a wing as well as a greater degree of twisting. This appears to be a large part of the secret to hummingbirds’ insect-like flight in which both up and down strokes of the wing provide lift. A modified wing and shoulder combined with pectoral muscles composed almost exclusively of type 1 fibres, which allow prolonged exertion (typically at the expense of speed in other organisms, but apparently not in hummingbirds), a reconfiguration of tendon attachment that allows very short muscle contractions to move the wing through its entire stroke, a brain to coordinate the necessary complex movements and numerous other adaptations and presto, hummingbirds can buzz through the air like bumblebees.

Adaptations that allow hummingbirds to hover or fly backwards would normally be explained as a product of design, just as the lift fan, swivelling exhaust and other engineering modifications for hovering flight on F-35Bs are. For philosophical reasons, materialistic Darwinism rejects this explanation. Is there other evidence of bird evolution that might support the assertion that hummingbird adaptations to their particular lifestyle evolved gradually via “numerous, successive, slight modifications?” Not really. In fact, without trying to make too much of absent evidence (which is not evidence of absence), the evidence we have points in the opposite direction. Fossil hummingbirds, which are not common, are universally fully formed with the adaptations already in place that we associate with hummingbirds'
unique flying ability among vertebrates. This is why the few fossils that are available can be unambiguously identified as hummingbirds. The best candidate for a missing link is probably Eocypselus rowei, thought to be intermediate between swifts and hummingbirds. However, the discoverers point out that E. rowei "shows neither modifications for the continuous gliding used by swifts nor modifications for the hovering flight style used by hummingbirds."2

Like F-35 fighters, if we want to see hummingbirds in Australia, we will need to import them from the Americas, but this does not prevent us from marvelling at the beauty and design in our own birds. Even as children we understood that "Mr Nobody" is not a reasonable explanation for breakage of a living room lamp during a rough and tumble indoor football match. Why accept "Mr Nobody" as the explanation of where hummingbirds, or any other birds, came from? Generally, rational people reject imaginary things because experience shows us that it is real causes in the real world that actually account for everything from aircraft to broken lamps. The Bible introduces us to Jesus Christ, that Real Cause, the Creator God who not only notes when a sparrow falls (Matthew 10:29), but also created and sustains "all things" (Revelation 4:11) including hummingbirds and us.

Tim Standish visits the Record InFocus set to discuss his Flight: The genius of birds documentary.


Timothy Standish PhD works at the Geoscience Research Institute, based at Loma Linda University, California.
Those who believe in the biblical view of sexuality are treading the well-worn path of scriptural literalists who, in ages past, supported slavery using precisely the same mode of textual interpretation—or so goes the argument. Dr Robert Cargill of the University of Iowa put the view forward rather vigorously in his blog:

“Let me say this to those who oppose same-sex marriage—ESPECIALLY IN THE NAME OF GOD: You are deserving of all public shame, chastisement, loss of reputation, and abandonment of friends and colleagues (both secular and Christian) that accompanied those who freely chose to defend the divinely ordained institution of slavery. You deserve the loathing you receive, for you have chosen to suppress the rights and privileges of your fellow humans because you think God told you to do so, but you don’t condemn evenhandedly. You deserve to be intellectually exposed and called out publicly, because you condemn in the name of a god who ENDORSED, LEGISLATED and MAINTAINED SLAVERY!”

Is Dr Cargill correct? Does it follow that if you oppose slavery from the Bible, you must similarly support same-sex marriage? Or if you oppose same-sex marriage, is it a logical requirement to support slavery?

It’s worth noting at the outset that Christians drove the abolition of slavery—giants like William Wilberforce, John Wesley, Charles Finney and Ellen White. None of them believed that their biblically based opposition to human bondage meant they must abandon biblical sexual morality.

Why not? There are three primary reasons.

Firstly, there is a distinction between laws that regulate and laws that mandate. As Christ made clear when He critiqued Moses’ divorce law (Matthew 19:8), not all laws regulating society in the Bible can be construed to approve the underlying behaviour.

The biblical laws regulating slavery were, like divorce, instituted to manage and reduce the impact of the practice, not uphold it. Like the Mosaic divorce laws, the slavery laws didn’t mandate the underlying practice but rather regulated it when it occurred. ¹ This is in stark contrast to the laws of sexual behaviour, which were mandated in the strongest of possible terms.
A second distinction is that the Bible doesn't link the implementation of slavery regulations with salvation.\(^2\) Sexual morality, in contrast, is an issue directly linked to salvation. In 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 (NKJV), of the 10 examples of the unrighteous who will not “inherit the Kingdom of God”, four relate to sexual morality. Similarly, in 1 Timothy 1:8-11 (NKJV), two of the eight examples of those who are “ungodly and profane” are those who engage in sexual immorality.

Thirdly, the practice of slavery regulated in the Bible differed substantially from Anglo/American slavery. In Exodus 21:16, kidnapping people for sale was explicitly banned. Exodus 12:49 also banned treating people differently under the law based on their nationality. Further, time limits on slavery were imposed in the Bible and slaves were accorded some rights. In contrast Anglo/American slavery not only had no time limits but involved the enslavement of slave descendents, provided no practical protection from rape and other acts of brutality, and was part of a program to exploit an entire race of people. To use biblical regulation of a practice so far removed from Anglo/American slavery to justify its abuses is transparently unprincipled.

While it may not be a historical or logical truth that views on slavery and sexuality are intrinsically linked, it has become, in many minds, a rhetorical truth; a rhetorical truth with very profound implications to how societies treat Christians individually and collectively.

In the face of vehement opposition to Christian views of sexuality, do we have the courage to stand firm? Do we have the backbone to withstand attacks on our character, our intelligence and our integrity? In the words of Dr Cargill, are we prepared to be “loathed”? But just as importantly, are we able to not loathe in return? Do we have the kind of character and resolve, compassion and dignity that Dr Martin Luther King demonstrated in the face of hatred? Do we have not only the courage of Christ but also the heart of Jesus?

We will all know soon enough.

1. See Money, Might and Munitions for more complete discussion.

2. Quite the opposite—slave traders are listed among the “ungodly” in 1 Timothy 1:10.

James Standish is editor of Record.
I almost never rent a GPS. I like to figure out my own way. A friend told me it’s a “man thing”. Maybe it is. But I think it’s something more. I like to understand how a city knits together. Driving to directions leaves me with a superficial familiarity; driving without them demands attention to detail. And, I suppose, I’ve found my way around cities from Moscow to Manhattan without a GPS, so why would I need one to visit Melbourne?

It’s for that reason I was hopelessly lost early one morning recently. I knew where I was going. I’d been there before. But as I drove back and forth on roads that all seemed to look the same in the predawn haze, I just couldn’t find the right turnoff. Like in a dream, I was lost in a mental fog, entirely incapable of finding my way home—home to my father.

A dirty dawn broke through overcast skies as I stumbled on the narrow entrance to the “memorial park” I was searching for. On this day, the home I was visiting was his final resting place to reflect on the profound silence that is death.

Visiting my father’s grave is always an intensely emotional experience. When I visited it a year after his death, I noticed his was the only gravestone in the row that didn’t have even a single flower on it. This man who once could command an enthusiastic audience in much of the world, a man whose hands had healed people around the globe, a man whose books sat on shelves from Sydney to Saskatchewan; completely alone in death. Without even a flower to mark his grave.

I went to a florist and bought artificial flowers so that at least his grave would be marked by one sign of remembrance, love, respect.

Not long after my dad’s death, his belongings burned up in the Black Saturday fires. So, in a matter of months, he was gone, his belongings were gone, and all that was left were ethereal memories. Even the best of us, the greatest of us, the kindest and bravest, disappear into dust. I knew that. I just never expected it could happen so quickly. And never imagined it would happen to my dad.

On this day, it wasn’t the flowers, the dawn, the fresh dug graves or the slow dribble from an indifferent sky that caught my attention. It was one of the graves nearby. There, on a gravestone not so far from where I was standing...
mourning my lost father, smiled the prettiest of girls. The picture was new—like it had been taken yesterday. There were a couple more photos of her, arranged like a schoolgirl’s scrapbook. The inscription told of a family’s anguish for their little angel.

Who was she? How did she die so young? I could only guess. That she was a bright, attractive girl full of life was clear. And yet, here she was, a beautiful girl who would never be anything else in this world.

I paused and looked into the eyes of this beautiful young girl. How could someone so lovely, so precious, so perfect, be dead? Gone. Buried. And then I thought of my own child who died in utero. My child who never had a chance to laugh, sing, to be pretty, cute, grand or bold. My child who I would give everything I have to hold, to comfort, to share a little of this life with. To tickle, play, run and laugh.

But that isn’t how life is.

We don’t get second acts here.

In milliseconds accidents take the wisdom and love of fathers away from their children.

For no good reason, beautiful girls die.

And sometimes parents, full of hope and joy, leave the hospital without words to express the hole torn in their hearts.

That is the world we live in.

It feels like an incoherent joke of darkest proportions. Except for one slim hope. A hope we can only grasp with our broken fingers clinging to a slippery rock of faith; a Saviour we cannot see; a Lord who, in our darkest moments, can seem so far away, lost in mists of space, enthroned in a heaven that is divided from us by an impenetrable barrier. A Saviour who Himself felt the despair of separation; the agony of affliction. A God who understands my depth of loss, because He experienced it Himself.

James Standish is editor of Record.
One of the strengths of our Church is that the Church, humanly speaking, belongs to all of us. This Church is strong because of the energy, commitment and vision of its people—you and me. We are Seventh-day Adventists because we believe in Jesus Christ and the message and mission of the Church. Everywhere I go I see this working itself out in so many ways—and that is just so good.

Many of you have given your time, talent and resources to volunteer projects at home and across the ocean. A huge number serve in local churches filling the various volunteer roles and offices that make each church what it is. Your service is indispensable to the Church. There are some who have spent considerable time and resources establishing various supportive ministries, and they are doing a marvellous job. Whichever is your area of service, may I make an important request: please make sure you are working closely with your church organisation to fulfil the mission given to us by Jesus Himself. Make your supportive ministries complementary to those that the church is already doing. We do not gain anything by having ministries set up that duplicate and thus compete with already established church ministries. Stretching our combined resources too thinly will not bring maximum results for anyone. Generally the end result is frustration and disappointment. Remember, complementary ministries, not competitive ministries, are those that are truly supportive ministries.

Dr Barry Oliver is president of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.