A chance to change lives

“CEO spent $384,000 on dinner.” That was one of the top headlines on an Australian news website yesterday. While there is room to call such a dinner bill a disaster, it’s nothing compared to the disasters which dominated news headlines in weeks past, such as the Ebola outbreak in West Africa or the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Syria.

With such calamities no longer making front page news, it’s tempting to think the world is in a pretty good place. Don’t be fooled. Every year more than 200 million people—most of whom are already living in poverty—are affected by disaster. And it’s only going to get worse.

This Sabbath (February 21), those attending Adventist churches in Australia have the opportunity to make a life-changing difference through the Disaster & Famine Relief Offering. It doesn’t take much—just $A24 can provide emergency food for a family in the vital first week after a disaster.

We encourage you to give generously this Sabbath. Together we can help raise the $250,000 the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) needs to assist more than 150,000 people affected by disaster every year.

For those not attending a church in Australia this Sabbath, you can learn more and donate online at <www.adra.org.au/disasteroffering>. More insight into ADRA’s life-changing work can be found in this week’s edition of Record eNews.
Sanitarium launches reduced sugar Up&Go

Aussies who live life on-the-go and are looking to reduce their sugar intake can now enjoy a delicious new way to start their day, following the launch of Up&Go Reduced Sugar.

Images of destruction and hope

Australian photographer Geoff White landed in the Philippines just days after one of the strongest tropical cyclones ever recorded smashed into coastal towns and villages. What he saw was both confronting and inspiring—he says he’d do something similar in a heartbeat.

Read Adventist Record

Look at that face, soak in the cuteness, and flip open the latest edition of Adventist Record.

Watch/download InFocus

- Church leaders concerned over children in detention report
- New research debunks the myth that a little alcohol is good for you
- America’s largest Christian bookstore chain files for bankruptcy

A number of religious freedom and advocacy groups are upset by US President Obama’s apparent inability to admit that Christians around the world are being
We will rise

You couldn’t blame the people of Ajuy, Philippines, if they simply gave up, packed up and moved on. Every year the 47,000 people who call this coastal district home bear the brunt of 20 typhoons as they whip west across the Pacific.

A different life

Giving one’s life to Christ is never a small thing. Yet for many of us, the decision comes with relatively little consequence. Not so for people like Romina Masih, whose decision to become an Adventist was met with denunciation and death threats.

deliberately targeted because of their faith.


Adventist leader publicly defends the Sabbath

What do we do when an eloquent and influential person writes something we believe contradicts the Bible? Feel intimidated? Shrug our shoulders and walk away? Get angry and rude? Or do we respectfully engage?
BFF <3

Vania Chew opens up about the highs and lows of best-friendship.

More Editorials
Sanitarium launches reduced sugar Up&Go

Aussies who live life on-the-go and are looking to reduce their sugar intake can now enjoy a delicious new way to start their day, following the launch of Up&Go Reduced Sugar*, a highly-anticipated addition to the nation’s best-selling liquid breakfast range.

Available now, Sanitarium’s new Up&Go Reduced Sugar* contains one third less sugar than regular Up&Go while still containing the protein and fibre of two Weet-Bix and milk^*. It is also 98.5 per cent fat free, high in fibre and provides half of an adult’s daily calcium needs.

Sanitarium Marketing general manager Daniel Derrick said the new product has been developed in response to consumer feedback and is ideal for those who don’t have time for a sit down brekkie.

“Sanitarium is committed to the health and wellbeing of Australians, and providing nutritious products they love,” he said. “We know that some consumers are looking to reduce their sugar intake and so we’ve developed Up&Go Reduced Sugar* to provide a convenient, great-tasting reduced sugar liquid breakfast choice, in addition to the market-leading regular Up&Go.”

Michelle Reid, accredited practising dietitian and nutritionist at Sanitarium, said the new Up&Go Reduced Sugar* has a 5-star Health Star Rating, under the new Government-led initiative which rates foods from 1/2 star to 5 stars, based on their nutritional credentials.

“Up&Go Reduced Sugar* achieved a high HSR score due to the protein content, low saturated fat and sodium content, and reduced sugar content,” she said. “When you’re unable to take time out of your hectic morning for a more traditional breakfast such as wholegrain cereal or toast and fruit, Up&Go Reduced Sugar* is the ideal option to enjoy on the go.”

“In addition to being high in fibre and calcium, Up&Go Reduced Sugar* also contains protein and 10 essential vitamins and minerals, does not contain any artificial sweeteners or colours making it a brilliant choice for a nutritious start to the day,” she said.

Reid said when compared with reduced fat flavoured milk or low fat yoghurt, Up&Go Reduced Sugar* contains on average half the sugar*.
Up&Go Reduced Sugar* is available in two great flavours—Choc Ice and Vanilla Ice. It can be found in all major supermarket retailers and a pack of 3 has an RRP of $A4.79.

*1/3 less sugar than Up&Go Liquid Breakfast

^Based on the amount of protein and fibre in 30g Weet-Bix and 125mL full cream milk

*Based on average nuttab 2010 data for reduced fat flavoured milk and low fat flavoured yoghurt
You couldn’t blame the people of Ajuy, Philippines, if they simply gave up, packed up and moved on. Every year the 47,000 people who call this coastal district home bear the brunt of 20 typhoons as they whip west across the Pacific.

The island made international headlines following Typhoon Haiyan, which broke records for its strength and destruction in 2013—but this was simply the strongest in a perpetual cycle of destruction.

If it was me, and my home and belongings were being destroyed on an almost annual basis, I would probably throw my hands in the air and walk away—or sit in the corner and cry.

But the people of Ajuy had a message for me late last year. In a very literal "wear your heart on your sleeve" moment I was taught a lesson about the strength and resilience found in communities.

The 34 communities that make up Ajuy had come together to collect life-saving and early-warning equipment as part of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency’s (ADRA) ongoing work following Haiyan. The community-elected leaders had come to ensure the people they represented were better prepared for and protected against future disasters.

As they entered I noticed a green band tied around each of their arms. It simply read: "We will rise again".

A child receives an ADRA hygiene kit with joy. The kit includes a bucket, purifying tablets, soap and other items.

This message of stoic hope, exemplified by their smiles and "God bless yous", demonstrated that more than just life-saving food and water, a renewed sense of confidence had grown in a population that was weary from continually being knocked down. Seeing the sea of green ribbons showed me how far these communities had come.

It wasn’t long after this, as my husband and I boarded up our windows in preparation for Typhoon Ruby, that my thoughts returned to the people of Ajuy and others like them. Almost exactly a year-to-the-day since Haiyan, Ruby’s driving rain was my first typhoon experience, but it was simply another disaster for these communities as they rebuild.
Shortly after Ruby had passed I flew with our team to Ajuy to assess and assist. It was here I spoke with Romulo.

In the middle of the storm, which was feared to match Haiyan in strength and destruction, Romulo crawled from his home towards the local evacuation centre. Forced to the ground by the wind, Romulo, who has previously lost an arm above the elbow, feared for his life. Stinging memories of Typhoon Haiyan returned—it was a storm that took his home and everything he owned.

By activating the community's new emergency plans no lives were lost during Typhoon Ruby and destruction was minimised. Taking ADRA's lessons on board Romulo had also secured the roof of his home by tying it onto nearby trees.

"When we returned from the evacuation centre it was a priceless feeling to see our house was still there," he said.

Romulo passed on his sincere thanks to ADRA. "We are thankful because after the typhoon we know that we still have a secure house to live in. We are very happy because this is a durable house—not a single trace of destruction is visible."

The immediate aftermath of disasters, and sometimes too the agencies that rush to the scene, grab the headlines. I can personally testify that the most amazing thing in these situations is not the destruction or millions of dollars spent but the incredible strength and resilience of the communities affected.

The most powerful work we can do is to build on this inherit strength so that future disasters can be avoided or at least their impact minimised.

In many ways this work, which we call disaster risk reduction and resilience, is a reflection of God's character. He isn't there just to pull us out of crises—He builds us up, teaches us and protects us so we can thrive despite the disasters that come. And He tells us, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

_Beryl Hartmann with Romulo._

While many agencies have left the people of the Philippines—and certainly the world's media has long gone—ADRA remains. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this is only possible because people like you support our mission. ADRA is only able to respond immediately and continue to work long after the headlines are gone because there are thousands of Australians—and millions of others across the world—committed to helping others thrive.
Your support means that when they need us we’re already there.

ADRA’s disaster and famine relief offering is collected in churches this Sabbath, February 21. Gifts can also be given by calling 1800 242 372, online at <www.adra.org.au/disasteroffering> or by returning the donation slip on the back page of this edition of Record to ADRA Australia.

Beryl Hartmann is humanitarian program officer for ADRA Australia.
A different life

I was born in Fiji to a Hindu family. My father was a poor farmer but he had great hopes for us. He dreamed that one day I would become a lawyer. It didn’t happen. And there’s a curious reason why.

By the time I got to university I began running in a rough crowd. We were involved in drug dealing on campus. Marijuana mostly but some of the group also dealt cocaine. Our leader was from China. The money I earned was helpful but it really wasn’t the reason I got involved; I was looking for a place to fit in and this group made me feel like I belonged.

Like most uni students I wasn’t sure where I’d end up philosophically or spiritually. I was open to all the world had to offer. Well, not entirely open. I’d met a few Seventh-day Adventists over the years and I didn’t like what I saw. I liked to fit in with what was going on around me. That’s why the group I was hanging out with was so attractive to me. We all did the same things; we all went along with each other. But the Adventists I met? They were the opposite. They didn’t compromise their own judgement just to fit in. They seemed out of step with society. And their unique style really grated on me.

One day I was walking down the street and saw a little kid handing out fliers. I tried to avoid him but he locked in on me. He ran up and thrust the paper into my hand and invited me to an Adventist outreach. I felt genuine loathing well up in me. He looked me right in the eyes and said, “This is for you.”

He was just a kid but the way he looked at me and what he said really had a big impact. I wanted to tell him to get away from me. I stuffed the paper into my purse and went about my day. When I got home I put it in on my table. There was something about that invite that was like a pebble in my shoe—I just couldn’t ignore it.

At the same time my sister was telling me about a banner stretched across a nearby street, advertising an evangelistic meeting to be conducted by Adventist Church and Fulton College students. I took the flier and tossed it to her, saying, “This may be of interest to you.”

She left the invite on the table in our living room. Next time I was there I saw it staring back at me and what he said really had a big impact. I wanted to tell him to get away from me. I stuffed the paper into my purse and went about my day. When I got home I put it in on my table. There was something about that invite that was like a pebble in my shoe—I just couldn’t ignore it.

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She left the invite on the table in our living room. Next time I was there I saw it staring back at me so I removed it and placed it on the refrigerator door. Next time I was taking something out of the fridge my eyes caught a glimpse of it so I kept changing the place of that invite around our house until somehow it ended up in my room. While in my room I looked at it carefully and I heard a voice inside me for the first time in my life: “If Jesus Christ doesn’t exist why does He bother you so much?”
I decided there was nothing to be afraid of. I would go and check out the evangelistic series. I bent my sister’s arm and off the two of us went. It turned out we were the only two Fijians of Indian descent in attendance. You might think we’d feel very out of place considering some of the tensions between the communities in Fiji at the time but it wasn’t like that at all. People treated us very well—they were loving and welcoming.

Eventually I decided to make a stand for Christ. It was very uncomfortable at home. When I eventually told my dad he was furious. He had so many high hopes for me and they were all destroyed. I wasn’t going to be a Hindu anymore. I wasn’t going to study law. I wasn’t going to be the daughter he thought he would have. It was shattering. He told me he wanted nothing more to do with me. I was devastated. But I was also determined to follow Christ.

My dad wasn’t the only one who I had to tell. I went to my gang and told them my days of running with them were over. It didn’t go over well. The leader of the gang began following and threatening me. He became a stalker—it was very intimidating. We had a number of confrontations in which he described terrible things he was going to do to me if I didn’t rejoin the gang. Eventually I blurted out, “If you are going to kill me, kill me, because I’m never going back to that life, never!” He was taken aback. From then on he left me alone.

He was in truth a very nasty guy. I had every reason to be afraid. And I didn’t doubt he was willing to hurt me—and maybe even kill me. Not long after, however, something terrible happened. He got mixed up in a deal that went bad and he was killed. It was a reminder to me how fortunate I was to be pulled out of that life by our God of love. I was now one of those people who marched to the beat of a different Drummer. And I was so glad I did!

I decided to go to Fulton College to study ministry. In our ethnic and religious cultures this was very unusual. Women were generally in support roles, not leading. God called me to be different and I was ready to be as different as He wanted. I had no money and my dad had withdrawn all support. I said to him, “I’m going to go and study and, if God is real, He will provide the necessary resources.” You know what? He did provide. It was remarkable. To his credit, my dad came to my graduation. I think he saw God working too.

After finishing my diploma I spent two years as a pastoral intern. They were two good years. And then I was given a church to pastor. I’m not going to lie, it was tough. Yes, there were many very good experiences but there were people who saw a woman in ministry as something to be resisted. There were days I went home and just cried out in despair to God. I wanted to quit. Maybe my dad was right: I should just go back and be a lawyer. At least in the secular world I would be respected. But every time I felt the tug of God to stay the course. I’d tried to live life my own way before, and made a mess of it. I decided that, no matter the pain, I would stay on God’s path for my life. And just as well.

After five years in ministry I went to Pacific Adventist University (PAU) in Papua New Guinea to complete my BA. It was a very rich intellectual and cultural experience. It opened my eyes and it opened doors. It was at PAU that I met a Pakistani guy named Younis. As you probably know, there isn’t a lot of love lost between Indians and Pakistanis. The two nations have fought a number of wars and there are periodic outbreaks of terrorism and communal violence in which many Hindus and Muslims have been slaughtered. I wondered, “What is a guy from Pakistan doing here in PNG?” It seemed a bit strange.

And it was a bit strange—but in the best sense. There was something about Younis that just drew us together. It was while we were at PAU I met Branimir and Danijela Schubert. It turned out that they had gotten to know Younis when he was a young man in Pakistan—he did yard work for them. He, too, came from a very poor family. And it was through their influence that he ended up at PAU. They have played a very important part in our lives ever since—encouraging and nurturing us. At PAU we also met the Taskers. They are another family that has played a very important role in our lives. They are an inspiration to us!

After PAU we both went to Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS) in the Philippines and did our Masters degrees there for three years. People were just so generous to us. Joy Butler, who was director of Women’s Ministries, arranged some sponsorship for me, and Kelvin Peuser, Paul Petersen and his friends arranged sponsorship for us, and a number of others. To this day I can’t express just how thankful we are to these members of
our Church family. We got married at AllAS and after finishing our studies went to Fiji to work at Fulton College. We spent five years lecturing at Fulton before we were called to South New Zealand Conference.

Almost two years ago I was called to pastor Invercargill church. Younis and I had decided that our academic work was enjoyable and satisfying but we really needed more practical ministry experience. After all, how can you teach pastoral trainees if you don’t have a wealth of practical experience yourself? My parents had moved to Auckland in the interim. So we were so happy to come to New Zealand. Younis is my associate pastor. It’s a unique arrangement but it seems to be working well. We have always seen ourselves as a team.

Our church is growing. In 2014 we had 20 baptisms. In 2013 we had 22. In the past three years we have had almost 80 new people join our church. There is a real love—a sense of family. It isn’t all smooth sailing—the church had a split a few years ago so we have two church groups now in small Invercargill. I sometimes wonder, if we can’t get along here on earth how are we going to get along in heaven? I hope history and hurts can be buried and we can reunite as a single church, unified in the love of Jesus Christ and His truth.

But as sad as that split is, God has blessed. The church growth we’ve experienced over the past couple of years has resulted in the church being more full today than it was before the split. But there is a lot of work to do. We need to ensure we retain our new members. We need to strengthen our community in the faith. We all have a very long way to go to grow to full maturity in Christ.

I don’t know what God has planned for us in the future. But what I do know is that I can trust in Him. And no matter what comes my way that is precisely what I intend to do. I want to be strong—just like those Adventists I once hated—not in myself, but strong because Jesus lives in my heart. Does He live in your heart?

Romina Masih is senior pastor of Invercargill church, New Zealand. She shared her story with James Standish at Invercargill church camp.
By the time I turned one I had lived in three different countries. No, my parents weren’t missionaries or refugees. We were just looking for the right place to settle down. We found that place in Sydney and we’ve been here ever since.

I was too little to remember the stress and excitement that accompanied those moves. I didn’t even understand what moving was. Not until I was five and I found out my best friend Amy* was moving away.

I now know the suburb she moved to was only 10 minutes’ drive away. But when you’re five (and can’t drive), that 10 minutes seemed like forever.

“I’ll visit you,” Amy promised.

“I’ll call you,” I said.

I still remember waving goodbye as she turned and walked away. But she never did come to visit. And I never ended up calling.

It wasn’t long before I had two new best friends—a school best friend and a church best friend. They were special to me in different ways. Tamara* and I played pranks on our teachers, came up with entrepreneurial ideas and teased each other about our first crushes. Meanwhile, I loved going to Zoe’s* house where we spent countless afternoons making up stories about her toys, challenging each other to races and trying to cook. Around the same time, their families decided it was time to move away.

After my experience with Amy, I wasn’t expecting Tamara and Zoe to keep in touch. So I wasn’t altogether heartbroken when they didn’t. I just figured it was time to make new friends again.

The problem was that by the time you reach Year 6, you know all the kids in your grade. If you haven’t become close friends before, you’re unlikely to suddenly discover each other now.
It was around this time that “Best Friend” necklaces became popular. There were two necklaces involved, each with half of a heart dangling from the chain. When you put the two halves together, you had a complete heart with the words “Best Friends” inscribed on it. Oh, how I wanted one of those necklaces! But where was I going to find a new best friend?

“Will you be my best friend, Vania?” The request came from Cherie*, a girl I was friends with but had never been particularly close to. I hesitated, knowing the real reason I was being asked was that Cherie had recently had a fight with her ex-best friend Michelle*.

Cherie sensed my hesitation. “You can have this,” she offered. My eyes brightened. It was half of a Best Friends necklace. I quickly agreed. It probably won't surprise you to learn that our “best friendship” didn't last all that long.

As I write this, a close friend is preparing to move interstate. Through the four years we’ve known each other, she has shown me shortcuts in my own hometown, challenged me to step outside my comfort zone and urged me to depend more on God.

And in doing so, she has pointed me towards my true Best Friend. One who will always be there when I need Him, who will never move away and who loves me more than anyone else on earth.

* Real names not used.

Vania Chew is PR/editorial assistant for Adventist Record.
Adventist leader publicly defends the Sabbath

What do we do when an eloquent and influential person writes something we believe contradicts the Bible? Feel intimidated? Shrug our shoulders and walk away? Get angry and rude? Or do we respectfully engage?

That was the question that faced Australian Adventists recently when the Australian Bible Society ran a piece in its influential newspaper questioning Sabbath observance. Rather than let it slide by, *Adventist Record* editor James Standish submitted a response that was published this month.

How well does the Seventh-day Adventist perspective stack up against thoughtful and insightful critiques?

Why not read the two pieces for yourself and decide?