Adventist Church in Nepal appeals for help

The president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nepal appealed for urgent help on Monday for scores of church members who lost everything in a devastating earthquake over the weekend.
International aid questioned

ADRA Australia has defended the work of aid organisations, after the release of an OECD report that is critical of the international community’s failure to achieve poverty reduction benchmarks outlined in the Millennium Development Goals.

Opening the books

As Adventists we are very familiar with the books being opened and everything being revealed . . . just as long it’s not our financial books. But why not? Is there a big secret lurking in there?

Is religious to blame for the world's wars?

In this age of Islamist terrorism, white colonial guilt and rising secularism, religion is being increasingly held responsible for humanity’s ills. Adventist historian Dr David Trim looks at the evidence.

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Despite it being his first visit to the Barossa Valley (SA), for James Standish it still felt very much like coming home.

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Adventist Church in Nepal appeals for help

Kathmandu, Nepal

The president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nepal appealed for urgent help on Monday for scores of church members who lost everything in a devastating earthquake over the weekend.

Members are in immediate need of warm clothing, drinking water, and tents to cope with living outdoors in cold, sometimes rainy weather after a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal on Sabbath, April 25, killing more than 4000 people and injuring 7000, said Pastor Umesh Pokharel, president of the Nepal Section, an attached field of the Adventist Church’s Southern Asia Division.

“We would like to appeal to our brothers and sisters around the world to extend help. Your small help would be great for the church,” Pastor Pokharel told the Adventist Review.

“Although many organisations together with the government are doing their best, our concern is for our workers in the field and members who have lost everything,” he said. “They need at a minimum good clothes, water, and tents.”

The exact number of Adventists requiring assistance is unclear because the earthquake, whose epicentre was 80 kilometres from Nepal’s capital, Kathmandu, has disrupted communication across central Nepal. The Adventist Church has about 1700 members and 36 workers, including pastors, worshipping in 14 churches in the affected area, Pastor Pokharel said.

Counting the cost

Among those in need are members of the church in Kaping, a village about 80 kilometres from Kathmandu. The church’s pastor, Bishnu Rokka, and several of the other 76 members lost their homes, while the church itself sustained cracks in the walls, Pastor Pokharel said.

Shankar Baral, a pastor from an area north of Kathmandu, reported that the homes of several of his members are
badly damaged.

A Bible worker from Sangachok said many of her village’s houses had been flattened and spoke of a dire need for food, shelter, and clothes.

“We are planning to send some of our people to assist them,” Pastor Pokharel said.

The Nepal Section’s accountant, Binod Dahal, traveled to his home village after learning that his father’s house had collapsed.

Donations for the Adventist Church in Nepal can be sent to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the administrative body of the Adventist world church, in Silver Spring, Maryland (see bottom of article).

**Adventist aid agencies and Scheer Memorial Hospital**

The Nepal Church’s appeal came as governments and aid agencies around the world scramble to assist the devastated country.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (Australia), based at Wahroonga in Sydney, Australia, has sent humanitarian project officer Beryl Hartmann to Nepal’s capital, Kathmandu, to help coordinate the relief efforts of a team from the international ADRA network that will work alongside members of its Nepal office in providing shelter to the new homeless. ADRA Australia is accepting donations through its Nepal Earthquake Appeal.

Open Heart International (OHI), a supporting ministry of the Adventist Church that operates under the auspices of Sydney Adventist Hospital, has launched an appeal to raise support for the Adventist-run Scheer Memorial Hospital outside Kathmandu.

The 130-bed hospital has been swamped with people seeking assistance. “The demand for their services at this moment could be financially crippling without support,” said Michael Were, who coordinates visits by volunteer OHI surgical teams that visit Nepal on a regular basis. "Open Heart International would like to assist in supporting the emergency aid by giving all donations made to our Nepal Burns/Women’s health projects from now until the 31st May to our partners at the SMH,” said Mr Were.

Pastor Pokharel said the situation was difficult at the hospital, with more than 200 people seeking treatment on Sunday alone. “Our church members and church workers are also helping at the hospital,” he said.

Asian Aid Australia has also launched an appeal focused on providing emergency relief—food, blankets and tents—to families affected by the disaster.

**A reason to praise God**

Tent camps have sprung up in Kathmandu and across Nepal as dozens of aftershocks from the weekend earthquake sent tens of thousands of people—even those with homes—in a desperate search for safety. Pastor Pokharel and his family are among those sleeping in tents.

The capital was at a virtual standstill on Monday, Pastor Pokharel said.

“The sun is shining, but people are staying outside,” he said. “Little movement can be seen in the streets. Nearly all schools, colleges, and private organisations are closed. Government and rescue vehicles are about the only traffic on the road.”

Amid the tragedy, Patsor Pokharel said he had a personal reason to thank God for His care.
He had planned to travel to Makwanpur, 300 kilometres from Kathmandu, for a baptismal service on the day of the earthquake. But an unexpected development prompted him to cancel his plans at the last minute. Several fellow Adventists urged him to reconsider, but he refused to yield.

“Some of our people were not comfortable with my decision, but I was sure that it was God's decision, not my own,” Pastor Pokharel said.

He said he realised now that he would not have been with his wife and two underage children when the earthquake occurred if he had made the trip.

“That would had caused more panic for me and my family,” he said. “Also, I wouldn’t have been able to come home on the badly damaged roads, and my family wouldn’t have managed to live outdoors without me.”

Donate to the Adventist Church in Nepal by addressing a cheque or money order to the “General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists” and writing “Nepal Section relief funds” in the memo line. The envelope should be addressed to:

Donation Cashier
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904
United States of America

The money goes toward the needs of Adventist members.

Donate to ADRA Australia by visiting <ADRA.org.au>. New Zealand residents can donate to ADRA NZ's Disaster Preparedness and Response Fund at <adra.org.nz>.

Donate to Adventist-run Scheer Memorial Hospital near Kathmandu by making a one-off gift to one of Open Heart International's Nepal projects before 31 May via <ohi.org.au>.

Donate to Asian Aid Australia's Nepal Earthquake Response via <AsianAid.org.au>. 
ADRA Australia has defended the work of aid organisations, after the release of an OECD report that is critical of the international community’s failure to achieve poverty reduction benchmarks outlined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The States of Fragility 2015 report says international aid has been too tightly focused on health, educational and social outcomes, and has neglected fundamental issues of security, justice and governance.

Beryl Hartmann, humanitarian project officer for ADRA Australia’s international program, said it was inaccurate to describe the aid sector’s efforts since the 2000 inception of the MDGs as a failure. “There has been a lot of progress, particularly in areas such as education, environmental sustainability, reducing child mortality and even access to safe drinking water. I think it’s important that we focus on the positive things that have come out of the Millennium Development Goals, and it’s just something that we need to now revise and look forward at the areas that need improvement.”

States of Fragility noted that countries where there are armed conflicts have fared particularly badly, despite receiving disproportionately large aid packages. Ms Hartmann, who in the course of her work with ADRA has visited Syrian refugees in Lebanese makeshift camps, agreed that this outcome is likely, given the circumstances.

“In countries where there has been conflict and crisis, aid organisations have had a lot of trouble with things like access, funding, a lot of instability in the environment that they’re working in, and also threats against aid workers and the work that they’re trying to do,” Ms Hartmann said. “So it has been difficult for aid workers to get in there and
to be able to address some of these issues."
As Adventists we are very familiar with the books being opened and everything being revealed. But those are God’s books, not ours! And particularly not our financial books. Audited statements are distributed internally to governing boards, of course, but in Australia we haven’t been required to share those statements publicly to the broader community. So we haven’t.

Why not? Is there a big secret lurking in there?

No.

But numbers can be confusing. And if you don’t believe me, consider some of the hassles we face in New Zealand, where the financial records are public and where periodically people focus on one number or another and get all excited. Some think the Church is going bust. It isn’t. Others think the Church is sitting on a mountain of cash. It isn’t. Some see all the assets and forget the matching liabilities that have to be paid from cash. Others see all the liabilities and forget the assets.

And guess who the lucky guy is who has to explain it? Over and over and over again? It’s me! So it’s not good news from my perspective that the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission is going to require the South Pacific Division’s Operating Entities’ audited financial statements be made public. If you don’t mind, therefore, I will pre-empt what is your most likely question: how come the Church has so much cash?

Let’s go there.

The Church runs very big entities. The Sydney Adventist Hospital is now the largest private hospital in Australia. Sanitarium is pretty big these days too. And then there are a bunch of other things the Church does. A lot of money comes into these entities but then a lot goes out—to pay employees, equipment, suppliers, utilities, raw materials and other expenses of operations. The Church operates on the income it has and does not borrow money to pay operating expenses, so it has to have cash.

So how much cash should you have to cover your current liabilities? If you don’t have enough, you know what happens? You hit a problem like the global financial crisis (GFC) and you don’t have the cash to pay your employees. They get fed up very quickly. And you don’t have enough cash to pay for raw materials like wheat, so
the farmers aren’t too pleased either. And every supplier, from pharmaceuticals through to toilet paper, quickly tires of delivering goods on credit.

In fact, if you want to know how the story ends for entities that don’t have enough working capital, you just need to think back to the GFC. Most of the companies that went bankrupt had very good business plans, customer lists and successful products in the market. What they didn’t have was cash. And when things tightened up, they quickly ran through what they had and couldn’t borrow to cover their current liabilities. So they went bust.

And here things get really interesting. But not in a good way.

Late last year, CPA Australia, a major professional accounting body, released a report on the health of the Australian corporate sector. It was scathing. CEO Alex Moley put it this way: “Economic factors are being felt across the market and are putting almost a third of ASX-listed companies at risk of financial catastrophe.” Mr Moley wonders aloud what would happen if another GFC hit. So do I!

What if the world economy does have another big shock? Say a Grexit (Greek exit from the Eurozone) created sufficient fiscal uncertainty that it pushed interest rates for the sovereign debt of highly leveraged European nations like Spain and Italy up to the point where they could not afford to issue bonds? Germany can’t bail them out because the economies of Italy and Spain combined are almost as large as the entire German economy. So things get very serious, very quickly. All of this is not entirely impossible, by the way.

If a second GFC hit, would the Seventh-day Adventist Church survive? If history is any guide the answer is yes. The Church has weathered wars and depressions, recessions we had to have and flourishes of extravagant public spending we didn’t need. Today the Adventist Church is Westpac’s second oldest customer. You don’t make it to a century without doing something right.

Which makes the Church’s conservative financial management seem awfully smart. Yes, we have about six weeks of operating expenses in liquid assets. It looks like a lot of money when you look at it by itself but it’s not that much when you look at our ongoing current liabilities. Sure, we could live closer to the edge. Lots have before us. And you know what happened to them . . .

So when the financial statements go public, and you see that number and wonder why the SPD doesn’t send a little chunk of that cash your way, please remember this article. And please don’t call me. No offence, but I do have an awful lot to do, some of which is even mildly productive.

James Standish is editor of Adventist Record.
Roman philosopher Marcus Cicero said, “To be ignorant of the past is to remain a child.” Similarly, Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard observed, “Life must be lived forward but it can only be understood backward.” And Ellen White stated, “We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.” Sometimes as Adventists, we don’t look back often or deeply enough. But it’s the stories of our past that can give us strength to face the future, and among the great stories of danger, courage, determination and faithfulness is the story of the early Adventists of South Australia’s beautiful Barossa Valley.

In 1835 an advertisement was sent out from Sydney asking for people to come and settle in South Australia. In 1838 Erdmann Jaensch, the grandfather of my grandmother Antonie Roennfeldt, arrived at Port Misery (now Port Adelaide). This first shipload of Prussians, led by Pastor Kavel and sponsored by George Fife Angas, were the first of many Germans to come to South Australia. These people had suffered religious persecution. Can you imagine being willing to sell up everything you had to raise money to sail for at least three months to a land thousands of kilometres away where things were very primitive and undeveloped? That was how seriously these Lutherans desired to live in freedom.

Around 1844 the interpretation of the 1000 years mentioned in Revelation chapter 20 caused theological division among the Lutheran community. The highest hill in the Barossa Ranges—The Kaiser Stuhl (Emperor’s Seat)—is said to have been the spot where Pastor Kavel and his flock gathered on a certain day to await the second coming of Jesus.

It was into this community that L.D.A. Lemke came as a literature evangelist about 1906. Lemke was born in Hanover, Germany in 1871. He trained as a teacher but gave up this career to sail the seas—rounding Cape Horn nine times. The Lutheran ministers welcomed Lemke and his books, which of course were in German. He was highly recommended to various congregations so there was an early contact with Adventist literature. Brother Lemke realised that there was an urgent need for a German-speaking evangelist to be placed in the Barossa and he was instrumental in bringing Daniel Nathan Wall from America to the region.

Gustav (George) Backhaus was employed as a literature evangelist to assist Pastor Wall. Gustav’s first contact with Adventists was in German West Samoa when he was an officer with the German Imperial Navy. He met Pastor Joseph Steed who was a missionary in that area and became interested in the Advent message and also Pastor
Steed’s daughter Dora. Gustav returned to Germany where he was baptised by Pastor L.R. Conradi, and after his discharge from the navy he came to South Australia and married Dora. The couple was well-qualified to work with the Germans of the Barossa.

The first mission Pastor Wall conducted was at Freeling just outside the western boundary of the Barossa. There were no converts from this mission and so it was decided to move to Greenock. A brother and sister of Erhardt Roennfeldt attended some of these meetings and recommended that my grandfather should go and hear this powerful preacher. Finally Grandfather gave in and went along. He and Grandmother were amazed by the things that Pastor Wall was teaching—all from the Bible. Grandmother was especially enlightened about the Sabbath commandment.

Grandfather’s siblings never became Adventists and in fact there was significant persecution for many years and families were alienated.

On the last night of the Greenock mission, Pastor Wall invited Antonie Roennfeldt and her two younger girls, Irene and Lorna, to ride in his buggy along with Mrs Wall, Mrs Fallseher, Gustav Backhaus and Bert Schwartzkopf. The rest of the Roennfeldt family set off across the fields to walk home. Some of the people who were opposed to Pastor Wall’s preaching met up with the buggy at the Greenock bridge and let fly with a massive barrage of eggs and other items. Gustav Backhaus’s new suit was ruined. But he said, “All for Jesus sake.” Apparently Grandmother Roennfeldt fared fairly well because, as my mother used to say, “Grandmother was quite rotund and the eggs just rolled off of her.”

Pastor Wall and Gustav Backhaus visited the Roennfeldt farm soon after the Greenock incident and asked Grandfather how he felt about the things he and his family had learned at the mission. Grandfather replied, “It is the truth and we are all going to keep the Sabbath.” After praying with the family the two men rode their bicycles to Seppeltsfield to see the Zeunert family who had also been attending the meetings. August Zeunert was a little more cautious in his response to Pastor Wall. He asked what Erhardt Roennfeldt had decided to do, then said that he and his family would do the same thing. What if Erhardt had not decided to become an Adventist—what would have happened to August Zeunert and his family? We can never underestimate the impact of our decisions on other people.

Daniel Wall’s brother Frank wrote Uncertain Journey, a book that tells the Wall family history and includes mention of Daniel’s work in the Barossa. He said: “The step taken by these two families was to have an impact far beyond the confines of that one valley. Erwin Roenfelt[1] became an outstanding evangelist in Australia; he served for many years as a secretary of the General Conference, during which time he travelled to many places around the world. He retired after a long term as president of the Northern European Division (or Trans-European Division as it is now known).”

Erwin, Clarence and Vera Roennfeldt studied at Avondale College and the Sydney Sanitarium (now Sydney Adventist Hospital). Clarence served as a missionary to Burma (Myanmar) during the 1920s. All of Clarence’s children either attended Avondale College or the Sydney Adventist Hospital. Lynette and Julia trained as nurses. Ray trained as a nurse and then did theology at Avondale. He is now president of Avondale. Peter has been a very successful pastor and is heavily involved in church planting programs in Australia and across the world.
Members of the Zeunert family have been involved in serving the Church for many years. Brother August Zeunert was a member of the Conference Executive committee for a long period of time. His sons Bill and Eric were involved with accountancy for Sanitarium and the Division and as farm manager at Carmel College, respectively. The Zeunert girls were also faithful members of the Church.

The Maywald family gave us Pastor George who spent many years in India at Spicer College while his brother David was a faithful worker at Sanitarium in Adelaide.

The Standish, Wegener and Klix families joined in the early days of the Barossa Adventist Church. Although the Standish family had an English name, their ancestors were primarily German. Darcy Standish spent his career working for Sanitarium. His twin sons Russell and Colin Standish went on to serve the Church in a number of environments. Colin first lectured at Avondale, then served in administration at West Indies College, Columbia Union College, Weimar College and Hartland College. Both became prominent voices on a range of issues in the Church.

Grandfather Roennfeldt was a seal holder, and elder and layreader in St Petri Lutheran Church—the church that his grandfather Christian Heinrich and father Franz Ludwig helped to establish and build. When he announced to the congregation that he would no longer be attending the church all hell broke loose. On the last Sunday he attended, the women lined both sides of the footpath outside the church and spat on him as he left. A couple of the Lutheran ministers visited with him and Grandmother to try to persuade them to stay with the Lutheran church. Grandfather stood firm and as a consequence received some harsh words from one of the ministers: "May the curse of God rest on you and your family forever."

Grandfather Roennfeldt was described as being mad and his son Erwin, who had been highly praised by the Lutheran ministers and was to be sent to Germany to study in the Lutheran seminaries, suddenly became "unwissend und ein dummkopf"—ignorant and a fool. These Lutheran ministers even suggested that Grandfather should give Erwin a good box on the ear.

The first Adventist congregation in the Barossa was formed at Greenock on April 10, 1915. There was no formal building and the first meeting was held in Mrs Fallseher’s home. After that people moved between homes. Baptisms were mostly conducted in Erhardt Roennfeldt's dam up until the early 1950s. Those first members included the Parker family from Seppeltsfield who had 14 children. Mr Parker was English and followed the sermons as best he could from his English Bible.

Albert Bartsch, who was also a member of St Petri Church, visited Grandfather one afternoon when Grandfather was dredging the large dam on the farm. Apparently not too much work was done that day because they sat down on a mud bank in the dam and spent much time discussing the Bible. Albert then decided after attending Pastor Wall's meetings at Stockwell that he too would join the Church. He was also a layreader at St Petri Church. Another man followed in their footsteps. It was said that the St Petri congregation decided to burn the layreader's chair because after three of their layreaders became Adventists, the chair surely was cursed!

The Barossa church family and friends celebrate the church's 100-year anniversary.

Adventist membership was gradually increasing and so it was decided to build a church. But where to find land in a suitable location? The Lutherans had vowed to keep the Adventists out of the area. A member owned the land where our church is now located (which happens to be a prime location). There was an old workshop on the property at 1 Old Kapunda Road, Nuriootpa, which the members could have if they renovated it. Everyone worked hard and the dedication date was set for later in 1915.

Just two weeks before the dedication day an interesting but alarming situation arose. By this time the Backhaus
The Walls had moved to Nuriootpa. Gustav Backhaus had managed to purchase a motorbike—an NSU (Dora said it meant “Never Stuck Up”). Gustav set out on the NSU to go to Kapunda but just out of Greenock it did get stuck up. Gustav couldn’t get it to go any further. He pushed it back to Greenock (there were no bitumen roads in those days!), walked to the Zeunerts’ property in Seppeltsfield, borrowed a horse and buggy and returned to Tanunda. Dora, who usually paid the rent, asked Gustav to go and see the agent to fix up the finances. So off he went. While he was paying the rent, the agent said to him, “Did you know that your new church and the house next to it are to be sold tomorrow?” The man who gave the house and land had so deeply mortgaged the property that he couldn’t keep up the payments. It was up for sale. PANIC! Gustav rushed to Nuriootpa to see Pastor Wall and together they went to Seppeltsfield to visit the Zeunerts. Brother Zeunert was a builder and quite well-off financially. As well as having horses and a buggy he had a T-model Ford. The three men jumped into the Ford and went back to Tanunda to the agent. Brother Zeunert was able to pay off the mortgage and the church was saved. Over time the church members paid the money back to Brother Zeunert.

I can imagine that Gustav Backhaus was a very weary man at the end of such a hectic and stressful day.

The Maywald family joined from Pastor Wall’s Stockwell mission, as did A.W. Raethel who was a layreader at Light Pass Immanuel Lutheran Church.

Dora Backhaus said, “This church was not born in comfort” and she was quite right from two points of view. Firstly, World War I had started. People of German background were under suspicion in Australia—were they loyal to the King of England or the Kaiser of Germany? Some German people were interned—7000 across Australia. These were people who had been born in Australia but had German names—people who were strongly supportive of Australia, even though they had different customs and traditions and were more comfortable with speaking German than English.

Secondly, it was as though a localised war was happening in the Barossa—a religious war. Pastor Wall had set up a tent in Nuriootpa for meetings. Gustav Backhaus would sleep at the tent overnight to try to prevent vandalism. Eggs were thrown at the tent—sometimes there were even enough unbroken eggs for Gustav to take home in the morning. One evening when Pastor and Mrs Wall and Gustav were at the meetings in Nuriootpa, Dora Backhaus was at the Walls’ home looking after the children. For some reason she moved the baby’s cradle away from a window and it wasn’t a moment too soon because a brick smashed through the window, landing where the baby had been just moments before. A death or serious injury could have occurred. A policeman was called but Pastor Wall decided not to press charges.

When Dora Backhaus and Margaret Wall walked down the street in Nuriootpa, they were verbally abused and even had stones thrown at them.

But through it all the Adventists of the Barossa were faithful and their legacy has greatly blessed the Seventh-day
Adventist Church around the world. On Sabbath, April 11, the Adventists of the Barossa celebrated their 100th anniversary; 100 years of faithful service and global influence.

[1] Erwin simplified the spelling of his family name to Roenfelt.

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*Monica Nash attended Barossa church for many years. She now lives in Cooranbong, NSW.*
There’s an old John Denver song that talks about a man “going home, to a place he’d never been before”. On the surface it’s a nonsensical statement. But now I think I know what it means.

You see I recently visited South Australia’s Barossa Valley for the 100th anniversary of our church there. It’s a church my ancestors attended. And though I have heard all my life about the Barossa, I’d never actually been there before. This is where my family first became Australians and then Adventists. Coming to the Barossa feels very much like coming home.

For Christmas in 1976 my father presented me with a family history. As his mother had died recently, he sentimentally entitled the 313-page tome “Her Last Mother’s Day”. I remember being decidedly unimpressed. There were lots of things I wanted for Christmas that year. A whopping big volume of dense text broken only by reproductions of faded black and white photos of relatives I didn’t know wasn’t one of them. But now that old volume is very precious, and as I leaf through the pages the lives of my ancestors in the Barossa come alive.

South Australia was established as a British colony in the mid-1830s. My family arrived soon after. They were Lutheran Germans from Silesia—then part of Germany. Their form of Lutheranism grated with the state-approved church and they lived under great pressure. They were planning to move to Russia as they believed they would be treated better there when Sir George Angas invited them to settle in the new colony of South Australia.

Fortunately for us, they chose wisely. The Barossa is a promised land of vineyards and honey.

Thomas Standish, my great-great-great-grandfather who brought our name to Australia, married Anne, a German, and went to live in the tightly-knit Barossan community. His son also married a German woman. When World War I erupted four generations after our family arrived, German Australians fell under suspicion and schooling in German was banned. But not before my grandfather had learned to speak German fluently.

Ultimately, many of my family moved away from the Barossa. But our name hasn’t entirely left. Today a celebrated wine produced there is called “The Standish”—and it’s grown in Vine Vale, an easy walk from the home of our
ancestors. The Wine Advocate praises “The Standish” for its “[S]umptuous depth, and incredible richness and purity”. Oh, to aspire for reviews of oneself that are half as glowing!

I can’t comment on the accuracy of the review but it does give me a perverse joy to see the mark of those hardy immigrants hasn’t entirely been swept aside by the tides of time—even if the mark is presumably a leftover from the part of the family who didn’t join the Adventist Church.

But there’s another legacy of which I’m much more proud. And that’s the spiritual legacy left by those families of the Barossa Valley. For a very small place, it has produced many men and women who have worked faithfully for God, spreading the Adventist message across the world.

Families associated with the church in the Barossa have served the Church at all levels (click HERE). They have served in ministry, in education, administration, in science and medicine, and many other areas. And they have served all over Australia, New Zealand, in the Pacific, Asia, Europe, the Caribbean and North America. All of that, from the little Barossa Valley Adventist Church. In every Adventist Record you are getting a healthy dose of South Australian German heritage as not only do I trace my heritage there but so does associate editor Jarrod Stackelroth.

There are many ways to define success in life but a definition of which I’m particularly fond goes something like this: success is to see your grandchildren grow up with love in their hearts for the God you serve.

When God introduced Himself to Moses in Exodus 3:6 He said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.”

I’m thankful that He is also the God of my great-great-grandparents, great-grandmother, grandparents, parents and He is the God of Leisa and myself. My sincerest prayer is this: that He will always also be the God of our children. It’s my dream that all of us will, ultimately, “go home to a place we’ve never been before”. And I wish no less for your family as well.

James Standish is editor of Adventist Record.