Family matters . . . and so does our health

Among the many things we shouldn’t take for granted, our families and our health are two of the most important.

Today marks the beginning of National Families Week (in Australia). This year’s theme is “Stronger Families, Stronger Communities.” And we could also add, “Stronger Church”. It’s something we sing about but perhaps don’t consider enough—how great it is to be a part of the family of God.

And in another week worth celebrating, this Sabbath (May 16) marks the beginning of Adventist Health week. In this week’s edition of Record eNews, we explore the connection between physical health and spirituality. After all, the Bible says to “glorify God in your body and in your spirit” (1 Corinthians 19:20).

Happy reading, and Happy Sabbath.
New earthquake strikes Nepal

A second major earthquake has wreaked havoc in Nepal, bringing down buildings already weakened by the first quake and killing at least 66 people.

What's the connection?

Pastor Kevin Price, director of Adventist Health for the South Pacific Division, discusses the connection between spiritual and physical health. Other health experts also weigh in on the subject.

Newly-baptised Adventist man Sam Oivo (pictured, centre) has used his influence as a former criminal ringleader in Papua New Guinea to bring three local gangs together with community leaders in a reconciliation ceremony. Discover his story in the latest issue of Adventist Record.

Making headlines:

- Child trafficking amid Nepal’s earthquake recovery
- Australia’s scripture classes debate heats up again
- Adventist neurosurgeon Ben Carson says he’ll run for US president
**Family of God**

Think your family is big? On August 12, 2012, the Porteau-Boileve family of France got together for a family reunion—all 4514 of them! No matter the size, living in any kind of family can be challenging.

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**Helping people help themselves**

Habitat Australia CEO Martin Thomas explains his organisation’s unique approach to reducing poverty.

More Stories

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**Health and happiness**

“There should be no such thing as a Seventh-day Adventist church that does not uphold principles of health,” writes Dr Barry Oliver.

More Insight

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**Christian books banned in NSW schools**: religious freedom lawyer James Standish says it’s a concerning development.

Family life educator Trafford Fischer says there’s a concerning tendency for older people to be ignored, patronised and treated poorly. What’s the way forward?

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**CHIP DVDs**

Missed this year’s Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP) and Depression Recovery Summit? Don’t worry, all the presentations are now available on DVD. Order your set today!

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**On the web**

The Portland Press Herald gives a shoutout to Maine native Ellen White and her influence on health-conscious eating in the 19th
One could argue social media has made all of us stars in our own very small world. But are we missing out on something in the process? James Standish discusses.
New earthquake strikes Nepal

Photo Source: Umesh Pokharel | "The damage in Kathmandu following a second earthquake."

*Dhading, Nepal*

A second major earthquake has wreaked havoc in Nepal, bringing down buildings already weakened by the first quake and killing at least 66 people.

The United States Geological Survey assigned this second quake a preliminary magnitude of 7.3. It comes less than three weeks after the 7.8 earthquake on April 25 which resulted in a death toll of more than 8000 and is still rising.

Dhana Dai, an Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) driver, is just one of many people who have lost their homes in this second disaster.

"We visited Dhana Dai's home in Dhading after the first earthquake," ADRA Nepal reported via social media. "His home was . . . still standing and his family members staying outside. He just reported that his house collapsed in the strong earthquake today."

ADRA Nepal have announced that their staff are safe and are working from outside to assist in any way they can.

"We are going to great lengths to ensure that even those who are hard to reach receive the urgent assistance that they need as soon as possible," says Robert Patton, ADRA Emergency Response Coordinator.

In the past fortnight, ADRA has distributed 1278 tarps in Dhading district, 900 tarps in Kavre, 50 tarps in Kathmandu and 64 tents in Lalitpur. There are plans to begin food distribution in addition to continuing shelter distribution.

To donate to ADRA's work in Nepal, please go to *<www.adra.org.au/nepal>*.
I have a friend—well I have many friends—but this particular man has been a friend for a long time. One of the things we have in common is our interest in older cars; we think of them as being classics. For us they are classics because they come from the era of our youth. True, that makes them old cars! You may well ask, what is the connection between old cars and Health Week? Keep reading!

For Health Week 2015 (May 16-23) we are asking a question: What is the connection between spiritual health and physical health? It's a question we want you to think about, especially during this coming week focusing on health.

What is health? Is it more than just not being sick? I believe it is so much more. The creation story reveals that God intended for us to all enjoy high levels of complete wellness. In Genesis we read of our God creating His ideal world for His "made in His image" people. Repeatedly this newly formed ecosystem is described as being "good" (Genesis 1:1-25). Then God forms mankind to manage this ideal environment. He indicated that the seeds, fruits and plants are to be the optimal wholesome foods (Genesis 1:26-30). Genesis gives a lot of detail about the creation of man and this new "God designed" and "God given" environment. God's reflective conclusion was that it was all "good, so very good" (Genesis 1:31, The Message//REMIX).

The final act of Creation week was the Sabbath, a constantly repeating gift of time blessed by God. It was established as a "holy day". We mark the completion of His creative activity with a period of rest from work (Genesis 2:1-4). We know it to be a blessed time for relating to God through worship and enjoying the evidence around us of His love and creativity.

God also recognised the need for Adam to have a close relationship partner. In the making of "woman" (Eve) He acknowledges that "it is not good for the man (Adam) to be alone, I will make him a helper, a companion" (Genesis 2:18).

I maintain that in the first chapters of Genesis we see God's definition of ideal health:

- God intended for us to be involved in managing our surroundings. We see an environmental connectedness that is linked to physical activity, work and life purpose. This ecological connectedness is also linked to appreciation of design, science, creativity and aesthetics. I believe that God gave this to us for our physical, mental and emotional health.
• God gave a simple, plant-based diet of foods that grew from the ground. We see a nutritional connectedness that leads to optimal physical (body/brain) health.

• God intended for us to experience close relationships. We see here the importance of social connectedness that is allied to our relational and emotional health.

• God also gave us a day of physical and mental rest. A day set aside for a change of pace, for worship, and for contemplation of His creative and redemptive activity. The Sabbath becomes a powerful contributor to our mental/emotional and relational fitness as well as to our spiritual wellbeing.

• God gave us an extraordinary affiliation with Himself that operates on a spiritual, intellectual and relational level. God’s plan was for us to experience a close, strong and personal relationship with Him. Thus our spiritual health is directly linked to a transcendent connectedness.

In this ideal environment health, as we define it today, was not an issue as disease was not yet a problem. We should never forget that the Genesis account had established the most important comprehensive health principles in advance of the entry of sin and resulting death. We see in the Creation story what was, and still is, God’s ideal for us.

So is there still a connection between spirituality and health? I think of the many outstanding Bible texts that link physical health with spiritual health. Texts like:

• “Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you” (Exodus 23:25).

• “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” (Luke 10:27).

• “Your body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost . . . Ye are not your own . . . . Ye are bought with a price . . . Wherefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19,20).

• “Whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

• “I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 1:2).

Today there is a significant body of research that demonstrates a link between spiritual involvement and the resulting physical health benefits.

At a recent Health Professionals Conference held at the Sydney Adventist Hospital, Dr Gerald Winslow from Loma Linda Hospital and University spoke about research showing the health benefits of prayer, forgiveness, Christian service, belonging to a faith group and the importance for health of having hope for the future and faith in God. Interestingly, Dr Winslow also rotated the connection around the other way. He talked about the connection between physical health and spiritual health. He pointed to Ellen White’s contribution that good physical health can lead to optimum brain health and spiritual perceptiveness with a resulting increased receptivity to God’s will in our lives. I’m grateful for the wonderful counsel given to our Church that physical and spiritual health are so interlinked (For an example, see Testimonies, Vol 3 p 62).

Which leads me to my friend and his classic car. I know you were wondering about that connection! You see my friend inherited his father’s car. It’s a 1960s Ford Fairlane with a rumbling V8 engine. It was old and tired and needed a lot of work. It was a big decision but he decided to fully restore the car. The engine, the gearbox and the differential were reconditioned. He combed the world for replacement pieces that would make it like new. The body was stripped back and then repainted. Carefully all was put back together. It was an act of devotion to a car and to his father. It was a very proud day when the fully restored Ford was driven out onto the road looking and sounding just like new.

I suggest that God is in the business of restoration. The whole gospel story is about how God is working to restore
what He originally gave us before sin entered our environment. Christ came to restore His Father’s world. His death was the ultimate act of loving restoration (John 3:16). Christ was definitely a Restorer. Every act of healing was an indication that He wanted to get people closer to the Garden of Eden state of true complete health. Now we are all looking to the time of ultimate restoration described in the book of Revelation. John pictures Eden restored as the day when there will be no more death, sorrow, crying or pain (see Revelation 21:4).

Just as Christ is in the restoration business, so we should be. Health for Adventists is about restoration for here and also for the hereafter. Our health message is way above what we "do not do"—it is about what we do do and why we do it. True health is more than just a physical restoration; it is about a full restoration. Is it about health just for personal pleasure? Maybe, but it is more about health for a purpose—a much higher and holier purpose. Here is the connection between health and spirituality. Our health work is to be a part of God’s work of restoration. Restoring the right connections between us and others, between us and our world, and between us and our Saviour—or should that be our Restorer?

For more on the connection between spiritual and physical health, click HERE.

*Kevin Price is director of Adventist Health for the South Pacific Division.*
What's the connection? Health experts weigh in

Adventist health leaders weigh in on the connection between spiritual and physical health.

Sibilla Johnson
Director, Adventist Health, Victorian Conference

Physical and spiritual health work best together. Our motives for following a healthy lifestyle should relate to our relationship with God. If our minds are clear and our bodies are healthy we are better able to understand the will of God and in turn serve others. Good health enables us to be joyful witnesses to truth, love and compassion, and makes us more effective for our wonderful heavenly Father.

I have experienced during my years of service in health ministry that the health work can very effectively break down prejudice against spirituality as nothing else can. Ellen White said this, and I constantly have the privilege of seeing this happen. I praise the Lord every time!

We can offer people something better than they now have, to be healthy in body, mind and spirit. For me, ministry of health and healing is central to the faith and practice of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Dr Chester Kuma
Associate Director, Adventist Health Ministries, South Pacific Division

I believe the Bible presents a strong connection between spirituality and health. "Shalom" is one of the most beautiful Hebrew words in Scripture. True, it is a common Hebrew greeting but it has a far deeper meaning. More than a greeting it is a wish for peace on the one being greeted. I believe the word “shalom” comes the closest to defining health in Scripture as it presents the desire for "wholeness" of life and not merely physical health or healing. It connects the spiritual and the
physical dimensions together in an intricate way. Shalom means: completeness, soundness, health, prosperity, peace, wholeness and balance, suggesting a state in which all the needs of a person are fully satisfied. It means to be whole, to be complete, to have physical and spiritual resources sufficient to one's need, and encompasses a state of physical, mental, social and, most important of all, spiritual wellbeing. Thus it enlarges our understanding of health as a “wholeness” of existence in God.

Dr Peter Landless
Director, Health Ministries, General Conference | Executive Director, International Commission for the Prevention of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency

As a cardiologist and as the world leader of Adventist Health Ministries I get to meet many people who have made the important connection between spiritual health and physical health. Their lives radiate the difference! It has become clear to many that there is more to wellbeing than just the absence of disease. This is not a new concept—it was enunciated by the World Health Organisation in 1948. But many centuries, millennia, in fact, before that, the apostle John writes to Gaius and prays that his health may prosper as does his soul (3 John :2). The scientific and sociological literature is replete with robust evidence that vibrant, physical wellbeing, and mental and emotional health and spiritual connectedness with God (for us, Christian spirituality) are inextricably related. Even when we experience the rigours of physical illness, we can still enjoy wholeness in Christ. Paul so beautifully encapsulates the thought that God’s “power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9)—wholeness in our brokenness! This is the essence of the Adventist Health Message—physical, mental, spiritual and social wellness, and we can enjoy this wholeness in Him if we but follow His guidance as we live in relationship with Him. This advantage was not given to us so that we can selfishly keep it to ourselves, but that we may serve others and in so doing, be conduits of His restoring and saving grace—making the real and needed difference and being truly relevant!

Proffesor Gerald Winslow
Vice President, Mission and Culture, Loma Linda University (LLU) Health | Professor, LLU School of Religion

The more we learn about human health in relationship to faith, the more we see that faith and health are inextricably linked. We were created by our Maker as whole persons. Wholeness is the harmonious development of all dimensions of life unified by a spiritually meaningful core. This means that faith has practical significance for health. The Bible teaches us, for example, to “pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16 NIV). The quality of embodied life may also affect spirituality. The Apostle Paul encourages Christians to “offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1 NRSV). Those who care about human health do well to consider the growing evidence for the importance of the faith factor. As Sir William Osler, one of the founders of evidence-based medicine, said over a century ago, “Nothing in life is more wonderful than faith—the one great moving force which we can neither weigh in the balance nor test in the crucible” (Osler, Lumleian Lecture, 1910). The visionary Ellen White also emphasised this connection when she wrote, “The assurance of God's approval will promote physical health . . . courage, hope, faith, sympathy, love, promote health and prolong life" (Ellen White, The faith I live by, 229). The faith that awakens in us the hope of eternal life can also prompt us to live more abundantly—more healthfully—now.
Associate Professor Ross Grant
CEO Australasian Research Institute (Sydney Adventist Hospital) | Clinical Associate Professor, University of Sydney Medical School

As a researcher in the neurosciences (especially neurodegenerative diseases) it is very clear to me that if the body is not healthy, the mind and its capacity to perform at its best will be compromised.

We are admonished by Christ Himself to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). The apostle Paul said "... whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). God’s engagement with man always occurs in a way that elicits man’s "intelligent" response. Impaired brain function, especially of those parts of the brain specialising in decision making, will also inhibit spiritual growth. As an inspired voice counselled many years ago: "Whatever injures the health not only lessens physical vigour but tends to weaken the mental and moral powers" (The Ministry of Healing, 128).

Adrielle Carrasco
Director, Adventist Health New Zealand and the South Eastern Pacific

Through my professional life I have seen many changes in the way we approach the treatment of lifestyle diseases. In most instances we have become more aggressive in our approach to using medication and we still place huge importance on diet and physical activity, but it is my belief that more than ever there is a need to focus on the spiritual health of our community.

Living with a chronic disease can be debilitating both physically and mentally. It is taxing to live day after day relying on modern medicine to keep you functioning and often people find this difficult to maintain. Through the years I’ve often been told by patients that they’ve not been “good enough” or have been “bad” with their management. This negative thinking has resulted in them feeling less accepted by their family, friends, community or health professional—how sad is that? This is where the spiritual element of health is closely linked to physical, mental and emotional health. The resilience one needs for living with a health problem can be strengthened when a person experiences a greater sense of meaning or value in their life. For Christians this is grounded in a belief that we are important in the eyes of God. There isn’t anything we can do that will ever change that (Romans 8:39). How much more powerful a message can be given to those who struggle to see their worth? If we are able to assist those struggling with low self-worth to see how important they are to God we will give them the strength to cope with their chronic health conditions, their overall wellbeing will improve and their belief in themselves will be restored.
There should be no such thing as a Seventh-day Adventist church that does not uphold principles of health. You see, to be a Seventh-day Adventist is indeed to uphold the very principles that make for a healthy body, healthy mind and a healthy spiritual relationship with God.

Our church building may have a beautiful sign out the front that says “Seventh-day Adventist Church”, but if the people in the pew are not living this marvellous message of love from God then the name is meaningless and we are failing at one of the most significant attractions that differentiate us from the rest of the Christian world. The message of vibrant health is not a nice quaint anachronism from the past. It is as relevant in 2015 as it has ever been and should place the message of this Church right in the community mainstream. But is that happening in practice?

The wholistic, integrated understanding of each person (mental, physical, spiritual and social) is the genius of the Seventh-day Adventist view of life and it should continue to inform everything that we are and everything we have to say. Are we making enough of it? Probably not. Do the people not of our communion know what we stand for? Almost certainly not. Are we trying to hide it? I sincerely hope not.

Health and happiness: let’s live it and share it!

Dr Barry Oliver is president of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
American artist Andy Warhol predicted that in the future everyone would be famous for 15 minutes. Here we are in “the future” with 7 billion people in the world, so that’s 105 billion 15 minutes of fame to fit everyone in. An 80 year life consists of roughly 2.8 million 15-minute segments. So for everyone to get their 15 minutes in the limelight, we need 37,500 media markets producing palpable levels of fame for a new individual every 15 minutes.

However we define fame, it may not be making it big for the 15 minutes between 3.15 and 3.30 am in the world’s 37,500th most important media market. But has social media made all of us stars in our own very small world? Maybe. But are we missing out on something in the process?

In the ’70s, Australia ran a public service campaign, “Life. Be in it.,” featuring “Norm” turning off the TV and getting active. A good idea, but the amount of time Australians spend watching screens has actually increased dramatically in the years since that ad campaign.

To underscore our screen obsession, a recent parody asked what the TV show Friends would look like if remade today. Its answer? A group of hipsters absorbed in their phones, ignoring each other, only stopping to take selfies, and decidedly annoyed when someone interrupts their Instagram session by splashing fountain water. “I’ll be there for you.” Or not.

And it’s not just hipsters. We recently moved, and our home internet provider informed us it would take six weeks to connect our wireless internet. At first, it was a crisis. But then the oddest thing happened. With no internet, we found we talked to each other more, read more, played more games together, and got out and enjoyed life a little more. After a couple of weeks of this forced diet of reality, we’ve decided we rather like it more than staring at screens. So we’re now flying TV and internet free at home.

Real life has, it turns out, a lot to recommend itself.

I wonder if as an Adventist community we might also want to consider the benefits of real life a little more closely. I’ve now been to seven conference camps in Australia. Each was a pleasure in its own way. South NSW has the
mountains, North NSW the beach, Tassie a great town, South Australia the vineyards and Northern Australia a beautiful river. What about South Queensland? You’re in Queensland, isn’t that good enough? And of all the camps we’ve been to, we managed to have the best time in WA—even though it’s not by water, mountains or vineyards.

All the camps had great speakers. Fabulous music. Wonderful people. And some pretty good food, too. But most were almost completely invisible to anyone outside the campground. Which makes me wonder if we’re a little more like the hipsters in the Friends parody than we might think—so absorbed within ourselves we miss out as the rest of the world passes us by?

What if we got out of our tents and into the streets? What if each of our camps organised something to bring the love, joy, faith and excitement that is wrapped up in our camps to the community in which they are located?

Wouldn’t it be something special if the North Australian camp put on a concert down on Townsville’s glorious Strand? When I last visited Townsville, a group of dreadlocked fire-eaters were putting on an impromptu show by the water’s edge. If they can do it, can’t we?

And wouldn’t it be fabulous if that amazing band and choir I enjoyed in WA took their worship down to Langley Park for a lunchtime concert for city workers? Why not serve up a lunchtime feast of beautiful music, with a good slice of the gospel in the middle? In South Australia, our camp coincides with the Barossa Vintage Festival. We invite the community to a concert, which is terrific but shouldn’t we be in that parade as well, celebrating our 100 year contribution and communicating our message? Wouldn’t it be great if the best of the music from the South Queensland camp was performed at Streets Beach on Brisbane’s South Bank? And why not a concert at Devonport’s Bluff Beach?

Yes, it would be time-consuming, complex and distracting. But shouldn’t we make church a little dangerous again? Isn’t church all about reaching the whole world, not just our microcosm? Why hide our lamp? There’s a real world out there. Let’s get out more.

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*James Standish is editor of Adventist Record.*