Get out
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 fit everyone in. An 80 year life consists of roughly 2.8 million 15-minute segments. So for everyone 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 usually 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 remade today. Its answer? A group of hipsters absorbed in their phones, ignoring each other, only pinging to take selfies, and decidedly annoyed when someone interrupts their Instagram session byashing 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, I’ve decided we rather like it more than staring at screens. So we’re now flying TV and internet free home.

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

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 one in WA—even though it’s not by water, mountains or vineyards.

The camps had great speakers. Fabulous music. Wonderful people. And some pretty good food, too. 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 in ourselves we miss out as the rest of the world passes us by?
that 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
we are located?

Wouldn’t it be something special if the North Australian camp put on a concert down on Townsville’s
Torres Strait 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
Langley Park for a lunchtime concert for city workers? Why not serve up a lunchtime feast of
greatful 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
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
Point 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
adventurous again? Isn’t church all about reaching the whole world, not just our microcosm? Why hide
the lamp? There’s a real world out there. Let’s get out more.