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**Church demolished, Adventists may be exiled**

A new Adventist church building in Solomon Islands has been demolished by angry locals and the small congregation ordered to leave their island by the end of the month.

**Covering NZ in Hope**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is now just a simple, remote-control click away in most New Zealand homes.

**Robbed by Alzheimer's**

Grace McLean thought God was leading her life, until it all went pear-shaped. What happened next?

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Making headlines:
- Child abuse commissioner addresses church leaders as the inquiry rolls on
- Christian agencies pitch in with Europe's migrant crisis
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Buddhist extremism. Much of the discussion on religious violence centres on Islam. Human rights lawyer James Standish says the reality is much broader.

Is your child ready for school? Family life educator Trafford Fischer says
Over six years Lindy watched her mother-in-law decline from a vibrant, active woman to a debilitated, confused and helpless invalid. Alzheimer’s disease eventually claimed her life.

Changing of the guard

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific has seen a number of significant leadership changes over the past few weeks. So what?
Jorge Munoz named AUC president

Updated Thursday, September 17, 2015

Albert Park, Victoria

Pastor Jorge Munoz has been named president of the Australian Union Conference (AUC).

The announcement comes as Church leaders from around the country gathered in Albert Park, Victoria, for the AUC’s three-day session this week.

Originally from Chile, Pastor Munoz has served the Church in South Queensland for many years as both a local pastor and administrator (most recently as conference president).

“I made this country my home 29 years ago, and I’m constantly encouraged by the tremendous opportunities we have here,” said Pastor Munoz following his appointment as AUC president.

“I admire the tenacity of the spirit of the people. We pray that as we look at the immense challenges we face, God will give us His grace and strength to focus on the mission of His Church.”
South Pacific Division (SPD) president Pastor Glenn Townend said he was “very pleased” at the prospect of working closely with Pastor Munoz going forward, describing him as “a man of vision and strategic focus.”

“He has a good record of working with diverse groups of people,” added Pastor Townend. “We believe he’ll bring those skills with him and lead the Church in Australia into greater discipleship.”

Pastor Munoz replaces outgoing AUC president Pastor Chester Stanley, who announced his retirement from the role in 2014.

Pastor Ken Vogel, who will continue to serve as general secretary of the Union, presented Pastor Stanley with a citation at the end of yesterday's meetings.

The AUC also has a new chief financial officer (CFO), former Trans-Pacific Union Mission CFO, Francois Keet. Mr Keet takes over the position left by Kingsley Wood, who has been offered the role of CFO for the Trans-Pacific Union Mission.

On Monday, Pastors Stanley and Vogel paid tribute to Mr Wood's contributions to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia.

The AUC meetings come on the heels of last week's SPD Executive Committee meetings, held at Division headquarters in Wahroonga, New South Wales.
Church demolished, Adventists may be exiled

Anuta, Solomon Islands

A new Adventist church building in Solomon Islands has been demolished by angry locals and the small congregation ordered to leave their island by the end of the month.

Anuta Island is an Anglican stronghold in Solomon Islands’ far eastern Temotu province. Local Adventist Selwyn Faramarama has been working on the island since last year as a Bible worker funded by Volunteers in Action (VIA) and supported by the Solomon Islands Mission (SIM) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Three people have been baptised and Mr Faramarama has been studying the Bible with five more people in preparation for baptism.

The new church building was erected with the agreement of the Adventist landowner but not, according to the Solomon Star newspaper, with the permission of local authorities.

“I’m the son of the first chief,” said Putanakipenu Arikifaka to the Solomon Star. “Although worship is a freedom on the island, what the Adventists are doing is not acceptable to our chiefly system . . . We told them that they can go ahead with their worship in their own homes but not to build a church on the island.”

Inside the demolished church.

According to Pastor Irving Vagha, who holds the portfolios of Adventist Volunteer Services and Global Mission for SIM, Anuta’s Anglican priest together with a large group of supporters demolished the church. Mr Faramarama is now in the capital, Honiara, where he is seeking advice and support from SIM. Church leaders have been disappointed at media reports that Anuta Adventists have now been ordered into exile from their island.

“We are chasing them out from the island,” Mr Arikifaka said to the Solomon Star. “They should listen to us while living on the island. We have our own laws. We only listen to our chiefs. We [do] not even recognise the government
... we are asking all Adventist members living on the Island to ... leave on any available transport that reaches the island this month.”

SIM president Pastor George Fafale is attending regional Church meetings in Fiji this week but will seek urgent meetings with Solomon Islands’ Council of Churches and Anglican national leaders upon his return.

Mr Faramarama is keen to return to Anuta to seek reconciliation. He plans to collect donations of rice and other food from Adventists in Honiara and distribute it to the Anuta chief and other islanders who are suffering food shortages after their crops were damaged by Cyclone Pam in March.

Selwyn Faremarama.

“We have sent a message to all our pastors about this and we are praying,” said Pastor Vagha. “Please ask for everyone to pray.”
Covering NZ in Hope

Who’s that at my office door and what do they want? A man sticks his head in and says something about deadlines. Doesn’t he realise that there’s a reason the door is closed? My desk phone starts ringing. And at that precise moment my mobile goes off. I look down at my mobile. It’s Brad Kemp, president of the New Zealand Pacific Union. I wonder what he might want.

“Big news James! We launched HopeChannel NZ on September 12,” Brad says.

“Haven’t you had HopeChannel in NZ?” I reply, distracted by another visitor at my door.

“This time it's different,” he says.

“How?”

“Breadth, breath and bridges.”

“What?”

“Breadth—we used to reach a small fraction of New Zealanders. Since September 12, we have been available to 68 per cent of the population. That’s more than two in three Kiwis. And in many cities like Rotorua, Nelson and Invercargill, we have 100 per cent coverage. It’s a big deal. Today, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is just a simple, remote-control click away in the living rooms of most of the country. And they see us for who we are—a positive community with a healthy lifestyle, vibrant spirituality and love for family. In their homes, we are able to build trust, and that trust will allow us to talk about things that really matter.”

Fair enough, that is news.
“Breath—we have original content produced by New Zealanders in New Zealand for New Zealand,” he continues. "Right now we’re finishing up 100 short films to go on the channel—creative, inspiring, engaging content that’s 100 per cent pure New Zealand. And we’ll be showing the best of global content—major films like Luther and Amazing Grace, cutting edge shows like Masterstroke and Beyond. More than 70 per cent of the material we’ve scheduled on HopeChannel NZ has never been available on free-to-air TV in NZ before.”

OK, well that is news, too. He has got my attention now.

“Bridges—there’s no point having a TV station unless it’s a genuine ministry. And that means it must be fully integrated with the local church, a Bible school, an exceptionally good website with on-demand videos and online Bible studies, nationwide promotion and local content. TV shows that lack bridges to real live churches in the community are simply religo-tainment. Yes, HopeChannel NZ programming will be entertaining. But not for its own sake. The goal is to involve viewers in a relationship with Jesus Christ lived out in a real faith community in their city or town. That is why local churches are the centre of HopeChannel NZ. Because, ultimately, the local church is the spiritual home for HopeChannel viewers.”

“Breadth, breath and bridges. That is what makes the new HopeChannel NZ different. Have you got it?”

I’m scribbling away trying to keep up with Brad. “Ah, yeah, Brad, um, got it. But TV is expensive. Isn’t this a bit, you know, ambitious?”

“Think about it James. We spent more than half a million on an evangelistic series that reached only one city, and only for a few weeks. With HopeChannel NZ we can reach the majority of the country, 24/7/365. It works out to pocket change per person we reach with the message. And when combined with local churches doing outreach, letterboxing, posters and, most of all, just conversations with friends and family, it is powerful.”
OK, well that’s Brad’s opinion. I see where he’s coming from. But what are other people thinking? It all sounds a little too good to be true. I make a few calls.

“Up until now, we’ve largely been having a conversation with ourselves on HopeChannel in NZ,” says Wayne Boehm, HopeChannel manager for the South Pacific. “This is the start of a conversation with millions of New Zealanders. And you can expect similar announcements across the region as HopeChannel expands from a little internal service to a major media force for Christ.”

Both NZ conference presidents share the HopeChannel vision. "It was a privilege to kneel in prayer with Andrew Ross at the HopeChannel New Zealand Technical Operations Centre in Napier on a recent Sabbath afternoon,” says Pastor Edward Tupa’i, president of the North New Zealand Conference.

“Andrew is one of the most passionate evangelists you will ever meet. For many years, through his technical expertise and immense heart for mission, he has been bringing Adventist television to New Zealanders. However, HopeChannel, with its plans to reach a large percentage of Kiwis, is his most exciting project yet. With the HopeChannel New Zealand team, he is working to present the Adventist hope in Jesus with quality productions and in a way that will reach as many Kiwis as possible. I do not understand all the equipment that he works with; it truly is amazing. But I definitely know that he is a man on a mission for God.”

Pastor Damien Rice, president of the South New Zealand Conference, is equally enthusiastic: “HopeChannel New Zealand is an important tool for our personal and public outreach efforts. I believe it will raise the profile of the Adventist Church, creating many positive associations for people and opportunities to connect. This is not TV for our members. Our ambition is for a new direction in religious broadcasting that is driven by a need to make the Church and the gospel more relevant to secular New Zealand.”

I get off the phone. The office is still buzzing. And so is my head. Imagine just flicking on your TV and seeing the Adventist message. Not the usual imported stuff. But something authentic, engaging and connected with a church in my town. This could be a game changer. Maybe New Zealand is really onto something big . . .

*Just in case you were wondering, this is a fictionalised summary of a series of conversations.*

James Standish is communication director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific.
We were visiting my parents-in-law for a family meal when my mother-in-law said to my father-in-law, "Come on dear, it's getting late, we'd better go home." My father-in-law quietly replied, "We are home love." This was the first sign my mother-in-law was experiencing memory loss and confusion. Over the next six years we watched her gradual decline from a vibrant, active woman to a debilitated, confused and helpless invalid. Alzheimer's disease eventually claimed her life.

Over the past 21 years, I have observed family friends, Harold and Helen*, come face to face with Alzheimer's disease. Helen was diagnosed at the age of 57 and with no known cure, Harold has had to slowly watch the love of his life drift away.

Helen's beautiful nature made the initial painful news that little bit easier as together they faced the future with strong faith in each other and their heavenly Father. Helen was aware her memory was fading and in the early stages was excellent in steering the conversation to Harold, who gave her the security and support she needed. She quickly became more and more dependent upon him.

Helen, like many sufferers of dementia, would have moments where she responded to old familiar music, even at times singing along or moving to the beat. And Harold, like so many carers, was determined to give his wife the utmost support that was humanly possible.

Harold wanted to make the most of every precious lucid moment by being as creative as he could in thinking of relevant activities they could enjoy together. It was clear at times that more than human hands were ministering to Helen.

Six years ago Harold had to make one of the hardest decisions of his life and pass the primary care of Helen over to the caring team at AdventCare. Over the years the disease has slowly but steadily progressed and Helen has deteriorated to the point where she is left with little more than the swallow reflex.

Helen's non-responsive expression provokes mixed feelings. There is the significant reality that, short of a miracle, she will never speak again nor be able to give a hug, squeeze a hand or sneak a smile.

Regardless of her physical condition, it is still surreal to be in her presence. There are moments when Harold and
the family shut their eyes and enjoy the memories Helen worked so hard to create.

Most grandmothers are adored by their grandchildren and Helen is no different. Even though there is no response from her now, the feeling of being in her presence evokes a multitude of happy memories of when she could tell her grandchildren how special each and every one of them was. Helen had a unique gift of making every child feel like they were her favourite.

Helen recently celebrated her 78th birthday amongst family and friends. Her children and grandchildren came from near and far to celebrate and share the special day. The beautiful, loving, caring wife, mother, grandmother and friend could no longer communicate with them, but she is still, and always will be, Helen.

Harold encourages anyone faced with a similar situation to be open with each other and plan for the future. Like many couples with friends, some of whom are now being diagnosed with Alzheimer's, there is the inevitable variety of responses from denial to education and acceptance.

In my role as chaplain I believe a person living with Alzheimer's disease is still capable of receiving love and kindness and a sense of wellbeing from the presence of others. I often invite Jesus into their room by reading Scripture out loud, praying and playing or singing uplifting songs of praise to God.

As we recognise World Alzheimer's Day—September 21—may we all be reminded of this disease and openly and lovingly support those with dementia and their carers. As a community we face increasing challenges to keep up with the number of cases being diagnosed every day.

*Names have been changed for privacy.*

**Ten tips toward a dementia-friendly church/community**

1. Trust in God—draw strength from prayer.
2. Enjoy the time you have together both individually and through church fellowship.
3. Learn to live in the Alzheimer’s world—don’t argue, avoid negative non-verbal cues, e.g. sighing, rolling of eyes.
4. Be responsive to lucid moments, allowing him/her to remain in control for as long as possible.
5. Remember they may have years of experience and words of wisdom to share even if they can’t remember names of family and friends.
6. Encourage communication about the past even if the details change from time to time.
7. Remember that exercise and laughter benefit mind, body and soul.
8. Don’t avoid opportunities to interact with persons with dementia and their carers.
9. Access and accept support from church members, support groups and, if appropriate, professional organisations such as Alzheimer’s Australia.
10. Express love, as it is the greatest gift of all.

*Lindy Sperring is chaplain for AdventCare, Victoria.*
Changing of the guard

Right now the Adventist Church in the South Pacific is facing a significant shift in leadership. If you’re a regular Record reader, you’ll know we already have a new South Pacific Division (SPD) president, Glenn Townend. One of the implications of this, however, is that his previous position, the presidency of the Trans-Pacific Union Mission, is now vacant.

As well as this, two of our other Union presidents are finishing up in their roles: Chester Stanley is retiring from the Australian Union Conference and Leigh Rice is returning from the Papua New Guinea Union Mission. It’s probably also worth mentioning that Leon Clark is retiring from his position as CEO of Sydney Adventist Hospital and Neale Schofield has announced he’s leaving his position as CEO of Adventist Media.

So what? you may well ask. These people and institutions are so far from my everyday experience as to be irrelevant. Yeah, I get that. But consider the trickle-down effect. Guess who’s going to be in the frame to replace these Union leaders? Your local conference or mission president perhaps. And when your conference or mission office then needs to reconfigure its leadership arrangements, your local pastor or Adventist school principal may well be considered as a worthy addition to the team. Add to this the usual spate of appointments, retirements and transfers and you’ve got a maelstrom of change that’s bound to affect you in one way or another.

Change happens. The alternative is rigor mortis. We’ve got to learn to accept it, understand it and get the most out of it. Yes, there’s a risk that successful programs will somehow fall between the cracks, now that their champion has moved on. But there are also opportunities for reinvigoration.

The new guard is likely to be younger than their predecessors, with fresh insights, innovative plans and the energy to see them through. I find that exciting. And after a century or so of seeing mostly Australians in senior roles around the South Pacific, we now have the chance to consider which local leaders are ready to take up leadership in their own territories.

Church leaders are often gifted and inspiring. But they are just people in need of the same love, respect and
friendship as the rest of us. As we witness the changing of the guard, let's pray for our leaders and offer the guidance and support they'll need as they serve us and God.

Kent Kingston is an assistant editor for Adventist Record.