

RECORD



“Road to Calvary” grew out of a desire to see the “Road to Bethlehem” Christmas program expanded so people would have an opportunity to experience the whole gospel story.

In this issue

Smiles and burns repaired in Nepal

Editorial team has new assistant

Former president opens own school



Easter dramatisation voted “better than the *Passion*”

Geelong, Vic

More than 600 people attended this year’s “Road to Calvary” program held on the grounds of the Adventist primary school, Oxford Christian School, in Geelong, Vic, from March 31 to April 3. Road to Calvary is in its fifth year.

The minister of the Eastside and Geelong Central churches, Pastor John O’Malley, has been involved for two years, and he senses that it comes across as “authentic.” “I had a Baptist come up to me and tell me he had seen the movie *The Passion of The Christ*, but this was better.”

The Eastside church meets in the school grounds and some now attend the church after seeing the program in previous years.

“We try to show what Jesus went through for us,” says the program’s producer, Colin Holman. “This is a non-threatening outreach to the community—preaching without preaching.”

“This also does a lot of good among churches of Geelong,” adds Pastor O’Malley. “Radio Rhema visited on the Thursday night and were rapt, and will advertise it for us. We have a couple of hundred who come from Melbourne to see it each year.”

What is exciting, says Mr Holman, are comments people make. “People are moved to tears when they see what Jesus really did for them. It makes it real.” *(Continued on page 7)*

**Happiness
not
included*

Adventist Christianity

In *Thinking Theologically*, Adventist theologian Fritz Guy begins with a foundational reminder of what our faith is really about. “To be Adventist,” he writes, “is to be, first and foremost, Christian; and what is most important in Adventist experience, practice and belief is not what differentiates us from other Christians but what unites us to them.” And thus he employs the term “Adventist Christianity” throughout his book “as a gentle but frequent reminder that our distinctiveness is not the proper centre of our theology or our spirituality.”

This is something we—individually and as a church—need to constantly come back to. It seems surprisingly easy for communities supposedly focused on God to sink back into themselves. And in recognising our commonality with other Christians, we can also recognise that the temptation is not unique to us. Writing from his own Catholic tradition, Henri Nouwen identifies a similar risk: “As soon as the community becomes sedentary, it is tempted to lose its faith and worship the house-gods instead of the one true God who is leading it in a pillar of fire” (*Intimacy*).

But religiosity, church politics, our religious subculture, lifestyle and social connections can seem so much more comfortable than the stark declaration of an ugly and cruel cross. Indeed, when we look at the cross without the pleasant nostalgia of the dust of distant history, it is a cause for constant affront.

We are sinners, we are lost, we will die—probably painfully and without any particular grace. We are animals, with the added aching burden of being able to recognise—in those moments of greatest honesty and clarity—our own lost-ness.

The cross screams the bloodstained certainty that we are not good enough, that we can never be good enough. Every time we see a cross we are reminded of our own hopelessness, the evil that is within us and the certainty of our own death.

The cross signifies the dashing of all our self-deluding optimism—and the beginning of true hope. The cross must be the focus of our Christianity: Jesus, God with us, God in our world, God in our mess, God lifting us by His death out of our mess.

The overwhelming significance of the cross is reflected in the experience of many in the early church. And while there are various traditions as to the post-biblical histories of the disciples, some people who study such things suggest that John’s gospel may well have been the last book of the Bible written. One tradition tells of John’s release from the island of Patmos after he had been through the visions and written Revelation and returned to Ephesus, where he lived for the remainder of his life. It was during this time—so this version of the story goes—that John wrote the story of Jesus as we have it today in the fourth Gospel.

After all the things he had been through, after his years as a leader in the church, after his astounding visions on Patmos, after the earlier letters he had written, John the beloved disciple—now an old man—came back to the story of Jesus. At the end of John 20, John explains his reason for writing his Gospel: “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ [the Saviour], the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).*

Reflecting on the centrality of the story of Jesus to our faith and our lives as Adventist Christians, Jon Paulien em-

phasises the pre-eminence of Jesus as testified by John: “The only witnessing that truly matters is witnessing about Jesus. To share the Sabbath, the prophecies, the sanctuary, the state of the dead with others is not witnessing unless doctrine brings Jesus into clearer focus” (in the introduction to *John*, his commentary on the Gospel of John).

As Adventists, we should not seek truth to claim any kind of superiority. Rather we seek the privilege and responsibility of understanding the gospel, the story of Jesus and the love of God a little better. It was a focus Paul also identified when he assured his readers that he had “resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

This is the centre of Christianity and as Adventist Christians the centre of our faith, our church and our lives. Recognising this reality, perhaps we should be a little less shy about using the cross as our symbol: “For all the false and misleading associations that may surround it, [the cross] still says—even without the knowledge of the one displaying it—I am bought by the sufferings and death of Jesus and I belong to God. The divine conspiracy [the kingdom of God] of which I am a part stands over human history in the form of a cross” (Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*).

* All Bible quotations are from the New International Version.



Nathan Brown



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Our vision is to...
know
experience
and **share**
our hope in Jesus Christ!

- *Fijian church leaders inspired* • *Help for HIV/AIDS patients* • *Week of Prayer impacts youth*
- *Adventists host World Day of Prayer* • *Champion guitar player chosen* • *and more*

—Compiled by Kellie Hancock—

● The church in Fiji may never be the same, says **Peni Dakua**, director of communication for the Fiji Mission, after the annual ministerial retreat held recently at Deuba Adventist Campsite. Guest speaker **Dr Russell Burrill** spoke on creating a disciple-making church. Dr Burrill lecturers at Andrews University, USA, is president of the North American Division Evangelism Institute and author of *The Revolutionized Church of the 21st Century*. He called on the church to examine why it has become stagnant and spends more resources on nurturing the saints than saving the lost. “He made such an impact,” says Mr Dakua, “and has helped to reorientate our ministers’ mind-set.”

● A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between the **Angau Memorial Hospital**, Lae, PNG, and the **Adventist Development and Relief Agency** (ADRA-PNG) on March 2. The MOU agrees to establish a better working relationship and a more effective pathway for medical referrals and counselling for **HIV/AIDS** patients. Last year ADRA officially opened an HIV/AIDS Support Centre in Lae, which provides general community education about HIV prevention and selected services to people



Avondale School is apples!



The Avondale apple eaters smashed this record in March by eating close to 380 apples and making 460 metres of curly apple-skin. Head of Primary Mr Len Farquharson and Karen Dobson spent every spare minute peeling metres of skin from the apples. The skin was stretched out on the ring road and a cheer heard when Graham Head, the sports master, finally announced the 460-metre measurement.

“Now it is Avondale School’s turn to challenge the schools of Australia and New Zealand,” says marketing and development coordinator Karen Zeuschner. “How much curly apple-skin can your students make?”

Canteen manager Karen Dobson (pictured with students) says that one apple produces just on 1.5 metres of apple skin.

living with HIV/AIDS. The main focus of this centre is in the area of counselling and care of HIV-positive people. The MOU enables referral of clients to Angau Hospital from ADRA for medical treatment, voluntary testing and pre- and post-test counselling.—ADRA-PNG *Tok Save*

● Students and staff at **Fulton College**, Fiji, observed **Week of Prayer** from March 21 to 27 with guest speaker **Pastor Eddie Tupai**, associate director of Youth Ministries and Family Ministries in the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference. Many Fulton students have sponsors to help with their financial obligations each year and one student, **Seini Tonga**, wrote a letter to

her sponsor following the Week of Prayer. “This was one of the best weeks of my life,” she writes. “Pastor Tupai’s talks were very touching. He talked about issues that young people relate to. At the end of the week I recommitted my life



to God and I know for sure I’m being called to work for Him.”—*Sandra Roberts*

● **Singleton church**, NSW, hosted World Day of Prayer celebrations on Friday, March 5, with 130 members and ministers from local Christian churches. **Libby Adamthwaite** and **Monica Nash** hosted the program in the church that was

decorated with a pottery and Panamanian jungle theme. The focus on Panama featured women from other denominations, and church minister **Pastor Clive Nash** (pictured) spoke on the life-changing power of Christ. The Bible Society will benefit from \$A360 raised during the event.—*Northpoint*



● Sydney Adventist College, Castle Hill and Wahroonga primary schools were involved in an **Independent Schools Expo** that saw 2300 people attend early in March.—*Intrasyd*

Off the record

● **Bella Vista Hospital** recently celebrated **50 years** as an Adventist institution serving the community in Mayaguez and the island of **Puerto Rico**. Descendants of the hospital's pioneers, as well as some of its first patients, attended the half-century celebration from March 12 to 14. Attendees included children and grandchildren of the hospital's founder, **Dr William Colby Dunscombe**, and

several children of some of the first missionary doctors. Also present was the first patient who entered the hospital its first day of operation, **Juan Rodriguez**, a World War II veteran, as well as the first twins born at the hospital.—ANN

● **Kettering College of Medical Arts** in Ohio, USA, recently received a **\$US4 million donation** toward the building fund of a five-storey, 41,000-square foot building addition. Philanthropist **Oscar Boonshoft's** donation will go toward a new student centre, learning resource centre, and computer and science laboratories that will allow the college to expand its offerings in the sciences and to offer a degree program in human biology.—ANN

● A recent survey shows that **house churches are multiplying in Beijing, China**. Most of the 3000 unregistered churches are small, with an average of 20 members with groups dividing once they reach 70 to avoid trouble with the authorities.—*Voice of the Martyrs News*

● More than one-third of Americans connected to the Internet have used it to access religious and spiritual information. Researchers say **"religion surfers"** have **increased 94 per cent** between March 2000 and November 2002.—*Agape Press*

● A new study has found that more adults are reading their Bible, participating in small religious groups and praying, but church-related involvement has remained flat over the past decade. Barna Research Group president George Barna says, "This may be an early warning sign that **we are entering a new era of spiritual experience**—one that is more tribal or individualised than congregational in nature.—*Charisma News Service*

Days and offerings

May 1—Tertiary Students Day
May 15—Health Offering

Tassie youth travel back in time

The Youth Week of Prayer (YWOP) in Tasmania ended in a unique way with Collinsvale Seventh-day Adventist church—the first Adventist church built in Australia—hosting a youth invasion that took the youth on a step back in time.

The YWOP began on March 13 with a well attended contemporary youth rally at the Derwent Entertainment Centre in Hobart. Each night of the week a group of young people met for prayer and Bible study. Then on March 20 the youth were invited to attend a traditional service at Collinsvale church.

The church was packed to full capacity and the traditional service included hymns led from the rostrum by the elders, a Scripture reading by a young person, a sermon from Revelation, and a local budget offering (which the treasurer was very pleased about!).

In 1885 Ellen White preached from the pulpit in the Collinsvale church. From that same pulpit current minister Pastor David Edgren read portions of a letter that Mrs White had written about her experiences in Collinsvale (then called Bismark) in which she states that many people were led to an interest in the Advent message through her presentation of the three angels' messages.

Pastor Edgren then preached a sermon about the three angels' messages.



Rick Dunne

Matilda." The first prize included a handmade guitar, recording time at a Melbourne studio and automatic entry to the International Fingerpicking Guitar Championships to be held in Kansas, USA, in September. Mr Willis will also be appearing in the publication *Australian Guitar Magazine*.

● The communications department of the **Wanganui church** (NZ) is using their **roadside noticeboard** as a **witness** to their street's busy traffic flow. Various signs are displayed and changed every few weeks to coordinate with special events and seasons such as Christmas and Easter.



Pictured is this year's Easter sign made by **Graham Greenfield**.

Aussie plastic-surgery team repair smiles and burns in Nepal

Banepa, Nepal

A team of Australian medical and health specialists have established a burns reconstruction unit and repaired more than 60 cleft lip and palate deformities during a two-week trip to Nepal.

The Nepal Plastic Surgery Program (NPSP), jointly sponsored by Sydney Adventist Hospital (SAH) and the Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA), was established in 1993 to repair cleft lip and palate deformities in Nepalese people who can't afford the operation.

Led by plastic surgeon Dr Charles Sharpe, over the years the team has repaired more than 550 cleft lip and palate deformities in Nepalese children and adults.

This year the team expanded their scope of plastic surgery to include burns reconstruction. Dr David Pennington—known for his work with Safari, the little boy with the big smile from Kenya—joined the team and operated on more than 30 burns patients.

Over two weeks, as well as carrying out their cleft lip and palate restorative work at the Banepa Medical Clinic, the Nepal Plastic Surgery team set up a burn scar

contracture unit with the assistance of Dr Pennington and in conjunction with the Scheer Memorial Hospital and Nepali plastic surgeons.

Burns in Nepal occur mostly from open fires, used in many villages as the only source of indoor heating, and from electrocution, which often result in horrific scarring.

“While there are very good plastic surgeons in Nepal, there are not enough of them, nor are there sufficient financial resources in their public hospital system to undertake this major task,” says Dr Pennington. “There is a large backlog of patients with scar contractures that are many years old, which have remained untreated.”

Likewise, because of the difficult access to medical services in Nepal, birth defects, such as cleft lips and palates, which are treated as babies in developed countries, are often left untreated. Local Nepalese customs and beliefs mean that children born with cleft lips and palates are in danger of being abandoned. If they survive their early years, they still face a poorer quality of life than their peers and are often treated as social outcasts.

“In developed countries, these defects are

repaired while the children are still babies; however, in countries like Nepal, most people will not have access to the medical services needed to treat this problem and may therefore live their entire lives with this very visible and life-altering problem,” says Dr Sharpe.

Many of the patients who received treatment by the team are from remote



This child will now be able to face the world with a smile after reconstructive surgery.

villages without running water or electricity, let alone medical facilities. Patients often walk for hours to reach public transport to take them to the Banepa Medical Centre. Even then, the journey is hazardous, passing through many military checkpoints along the way.

Each year, the NPSP team raises money to transport equipment, pay for airfares and pay for the operations themselves (estimated to cost around \$A350 per patient). This year they also raised money to fund the burns patients at an estimated cost of \$A1000 per patient.

Despite the combined efforts of the NPSP team, local Nepalese doctors and aid agencies, there is still a long way to go. “Training and facilities are improving in Nepal, however priority is given to life-saving specialties, and plastic and reconstructive surgery has a relatively low priority,” says Dr Sharpe. “This input of expertise and money from Australia helps some of the many thousands of patients who have debilitating cleft and burn problems and who otherwise would not be treated at all.”—**Susannah Owens**

Hope Channel launches broadband video

Adventist Television Network's (ATN) Hope Channel is now available on the Internet.

ATN began streaming the channel on its <www.hopetv.org> web site in March. “Hope Channel is putting the virtue back into virtual, so to speak,” says spokesperson Lori-Anne Charlton.

The network is also encouraging Adventists to forward an email that includes an invitation to view Hope Channel to their friends. The invitation reads as follows:

Here's a great new web site I thought

you'd be interested in: <www.hopetv.org>. It's the home page of a new TV station called Hope Channel, and it features video streaming. This means you can watch the channel on your computer free, anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day.

The point is to make Jesus, the only lasting source of hope, relevant to life today. To see what I mean, click on the link below for a 30-second introduction to Hope Channel.

For more information or to access this letter, go to <www.hopetv.org>.—**Brenton Stacey**

Young people to have “direct line” to church president with new web site

Silver Spring, Maryland, USA

Adventist young people are being invited to design a web site that will give them a direct line to the highest level of church administration. The General Conference president has announced a design competition for the new site, which will open in August, as a way for young adults to communicate with Pastor Jan Paulsen, president of the church.

“I recognise that many, many of our young people feel distance from the church—they feel as if they don’t have a voice, they don’t feel they have been heard and they don’t feel they have been understood,” says Pastor Paulsen. “But I want them to know the church cannot survive without them.

“We want to hear from them—what they feel, and what they would like to say to their church,” he adds. “And I want them to know it is our intention to take their comments seriously.”

The development of the web site will continue a dialogue between Pastor Paulsen and Adventist young people that began in August 2003 with the *Let’s Talk* global broadcast. During the one-hour live



General Conference president Pastor Paulsen wants to open the communications channels with young Adventists through a new web site. He believes the site will give them a chance to be “heard,” and invites young designers to enter their ideas in the recently announced competition.

event, Pastor Paulsen fielded questions on a wide range of topics from a studio audience of some 50 young people. A similar event, *Let’s Talk—Again*, is planned for September this year, and will originate from the campus of Andrews University, Michigan, USA.—*Bettina Krause/ANN*

Editorial team has new assistant



Scott Wegener.

Warburton, Vic

The RECORD’s new editorial assistant, Scott Wegener, brings technical skills in multimedia and a passion for creative writing to the role.

“We’re pleased that Scott has been able to join the team,” says RECORD editor Nathan Brown. “His background, knowledge and proven track record as a communicator will be an asset.”

Mr Wegener has been published in RECORD and involved in communication at the local church level.

“I’m excited about this opportunity to inspire others through writing and sharing news from around the division,” he says. “I’m enthusiastic about using my talents for God’s work.”—*Kellie Hancock*

Web site design competition details

- The *Let’s Talk* web-site design competition is open to all church members under 25 years of age.
- The winning designer will receive a cash prize as well as a donation toward a mission project.
- Entries close May 31.
- Complete details about the web design competition are online at: <http://presidential.gc.adventist.org/letstalkcontest/>.



Easter dramatisation voted "better than *The Passion*"

(Continued from page 1)

Pastor O'Malley agrees: "You come out with a sense of what Jesus did for us. I sense the Spirit of God at work when the people come out talking about how it affected them personally—and I like to talk to them about that."



Martha, Lazarus and Mary share their story from their Bethany home.

His role is at the end of each 30-minute presentation when he is among the group that mingles with those who stop to have drinks and receive a pack of material to take home.

"I look for opportunities for verbal feedback. Some people take the opportunity to talk about spiritual things. This year I suggested they might like to attend the

prophecy seminar I'm about to start."

He adds that Try Jesus cards given out in previous years have resulted in several Bible studies.

Pastor O'Malley recognises that the 60 or so involved in the production enjoy the positive feedback, but the work is "exhausting" because it takes an "awful lot of preparation."

"One of our challenges," adds Mr Holman, "is to find extra actors. There is a real danger that it won't happen next year if we can't."

Pastor O'Malley also sees the need for more actors: "We have Baptists and Anglicans who are acting in Road to Calvary or want to next year, so why not some more Adventists? A few more actors can help expand the program and make it better." (Potential actors can phone Mr Holman on (03) 5265 1186.)

"As a pastor, this is a fantastic time of rubbing shoulders with church members on a different level, and from both churches in my district," says Pastor O'Malley. "This is a great thing spiritually and socially."

"Personally, I get a thrill when I see God's people working for Jesus."—**Bruce Manners**

Former president opens own school

Auki, Malaita, Solomon Islands

A former president of the church in the Western Pacific has opened a school in the Solomon Islands that bears his family name.

Pastor Calvyn Townend—who served as president of the former Western Pacific Union Mis-



Pastor Calvyn Townend (right) at the opening of the new primary school.

sion between 1993 and 1997—cut a ribbon at the Townend Adventist Primary School in Auki, Malaita, on March 7 to mark the completion of the first stage of construction.

Pastor Townend, currently general manager of Adventist Media, is an honorary chief of Malaita. "Our church members gave me the title because of our work establishing the Mountains of Malaita project." More than 1000 people joined the church through the project.

Principal Lloyd Gwe says the school's 180 students are enjoying studying in the six new classrooms on campus.

Parents and friends of the students donated more than \$A700 to the school during the opening ceremony.—**Brenton Stacey**

Playing the role of Jesus

Brad Luke, a freelance graphic artist and video producer, has played the role of Jesus for four of the five years Road to Calvary has been performed.

"It's really hard to play the role of Christ," he says. "I can never get into the mind-set of Christ. I can only play Him as I think He should be portrayed, and then it's more of His human side."

"I pray that those who come will see the glory of Christ. I don't want to be recognised in it. I get a lot of satisfaction from the fact that people are hearing the story of Christ."

"In certain places I can see the sorrow in people's eyes. In one part I fall to the ground and talk to the people. Last night one woman bent down as if to lift me up and then realised that she shouldn't. She was really feeling in the time and in the moment."

"The crucifixion scene is where there is the most reaction. Often people are crying. I can feel their sorrow. Then there's the resurrection and a sense of—it's like,



Brad Luke.

Yes! this is where it is heading. It goes from a sad part of the story to the joyous realisation that they too can have a part in the resurrection.

"Playing the role can be quite difficult. I'm getting beaten up each night and thrown around by the guards. In the crucifixion scene I feel anguish and I go through the motions of death. But it's great to be resurrected."—**Bruce Manners**

John O'Malley

*Happiness not included

by Linzi Aitken

The ancient European philosopher Epicurus may have been an expert on happiness. He taught that the motivation behind our actions was purely to attain pleasure and tranquillity. This could be considered a hedonist philosophy—but one of the idiosyncrasies of Epicurus was that his hedonism did not involve the “eat, drink and be merry” view. Instead, he argued that an ascetic way of life would bring pleasure. He suggested we should abstain from worldly comforts and pleasures and find happiness in friendships and virtuous pursuits.¹

Epicurus revisited

An episode in a recent ABC television series, *Philosophy—A guide to happiness*,² explored the teachings of Epicurus to find if his philosophies have any relevance for today. The presenter, and modern-day philosopher, Alain de Botton, attempted to simplify some of the daunting arguments of Epicurus.

De Botton explored Epicurus’ teachings on materialistic pleasures as they relate to happiness and concluded that what society tells us will bring happiness—cars, clothes, wine, jewellery, perfume etc—may not actually make us happy. A sense of belonging and contentment are what humans truly desire and, according to Epicurus, this can be achieved through friendships, education and a simple life.

Marketers are fully aware of the importance of things like friendship, acceptance, love, freedom, peace and happiness—basic human needs that can’t be bought. However, they can promote a product in such a way as to make consumers think they will be buying into the things they truly desire, not just another product.

The blurring of lines between product and idealism in advertising was raised by de Botton during the program. He suggested the advertising campaign for Southern Comfort, an alcoholic beverage, as a case study. The campaign entitled “Between Friends” depicts attractive, youthful people relaxing, laughing, smiling and drinking Southern Comfort. There’s also a web site where you can “meet the friends” and get caught up in the happy, inclusive world of Southern Comfort. The advertising makes the consumer believe, on a subliminal level, that their need to “belong” will be met if they drink Southern Comfort.

And this kind of clever marketing doesn’t stop at alcohol. Mobile phone companies, perfume manufacturers, banks, furniture stores and airlines are just as guilty of playing on our human desires and ideals of “happiness” in order to sell their product.

Look at the Freedom Furniture campaign: “Think outside the square you live in.” You have to wonder if they are selling furniture or a stress-free, perfect lifestyle where every day is a holiday, everyone is beautiful and the food is always gourmet. All you have to do to acquire this type of “freedom” and contentment is to purchase their furniture on 24-months, interest-free credit.

Society hasn’t changed much in 2000 years. Even in Epicurus’ time people thought they would be happy when they

obtained every material luxury: things like fine clothes, wine and expensive delicacies. It’s not too dissimilar to today’s material pursuits.

Happiness or things?

But once we get all the material things that society tells us we must have, will we be happy? Epicurus argues no: “The wealth required by nature is limited and is easy to procure; but the wealth required by vain ideals extends to infinity!”³ It seems that once we get it we want more.

In the documentary, de Botton went on to explore the ruins of a limestone wall in an old Epicurean village marketplace, etched with warnings against the pursuit of material pleasures. It was engraved with statements such as, “Poverty, if measured by the natural end, is great wealth; but wealth, if not limited, is great poverty.”⁴

Another read, “Since the attainment of great wealth can scarcely be accomplished without slavery to crowds or to politicians, a free life cannot obtain much wealth; but such a life already possesses everything in unending supply.”⁵ Epicurus believed that as long as you had friends, knowledge and simple necessities, you would be abundantly happy rather than a slave to things that were impossible to attain in one’s lifetime.

Armed with these Epicurean philosophies, de Botton enlisted the creative minds of an advertising agency to design a campaign warning people of the dangers of material pursuits, similar to what the Epicurean followers did with the stone wall in the village marketplace. The advertising agency eventually came up with a “Happiness not included” campaign, depicting a grand mansion with a magnificent sports car parked in the driveway. They had put a red asterisk next to the mansion to draw your attention to the fine print, and the fine print in this case



was, “Happiness not included.”

Epicurus’ philosophy, in summary, suggests that you could very well be happy with every material possession, but warned that happiness wouldn’t automatically come with material wealth.

Greater wisdom

Scripture, however, gives much stronger warnings against the pursuit of material wealth. In Haggai, God chastises the leaders of the nation for being interested only in building their own personal wealth instead of building God’s temple. In Haggai 1:6 the Lord says, “You have spent a lot of money, but you haven’t much to show for it. You keep filling your plates, but you never get filled up. You keep drinking and drinking, but you’re always thirsty. You put on layer after layer of clothes, but you can’t get warm” (*The Message*). Again the warning: once we get it we want more of it, but because we don’t feel satisfied we continue to pursue earthly wealth to the detriment of our relationships with God and with each other.

So what will make us happy? According to Epicurus, friendship, education and wisdom: “Of all the means which wisdom acquires to ensure happiness throughout the whole of life, by far the most important is friendship.”⁶ Maybe the Southern Comfort marketing people were pretty clever in advertising “friendship” instead of alcohol. We all want to be accepted, loved and respected.

The Bible also gives us examples of what can bring us happiness and advises us to “get wisdom—it’s worth more than money; choose insight over income every time” (Proverbs 16:16, *The Message*). It also suggests that “a sterling reputation is better than striking it rich; a gracious spirit is better than money in the bank” (Proverbs 22:1, *The Message*).

Contemporary “philosophy”

Madonna, pop singer and the original “material girl,” wrote a song recently about her life entitled, “American life.” In this song she brags about all the things she has: a Mini Cooper, a lawyer, a manager, a nanny, bodyguards, a driver, a butler, a jet, a stylist, a gardener. And at the end of her exhaustive list, she asks, “Do you think I’m

satisfied?”⁷

But Madonna doesn’t stop questioning the materialistic world in which she lives. She sings about Hollywood in her song of the same name, about it being a place where people are lured into thinking that



they can “make it big.” Hollywood offers the illusion that you will be famous, rich and happy. She asks, “How could it hurt you when it looks so good?”⁸

It is an ironic question, suggesting that even though something looks good it may not be good for you. Madonna, in many of her recent songs, seems to be wondering if there is more to life than just shallow and temporary pursuits. It seems as though she is expressing that her life is “empty.”

In the light of Scripture, perhaps she’s right. There’s a passage in the book of Habbakuk that explains the difference between a good life and an unfulfilled, dissatisfied life: “Look at that man, bloated by self-importance—full of himself but soul-empty. But the person in right standing before God through loyal and steady believing is fully alive, really alive. Note well: Money deceives. The arrogant rich don’t last” (Habbukuk 2:4, 5, *The Message*). The Bible clearly suggests that living with a loyal faith in God, rather than self, is a life well lived, a happy life.

A different measure

I once read a parable of a rich man who, in his will, requested that his pockets be filled with gold coins before he was buried, so that he might find favour with God and buy his way into heaven. When the rich man passed away they carried out his request and filled his pockets with gold coins. Finally, he made it to the gates of heaven where he met an angel. He presented the angel with the gold coins.

The angel looked at him puzzled and asked, “Why would you want to bring pavement into heaven?”

Our earthly wealth and material possessions hold no value in heaven, where the streets are paved with gold. Paul urged, “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age,

so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life” (1 Timothy 6:17-19, NIV).

Advertisers would like us to believe wealth and material possessions will bring happiness. But we know that happiness is found in things unseen rather than things that can be touched, bought or even stolen. If we make for ourselves heaven on earth, don’t we eliminate the need to seek heaven eternal?

Our Father wants His children to be happy and He blesses each of us in different ways. But we sabotage our eternal existence when we tie ourselves to things that we can’t take with us when we leave. **R**

1. *The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/e/epicur.htm>, 2003.
2. *Philosophy—A Guide to Happiness*, a British Broadcasting Corporation production, 2002, aired in Australia by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.
3. *ibid.*
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*
6. *The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, <<http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/e/epicur.htm>>, 2003.
7. 2003 WB Music Corp/Webo Girl Publishing, Inc.
8. *ibid.*

“Stewardship—It’s a lifestyle.” This is the first in a series of articles highlighting the importance of stewardship as it impacts on many aspects of our lives.

Linzi Aitken is departmental assistant for the Stewardship Department at the South Pacific Division headquarters in Wahroonga, New South Wales.

Possibilities of "church"

by Brad Watson

It's a word that means so many different things to different people. Let the word *church* roll around the roof of your mouth for just a moment. Feel yourself saying it. Feel your tongue pressing against your teeth as you make the sounds. Now think about the memories that the word brings to mind. What was your first thought?

Church is a common enough word, yet one that has an uncommon tendency to draw out strong feelings. It is both revered and reviled, delighted in, and despised. And it has a unique sound, like a cross between a "schush" and an "urkh!"

Memories of church

If you are honest, there is probably no denying that you have been uncomfortable in church at times. As a small child the sermon went on forever for me and the carpeted floor seemed irresistible, a far more comfortable option for snoozing or reading and playing with the soft toys my mother would pack for just such occasions.

I was also bored in church when a little older. The wheel may have been the first great invention, but throughout my primary school years those black-and-white church bulletins far surpassed any ancient achievements. They were carefully transformed into paper planes and water bombs in preparation for mass launches off the veranda immediately after the last hymn. What a joy it was to douse the girls on the way to the toilets! And they thought there was safety in numbers.

In later years, when paper planes no longer graced the skies, I recall the triumph of seeing the head elder snort awake up the front one day, leap to his feet and announce the last hymn—before he realised the minister had not yet finished. I, and half the congregation with me, knew then we were not the only ones who were finding the sermon a little dry.

Like some, I have experienced embar-

assment at church. As a teenager I was the only one my age. While others in larger churches socialised in youth groups, I stood uncomfortably outside mine, hoping non-Christian friends from school driving past would not see me there and think I was uncool.



The ugly church

And so I have resisted in church. I have resisted the urge to sing with all my heart. I have resisted the call to come forward. And, at times, I have resisted the call to go at all.

I have daydreamed in church, counted bricks in the walls, imagined fish caught and journeyed to strange places. Even as an adult I find myself searching for relevance in some sermons. Some days I'm probably the fellow near the back with my head buried in the weekly church publication, wondering why so many men my age have chosen not to come at all.

Like Jesus I have even experienced intense anger in church. For me it was the urge to shout out, "You're so wrong. I condemn your words!" That day I sat behind a beautiful little girl, perhaps four years of age and full of all the innocent

curiosity known only to a child. It was annoying but nice, as she rattled her toys and mumbled happily to herself, until her grandmother leaned over impatiently and snarled in a horrible, vindictive voice, "Shut up. If you don't, Jesus will come and get you. He will. Jesus will get you."

I have experienced sadness and loneliness too. I'm told places of praise can be laced with betrayal. There can be distrust and judgment, or ways of doing things that cause division and distress. For some church is the last place they would go to admit their faults. Church can be a place of disagreement. It can be boring, and at worst it can be downright ugly.

Church is ugly. It's all too human and it's made up of the likes of you and me. The Bible says all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. All. That means you. Your righteousness, the best you have, is like the smelly rags of a destitute beggar. No wonder it is easy to lose focus, drift away and become disenchanted. The mantra of "me" is an unhappy recipe indeed.

The other church

But there are other experiences too. Ones not nearly so negative.

I have experienced mirth in church. I'm sure we all have our own stories of church bloopers and slips of the tongue.

At times I have been inspired. I have stood on the battlefield with David as Goliath crashed to the ground and felt the heat of the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego. Daniel's lions have breathed their foul breath in my face and shivers have run down my spine with stories of great deeds and awesome miracles when all hope had gone.

Church can be touching. Just last Sabbath I glimpsed the future as a man stooped with years announced that his elderly wife had been anointed in hospital, that he was grateful for everyone's prayers.

He could hardly contain the sorrow of knowing his love was slipping away, and it was an effort for him to hold back the tears after a lifetime together. For him church was a place of love and support.

I have been overwhelmed in church. Compelled to stand up and give my life to God and release my private, stunted faith, compelled to tell the world that only God can make a boy into a man.

I married my wife in a little country church and dedicated my firstborn child.

I have sat with refugees under a mango tree rooted in the African soil and witnessed their reverence for that, their humble place of worship. How well I remember my efforts to sympathise with



the minister of a thatch-roofed, village church in Papua New Guinea. Halfway through the service a wild-looking woman wearing a Metallica T-shirt, dirty skirt and no shoes, had threatened the audience and elders with a stick. Little did I know! She was an elder appointed to the important role of keeping the crowd awake.

In church I have listened to amazing stories. Like the hippie woman who testified that Jesus had reached down and touched her in the depths of her drug-induced haze. Like the student who stood before us all and said he first experienced Christianity when a fellow student sent him to bed and then cleaned up his pool of vomit. Like the tearful refugee who described the slaying of his entire family, yet still could praise God.

There have been acts of giving unsurpassed. In my recent work with a

small charity I have experienced a culture of giving that permeates many of our churches. The middle-aged woman with a tear in her eye who wanted to help the poor but could not because she was the full-time carer of her own father. The elderly gentleman who squeezed \$20 into the palm of my hand and said he wished he could give more. The web-site designer who gifted 150 hours of voluntary service. The colleague who has gifted her life for the cause. In missionary service of the church I have known friends threatened, abused and raped. Much personal sacrifice is held close the hearts of those who have paid dearly—for their God and their church.

Church can be beautiful too.


Church and beyond

Jesus didn't always find the "church" of His day pleasing. He was enraged at the irreverence of moneylenders doing business in the temple. He found hypocrisy among church leaders. Jesus saw arrogance and pride in a people where love and humility should have been. At times He chose fields instead of pulpits. He bucked against the burden of numerous laws that robbed a nation of the joy of worship. And He brought a message none of us should be quick to forget.

People are the church. Prodigals are welcome. Sinners are to be sought out—not saints who are already saved. Giving a lot is not as worthy as giving from the heart. Samaritan acts are more desirable than pious theologies. It is better to serve than to praise or fast. Churches built on law are no substitute for ones founded in love.

You will get what you give, become what you believe, find what you seek. Look for ugliness and you will find no shortage. You can start afresh by saying "I am the fault."

Church can be beautiful! Awesome too! And where does the beauty come from? That's the easy part. From God. He is forever. He saves. He lives. He alone is pure. Jesus, His Son, is worthy.

Let's look for God when we go to church. Lets make it all about Him. Then, and only then, will we find it satisfying. 

Brad Watson writes from Wyee, New South Wales.



My Father's will

by John Pocock

I sat beside my bed last night
Reading about Your death on the hill.
Emotions welled up as I imagined
the sight
Of Your body hanging limp and still.

I sat beside my bed last night
Wondering about Your death on the
hill.
Tears welled up, for try as I might,
I could not understand Your Father's
will.

I knelt beside my bed last night
Praying about Your death on the hill,
Searching for meaning and new
insight
Wanting to understand my Father's
will.

I lay beside my bed last night
Touched by the Spirit, limp and still.
New meaning came in the
resurrection light
The tomb revealed, the stone stood
still.

I stood beside my bed, in the dawn
light
Empowered by Your death on the hill,
Understanding more than I did last
night,
Through Your Spirit I know my
Father's will.

John Pocock writes from Helena Valley, Western Australia.

To memorise

by Christine Miles

On Monday I went into the city by train. On the return trip I sat in a carriage with three men. Two were Samoan. I knew immediately they were Christians. They were friendly and open. They had a look in their eyes that indicated they knew something most other people didn't know. I guessed they would share their Christianity. There was an air of friendly concern about them.

The third gentleman was a German tourist. He brought his bike on board. The ticket collector charged him \$1 for the bike. The Samoans asked me how much I paid to bring my stroller aboard. Nothing. We discussed NZ Rail's policy of paying for bikes on trains, but not strollers or preschoolers. The tourist wondered if NZ Rail thought bikes were more important than little children.

The tourist spoke enough English to get by. The Samoans had a heavy accent. A conversation ensued, in which the Samoans deftly switched the topic from train fares to religious matters. With frequent repetition and rephrasing, the tourist kept up with the conversation. He didn't attend church, he said. He could see God all about him when he climbed the mountains and tramped in the bush.

The Samoans were concerned. They discussed the importance of attending church. They brought the subject around to death. "If you don't love God, you will go to hell," one said.

"Eh!" exclaimed the tourist, and he clutched his bike more tightly. "You say again."

So the Samoans repeated their message, and elicited a response from the German that he did indeed love God. The Samoans seemed satisfied with this, but clearly would have been happier if he had agreed to attend church. But their stop was called, and they said farewell.

"They are good men," said the tourist as



the doors swished shut. "They are good men."

But I was ashamed of myself. If I'd had the courage of my convictions, I could have joined in the conversation and contributed my beliefs. When they spoke about worshipping on Sunday, I could have reminded them of the Sabbath. When they promised hell for unbelievers I could have provided hope. The least I could have done was write down a few Bible texts for them. All of them.

One huge lost opportunity. One German tourist sent pondering the justice or injustice of a powerful God. Two Samoan men living their lives in a way so as to avoid hell. And me, who claims to know the truth, but silent.

Those men had a knowledge of the Bible. How better to connect with them

and share biblical claims than with biblical fact. When arguing a Christian belief, what better source do we have than the Word of God itself?

These thoughts reminded me of another recent conversation in which the issue of memorising Bible verses was raised. The immediate response was that memorising memory verses (um, shouldn't memory verses *be* memorised?) was an outdated activity. Nobody (either adult or child), it was suggested, remembers for long anyway, so why bother?

The point of memorising passages of Scripture is twofold. One is to strengthen our own belief (Proverbs 2:1-5); the other to provide a sound base for argument (Psalm 40:8). David was clear when he wrote, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. . . . Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:11, 105. NIV). It seems to me that if God's Word is to be hidden in my heart, then I need to know it. **R**

Christine Miles writes from Auckland, New Zealand.

Just for children



"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you."

Ephesians
4:32

Peta Taylor

Casting stones

Aldona Jones, Vic

I was one of the 95 per cent present outside Melbourne's World Economic forum to speak out against injustice and oppression without violating the laws of the land, attacking police, harming any person or damaging property. Unfortunately, we weren't seen as newsworthy, as we didn't fit the images of bomb-throwing anarchists that the public has come to expect. Thus it is troubling to see Stuart Barrons's "Religious terrorists" (Feature, April 3) taking the same course, automatically equating the act of standing up for one's principles with terrorism.

As Christians we're to abide by the laws of the nations in which we find ourselves in so far as they don't conflict with God's laws. But history is full of examples of people unafraid to risk humiliation, torture, imprisonment and death to oppose unjust and ungodly laws.

As a denomination we believe the time will come when laws will compel us to worship in a manner and at a time contrary to our faith. Will we conform, afraid of being labelled law-breakers and terrorists, or will we say, like the apostles, we obey God rather than humans?

Jose Gutierrez, NSW

Stuart Barrons's "Religious terrorists" is the most conservative, uninformed rave I've ever read in RECORD. It begins with criticism, judgment and condemn-

ation of those participating in anti-globalisation protests, comparing them with terrorists.

Those protesters were neither "extremists" nor "terrorists," but ordinary people exercising their democratic right to protest and dissent within a democratic society. I've participated in such protests, and I can say it is always the police who start the fighting. In Melbourne many peaceful protesters were repressed and injured

by the worst police brutality in Australia.

People have a right to protest against the evils of capitalist globalisation and fascism. Instead of criticising them, we should love them, understand them and try to reach them out with the message of Jesus, for Jesus loves and cares for everyone. I know a few antiglobalisation protesters and they are caring and concerned people. They thirst for justice and welfare for everyone. We have no right to condemn them for exercising their right to dissent.

Law and testimony

Barry Harker, Qld

Norman Young, in "Five charges against God" (Feature, March 6), claims that we cannot obey the law faultlessly and that only Christ is able to refute Satan's charge that it is impossible.

The following clearly deny the first claim—2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; 1 Peter 4:1; 1 John 3:2, 3, 7; Jude 24 and Revelation 14:5—and as the second rises or falls with the first, it is also false.

Hence, we read, "Satan declared that it was impossible for the sons and daughters of Adam to keep the law of God, and thus charged upon God a lack of wisdom and love. If they could not keep the law, then

We weren't seen as newsworthy, as we didn't fit the images of bomb-throwing anarchists.

there was fault with the Lawgiver. Men who are under the control of Satan repeat these accusations against God, in asserting that men cannot keep the law of God" (*Signs of the Times*, January 16, 1896).

A history of preaching

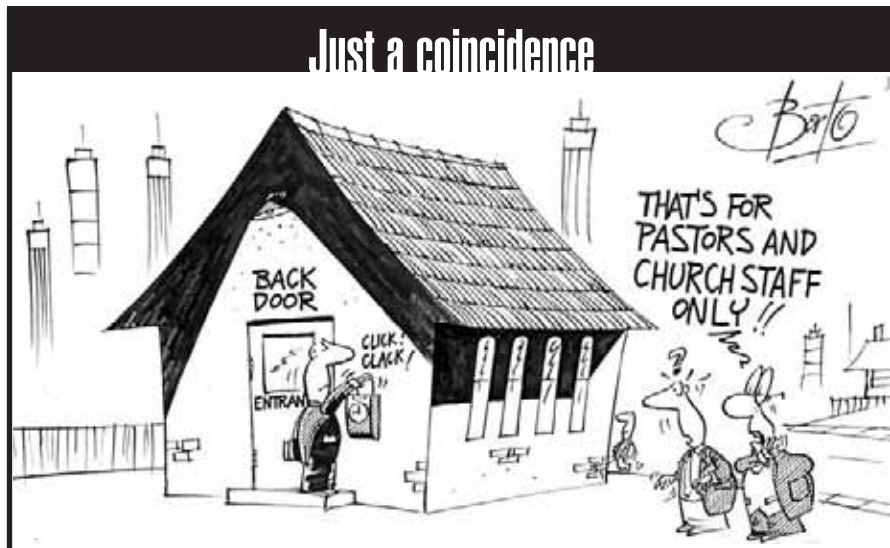
Jan T Knopper, NSW

In response to Milton Hook's letter of March 6, the following may clarify a few points. It is correct to say that since the 1970s the preaching of righteousness by faith alone is evident in many pulpits, but we must add that before then, it was not absent. Also, since the 1970s, the preaching of sanctification by faith (see Acts 26:18) has declined. The preaching of the latter before the 1970s was not presented as legalism but as the fruit of faith.

We also must add to the letter that it is evident that when righteousness by faith was preached, as stated in Milton's letter, a number of things started to decline, like 24-hour Sabbath-keeping as a holy, sacred day, the wearing of jewellery became more common and tithing suffered.

Ephesians 2:8, 9—"by grace you have been saved, through faith"—is often quoted as the heart of salvation, but verse 10 must be included as well, which adds that we are "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (NIV).

Note: Views in Letters do not necessarily represent those of the editors or the denomination. Letters should be less than 250 words, and writers must include their name, address and phone number. All letters are edited to meet space and literary requirements, but the author's original meaning will not be changed. Not all letters received are published. See masthead (page 2) for contact details.



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Towler—Strano. Stephen Edward Towler, son of George and Margaret Towler (Home Hill, Qld), and Serafina Marie Strano, daughter of Guisepppe and Josephine Strano (Home Hill), were married on 22.2.04 at Kidby Gully, Home Hill.

Roger Ward

Wallis—Hagen. Haydn Arthur Stephen Wallis, son of Arthur and Mary (deceased) Wallis (Melbourne, Vic), and Sandra Mae Hagen, daughter of David and Heather Hagen (Brisbane, Qld), were married on 18.1.04 in the Avondale College church, Cooranbong, NSW.

Keith Jackson

Ward—McConaghie. Tristan Lee Ward, son of Pastor Roger and Caroline Ward (Townsville, Qld), and Suzanne McConaghie, daughter of Valerie Mauviel (Miriwinni), were married on 11.1.04 on the banks of the Ross River, Townsville.

Roger Ward

Obituaries

Bapty, Alice Mary (nee Findley), born 23.8.1924 at Heyfield, Vic; died 22.3.04 at Buderim, Qld. On 7.1.47 she married Lionel, who predeceased her in 2000. She is survived by her children, Nerelle Carton (Brisbane), Greg (Glasshouse Mountains), Raymond (Smithton, Tas), Elwyn (Lightning Ridge, NSW), Kevin (Gosford), Michael (Mildura, Vic) and Lorelei Bridgen (Darwin, NT). Alice loved her Lord and her family. She also loved life and especially enjoyed caring for children.

Cyril Pascoe

Mark Pearce, Neil Tyler

Birkett, Laurence Spencer (Laurie), born 8.1.1920 at Ballarat, Vic; died 18.3.04 at Warragul. In 1942 he married Phyllis, who predeceased him on 26.11.89. He is survived by his daughter, Lorraine Birkett (Warragul); his daughter and son-in-law, Helen and Elwyn Scale (Trafalgar); his four grandchildren; their spouses; and his three great-grandchildren. Laurie was a Christian gentleman, who was always smiling and jovial. He knew his Bible intimately

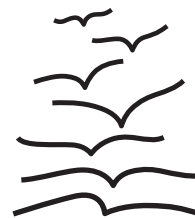
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Appreciation

Birkett, Lorraine, together with Helen and Elwyn Scale, would like to thank their many friends for the cards, phone calls, emails, love and prayers of comfort on the recent loss of their Dad, Laurie. Loved Pappa to Daz, Roo, Chub and Del. Your thoughtfulness means so much.

Weddings

Miller—Morta. Leslie John Miller, son of Leslie Miller and Marina Miller (both of United Kingdom), and Cassandra Morta, daughter of Owen and Susan Morta (United Kingdom), were married on 28.2.04 in the North Harbour Adventist church, Auckland, NZ.

Russell Willcocks

Pinasco—Alota. Genaro German Pinasco, son of Genaro and Elba Pinasco (Sydney, NSW), and Rhona Beth Alota, daughter of Daniel Alota (Philippines) and Adelfa Alota (Sydney, NSW), were married on 28.3.04 at Paramatta Adventist church, Sydney, NSW.

Peter Fowler

Rodionoff—Johnson. Stephen Andrew Rodionoff, son of Andrew and Beryl Rodionoff (Sydney, NSW), and Sally Ann Johnson, daughter of William and Emilee Johnson (Dalby, Qld), were married on 7.3.04 in the Strathfield (Russian) Adventist church, Sydney, NSW.

Wayne French

Thoreson—Ringrose. Roger Noel Thoreson, son of Garth and Barbara Thoreson (Pukekohe, NZ), and Trudy Joy Ringrose, daughter of Lewis and Lurlene Ringrose (Whangarei), were married on 21.3.04 in the Wilson Home Chapel, Auckland.

Russell Willcocks

and was a joy to be with. He was involved in organising four fly'n'build teams to Fiji, building churches and a school. For many years he served as senior elder at North Fitzroy and Warragul churches; also a term on the executive committee of the Victorian Conference.

Bill Doble, Tim O'Keefe

Hann, Bernice (nee Hunger), born 22.6.1922 at Stratford, NNZ; died 18.3.04 at Stratford. On 4.4.45 she married Vic, who predeceased her. She is survived by her son, Philip; her daughter, Carolyn Strange (both of Palmerston North), her daughter and son-in-law, Alison and Dennett Jaques (Brisbane, Qld). Bernice provided floral arrangements and organ music at the Stratford church for many years. She had a strong faith and loved her Lord.

Lawrence Lane

Hutley, Delphine, born 30.1.1960 at Waverly, New Zealand; died on 10.12.03 in a tragic accident at her home in Mount Colah, Sydney, NSW. She is survived by her teenage daughters, Elise and Amelia, and their father, Gary, also her mother, Valma Zanstra (Tauranga, New Zealand), her brother, Dirk Zanstra, her sister, Diane Jonasen (Hastings, New Zealand), and her colleagues at Sydney Adventist Hospital where she worked as a theatre nurse. She was highly respected by everyone as a sensitive, passionate nurse and thus an inspiration to all.

Adrian Flemming

Pemble, Lawrence, born 22.5.1938 at Harden, NSW; died 14.3.04 in the nursing home at Kings Langley Adventist Retirement Village, Kings Langley. He is survived by his wife, Gwen; his children, Jeffrey, Julianne, Darren and Nicole. Larrie expressed his confidence in Jesus to bring him forth on the resurrection morning to unite with his family once more.

Bill Sleight

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A position vacancy for a business manager/accounts exists at Cedarvale Health Retreat, Kangaroo Valley, NSW, commencing July 2004. Experience in marketing helpful. For applications and job description please phone (02) 4465 1362.

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Registration for the weekend is necessary. See details of Homecoming in the April 2004 *Reflections* magazine.

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