

May 29 2010

# Record™

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## STEWARDSHIP EDITION

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 Giving character  
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# What if I give all?

by Barry Oliver

**A** FEW MONTHS AGO I VISITED THE GRAVE OF John Tay. It sits on a hillside overlooking Suva harbour, Fiji. John Tay sailed from the United States to the South Pacific on the mission vessel, *The Pitcairn*. After some time at Pitcairn Island and the Cook Islands, he and his wife Hannah settled in Fiji. After just five months in Suva, he died of black water fever. It was 1892.

Since that time, many others have given their lives in service in the South Pacific: people like Pastor Peter Knopper; Lance Gersback; Peni Tavodi; Len Larwood; Brian Dunn; Del, David and Adrian Lemke, to name just a few. Some were very young. All were far from home. In all, the South Pacific Division cares for 58 gravesites scattered across the Pacific.

We cannot think of these men and women without thinking of words like “courage”, “selfless service” and “sacrifice”. Even in secular societies we hold such attributes very high on the scale of moral goodness. The events that we participate in and witness, like Anzac Day in Australia and New Zealand, remind us this reality. On such occasions the national flag is flown high. Patriotic songs and anthems abound.

Courage, selfless service and sacrifice are attributes of those who have a strong sense of allegiance. For the soldier in the trenches it is allegiance to country but for the Christian it is allegiance to God. Such allegiance is publicly declared through the richly symbolic act of baptism. It is reaffirmed daily in the personal life of the believer and more publicly at such times as the communion service. Of course, it does not have to be affirmed by death or martyrdom. But the simple fact is that we cannot claim to be Christian if we do not give to our God our full allegiance. The first of the Ten Commandments puts it so simply: “You shall have no other gods before me!”

This special edition of the RECORD considers the privileges and responsibilities of stewardship for the child of God. Stewardship is a direct outcome of allegiance. There is no such thing as allegiance without stewardship. It is a

matter of integrity. I cannot claim to give God my allegiance and then fail to act responsibly in caring for the resources that He places at my disposal.

The Bible gives us several examples of those who demonstrated their allegiance to God through their stewardship including the widow who gave all that she had (Luke 21: 1-4) and the little boy who gave his loaves and fishes (John 6:1-12). Profound lessons can be gleaned from these examples: the value of a gift is not measured by its size—it is measured by the size of that which remains—giving is only giving if it comes from the heart; there are as many different means of giving as there are people who give; a gift from the heart is always multiplied by Jesus.

For the Seventh-day Adventist Christian allegiance is expressed both in relation to God and in relation to the church family that we have chosen. From my earliest days as a young person growing up in the Church, I have believed that my Church is important and that “feeble and defective though it may be” (to quote a very well known author), it is God’s primary human channel of mercy and grace to the world.

After nearly 60 years of experience I am more convinced than ever that stewardship is a vital expression of my relationship to God and the church family that I have chosen. I am proud of this Church. I thank God for this Church. I am honoured and privileged to have given my life in service to this Church and the world it seeks to win for the kingdom of God.

Please reflect with me as you read the pages of this edition on the privileges and responsibilities of being a son or daughter of God and of being a member of our church family. And in the words of the apostle Paul, I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (Romans 12:1). **R**

*Dr Barry Oliver is president of the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists.*



# Excuses and barriers to giving

## 1. My giving is a private matter between God and me.

That's true. Jesus reminds us to give in a way that does not attract human accolades (Matthew 6:3). Our giving is worship to God and only God really knows the heart you are giving with. However, Scripture is also clear on how we are to work together as a "body". As a body we bring our gifts (time, talent and treasure) together for God's glory. In the context of the body we need systems of accountability that promote wise stewardship.

## 2. I'm too young to give; I really just need to focus on being a student.

"Everytime" is the right time to be "rich toward God". You don't have to "grow up" to be generous; even a child understands the difference between selfishness and sharing. The habits we put in place as young people are unlikely to change. God is the owner of everything and blesses you with your clever mind and your next heartbeat. Don't defer allowing Him to work in and through you.

## 3. Christians are under grace, not under law. Tithing only applies to Old Testament Israel.

While it finds its origins in the Old Testament (OT), tithing is not simply for OT Israel. Abram and Jacob (Genesis 14:20, 28:22) tithed before there was an Israelite. Abram gave his tithe to a king and priest who lived in a Canaanite city but worshipped Yahweh. In the New Testament (NT), Jesus affirmed tithing with a right heart (Matthew 23:33/Luke 11:42). Hebrews 7:1-10 also gives a positive perspective on tithing. If the practice of tithing was to be changed, you'd think it would be mentioned by a NT author.

## 4. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 9:7 that each man should give what he has decided in his own heart to give. So I am free to give as much or as little as I choose, even not at all.

Tithe is the starting point of our worship to God in the material areas of life—offerings follow. Paul's statement is in the context of a discussion about generosity. A generous heart overflows in being "rich toward God". A stingy heart looks for the bare minimum. This misses the whole point of what it means to worship God with our giving.

## 5. There's a good chance my donation will be misappropriated or wasted.


While the Church has systems of accountability and transparency there's always a risk that the money will be misappropriated or wasted. Mind you, it's worth remembering that it's all God's money—not yours. In any case, Jesus commends a widow for giving out of her poverty in Mark 12: 41-43. She gave to a system that Jesus knew was already using the money unwisely and even plotting His death. Jesus still commends her giving. You and I are called to be good stewards and use our appropriate systems and influence, where appropriate, to ensure our Church honours God with its resources. However, in the end, the giving heart is primarily our concern while God will lead His Church.

## 6. Stewardship involves a lot more than money. I give my time and talents by teaching Sabbath school and opening my home. I consider that to be my giving.

That is giving. We steward all of our lives: our bodies, our talents and our time. However, Jesus talks more about money than any other topic. Two thirds of His parables deal with material possessions. He knew that money has a way of competing with Him (Matthew 6:24). Money quickly reflects your walk with God and quickly impacts your relationship with God. Sure, give in all areas. But don't neglect honouring God with your treasure. He wants to be the centre of all of you—you exist to glorify God.

*Brendan Pratt serves as Communication, Stewardship and Personal Ministries director for the Greater Sydney Conference.*

## NOW & THEN Our attitudes to stewardship:



Today:  
Lord of our  
Life.

Then:  
He was  
Lord of our  
tithe.

Today:  
being in  
Him.

Then:  
doing in  
Him.

Today:  
Stewards.

Then:  
earners/  
owners.



## Connecting with God

Roger Govender

This year the South Pacific Division is investing in and focusing on stewardship. The Australian Union Conference's theme for stewardship is "Stewardship Inside Out—Connecting with God". While stewardship touches every area of our life it's important to focus and develop resources in the areas of worship, lifestyle, tithes, estate planning (will preparation), offerings and the environment. This will be ongoing with a decade of stewardship initiatives being considered for the ensuing years.

Mention stewardship and what comes to mind? Dollars and cents.

Over the years the word stewardship has been associated with church budgets, fundraising and church development. Some have even defined stewardship as time, treasure and talent, health and the environment. I would imagine for many this has brought some confusion to the meaning of stewardship, but also in our collective understanding of this concept.

So what is stewardship? Stewardship is nothing less than a complete lifestyle, with total accountability and responsibility before God. In other words, it is the life of one who accepts Christ's Lordship, walking in partnership with God and acting as His agent to manage His affairs on earth.

This journey began with God's creation of Adam and Eve in His own image. In doing so God established an intimate relationship and union with all of humanity. This shared image and intimacy are important to understanding the spirit and dynamics of biblical stewardship. In our walk with God we acknowledge His Lordship and we surrender every area of our life to Him.

For the committed Christian the recognition of God as Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, Owner and Partner becomes the connecting link. Stewardship calls us to manage our lives and God's gifts of creation and redemption in a responsible way. We are partners with God to accomplish His purpose in the world.

This special edition will hopefully challenge and expand our thinking in understanding the practice of Christian stewardship.

*Pastor Roger Govender serves as Sabbath School, Personal Ministries and Stewardship director for the Australian Union Conference.*

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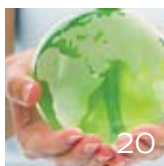
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## OPINION

Pablo Lillo

### Moral challenge?

Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd some time ago stated that climate change was “the great moral and economic challenge of our time”, requiring “concerted global action to overcome”. As a Christian, I believe Mr Rudd’s statement was a universe away from the truth. Yes, it’s true we need to look after our environment but I believe we have an even greater moral challenge facing our generation today.



Under inspiration Ellen White penned the following words, “The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.”

One word that best encapsulates Sister White’s sentiment is—faithfulness. So the greatest want of the world today is for you and I to live out our lives faithfully, to God. That is, to be totally committed and faithful with everything we have at this moment, everything entrusted by God—the True Owner of all things.

I often wonder why our Lord and Saviour said more about how we are to view and handle money and possessions than about any other thing. Did you know prayer is mentioned approximately 350 times in the Bible? Love is mentioned more than 700 times? Money is mentioned more than 2000 times?

Why didn’t God just talk about love, grace, forgiveness, community and salvation and leave it for His children to worry about money and possessions. How could the Bible’s Author and Editor justify devoting twice as many verses to money than to faith and prayer combined?

The sheer enormity of Scripture’s teaching on this subject screams for our attention. Giving demonstrates how good giving is more than a responsibility—it’s an adventure.

*Pastor Pablo Lillo is head of news and editorial for the South Pacific Division.*



# Inside out stewardship

by Peter Cousins

**O**UR HEART AND OUR CHRISTIAN WALK ARE vitally connected. Spiritual life grows from a connected heart. A relationship with Christ flows out from within. God gives us a heart that loves and worships Him. He gives to us a willing walk and a deeply born and satisfying life. “No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5 NIV).

On my spiritual journey I have learned that motives matter. Jesus in His encounter with the woman at the well said: “. . . whoever drinks the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14,15 RSV). What an image—a life flowing out from its centre. This is living from the inside out and it is a Spirit-fuelled life. It is this life of surprise and freedom that excited the Samaritan woman. A life of joy, and a life of exceptional abundance. “. . . so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8 RSV). We live from the inside out.

Conforming to Christ from the outside is a painful and fruitless experience. I have tried it and it is spiritually destructive. Outward compliance has some value. At times we all long for progress, for control over the events, circumstances and people in our lives. If only I would overcome this; if only they would live sensibly. Why don't they do the “right thing”? There are benefits to living from the outside. It, however, does not qualify as a response to Jesus' words, “you must be born of water and of the Spirit”.

When we believe that following a formula is reality, that it is the substance of living for Christ, we are far from God. Sincerely or even passionately believing and adhering to the letter not the Spirit; accepting the husk in place of the kernel, is a distortion of God's Kingdom.

Many choose to live as cultural Christians. Doing what must be done. Substituting life in Christ and Christ in the life with rules. Depending on other's assessments and opinions

for our significance and purpose. The mystery and joy of an uncharted journey in the Spirit is lost.

Our culture is focused on outward performance. It values much less, if at all, the life of the Spirit. Sometimes it is out of fear that we conform to God's will for our lives. It is a tragic way to live! I have heard it said, fake it till you make it. But it is not possible to fake the joy or outcome of a new life in Christ and live a Spirit-filled life. If faked our journey is futile; by description it is a counterfeit. It is a cop-out or at best a performance.

After feeding the people and walking across the Sea of Galilee, the crowds could not find Jesus. When they found Him on the other side they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.”

Jesus says to these seekers: “Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the good which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you” (John 6:27 RSV). Organising a good life is not enough; what is required is a new life where what is in our hearts is in our legs. God no more wants your love out of obligation than you want the love of a spouse because it is their duty or responsibility.

Stewards who live inside out do not walk life's stage only because of careful planning, strategy and performance. They show their parentage in spontaneous ways; they conform to the powerful, living Spirit of God.

As Billy Graham once said: “The object of your faith must be Christ. Not faith in ritual, not faith in sacrifices, not faith in morals, not faith in yourself—not faith in anything but Christ!” That is what we are called into, a new life in Christ. Stewards, disciples living from the inside out! R

*Peter Cousins is Family Ministries and Stewardship director at NNSW Conference.*



# Understanding Lordship

by Ben Maxon

**S**TEWARDSHIP IS THE HUMAN SIDE OF LORDSHIP. Jesus is Lord and we are His stewards—managing the resources He has placed in our hands.

The Lordship paradigm is the foundational concept undergirding all of stewardship. Accepting God as Owner and giving Him control transforms our entire approach to daily life. Lordship is even greater than simple surrender to God and must be integrated into the very core of our being. So let's explore this paradigm, seeking to find ways to make it our own life perspective.

The apostle Paul presents Jesus Christ as Lord because of who He is and what He has done (Philippians 2:5-11). Being God, Jesus chose to empty Himself, becoming a man. Yet simply becoming human was not enough. He identified Himself with the essence of humanity, taking the form of a servant and dying our death on Calvary. In doing so, He identified Himself with our sin to the extent of becoming "sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). As a result, God has exalted Jesus, given Him a name above all other names, and at the end of time, every tongue will declare Him Lord. So the fact that He is Lord is an eternal reality.

Sooner or later, every person will acknowledge that Jesus is Lord. But it is not enough to simply say that He is Lord. At the end of the millennium, even the wicked will admit He is Lord. It must be a confession of relationship with Him if it is to transform our lives.

Too often, we see Lordship as simple obedience. God says it, we do it. While containing an element of truth, this approach ultimately leads to failure and discouragement.

The power for obedience is often missing. We try to obey only to fail again and again. We attempt to do by human force of will what only God can empower.

At other times, we understand Lordship to mean the loss of control. Once again, there is an element of truth. But it must be much more. It is a surrender that leads to an even more powerful life.

Lordship is intimacy with God through the indwelling Christ integrated into daily life. It is the result of accepting Christ as Saviour, Owner, and present within us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit:

- as Saviour, He forgives and saves us
- as Owner, He controls us
- as present within us, He empowers us.

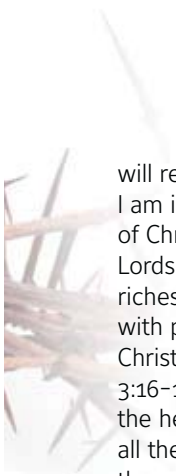
Lordship began with creation; Adam and Eve were created for intimacy with God. Adam began life in the cradle of

God's arms, awakened by the kiss of life. Discovering God and his own identity in relationship with God were his first conscious thoughts. As humans, we are born with the capacity for, as well as the need of, intimacy with the Almighty, and we will never be at peace, never be satisfied, until we find that union with God for which we were created.

Lordship is the realisation of that union for which we were born. In the relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord, we discover a level of intimacy where the core of our hearts is transformed by the very presence of God. In giving the promise of "another Comforter", Jesus also promised to return to us (John 14:18). When the Comforter came, He brought the assurance of His presence: "On that day you

**Lordship is intimacy with God through the indwelling Christ integrated into daily life.**





will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you" (John 14:20, NIV). This indwelling presence of Christ is the essential core of the Biblical concept of Lordship. Paul presents the promise "that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Ephesians 3:16-17, ESV). Paul concludes that as a result of knowing the heights and depths of God's love we will be "filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:15-19). This is the scope of the promised intimacy with God—Christ bringing the fullness of God into our lives.

Lordship is also submission. It is realising that our sinful nature places us in a natural position of rebellion against God—a position where we will create or be our own god. It is recognising our innate "lostness" and accepting our need for a radically different life which is ours only in dying to self. The act of submission to God restores the natural order in which we were created. It allows God to resume His place on the throne of life. It places us in the right relationship with God from which we can begin an entirely new life. Submission also connects with God as the source of strength and power for living the daily life.

Christ invites us into a partnership. As the indwelling Christ (Eph. 3:16-17), His Lordship empowers our everyday activities. Accepting Him as Owner we manage His resources with His guidance and power. Therefore whatever we do is done to God's honour and glory (1 Cor. 10:31). Since it is His business, what is done in the name of that business reflects on Him. We act in the name of the Lord, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17, ESV). Everything we do is done serving Him (Col. 3:22-24).

While this relationship offers so very much, it also confronts us with radical demands that are in direct contrast to the contemporary Christianity which has been assimilated by the world around us. This Christianity has lost its power for it has abandoned its source—the indwelling Christ. Instead of debating about issues of obedience or arguing about how to keep the Sabbath, Jesus as Lord invites us into something much more radical, a life of intimate union with Him. Each part of that life is transformed by His presence.

Lordship means God says it and I do it. This is not because of my effort to obey. Instead it is the fulfilment of God's promise to work in us "both to will, and to do" (Philippians 2:13). He is Lord and you and I have the privilege of living out this experience in everyday life. How? By abiding in Him and allowing Him to abide in us. Thus lordship moves from a theological expression to a living relationship with the King. ➤

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*Dr Ben Maxon is senior pastor of Paradise church, California, and was previously director of the Stewardship department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.*

## Are Riches Meaningless?

"He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity. When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what is the advantage to their owners except to look on?" (Eccl 5:10-11 NASB)

Whoever loves money—  
Never has money enough.  
Whoever lives for wealth—  
Never possesses too much 'stuff'.  
It all becomes meaningless,  
And cannot fill the void.  
After the initial pleasure—  
Of the Rolls Royce or ships convoyed.  
When wealth is hoarded—  
It's not a pretty sight.  
Wealth is meant for sharing—  
Both parties to delight.  
A man comes naked from the womb,  
And in a suit he leaves;  
Takes nothing from his labours—  
Is lucky if others grieve.  
Those who experience envy—  
Work hard to accomplish wealth,  
But those who are satisfied,  
Show others time and value health.  
Working for lost souls—  
Is work that's worthwhile,  
But riches are meaningless—  
Unless used in harvest soil.  
Are riches meaningless?  
Each one must ask this question.  
Do you want wealth and power,  
Or toil for food and passion?  
Passion for our fellow man—  
Is important whilst we're here.  
Selfishness for richly gain—  
Demonstrates no brotherly care.



Maureen LeFanue writes from South Australia.

## The rich man and the gardener

The story is told of a wealthy man who devoted all of his time to his business. All through the country in which he lived he constructed magnificent buildings, winning many architectural awards and prizes. And he lived well and selfishly on the profits of his enterprise, until accepting Christ on his deathbed.

The successful businessman had a gardener; a man of simple and unselfish tastes; a man who devoted his meagre income to the Gospel message.

Both died and went to heaven. The gardener was given a beautiful mansion. It had a marvellous view of the Sea of Glass, in full view of the Throne. The rich man was offered a hut, clean and white but just a hut! Seeing his face fall the Apostle Peter explained "I'm sorry, sir, but we did the best with the material that you sent up."

While it is not true that God differentiates between sinners, the priority which we give to our wealth and possessions is of fundamental importance.

Many people think it's essential to accumulate a great deal of "treasure" on earth. "What if I get sick or have an accident?" they say. "I need to be independent". And so



to establish their independence, they neglect giving to God. And when we achieve our intended level of self-sufficiency, we strive for higher levels of self-sufficiency and independence.

We may believe strongly in God, be faithful in our church attendance and Bible study, be faithful in prayer, but if most of our income and possessions are used for ourselves then our own needs and wants will be paramount. Self will be the real and very big thing in our lives and God will not be very real. Invest in God's work now and make God real. ➤

*Ken Long attends Kellyville church and is passionate about stewardship.*



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# Influencing Presence

by Joseph Talipuan

IT WAS WET AND COLD OUTSIDE AND I WAS IN A busy bus going home from Mt Hagen to Wabag, in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. The 15-seater mini-bus bounced, slipped and slid as it made its way up the winding highway. To avoid the rain and the bitter cold outside, every passenger shut their window. I was seated among them heading home for holidays at the end of my school year.

The atmosphere was thick with cigarette smoke, the smell of chewed beetle nuts and what made the environment worse was the constant swear words. I was a young Seventh-day Adventist male, young and naïve with the world at my feet.

I sat on the second last row—directly behind me was a dear old lady. She was totally different from everybody else. Unlike the rest of us she was clean, her hair was neatly combed, and she seemed happy—at peace with the world. By looking at her I felt she was living life to the full. Every now and then she gave me an innocent smile through her wrinkled cheeks—I couldn't take my eyes off her. She sat humbly with her little string bag tucked under her feet and although I hadn't met her before, I felt warmed by her presence.

I thought I was the only one who took notice of her but someone else must have. Suddenly someone on the bus made an unofficial announcement, "*Wanpela sevende i sindaon*" (there is a Seventh-day Adventist among us). Almost immediately everyone turned and looked at the old lady—without a word, cigarettes were extinguished, the swearing ceased and a sense of calm blanketed the bus.

**How could an old, uneducated and primitive woman from the mountains possibly change the demeanour of a bus load of people?**

How could an old, uneducated and primitive woman from the mountains possibly change the demeanour of a bus load of people?

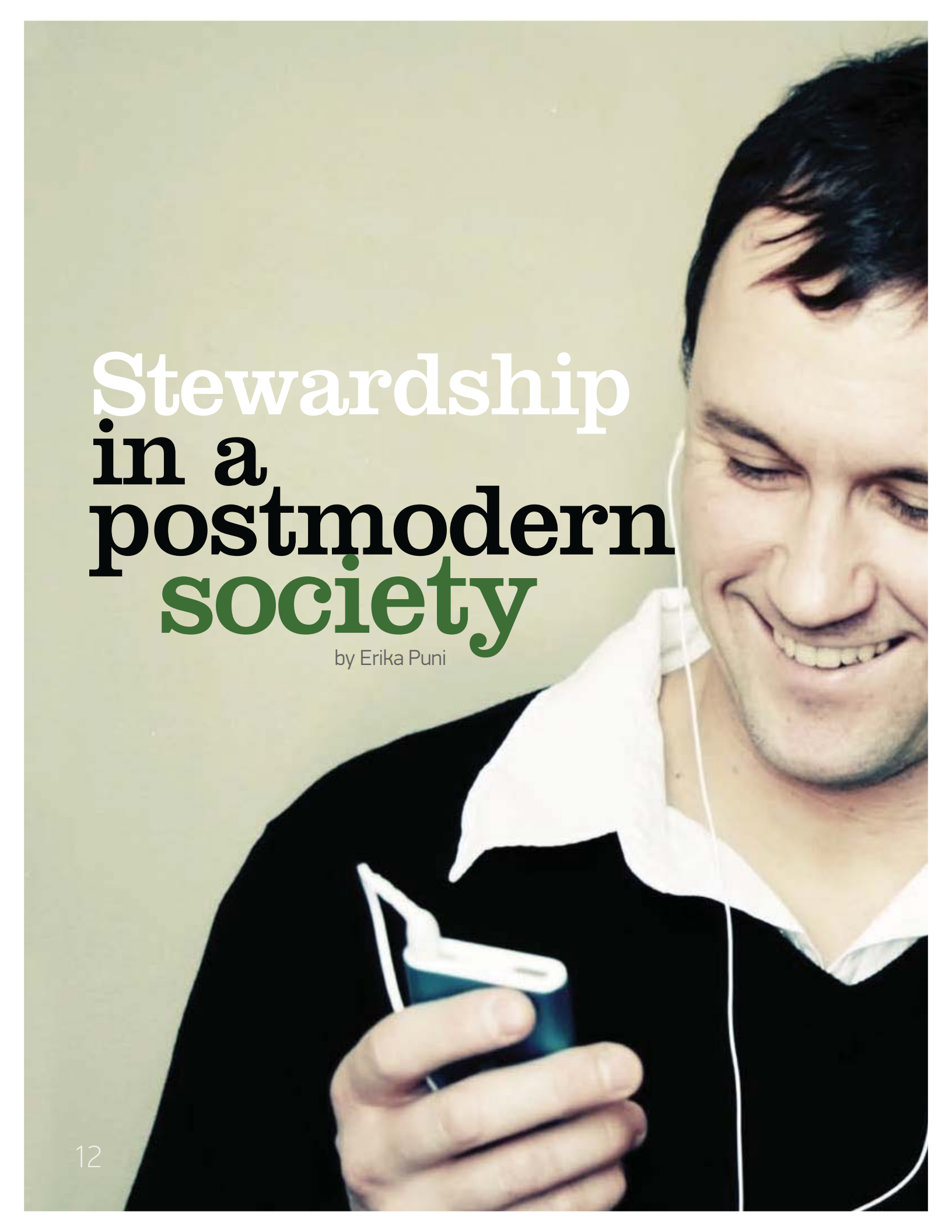
This woman had authority to silence the forces of evil because of her daily connection with God. She travelled to church every day to spend time in solitude with God. She walked and talked with God as one does a close friend. Her relationship with God was so strong that it was felt when people were among her. She was able to exert influence

way beyond her human ability—as Someone Great and powerful was living inside her. She walked with God and He gave her power to command, not by force but by love.

Can you exert such influence today? We are stewards not only of our resources but also our influence. God has endowed us with the capacity to reach others, impact their lives and be a spiritual influence in their lives.

Ellen White wrote: "We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, 'Be still, and know that I am God' (Psalm 46:10). This is the effectual preparation for all who labour for God. Amid the hurrying throng, and the strain of life's intense activities, he who is thus refreshed will be surrounded with an atmosphere of light and peace. His life will breathe out a fragrance, and will reveal a divine power that will reach men's hearts" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p 58).

*Pastor Joseph Talipuan is the Stewardship, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries director for the South Pacific Division.*

A close-up photograph of a man with dark hair, smiling broadly as he looks down at a small, dark-colored mobile device in his hand. He is wearing white earbuds and a black sweater over a white collared shirt. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# Stewardship in a postmodern society

by Erika Puni

**P**OSTMODERNISM IS SOMETIMES CHARACTERISED as a way of thinking and being where everything is relative and personal. It may be a problem for the Christian church in the 21st century; it does, however, offer us Seventh-day Adventists an opportunity to re-assess our approach and understanding of Christian stewardship. I'm thinking specifically of the way we have understood, taught and promoted stewardship as "tithe and offerings" only. For many church members, stewardship is about money!

### **A Theological Shift**

I believe the starting point towards any approach that will make stewardship relevant yet Biblical in today's world is by shifting the focus of stewardship from the person, the church member, to God Himself. In Genesis 1:1, for example, the Bible makes this explicit declaration that "in the beginning God" (Genesis 1:1), and everything else including Adam and Eve's stewardship of the Garden of Eden, was secondary to the existence and rule of God as Creator and Owner of everything. In creating His new faith community, Jesus said to the disciples, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18), which clearly established the owner of the Church as Jesus Christ. This shift in focus to God is not only theologically correct but it is also reaffirming for Christian stewards who believe that in their giving whether it's in time or resources that they are giving to God irrespective of who benefits.

### **A Relational Shift**

Another significant shift in this area of the Christian life is the recognition that biblical stewardship is about having a relationship with Jesus. When Adam and Eve sinned, God came looking for them (Genesis 3: 8-9) even though they disobeyed and rejected Him. This initiative on the Creator's part showed His desire to maintain a relationship with His creatures even in their sinful state. When God instructed Moses to build the sanctuary in the wilderness (Exodus 25: 8), the rationale given for this project was that He wanted to live among the Israelites. This realisation that God is interested in having a relationship with people in the Bible is fundamental but it's also a major point of interest and identification with postmodern minds that are looking for a genuine spiritual experience with the Divine. Christian stewardship correctly understood is about a personal relationship and encounter with God. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

### **A Transformational Shift**

One of the real benefits of this new approach to stewardship where God is the focus is the fact that we're allowing Jesus who is Lord to do what we cannot do for ourselves, and that is to change us from within. This experience of transformation has to take place in the deep level of our being where our values and beliefs exist but its results can be seen on the surface level where our behaviour is expressed. Let's take for example the area of financial stewardship. On

our own, we cannot and will not produce fruit of faithfulness in tithes and offerings except for Christ living in us (Galatians 2:20). In fact, no amount of stewardship education or promotion will make us to give, even to God; unless the sinful man is dead to sin and alive in Christ. With this transformational emphasis, the postmodern yearning to do good in society finds its answer in this Biblical reality. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

### **A Worship Shift**

While tithe and offerings are given primarily in money form, this aspect of Christian living is really about worship (Romans 12:1). It's about honouring God who sustains and provides. It's about our acknowledgement that everything that we are and have comes from Him as Creator and Redeemer. In this worship paradigm, the motive for giving is love for God (Matthew 22:37-38); and because He is worthy of our praises and thanksgiving. Stewardship in this context is not a financial matter but a spiritual act of faith where the worshipper submits and commits to One who is higher than one's self. And while postmodern persons may be indifferent to religion and the church, they nevertheless are keen and interested in having some kind of connectedness to their inner being; the heart, the dwelling place of God; and stewardship and worship is about the heart!

### **A Mission Shift**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was established by God for mission; and it exists in the world today for the very same reason. This mission is to "make disciples" (Matthew 28:19); meaning that the end result is people—men and women who have surrendered their lives to God. Now this understanding of mission is critical for two reasons: that the stewardship goal of the Church is to make disciples; and that in financial giving, we're expressing our partnership with God. Stewardship is not about maintenance of structures and institutions though important these may be; but a genuine effort and commitment to partner with God in alleviating suffering in human society while at the same time pointing people to Jesus gives eternal life (John 10:10; 14:6). This mission-oriented approach will find resonance in the hearts of postmodern persons.

I'm convinced that the way of stewardship into the future is to present stewardship as a total response of the believer's heart to God. That while stewardship includes the giving of tithes and offerings it is certainly more than money. It's about having a living relationship with Jesus and allowing Him to rule supremely in every area of our lives. Stewardship is a transformational experience which invites people to worship and witness for God. More importantly, the Church will be richer in every way when the focus is Jesus (Psalm 23:1). This paradigm shift is not only Biblical but necessary in making the Church relevant to both seekers and believers in an ever-changing world. R

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## MY MINISTRY IDEA

It's 5:30 am and Stan Binskin is picking up rubbish—74 years of age and a little too thin, due to a recent bout with cancer. But he's putting on weight and able to get back to his emu patrol—three kilometres down Riverside Drive to the ferry crossing and three kilometres back.

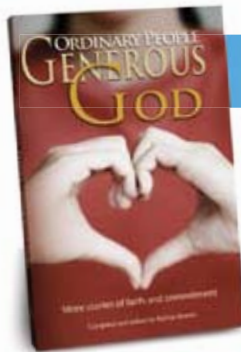
"About six years ago, I was going through a time when I just couldn't feel God's presence," says Stan, "so I decided to start walking in the morning; asking God to show me what He wanted me to do.

"One day I noticed the road was a bit of a mess—people had been chucking rubbish all over the place. So I brought a bag with me, filled it up with rubbish and put it in the bin near the ferry. Then I did the other side of the road on the way back."

It's an act of worship, Stan says. One day Paul, a neighbour, complimented him, saying it was great what he was doing for the community. In his typical straightforward fashion, Stan told him he was doing it for God, not anyone else. "But if the community benefits as a side-effect, that's fine by me."

Paul wasn't the only neighbour to notice Stan's dawn patrol, or the only neighbour to get a strong dose of God-talk.

"When I mention Jesus, people take three steps back?" says Stan. "I ask, 'What are you frightened of?'" A few years back, Dawn, another neighbour, started walking and talking with Stan. Earlier this year she was baptised. And she's not the only one. Stan, Dawn and other neighbours and friends now worship at a fellow Adventist's home in Riverside Drive.—*Kent Kingston*



## NEWS

### Book of stories helps stewardship focus

Warburton, Victoria

A new book of stories from writers across the South Pacific is supporting the Australian Union Conference's "Year of Stewardship". *Ordinary People—Generous God* was launched on May 20 at the mid-year meetings of the AUC executive by president Pastor Chester Stanley and Pastor Roger Govender, director of stewardship for the AUC. "Stewardship is how the gospel is lived—and storytelling allows us to share examples of what it means to live as a follower of Jesus," says Pastor Stanley. "It is not always easy to live faithfully but we can be encouraged by the stories of the practical stewardship of others."

*Ordinary People—Generous God* is a sequel to *Ordinary People—Extraordinary God* (released 2005) and *Ordinary People—Faithful God* (2007), and contains 55 more stories of people living in partnership with God and the results this brings.

"I believe these books have been enjoyed by many readers because they show the activities of God in the lives of everyday people in both ordinary ways and miraculous ways," explains Nathan Brown, book editor at Signs Publishing Company and compiler of the books.

In his introduction to the book, Mr Brown describes the project as a story of stewardship in itself, citing the uncertainty as to whether sufficient stories would be submitted for a third volume. "When God responds in His generosity in partnership with us, we have a story to tell—and, in this case, a collection of stories to share."

*Ordinary People—Generous God* is available from Adventist Book Centres.

# why disciple?

by Luke Narabe



## The benefit to the discipler

**M**ANY CHRISTIANS SIT IN CHURCHES ALL THEIR lives hearing the word taught. They learn Bible doctrine. They experience life and learn from their experiences, but never allow others to benefit.

Listen to this statement from Ellen White, "What can we expect but deterioration in religious life when the people listen to sermon after sermon and do not put the instruction into practice? The ability God has given, if not exercised, degenerates" (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol 6 p 425).

A newborn baby grows naturally, but if he does not exercise throughout his life he will grow fat. Obesity is no compliment to anyone and there are dangers in being fat. There are dangers to church members who do not exercise. They deteriorate and thus, the whole church deteriorates.

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:3-4 NKJV).

God doesn't want us to hoard all that He has taught us. He wants to use us to help others grow. That process is discipleship.

## The Results of Preparation

We need more than numerical growth. We need maturity in our Christian experience that will multiply the body of Christ year after year. Only groups can do that. As the human body grows through the multiplication of its cells, the body of Christ will grow through the multiplication of its cell groups.

There are many Christians in our churches who have never gone beyond the alphabet because they have missed the growth that comes from saving and caring for souls. Ellen White reminds us that, "It is because this work is neglected that so many young disciples never advance beyond the mere alphabet of Christian experience. The light which was glowing in their own hearts when Jesus spoke to them, "thy sins be forgiven thee", they might have kept alive by helping those in need. . . Those who minister to others will be ministered unto by the Chief Shepherd. . . The great topic of interest will be how to save the souls

that are ready to perish" (*The Desire of Ages*, p 640).

Listen to this counsel from the Spirit of Prophecy, "just as soon as a church is organized, let the minister set the members at work. They will need to be taught how to labor successfully" (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol 7, p 20).

"The Saviour Commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister. All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon them its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ" (*The Desire of Ages*, p 822).

Peter also reminds us: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9).

Again we have another important statement from Ellen White: "The ministers and the church members are to unite as one person in labouring for the up-building and prosperity of the church. . . The minister's work is the lay members work as well" (*The Review and Herald*, July 9, 1985).

Discipling includes all groups in the church that process people to the next step of spiritual maturation. The church should be viewed as a holistic discipling unit, a living, organic body that moves people on in their relationship to Christ and in service.

Building people becomes the key to being church. The emphasis is not only on what we know, but more importantly, on who we are. It is broad, holistic and balanced. Because of the emphasis on holism and everyone being a minister, our goal becomes not just baptisms but producing mature disciples for Christ.

When we are learning and growing and passing our discoveries on to someone else, and they are doing the same, then the principle of multiplication will cause the Church to grow. And it will be good solid growth with Christians in varying stages of maturity. Not a spectator church with a few professionals and a lot of babies, but growing stewards who will make a growing church.

**R**

# The joy of the steward

**T**HEOLOGIAN R SCOTT RODIN WROTE THAT British prestige was shattered when running champion Linford Christie left the track at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games after failing to win the gold medal. Oddly, Christie did not lose the race to a faster or better athlete. In fact, he did not run one stride in the seminal event that would have defined his career and crowned him as the fastest athlete, not only of the modern games, but perhaps of all time.

As the event was about to begin, the starter's gun went up and Christie did the unimaginable. With the world watching, he broke and made a false start. Minutes later, he broke a second time; two false starts meant immediate disqualification.

All the training, pain and mental preparation that led him to that critical moment were now wasted. The dream of a new Olympic record, and the prestige that went with it disappeared as Christie left the arena shocked, heartbroken and discouraged. A brilliant career would be forever remembered for that one infamous moment of failure—all because of false starts.

Rodin says it's not hard to liken Christie's experience with that of the Church in terms of stewards and stewardship. He even suggests the modern Church misunderstands the role of the steward (*Stewards in the Kingdom*, p.16). "Being a steward is quite different from practicing stewardship," he says. "The first defines who we are; the second describes what we do." Mostly, according to Rodin, "we get these terms reversed," and he considers this a false start.

Former president of the North American Division, Charles E Bradford, agrees with Rodin. "A steward is a manager, and stewardship is management—the management of goods and gifts on behalf of another . . . Christian stewards are empowered by the Holy Spirit and commit themselves to conscious, purposeful decisions in the use of these gifts (*Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, p 651).

And so, a biblical understanding of the role of a steward can only strengthen the bond between God and humanity, enhancing the life of faith, service and mission.

## The Joy of the Steward

To discover the joy of the steward we must go back to the book of beginnings. In Genesis 2: 15 (NKJV), the Bible states: "Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it." Biblically, a steward cares for their master's goods. However, the thought behind God's instruction to Adam goes a lot deeper. One interpretation of the ancient word for steward is, "life giver;" not too far from the mark when we consider God's gifts are meant to sustain us both physically and spiritually.

However, there is much more in these few words. Adam Clarke's commentary says that the first man had intuitive knowledge of the creation and knew how to look after his Master's garden. Sometimes we think of Adam as having the maturity of a kindergarten child, but this is not the case. He was perfect in intellect and knowledge. "Adam and Eve received knowledge through direct communion with God; and they learned of Him through His works" (EGW, *Education* p 126).

For Adam and Eve the role of steward was simply to use God's gifts to bless others. In their garden home, this was the natural order of things. They lived to serve their Creator and each other. But, sin changed the innate order of things, and the subsequent decline of the role of steward started when our interactions with God and His creation fell apart.

In his book, *The Missing Connection*, Ben Maxson says, "We were created for a relationship with God," (p 109). "Being a steward denotes an automatic relationship with the Master," he continues. However, we are disconnected from God in a way that creates tensions between partners, families, races and the earth, says Charles Bradford. Because of this disconnection, our self-image is wanting and we do not know to whom we belong. We are lost in a world going nowhere. To complete the breakdown in our relationships, we exploit the planet because we have lost the sacredness intrinsic within the role of the steward. In effect, we are alienated from God in more areas than we acknowledge.



# d

by David Edgar

## The Sovereignty of Stewardship

Moving from the role of steward to acts of stewardship, JL McElhan, in his book *Counsels on Stewardship* (p 6), says, "In the realm of Christian life and service the question of stewardship occupies a large and vital place. . . . Our recognition of the sovereignty of God, of His ownership of all things, and of the bestowal of His Grace upon us, is included in a proper understanding of the principles of stewardship."

Unfortunately, many have come to understand the word stewardship negatively because the word is often used as a synonym for finances; but that's a misnomer. First, it shows a lack of biblical understanding of the role of a steward. Secondly, because of our fallen natures it degrades a gift of heaven to that of a resentful act.

We are sometimes resentful of giving because in our fallen state we have become owners and are no longer stewards; and what we own, we guard jealously. We seek to satisfy our own cravings instead of using what belongs to God to bless others. Among Christians, this is sadly evident in the accumulation of this world's goods. Instead of passing on His gifts, we store them up.

We have forgotten that the, "earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof (Psalm 24:1 KJV). We need to remember that all we see in our present world is temporary. As backslidden stewards, we own our time, talents and possessions, dispensing them as we see fit, rather than as God asks. If God is not the owner of one hundred percent of our lives, He owns nothing. We need to look to our future world where all God's gifts are free, more beautiful and satisfying than all the gold our current world could ever buy.

As God taught Adam and Eve their role as stewards, Jesus also modelled the same teachings. In John 17:6-12, Jesus, as God's Chief Steward, dispensed the gifts of heaven for our salvation. He was faithful and single minded to the task given Him. He lived to bless humanity with heaven's greatest gift, Himself.


Jesus could have had the riches of the world, but rejected them for our salvation. He died a pauper in this world's

eyes because He had His sights set on the next. These are the mysteries we need to understand. In 1 Corinthians 4:1,2, the Apostle Paul said: "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." Gospel stewards dispense the secrets of the kingdom to interested souls. We are to reveal heaven's most precious gift, Jesus Christ. We are to tell them He loves them and will do all within His power to save them. But, He wants us to share His love among the lost.

Regarding verse 2, Charles Bradford *ibid* says. ". . . the faith community does not exist for itself. It exists for the distribution, the sharing, of God's manifold grace with a needy world. . . . The steward has no option but to meet these needs wherever found." The essence of the role of steward is to give. The Apostle Peter said: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."

It is time the Church rediscovered the role of the biblical steward because the world needs to see Jesus as its only hope. "How beautiful are those who preach the good news," says Paul (Romans 10:15). We could add, "How beautiful are those faithful stewards who dispense heaven's gifts as well." In effect, they are the same thing. In *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p 138, Ellen White wrote: "Men and women should be informed in regard to the human habitation fitted up by our Creator as His dwelling place, and over which He desires us to be faithful stewards."

In the New Testament the role of the steward is an active and important one. It overshadows all we do as Christians because it gives us a point of departure, a reason for being, and a direction for mission. When we understand the role of the steward false starts are impossible and acts of stewardship naturally follow.

We minister because we understand how God wants us to bless others. We give because we believe that all belongs to Him who suffered for us. And, we serve because we cannot do otherwise. The steward is God's deputy. 

*Pastor David Edgar is director of Trust services, Christian Services for the Blind, Communication and Stewardship for the South Queensland Conference.*



# Ordinary People Ge

**A**FTER NINE YEARS OF LIVING IN PAPUA NEW Guinea and visiting churches in and around Lae each Sabbath, two years ago we were invited to try something different. We were to worship “inside” with the “high risk” men of Buimo Kalabus—the prison at Lae. Now each Sabbath we worship “inside”—it has become our “church”.

I am honoured to have been given the “honorary” position of head deaconess—as I am the only female with permission to go “inside”. My husband and I laugh about the title! Each Sabbath is so special—not just because it is the Lord’s day but because we again have the opportunity to witness with “our boys”.

Recently, we witnessed 30 of “our boys” and two of “my girls” go into the water of baptism—what joy there must have been in heaven that day!

To be called Mumma and Pappa—or Mummy and Daddy—to be greeted so warmly by these men who are “inside” for murder, rape or armed hold-ups, is something I would never have thought of when reading Matthew 25:36, “I was in prison and you visited me.” What a privilege to be a part of their family!

On another recent Sabbath, we celebrated the Lord’s Supper. Imagine more than 150 men whose hearts and lives have been turned around, sitting on the floor inside the “walls of wires” that make up our church.

As the service continued, the elder invited us to find a friend and wash each other’s feet. I went outside the wired walls, inviting those who were sitting along the nearby wall of the cell to follow the example of Jesus and take part, if they so desired. I told them it was not only for “us” who were church members or those who attended each Sabbath. What a thrill it was when some of these other men came and joined in such a special service. After all, this is Papua New Guinea and the kalabus—where men are “men” and these men are “inside” because they didn’t want to be humble!

After a time, when I had finished foot washing and was sitting waiting for the rest of the men to finish, I noticed an

inmate come inside. He seemed to want to take part.

The elder asked if there was anyone who had not washed the feet of a friend. There was silence until I said I had already taken part but was happy to wash his feet, if that was OK with him. We found space on the floor and joined together in foot washing and prayer. Little did I realise how much the “service of humility” meant to him.

Two weeks later after church, I was talking with a group of inmates, when I heard a quiet voice saying, “Mummy, mummy”. I turned to see the shy man whose feet I had washed two Sabbaths earlier.

He continued, “Mumma, mi laik givim yu samtin” (“Mumma, I want to give you something”).

Knowing he would have nothing “inside” that he would not require himself, I thanked him, adding that I really did not need anything.

With a little more conversation and with tears, he lifted a packet of three biscuits, similar to Sao biscuits, saying, “Plis, mi sori tru, mi nogat narapela samting long givim yu, long tok tenku—yu wasim leg bilong mi” (“Please, I am very sorry that I don’t have anything else to give you to say thank you—you washed my feet”).

With a lump in my throat, I replied, “Tenku tru, but em monin kai kai bilong yu, yu kai kai em. Taim mi wasim leg bilong yu, mi bihainim leg mark long Jisas—yu no nid long tok tenku” (“Thank you very much, but these were your breakfast, you eat them. When I washed your feet, I was following the example of Jesus—you don’t need to thank me”).

But I could see he wanted to show his gratitude. So with tears in his eyes and mine, I accepted the biscuits as he said, “Yes mumma, mi lukim Jisas, taim yu wasim leg bilong mi” (“Yes Mumma, I saw Jesus when you washed my feet”).

I thank my heavenly Father for the opportunity to serve Him. I thank Him for giving me the opportunity to go “inside” and be mumma to our “boys”!

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*Margaret Davis lives in Lae, where her husband, Reg, is building supervisor for the Papua New Guinea Union Mission. This story is adapted from Ordinary People—Generous God (see report on page 14 for details).*

# Generous God

**O**UR FAMILY HAD A FARM NEAR MANJIMUP, THREE hours south of Perth, Western Australia. Like many other farmers in the district, we decided to grow a crop of peas under contract with Edgell-Birdseye. It was the responsibility of Edgell-Birdseye to sow, monitor and harvest the crop once the peas reached maturity. Our family was responsible for the irrigation, fertilising and weeding of the crop.

Edgell field officers visited regularly to check the pea crops, ensuring the farmers were keeping up with their part of the contract. They would also take Maturity Index (MI) readings as part of the monitoring process to help them calculate when the crop would be ready to harvest.

Unlike other vegetables, peas mature in a matter of hours, so monitoring their growth is essential to receiving a successful crop and the best quality product possible. As the crop comes closer to maturity, the field officers spend all hours of the day and night monitoring its progress. If they miss the right level of maturity, the peas become hard like bullets and are worth a lot less.

After taking his MI readings one Wednesday, the field officer told us that with the continued warm fine weather forecast, the peas would be ready for harvest during the early hours of Saturday morning. This meant the harvesters would arrive late Friday night in preparation.

My husband, Mark, explained to the field officer that we would prefer the crop not be harvested at this time, which would be during the Sabbath hours. He requested that they wait until after Sabbath closed at sunset on Saturday night. He explained about Sabbath and the importance of observing it to the field officer. But the field officer became annoyed and was adamant that the crop would be harvested when he thought appropriate, as stated in the contract.

Due to being locked into a contract, the only way we could see of getting around the Sabbath issue was to take it to God in prayer.

The next day—Thursday—after offering many prayers to God, Mark was asked to meet with the field officer, field manager, production manager and manager. He again

explained the importance of Sabbath-keeping and the relevance of not working on the Sabbath, even for anyone “within their gates,” as instructed in the Fourth Commandment in Exodus 20.

The managers explained again to Mark that if the crop was left to be harvested when he wanted, the peas could be overmature, with a very high MI reading. Consequently, we would receive the lowest payment rate per ton and the peas would be like bullets, which was not in Edgell-Birdseye’s interest. They emphasised to him that once they had taken out the costs due to Edgell, for the seed, planting and harvesting of the crop, our crop payment would be reduced even further.

They asked if we had considered that by the time we took out our other costs—such as fertiliser, irrigation and labour—we might actually make a substantial loss.

Mark responded by telling them we believed God was in control. He could either turn it into a bumper crop or let it fail, but ultimately, we would leave it completely in God’s hands as it was His crop.

To the annoyance of the field officer, after telling Mark how foolish they thought he and his family were, the managers decided they would respect our religious beliefs and hold off the harvest until just after sunset on Saturday night, even if the crop was ready for harvest earlier. What a relief and an answer to prayer!


But God wasn’t finished.

Our pea crop not only became the topic of interest to many of the employees at Edgell-Birdseye but also the townsfolk and surrounding farmers who had heard what was happening. Many in the district knew our family well, knew of our faith and that we only ever worked six days a week—never on Sabbath. They were all watching with considerable interest.

Unexpectedly, Friday morning dawned cold, overcast and drizzly—a cold front had moved in overnight. This was contrary to the long range weather forecast and unusual for that time of the year. As the cooler weather would slow down the maturing of the pea crop, the field officer told us that based on the new MI readings, the crop would not be ready for harvesting until midnight Saturday night.

God not only answered our prayers for not harvesting on Sabbath, He also brought in a cold front to slow down the maturing of the peas.

Still, God wasn’t finished yet.

Very rarely will a pea crop yield both a low MI reading for high quality and high tonnage per acre. Much to the amazement of the Edgell-Birdseye management and staff—and the interested onlookers—this pea crop had the lowest MI reading, giving the highest quality supplied for the season. It also had one of the highest tonnages per acre in the district. 

*Jenny Keegan now lives in Mittagong, NSW, with her family but about 20 years ago—at the time of this story—both she and her husband, Mark, worked for Edgell-Birdseye in Manjimup, WA, as well as helping with the family farm. This story is adapted from Ordinary People—Generous God.*

# Eco Steward

by Sue Redman

**I have to admit I've been just as guilty as the next person for both ignoring and being altogether disinterested in environmental concerns.**

IT HAS ONLY BEEN IN THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS that God's heart for this earth has started to become my heart. I now agree with Dr John Baldwin, a professor of theology at Andrews University, who says, "It's time for Seventh-day Adventists to be more active in environmental issues."

Other Adventist academics expressed similar convictions during an interview with Adventist News Network. "Even though the Bible promises a "new heaven and a new earth" at the conclusion of the book of Revelation, that's not a reason for Seventh-day Adventist Christians to ignore pressing environmental concerns," they said. "Adventists need to resurrect again the beauty of our doctrine and importance of health and a healthy lifestyle."

As I've thought about this over the last few years, I've realised that just like the promise of a perfect world doesn't make child abuse OK in the here and now, neither does it make earth abuse OK. As Christians we are called to be responsible stewards of the home God has created for us. To help us do that we need to understand the biblical basis of ecology, the reality of the ecological crisis and some positive steps we can take.

## The biblical basis of ecology

To understand the biblical basis of ecology, we first need to understand the biblical doctrine of creation. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," Genesis 1:1 tells us. But "he did not create (the earth) a chaos, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isaiah 45:18) and according to God it was "good", in fact "very good"! (Genesis 1:31)

Whether we truly believe God's creation is "good" is profoundly reflected in how we "rule over" it. God originally gave humans the responsibility of caring for the earth in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1:26, 28) and He explained how to do that when He told Adam to till and keep it (Genesis

2:15) and told the Israelites to let it rest (Leviticus 25:2-8). Charles Bradford summarises the implications of this in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*.

"The stewardship of the earth, which God entrusted to Adam and Eve, still belongs to their descendants. We who inhabit the planet are responsible for its care. In the final judgment, the 'destroyers of the earth' are destroyed."

Sound a bit steep? Bradford is actually quoting Revelation 11:18 and this is just the beginning. Imagine what God would say about the greed that is significantly contributing to the bleak future of this planet and a Christian's responsibility to protect the poor who are the hardest hit by the ecological crises.

## The reality of the ecological crisis

The reality of the ecological crisis is becoming more and more obvious. Many scientists now believe we are living on borrowed time, and tragically, we are borrowing from future generations. The longer this generation puts off sustainable living, they say, the harder it will be for the next.

According to Bernard Nebel and Richard Wright, there are four basic principles of sustainable living and an ecological crisis exists when any one of these principles is compromised: 1. recycling to dispose wastes and replenish nutrients; 2. using solar energy; 3. maintaining the size of consumer populations to prevent overgrazing; and 4. maintaining biodiversity.

Presuming this to be true, is it any wonder we have an ecological crisis? Consider a well-known compromise in the third principle, the deforestation of rainforests. More than 40 million acres of tropical rainforests are lost each year to deforestation and given that 40 per cent of the world's oxygen is believed to be supplied by the tropical rainforest belt, is it any wonder we are on alert?

What about the effects of burning fossil fuels like coal,

a well-known compromise in the fourth principle? Or the debated ozone hole over Antarctica? These are just a few examples of environmental problems we are facing today but in and of themselves they illustrate the need for positive change.

### Positive environmental steps

The concerned Christian's imagination is the only limit to creating positive ways to nurture the earth God has entrusted to us. We can recycle, use compost for gardens, use alternative means of transport to cars. We can support quality environmental organisations, use our pens and use our voices.

Still not sure this will make a difference? Or not sure all the Adventists in the South Pacific can make a difference? Be encouraged by Pastor Don McFarlane, the president of the Adventist Church in the United Kingdom, who said, "We might think our individual contribution to climate stabilisation might be too small to make a difference, however every little bit counts. Every snowflake in an avalanche has some responsibility for it."

As the whole creation groans in labour pains, as Romans 8:22 describes it, I can't wait for the day when "creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). God's redemptive work, through Jesus Christ, is not only for us but also the natural world around us and my prayer is that we will be faithful keepers of this garden until Jesus comes again!      ↻

Sue Redman is the pastor of Thornleigh Church (NSW) and Personal Ministries Assistant (Discipleship) for the Greater Sydney Conference.



## eGiving Interview with Bob Louk

Stewardship Director  
South Australian Conference

**What is eGiving?** Any form of electronic funds transferred electronically. This secure online service allows members and friends to contribute financially to the church and its mission by using credit card payments, bank direct debit or Bpay.

**How does it work?** Your funds are credited to the bank account of the local church. The treasurer will produce necessary receipts and place these for your collection in the normal location at your local church.

**What are the benefits?** Convenience, you don't have to worry about having cash on hand. There is less cash for church treasurers to worry about. Planned regular giving is more easily achieved. It is also flexible as you can readily adjust the amounts at any time.

**How will my church treasurer know that I returned tithes to my church?** The money goes into the local church account. Once you register online, the treasurer will know it's you.

**We're asked to bring our treasure to the storehouse; how is returning tithes online an act of worship?** The concept of a Sabbath offering as part of our worship of God is more custom and tradition than Biblical mandate. We can worship God through our giving any time of the day or night during the week. So there is no difference in that respect. Because giving to God is an act of worship, we encourage you to pause and offer a prayer of thanks to God for supplying all your needs and meditate on one of the following Scriptures:

Proverbs 3:9  
Malachi 3:10  
2 Corinthians 8:8,9  
1 Timothy 6:18,19  
Philippians 4:19

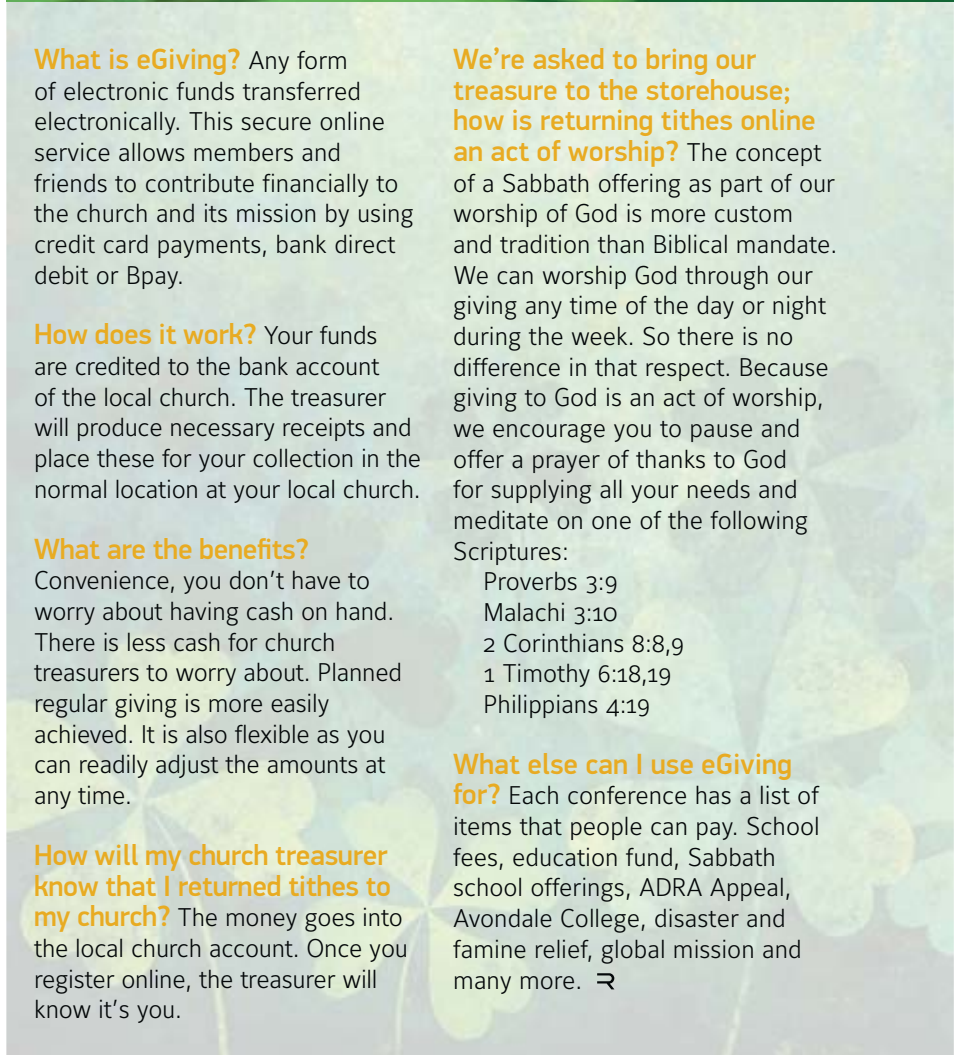
**What else can I use eGiving for?** Each conference has a list of items that people can pay. School fees, education fund, Sabbath school offerings, ADRA Appeal, Avondale College, disaster and famine relief, global mission and many more.      ↻

## OPINION POLL

Do you trust the church to manage your tithes and offerings?

Yes       No

Please visit [record.net.au](http://record.net.au) to answer this poll.





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# Kids' SPACE

## Bula\* kids

Remember Jacob? He was a good steward. Stewardship means looking after the things that Jesus has gifted you with. It might be your health, your time, your food even your money. Jacob decided to give back to God, one-tenth of the things God had given to him. This is called paying tithe.

### Colour in Li Mei's Tithe

### Colour in Joseph's Tithe

OR
OR
OR

## Bible Text

Of \_\_\_\_ that You \_\_\_\_ me \_ will \_\_\_\_ You a \_\_\_\_.

Genesis 28:22

### Draw lines to connect the coins to the correct numbers

twenty cents

ten cents

five cents

fifty cents

one dollar

two dollars

Remember we show JESUS we love Him by being good stewards!

\*Hello in Fijian



# NOTICE BOARD

## POSITIONS VACANT

■ **Part-time Accountant—Adventist Aged Care (Wahroonga, NSW).** A part-time vacancy exists for a qualified accountant to work in our accounts department in Wahroonga. This is a part-time position for 16 hours per week. The successful applicant will have the following: an accounting degree and CPA membership or equivalent, prior accounting experience, good computing skills with a good knowledge of MS Excel and accounting software, experience in producing monthly and annual financial reports, good communication skills. For applications please contact Brian Swanepoel, <brianswanepoel@adventist.org.au> or (02) 9487 0600. Applications close **May 31, 2010.**

■ **Account Manager, Foodservice/Route, Away From Home (AFH)—Sanitarium (NSW).** An exciting opportunity exists for a highly motivated account manager to join the AFH team growing Sanitarium's Foodservice/Route business with Australia's most loved breakfast cereal and other leading products. The position is based in Sydney and will report to the business manager AFH. The position involves focusing on delivering exceptional customer service to assigned accounts and customers, daily face-to-face interactions with customers, preparing and tracking business plans, driving product sales, preparing and delivering business reviews and presentations. Position requirements include those of strong negotiation and computer skills. For a fuller description and position requirements, please visit our website <www.sanitarium.com.au/company/employment.html> or contact Peter Jaeger on 0416 106 544 for more information. Apply online at <www.sanitarium.com.au/company/employment.html>. Applications close **June 11, 2010.**

For more employment options go to [adventistemployment.org.au](http://adventistemployment.org.au)



## WEDDINGS

**Borkovic—Barnett.** Linden Borkovic, son of Mladen and Blazenka Borkovic (Melbourne, Vic), and Elizabeth Barnett, daughter of Frederick and Rosemary Barnett (Melbourne), were married 7.3.10 in St Johns Lutheran church, Melbourne.

*David Currie*

**Buzzard—Anderson.** Adam Buzzard, son of Peter and Debby Buzzard (Nelson, NZ), and Alexandra (Ali) Anderson, daughter of Rodger Anderson and Mary Fowler (both of Brisbane, Qld), were married 14.4.10 at Roma Street Parkland.

*Darrin Parker*

**Furst—Jakab.** Robert Furst, son of Wladyslawa Borkovich, and Renata Jakab, daughter of Mr and Mrs Stephen Jakab, were married 10.4.10 at Windmill Gardens Chapel, Plumpton, Vic. Friends from many parts of Australia attended.

*David Currie*

## ADVERTISEMENTS

**Quality Christian products.** Books,

DVDs, study guides, story CDs and music from suppliers Amazing Facts, 3ABN and others. Register for our monthly specials. Contact The Story Factory, freecall 1800 452 133; or email <info@thestoryfactory.com.au> and online at <www.thestoryfactory.com.au>.

**Remember Greensborough Church?** We're moving! 46 page history (190+ colour photos) available from Brian Pascoe, 169 Smiths Rd, Toolangi, Vic 3777 or <bgpascoe@aapt.net.au>. Price \$15 (incl. postage).

**Nunawading Church 60th Anniversary Invitation.** This year Nunawading Church Victoria celebrates its 60th anniversary. As a result we are planning a special celebratory day on Sabbath, July 24. We are inviting ex-Pastors, ex-members and others connected to Nunawading church to attend. If you have any memorabilia that could enhance the anniversary or for further information, please contact Pastor Rod Anderson (0439 615 250).

**Data projectors, screens, DVDs, VCRs, PA systems etc.** Lower prices for Adventist churches,

2nd International Conference

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or telephone +61 2 4980 2121

**KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**  
Dr Dianne Sika-Paotonu, Malaghan Institute of Medical Research  
Mrs Barbara Fisher, Avondale College  
Dr Sook-Young Kim, Kyungbook National University, South Korea  
Dr Koot Van Wyk, Kyungbook National University, South Korea  
and more

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**Finally**  
Live simply so that others may simply live.

**Next Record June 5**

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## VOLUNTEERS!

**Pacific Yacht Ministries** is seeking health personnel for its 2010 season. Expressions of interest are sought from doctors, dentists, registered nurses and qualified health educators. The season operates July–October inclusive and volunteer service is for approximately two week terms. If you are interested please go to <www.pym.org.au> for further information and to download the application form.

Email:  
<volunteers@adventist.org.au>  
For more positions visit  
<www.adventistvolunteers.org>

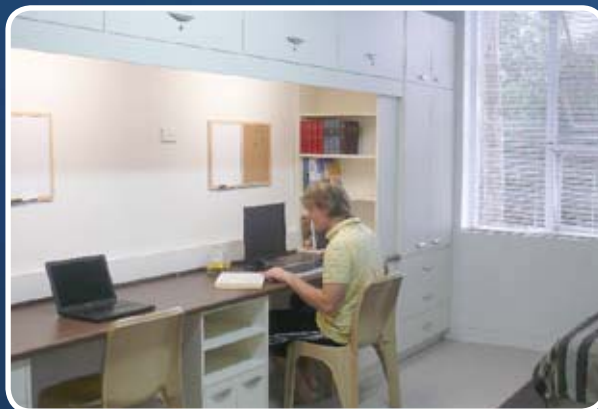


# ADOPT A ROOM

## CARRY ON THE AVONDALE EXPERIENCE



### ANDRE HALL



### WATSON HALL

Sponsor the renovation of a room, possibly the room in which you stayed.

Help make the Avondale experience for the next generation of students even better by giving to the **Avondale College Offering** or by supporting **Adopt A Room**.

The project allows you, a group of friends or your church community to fund the renovation of a room.

We will place a plaque in the room to honour your contribution.

#### ANDRE HALL

Andre is a sanctuary for women of Avondale, and the first "home away from home" for many.

#### What are the issues?

Andre's 42 double rooms have little storage space, deteriorating chipboard fittings, old furniture and poor lighting.

#### What we want to do?

Rooms in Andre, when renovated, will have new carpet, bedside drawers, better lighting, more power points and lockable storage space. Laminate will replace chipboard. Walls will feature neutral colours to encourage individual decorating flair. The layout of the rooms will also change to make them more suitable for studying.

#### WATSON HALL

The men of Watson have a proud history of mateship and camaraderie. For many, the friendship has been just as important as the study.

#### What are the issues?

Watson's remaining 83 rooms have little storage space, deteriorating chipboard fittings and old furniture.

#### What we want to do?

Rooms in Watson, when renovated, will have bedside tables, bookshelves, new carpet and linoleum, new chairs, corner cupboards, lockable overhead cupboards, computer friendly desks, more drawers, new paint, more power points and a specific space for a fridge. Laminate will replace chipboard.

### HOW TO GIVE ...



- > AVONDALE COLLEGE OFFERING, JUNE 5
- > [www.avondale.edu.au/adoptaroom](http://www.avondale.edu.au/adoptaroom)