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**Banned
for handing
out Bibles . . .**
but cared for by God ¹⁹

Solomons school damaged by
earthquake ⁶



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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Letters from Paul

Jarrod Stackelroth
Editor

“
[Paul] understood how his experiences had led him to be especially equipped for his unique ministry.

I've been reading through the letters of Paul as I make my way through the Bible this year. Paul is a fascinating character who lived a life that can still teach church leaders and Christians of all maturity some valuable lessons. Here are just a few of the lessons that have stood out to me as I read through.

Make the main thing, the main thing:

The gospel of Jesus was Paul's absolute centre. He lived and breathed it. Every piece of advice that he gave, he framed around the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Often in his letters, Paul is addressing some controversy or challenge in the local church (or group of churches that make up a city). While he did address the specific issues a group wrestled with, he did so in a framework of gospel understanding, using Scripture to make his point and pointing to the work of the Holy Spirit and the example of Jesus. We must do the same, with the gospel at the centre of every controversy and challenge we face.

Contextualise your message:

In Paul's letter to Titus, who was based in Crete, Paul quotes a Cretan poet. In Athens, Paul quotes Greek philosophers and claims the Unknown God. When arguing with the Judaisers and Pharisees, Paul draws on his Pharisaic pedigree and training (he uses this to good effect when he sets the Pharisees and Sadducees to arguing with each other, diverting attention from himself). And to the church, he uses his shared experiences with them, the people they know in common and their shared stories of Jesus and Hebrew Scripture to explain, teach and equip. Paul knew how to modify his message to be appropriate to the audience and their needs. We must always do the same with our Advent message. As a communication professional, one of the first things I tell people in training is to know their audience so they can craft a message that speaks to their needs.

Be hopeful:

Paul was always signing off his letters with his hope to see the people again and that he would worship with them in person. While he was in prison, looked forward to receiving a visit from the person he was writing to (Timothy and Titus). Paul especially looked forward to being with Jesus. He explains to the Thessalonians that they should not be without hope—that they should understand that death is not the end. He frequently looked forward to the coming of Jesus and encouraged others to hold on for that day. As humans we need events to look forward to. That is why the past two years, with uncertainty and cancelled plans, have been so mentally draining, as we lost that sense of anticipation. As Adventists, we should be people of hope. We should have an optimism and sense of wonder about the world, not borne from certainty or smooth and painless lives but because we know Jesus will be true to His Word. We know, especially in the middle of suffering and challenge, that the God we love and who loves us, is bigger than all the challenges and has already overcome death and sin.

Don't shy away from what makes you unique:

Paul understood the power of testimony. He understood how his experiences had led him to be especially equipped for his unique ministry. He often recounted and reminded those his letters were addressed to, of his experiences and his hardships. He used his testimony with King Agrippa (Acts 26) and always acknowledged God's call in his life, pointing to God as the model and himself as the follower. Paul called out his church members, challenging them to become a new humanity that respected each other and the culture around them, but placed allegiance to God above everything else. We must also be in tune with what God has done and is doing in our lives and how He is working in the lives of those around us. Our testimonies are a powerful tool that God has given us to share Him.

Let's strive to be gospel-centred, culturally literate, hope-filled, testifying new creations who share the good news that we've received with those in our spheres of influence.



INSIGHT:

A bigger perspective

Glenn Townend
South Pacific Division president

I was very hesitant to get vaccinated for COVID-19. Having never had a flu vaccine and rarely taking pain killers or antibiotics it was against my usual habits. I've followed Adventist health principles since I was a boy, which I thank God for: eating plant-based food, drinking mainly water, not taking illicit drugs, tobacco or alcohol, enjoying time nature and the Bible to reflect, exercising with walks with my wife in nature and bike riding, enjoying gardening in the sunshine and fresh air, getting good Sabbath rest, enough sleep and trusting in God. To date these principles have given me a very healthy and active life. They help build natural immunity. The older I get the more I value living by good health principles.

When I was vaccinated for COVID-19 I did have a complication requiring medical care that lasted longer than most who have been vaccinated. But I am still pleased I was vaccinated because health is more than just the body.

ELIA Wellness (SPD Health) app and website highlight seven principles of health (eliawellness.com/dimensions_of_wellness). They are emotional, physical, social, vocational, intellectual, environmental and spiritual. Maintaining good mental health in the pandemic has been a huge challenge. Not being able to see my parents, my children and their spouses, my grandchildren and other family and friends has been very hard. FaceTime and Zoom are working overtime but there is nothing like being with people face-to-face. We are social and emotional beings who need to hug and to hold. As soon as the restrictions eased I visited loved ones (still more to go). It is good for my health and theirs and it can only happen because we are vaccinated. Vaccination is not a guarantee, but it makes you less at risk of getting and carrying the deadly virus.

Travelling overseas to various countries has always required vaccinations. I cannot wait to be able to see my colleagues and church members in Queensland, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and other parts of the South Pacific. I will be encouraging my colleagues in the SPD office to travel as soon as they can because physical presence builds healthy disciples and a healthy church.

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SIM Honiara satellite event: people from the back watching the presentations.

Lifestyle medicine focus of summit

📍 Wairoonga, NSW | Juliana Muniz

People from across the South Pacific were equipped with the latest in lifestyle medicine strategies and research during the third ELIA Wellness Summit conducted from October 15 to 17.

More than 190 individuals attended the online event, and another 120 attended two satellite events run simultaneously in Honiara and at Atoifi Hospital in the Solomon Islands Mission.

A third satellite event at Pacific Adventist University (PAU) with 80 attendees expected had to be postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The program featured a team of researchers and clinicians from Australia, New Zealand, America and the Pacific who shared their expertise, presenting a range of lifestyle medicine topics.

"We seek to create and promote evidence-based, accessible resources and training in lifestyle medicine, that will inspire and empower people to bring health, healing and hope to their communities. It was great to see that 95 per cent of participants felt more educated and equipped to do this," said ELIA Wellness executive director Geraldine Przybylko.

Attendees learned about how lifestyle medicine can be used to improve immunity, the relationship between spirituality and wellbeing, the best diet for diabetes, the impact of food on the gut microbi-

ome and much more.

"The presentations were world class standard, and we have been inspired and challenged to make positive changes in our own lives as we also seek to impact the church during these challenging times," said Solomon Islands Mission president Dr Silent Tovosia.

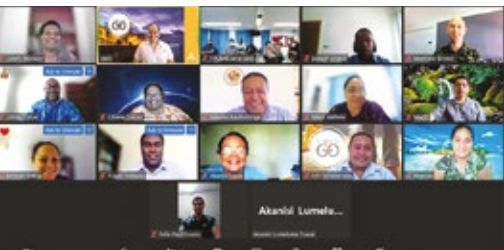
Another key feature of the program was the 10,000 Toes campaign, an Adventist Health initiative that has been growing across the Pacific with 3616 ambassadors educated and equipped to help combat diabetes and other non-communicable diseases.

"The 10,000 Toes campaign is the main wellness strategy in the Pacific. It is about turning the tide on diabetes," explained South Pacific Division (SPD) president Pastor Glenn Townend.

"This lifestyle disease can be prevented, managed and in some instances reversed by implementing a healthy lifestyle. We learnt plenty of good tips at the Wellness Summit to help us implement positive lifestyle change so we can live our best life."

"I am so thankful for the 10,000 Toes project as it is having a great impact in our Union," said Trans Pacific Union president Pastor Mavani Kaufononga.

Selected presentations will be made available at a discounted rate. Contact <christiana@eliawellness.com>.



The online training was conducted by South Pacific Division's Adsafte team.

Adsafte runs first-ever training at TPUM

📍 Suva, Fiji | John Tausere

The Trans Pacific Union Mission (TPUM) office hosted its first Adsafte training on October 26. TPUM office staff took part in the online half-day professional development and training session conducted by the South Pacific Division's Adsafte team.

Adsafte has been operating in Australia and New Zealand since 2017. In the Pacific, operations started more recently in 2019 with Meri Vulaloa appointed TPUM's first Adsafte training and development officer on September 1. AdSafe's focus in the Pacific is to educate churches on how to be safe places for vulnerable people.

The first session served as awareness training for the TPUM staff, introducing them to the types of operations and services offered by Adsafte.

Data shared during the session revealed alarming figures on sexual and physical abuse throughout all countries in the Trans Pacific region, a major concern for church leaders in the Pacific.

"It was great to be reminded that abuse has no place in our Church. This has to be true in every area: in all our departments, schools, missions, institutions, everywhere," said TPUM secretary Matthew Brown.



Discover Your SHAPE equips members to make disciples according to their strengths and areas of interest.

New ministry resource equips church members to make disciples

📍 Auckland, NZ | Juliana Muniz

The New Zealand Pacific Union Conference (NZPUC) and the Australian Union Conference (AUC) have launched a new tool to empower Adventists who want to serve in ministry and make disciples using their strengths and talents.

“Discover Your SHAPE” is a program that helps people to identify their SHAPE: Spiritual gifts, Heart (passion), Abilities, Personality, and Experience.

“By discovering your SHAPE, you can have greater clarity of God’s purpose for your life as each of these aspects serves as a ‘clue’ of what God wants you to do,” explains NZPUC Discipleship Ministries assistant Vahiria Kei.

Kickstarted by NZPUC Discipleship Ministries leader Pastor Victor Kulakov and his team, the program has been in the making since 2019.

“I personally get truly excited about it because I believe that God gave us a life and SHAPes us for a purpose,” said

Pastor Kulakov. Aiming to make the program available to more church members, Pastor Kulakov pitched the idea to the AUC, and the two unions worked together, using pastors from each country to film content for the course.

“The relationship worked really well between NZPUC and the AUC, and I hope we can collaborate more in the future,” said AUC Personal Ministries, Sabbath School and Stewardship director Pastor Lyndelle Peterson, who was responsible for converting the program to an online platform.

“If people discover their God-given SHAPE, they will become active disciple-making disciples working with others naturally empowered by the Spirit to expand Jesus’ kingdom on earth,” said SPD president Pastor Glenn Townend.

For more information, visit <learn.disciple.org.au>.



The principal’s house is off its stilts and has sustained major damage.

Solomons school damaged by earthquake

📍 Bekabeka, Solomon Islands | Jarrod Stackelroth

An earthquake caused significant damage to the Bekabeka Adventist Community High School on October 15, in Solomon Islands’ Western Province just east of Ngatokae Island.

The epicentre was between 25 and 30 kilometres from the closest point of land and communities, which happened to be the boarding school.

ADRA Solomon Islands director Stephen Tasker sent Raynick Jack, ADRA SI’s emergency management coordinator, on the *MV Mariner* to discover what damage had occurred at the school and surrounding communities and put together a report.

With 23 out of 28 homes on the campus damaged in some way—two buildings completely fallen, including the principal’s house and the canteen, and seven seriously damaged—five staff families have had to live in the dining hall, one group in a classroom and the principal is staying in the transit flat.

The dormitories had some damage

but were still habitable, however six toilets and six showers were also broken, creating sanitation issues.

One student member was inside the canteen when it fell down, knocking her to the ground unconscious. She was pulled out of the building by some male students and revived shortly after.

“The administration would like to thank you all for prayers and especially ADRA Solomons for being the first to positively respond by sending an officer to assess the situation,” said Bekabeka principal Encie Dionie.

“We also thank God that no lives were lost and that both students and staff families are well.”

At least two houses will need rebuilding and others repaired.

Bekabeka is a boarding high school with 249 students, 18 teaching staff and nine support staff.

For more information on how to assist Bekabeka, you can contact the principal at <edionie@gmail.com>.



Author Karen Collum with the book *Advent for Kids*.

Kids' book shares Jesus' story with families

Warbuton, Vic | Nathan Brown

More than 10,000 copies of a new book will invite children and families to go deeper into the story of Jesus' birth for Christmas this year. Following the same day-by-day themes, *Advent for Kids* features readings adapted from *Advent*, as well as adding conversation starters and activity suggestions to engage the whole family.

"I love the idea of a book that means that families can journey together through the Advent season," said Karen Collum, a school chaplain and children's author who worked with the original book to adapt it for a new readership. "I think our theology around the birth of Jesus should be simple and clear enough for children to be able to appreciate it."

The new book project is the first for children supported by Adventist Media's Literature Ministries Committee. "Research indicates that the 4-to-14 window is when most people make a decision for Jesus," explained Brenton Lowe, coordinator of Literature Ministries. "With *Advent for Kids* aimed at readers from 5 to 12 years of age, this is a great opportunity to reach children with the good news—and their families through the children."

Mr Lowe said the Literature Ministries team received positive feedback from church members sharing *Advent* in the lead up to last Christmas. He suggests that *Advent for Kids* is an opportunity to follow up some of the same families that received last year's book and that the two books can be used together by different members of the family.

For Mrs Collum, sharing *Advent for Kids* will begin close to home this year. "Gold Coast Christian College are gifting the book to each family in our primary school in the hope that they will engage with it as a family," she said. "And Gold Coast Central Church are using the book as the foundation for worship services across December."

Amid continuing limitations of in-person events in Melbourne, the Road to Bethlehem team is using *Advent for Kids* and *Advent* as the basis for "A Month on the Road to Bethlehem" with daily video content planned for December (see <roadtobethlehem.org>).

Mrs Collum said she gained a new appreciation for the story of Jesus' birth in working on this project and this is something she is excited to share. "I learned that there is a depth and breadth to the story that is often overlooked in its usual telling each Christmas," she reflected. "And the humanity of the people in the story shines through when you go deeper."

Visit <signspublishing.com.au/advent-for-kids> to discover more about *Advent for Kids*, which is available from Adventist bookshops in Australia and New Zealand.

making headlines

Crucial role

Ghana president Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo attended the centennial celebration of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kumasi on October 16. In his speech, Mr Akufo-Addo recognised the nationwide impact of Adventists. "We can say with considerable pride that the Adventists have a great conceptive and crucial role in the development of Ghana," he said.—ANN



Adventist longevity

A national TV program in Germany recently featured Seventh-day Adventist members in Loma Linda, US, and their way of life. In a report, ARD's *Weltspiegel* discussed the lifestyle of residents in one of the so-called "Blue Zones" and how Adventists in the small Californian town have a longer life expectancy due to a healthy lifestyle.

—Adventist Review

Epilepsy research

Queensland researchers have turned blood samples from epilepsy patients into functioning human brain tissue, allowing them to test the effectiveness of different combinations of anti-seizure drugs. They hope the novel approach will take the guesswork out of prescribing seizure drugs to epilepsy patients, a process that is often a long journey of trial and error for neurologists.—ABC News

Mental health impact

One-in-four Australians say they know someone who died by suicide or attempted to take their own life during the past 12 months of the pandemic—equivalent to five million adults. The survey was commissioned by Suicide Prevention Australia and completed by YouGov in August.—news.com.au



Keith is 100!

War veteran Keith Hill turned 100 on October 31. Originally from Western Australia, he joined the army in Albany during World War II, quickly rising to the rank of sergeant. He met his late wife Iris at the Amberley Air Force base in Queensland, and together they raised four daughters. Mr Hill is now a resident at Adventist Senior Living in Cooranbong (NSW) and credits his long life to good genes, a healthy lifestyle, and staying active and interested in life. —Lyndon and Olive Schick



Super production

After much preparation, Brisbane Adventist School (BAC) students got on stage with colourful costumes and well-rehearsed choreographies to perform the musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*. Produced by the BAC Arts Department, the musical was presented for four nights from October 14 to 17. The musical comedy, written by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, is based on Joseph's "coat of many colours" story from Genesis. —Juliana Muniz



Blessed return

After weeks of COVID-19 challenges and disruptions to church services, members of Blenheim Adventist Church in New Zealand were pleased to celebrate four baptisms on their first Sabbath back worshipping together, on October 16. Each baptismal candidate shared their testimony and how Christian television played an essential role in their journey. The four new church members will continue their journey of spiritual growth under the leadership of a mentor. —Paul Gredig



Adventist mini-market

In an effort to encourage church members to consider backyard farming, the Samoa and Tokelau Adventist Mission (STM) office has built a small roadside market next to its back exit gate at the Lalovaea church campus. Church members in the area are now able to bring their fresh garden produce to sell at the mini-market. "Whenever I go to my garden, we will also collect some *koko Samoa*, coconuts, cabbage, spring onions, plants, beans, taro, breadfruit, mangoes and avocado to sell at this new market," said STM secretary Pastor Neru Nuualii. —*Trans-form*



Exciting visit

To promote Adventist Education, students and staff from Epauto Adventist Secondary School in Port Vila, Vanuatu, were divided into six groups with the mission to visit 10 churches in Malekula on August 21 and 28. Students were involved in singing, Sabbath school teaching and preaching. "Adventist parents were excited and asking for application forms to enrol their children in an Adventist school," said Malekula district director Maccsell James. —*Trans-form*



Digital evangelism

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has developed a new, exciting app as digital evangelism becomes the forefront of evangelistic and missional efforts by the worldwide membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The “Adventist Teams” app allows members around the world to source and distribute quality, biblical content for friends and family in the digital space. Adventist Teams is a result of the focus of the worldwide Adventist Church on Total Member Involvement (TMI).

General Conference associate director of communication, Pastor Sam Neves, reiterated the central importance of equipping every Adventist with the capacity and tools for online involvement in the great commission and the proclamation of the three angels’ messages.

“Our mission is to proclaim these three final warnings to the world and even though our mass communication models are important, God called each of us to be the ones delivering the message,” Pastor Neves said.

Apart from finding existing resources to share, the app will allow users to share their own created content—content that, according to Adventist Teams coordinator Alyssa Truman, is intended to be “evangelistic in nature, with members worldwide, who in turn, can share it with others”. To find out more visit adventistteams.org.—**GC Communications**

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Pray Until Something Happens

Funafuti Adventist Primary School in Tuvalu ended its education week on a high note with a special retreat at Afelita Island Resort from August 20 to 23. According to principal Kima Pedro, the event themed PUSH (Pray Until Something Happens) aimed at helping the participants improve their prayer skills. “Praying develops their personal relationship with God,” he said. Thirty-one students attended the retreat, with 15 coming from a non-Adventist background. “I really enjoyed the retreat. I have learnt new things about prayer, visited a new place and made friends,” said one of the participants. After the retreat’s success, the school plans to continue with similar programs to encourage students in their faith journey.—**Kima Pedro**



Uni church

After cultivating relationships on campus throughout the year, the Newcastle University Adventist church plant (NSW) ran its first official evangelistic series from October 22 to 30, with 100 people attending on Sabbath and 40 on Wednesday night. “Even though students were busy with assignments and exam preparation, we still had a very good attendance. About 30 per cent were not church members,” said one of the local church plant leaders Na Shen. Held at Warners Bay Adventist Church, the series was themed Revelation of Hope and was presented by Avondale University head of Seminary Dr Kayle de Waal. Healthy plant-based meals were provided at the weekend meetings by Food Farmacy—a North NSW Conference Health Ministries cafe opening in December in Cardiff.—**Juliana Muniz**



Cascade

Some of the largest waterfalls start as tiny streams . . .

It was the year 2020 and I had just given birth to our second child. My husband came home from work one day and told me about a virus outbreak and having to wear masks. In my sleep-deprived state it all seemed like a strange dream. I had to see it for myself, so when baby was sleeping one day I drove down to my nearest shopping centre to explore. The shopping centre was filled with people wearing masks, and social-distancing notices. It was very surreal. I started to see posts on Facebook about toilet paper shortages, and was trying to work out what was going on. People were panic buying, and toilet paper was at the top of the list!

The coronavirus did not seem to be going away. We were told to get used to a new normal.

Fast-forward to 2021 and things began to escalate.

The tiny stream is turning into a river.

Mask mandates, vaccine mandates, people hospitalised, protests, people losing their jobs, businesses suffering, lockdown after lockdown after lockdown, angry words all over social media,

restricted travel.

Never before have we seen such an event that has touched nearly every corner of the globe!

The coronavirus pandemic and the flow-on from that is impacting all of us in some way. It is also impacting our families and our churches. We are now seeing a polarising effect between those who choose to vaccinate and those who choose not to vaccinate. To mention something related to COVID-19 vaccination on social media creates a war of words and opinions. People are not afraid to voice hurtful and hateful comments, and people are afraid to talk and share openly.

Let us be careful not to judge, as we can only see the outside. God looks at the heart. Remember "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Verse 10 goes on to say that it is only God who searches the heart, and tests the mind, to give us according to our ways and the fruit of our doings. We need to spend less time judging, and more time loving (in the truest biblical sense); less time watching YouTube videos that support our viewpoints, and more time praying; less time criticising others and more time reading God's Word and fortifying our minds with it.

I know from my own experience that if left to myself, without Christ's faithfulness and victory working in my life, I can be judgemental, critical and mean.

As Christians, God wants to grow His fruit in us; the best kind of fruit: "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22).

Can these fruits be seen in our lives when we interact with others? Especially with those who have a different opinion to ours? I have seen fear and coercion used from both "poles": "Get vaccinated or else you will lose your 'freedoms' or lose your job!"

From the other pole comes the cry: "Don't get vaccinated, otherwise you're a sinner and you're receiving the mark of the beast!"

I know beautiful, loving people who have chosen to get the vaccine. I know beautiful, loving people who have chosen not to get the vaccine. I know judgemental, hateful people who have chosen to get the vaccine. I know judgemental, hateful people who have chosen not to get the vaccine.

Are we being Christian in the way we are living?

Whether you choose to get the vaccine or not, what fruit are you cultivating in your life? Are we allowing the Holy Spirit to grow His fruit in us?

The volume and speed of the river is growing

The vaccination issue is not the mark of the beast. I can say that with biblical certainty. This is just a dress rehearsal for what is to come, as we are clearly warned through Bible prophecy.

Don't get caught up in the shifting sand of human ideas: hidden microchips and 5G mind-control may be disproved, and if we build our case on that and it falls apart, then we have nothing to stand on.

The same goes for scientific research, or what one doctor says versus another. If we build our case only on human thinking, and that is disproved, then the rug is pulled out from

under us.

The only firm foundation we have is the Rock; Jesus Christ and His unchanging, ever-remaining Word. Let's focus our time and effort on telling the world that Jesus is coming soon!

I can start to hear the roar of the approaching waterfall

We have been warned in the Bible that friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4).

Let's not get so comfortable with giving up our freedoms in order to gain what the world has to offer.

Though the vaccination issue is not the mark of the beast, there are more choices to come, and each little choice that we make culminates into a great cascade. If we are loving the world and worldly things now, then when the true test comes, we may be tempted to conform. If we are not firmly rooted in Jesus, we will be swept away by the lure of the world. God's way may seem narrow and inconvenient; uncomfortable even. But we are called to be like Moses who chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin . . . for he looked to the reward (Hebrews 11:24-26). The trials we go through here on this earth will be nothing when compared with the joy we will experience with Jesus for eternity!

And so we must ask ourselves the question: how am I living today? Am I digging down deep and building a solid foundation on the Rock? Or am I too busy sunbaking out the front of my demountable beach house? We know that only one of those houses can weather the storm; the one built on the Rock—Jesus Christ.

The time of the end is near and the time of trouble will soon come. How will you live today to prepare your heart and mind for Jesus' second coming? For really, truly, today is all that we have. Are you seeking God with all your heart? Are you spending time in God's Word? Are you living out practical Christian love in your home and circle of influence? Are you persevering in prayer like the prophet Daniel? Do you know God? Do you know God as your Friend and your Saviour?

One of my favourite Bible passages says, "Thus says the Lord: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising loving-kindness, judgement, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,' says the Lord" (Jeremiah 9:23,24).

Do you really know Him? Does He know you?

The warning is there for those who have ears to hear.

Beware of the cascade. Once that water plunges over the edge, it's too late.

"He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work" (Revelation 22:11,12).

Carly Kochanski

mum of three, Singer/song-writer and lover of Jesus, Glouster, NSW.



Practising our (public) health message

Having spent more than 20 years working and studying in the field of Public Health and Epidemiology, I have been disheartened by the foothold that anti-vaccination and anti-vaccination mandate ideologies have taken within some spheres of the Adventist church community. As a denomination, we have placed great importance on the proclamation of the health message for more than 150 years. We have prided ourselves on our healthy lifestyles, with abstinence from tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs a cornerstone of most church members' lives.

This stance has always been aligned with the principles of public health, with prevention of disease being preferable to cure—and much less costly. This is further underlined by the many health programs that have been conducted at the local church and conference level, including CHIP, the Live More project and countless smoking cessation programs. But, with our relative freedom from infectious diseases in Australia over the past 60 years, we seem to have become complacent.

As Dan Buettner highlighted in his *National Geographic* report in 2008, the Adventist lifestyle has proven highly successful in lowering rates of chronic disease and extending life. But what appears to be missing from recent debates is an awareness of the stark differences between infectious disease epidemiology and chronic disease epidemiology. A healthy lifestyle offers little to no protection against contracting an infectious disease. This is particularly true of a silent disease like COVID-19, which can be passed on by an asymptomatic carrier unaware they are infectious. While individuals might

feel they are at a lower risk of severe disease because of their healthy lifestyle, this will not prevent them becoming transmitters of this disease.

Vaccination against COVID-19 has been shown to not only reduce the risk of serious disease and death,¹ but to also reduce the transmission of disease.² For these simple evidence-based scientific reasons, Adventists should be at the forefront of encouraging vaccination! As an organisation that works closely with vulnerable populations in our aged-care facilities, hospitals, schools and community centres, it is disappointing that we would need mandatory vaccination requirements to encourage our staff or visiting church members to be vaccinated.

Wanting to be welcoming, some churches are seeking to include vaccinated and unvaccinated people equally in worship and other programs. This sounds noble, but ignores the fact that this stance will exclude or risk the health of those who are immune-compromised, in higher risk demographics—including the youngest and oldest—or who work in critical healthcare settings. They do not choose their risk status; almost all of those who are unvaccinated do.

The biblical principles of humility and care for others seem to have been lost with a focus on “my rights”. When did we become a self-centred group of people more concerned with our own perceived loss of “liberty” than with looking after our fellow humans, even our fellow church members? Are we so keen on “persecution” that we are seeking it out unnecessarily, risking not only our jobs but also risking our ability to serve in our community, our health and that of those around us?

By contrast, we have a clear direction to look after the vulnerable among us (see Psalm 68:5; Matthew 25:31–46; 1 Timothy 5). One of the best ways for us to do this during a global pandemic is by vaccination. We believe that “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13, KJV). We are not being called to lay down our lives, simply to be vaccinated. A sore arm is a small sacrifice. In many ways and in varying degrees, there's no doubt that the past two years have been challenging for everyone, and lockdowns have had a huge impact on mental, social and spiritual wellbeing. The quickest way for us to address this situation is to be the champions for public health that we have been for the past 150 years. This includes support and acceptance of vaccinations, as we have done in response to many infectious diseases in the past.

1. Dagan N, Barda N, Kepten E, et al, “BNT162b2 mRNA Covid-19 vaccine in a nationwide mass vaccination setting,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 384 (2021): 1412–1423; Baden L, El Sahly H, Dagan N, Essink, Efficacy and Safety of the mRNA-1273 SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine *New England Journal of Medicine* 384 (2021): 403–416.

2. Lipsitch M, Kahn R. “Interpreting vaccine efficacy trial results for infection and transmission,” *Vaccine* 39(30) 2021: 4082–4088.

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Tips for churches to ensure good air quality



Governments in Australia have announced reopening roadmaps that include COVID-19 safety considerations for building ventilation within places of worship.

Public health advice cautions that COVID-19 can be transmitted by contact with droplets or airborne aerosols (tiny particles that float in the air) from a person with COVID-19, and contaminated surfaces.¹

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is in the air we breathe out. In any indoor environment, when CO₂ levels double, the risk of COVID-19 transmission also roughly doubles, scientists report.²

Geoff Hanmer, Adjunct Professor of Architecture at Adelaide University, speaking to *Eternity News*, explains that normal, outside air contains around 400-415ppm (parts per million) of CO₂ and around 600ppm is considered best practice for indoor environments.

When CO₂ levels go beyond 800ppm, steps to improve the air quality should be taken. Anything above 1500ppm becomes a high-risk environment and immediate improvements must be made to reduce the risk.

Prof Hanmer advises that in indoor environments, "Good ventilation is an effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection."³ He recommends a number of simple and cost-effective ways to improve and monitor air quality within your church or place of worship:

1. Promote cross-ventilation with open windows and doors.

Where possible, and if safe to do so, it is recommended that churches open windows and doors before, during and after indoor activities. Ensure that windows and doors won't slam shut, which can happen

with cross-ventilation. It is also a good time to check if old windows need repair.

2. Monitor the air quality.

Infectious people exhale airborne viruses at the same time as they exhale carbon dioxide, so it makes sense to monitor CO₂ levels. There are many different types of CO₂ meters ranging in price, but Prof Hanmer suggests that you can obtain satisfactory results from meters that cost around \$A80.

3. Air purifiers with HEPA filters.

If good ventilation is unable to be achieved, then an appropriate air purifier with HEPA filter will help.

4. Bathroom exhaust fans.

While this isn't the nicest thing to think about, poorly ventilated bathrooms can bring the risk of infection too. Consider installing exhaust fans and keeping them on while the building is being used.

5. Conserve use of heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems as well as fans.

It is highly recommended that these systems are regularly inspected, maintained and cleaned. Sites should avoid using the recirculated air function if possible. Also, avoid directing fans towards people's faces, instead direct them towards the ceiling or floor.

6. Seek professional advice.

Churches with large congregations or complex ventilation issues may wish to consider seeking the advice of a qualified professional with expertise in ventilation.

As restrictions are lifted, places of worship that wish to reopen will need to take the necessary steps to implement their COVID-safety plans.

Australian Union Conference general secretary Pastor Michael Worker, is encouraged by Adventist churches returning to face-to-face worship, stating, "How wonderful it is that after all this time we can meet together again.

"As we return to congregational worship, we have a duty of care as Christians to take all the steps needed for the safety of everyone, especially children and vulnerable people. It is an opportunity to show Christian love and care."

Further support is available by speaking with your local conference's Work, Health and Safety officer or by reaching out to Risk Management Service.

1. Victorian Government, Coronavirus, Religion and ceremonies sector guidance, <coronavirus.vic.gov.au/covidsafe-religion-and-ceremonies-guidance>, accessed October 13, 2021.

2. Science Daily website, "Carbon dioxide levels reflect COVID-19 risk: Research confirms value of measuring carbon dioxide to estimate infection risk", <sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/04/210407143809.htm>, accessed October 14, 2021.

3. Eternity News, "How to check your church building's ventilation to ensure it is Covid safe", <eternitynews.com.au/australia/how-to-check-your-church-buildings-ventilation-to-ensure-it-is-covid-safe/>, accessed October 13, 2021.

4. NSW Government, COVID-19 guidance on ventilation, <nsw.gov.au/covid-19/business/covid-safe-business/ventilation>, accessed October 13, 2021.

Linzi Aitken

Risk Management Service, Wahroonga, NSW.



Oddballs in muddy puddles

Matthew 20:1-16

Workers in the Vineyard

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard” (Matthew 20:1,2).

There’s one parable that Jesus told, that causes me more anguish than the rest. The parable found in Matthew 20:1-16 is commonly called the “The Workers in the Vineyard” and its message is jarring. Like many middle-borns in the birth order, I confess to being somewhat obsessed with fairness and this parable triggers my injustice meter. I feel my indignation is legitimate, as the wealthy landowner pays the workers who worked a full day the same amount of money as those who began work at midday and those who worked just a few hours in the late afternoon,.

I have tried to justify this outrageous narrative of Jesus in several ways: “Maybe it was the harvest season and storms were predicted that could ruin the crops so maybe there was a race against time and the landowner was simply incredibly grateful for their labour.” Or maybe “The wealthy landowner had a socially radical agenda” that is being highlighted. Yet in my most honest place I know those potential addendum lessons are but a distraction—the smoke and mirrors I use to avoid the most uncomfortable

truth that lies at the heart of this story.

My injustice meter shrilling like a fire drill siren “unfair, unfair, unfair” when those who hardly raised a sweat by working a few hours receive the same pay as the day long workers, seems pretty human. When I excavate a little deeper as to why this parable is so triggering, I discover I have placed myself into this story as the early worker. I empathise with those labouring hard from dawn through the entire day in the scorching heat, until totally exhausted at sunset. I see myself as the one who works hardest and longest and feel embarrassment at transposing myself as an “Aussie battler” who is just “doing my bit” and “trying to get ahead”.

This summation forces me deeper into the real problem within this story. The most uncomfortable truth of all that causes me the greatest anguish is that while my indignation rises and my injustice meter shrills, I am recoiling from the grace of the landowner. I see the wealth of the landowner as a finite pie and I somehow feel that the slices are mine to dictate. I am not just dismissive of the generosity of the landowner, I feel riled up. Why do I have such a hot response to the landowner being exquisitely generous toward the workers who started later in the day? How can I, the “mature Christian”, be wanting justice and protesting grace when I myself have received a generous share? How have I backslid into this role of wanting others to earn their way rather than rejoicing at the grace-filled distribution?

Others receiving grace doesn't have anything to do with me. It doesn't alter my position, my pay, my opportunities or my situation. Grace given to others does not change anything about the grace freely available to me.

I really cringe at this awareness of myself.

Unfortunately I also wrestle with societal whisperings that advocate fairness, disguised as economic structures that prioritise profit over social good and encourage and reward individuals trying to get ahead. This brainwashing from society neglects social cohesion, increases poverty and sacrifices our collective wellbeing for the benefit of the few. These pressures disparage grace. Grace is portrayed as foolish, ridiculous and weak; as something that takes advantage of people. Grace doesn't allow us to get what we deserve, which is the whole point actually. Grace reveals God as holy and me as wretched and struggling . . . but again, that's entirely the whole point of grace!

Another part of my anguish is not wanting to see that maybe I am the worker who was last hired and was the least employable; held back by inexperience, gender, disability, ethnicity, theology or my character deficits . . . I don't want to see myself in need of grace . . . cause I'm doing just fine. Really.

So here I sit in a pity party for one. My knees pulled tightly into my chest, as I huddle in puddles of shame and stare at my reflection, trying to see myself as God sees me, to love myself truly and deeply. Yet even sitting in this puddle, I fall under His umbrella of grace. From this puddly vantage point, the entire purpose of the parable is revealed to me. The kingdom of heaven is like . . . sitting in puddles and looking down into the murky waters' reflection and only seeing the Son shining. Therefore, maybe this story is about a bunch of oddballs that Grace gathers together—not because they are rich, worthy, theologically correct or have worked the hardest—maybe they simply have their muddy hearts and hands outstretched to accept grace.

This parable paints a vivid and startling portrait of the upside-down kingdom, a kingdom where God is foolishly lavish toward us, the undeserving ones, even while we grumble about His distribution. God's grace is projected as so magnanimous that it provokes big emotions, anger even.

While anger is completely valid as its own emotion, anger is also a protective emotion sometimes used when a deeply raw emotion such as sadness, disappointment or shame is present and needs to be addressed or validated. It is easy to reject grace. It is easier ignoring our inadequacies and admitting we fall far short of living a life that is admirable. We'd rather imagine ourselves as the hard worker than having to deal with emotions that arise from knowing we are actually the inadequate ones, the ones not chosen—passed over for that job, award, relationship, parenthood . . .

The good news is there is always room for more odd balls. Notice the wealthy landowner doesn't just employ once or twice, he goes out again and again seeking those in need and bringing them into the vineyard. God doesn't want anyone to miss out. No-one. And that includes me while I sit in my puddle. And you. Yes God knows your

story. God knows the darkness you hold onto and the doubts and fears that whisper in your ears and settle into your core and push grace away.

It is an intentional plot twist that the landowner has his manager gather all the workers and pay those who worked the least hours first and in front of all the others who worked longer hours. The parable intentionally casts the full day workers as dissatisfied with the landowner's "unequal" payments. This narrative shows that grace excavates our deepest insecurities, our unworthiness, shame and self disgust and seeks to disarm our superiority complex. God's grace isn't secret or given with explanations; it is distributed openly and extravagantly on purpose and in the mysterious way God works. Grace is not given according to our ability to exegete or serve the poor or according to our character or what denomination we declare on the census. If grace isn't uncomfortable, we haven't grasped it.

This story should force us to consider a different perspective around how we see ourselves. Do we act superior around those who are more recently "saved"? Do we place high bars around behaviours that they have become obstacles on the pathway to the cross? Do we wield the Bible like a weapon rather than showcasing it as containing the remedy for suffering and a GPS to Jesus? Are we constructing ourselves as fix-it-physicians basking in how far we've refined our character, sticking gold stars on ourselves while secretly feeling glad we are not like "them"—AKA dole bludgers or that neighbour that screams and swears loudly at her kids or that conspiracy theorist posting all over Facebook. Thank you God we are not like those over there . . . those with dust in their eye while we blindsides others with the plank in ours?

And last but not least are we guilty of elevating ourselves as the remnant, so that we deride, criticise and stay away from those who do not interpret theology like we do?

I vote we rename this story The Parable of the Ridiculously Generous Landowner and the Oddballs Who Sit in Muddy Puddles. God is trying to tell us "Stop trying so hard! Cease all that hard and holy work that distracts you and has you construct yourself as a superior people. Stop the comparisons and abandon the relentless pursuit of good. Instead pursue surrender. I invite you to simply be with Me."

Ultimately, the problem with grace isn't God and His recklessness—it's me in my humanness struggling to accept grace's sacred gloriousness. But I must try to remember that the kingdom of heaven isn't the try-harder kingdom, it's the try-Jesus kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is like a ridiculously generous God who leaps muddy puddles in a single bound to make the uncomfortable comfortable and the comfortable uncomfortable via His omniscient and unfathomable grace.

Rochelle Melville

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TO SUBMIT

or

NOT TO SUBMIT

THAT IS THE QUESTION



A passage of Scripture that has created much controversy in Christian communities is Ephesians 5:22: “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.”

During our 30-plus years of ministry, we’ve encountered various church members who’ve struggled to interpret this passage. One was a church member who was physically abusive toward his wife. When challenged, he used this scriptural instruction to justify his abuse. On another occasion, a young, soon-to-be-married man visited our home and asked us about the authority structures in our home: “Who has the final say?” When we explained that our marriage did not operate by the principle of one having authority over the other, he insisted that a husband should have the final word. Later, during our seminary teaching years, we would sometimes hear this sentiment among our students, who insisted that marriage was unworkable unless someone was responsible for making the final decision.

This view was also reflected in an inter-denominational group of conservative Christians we befriended while serving in the Pacific. Their inability to follow this instruction sometimes caused these sincere Christians genuine anguish. We would return from our social gatherings grateful for our Adventist worldview; grateful that a founding leader of our denomination was a woman, something unthinkable for our friends. Little did we know that, in the not-too-distant future, the Adventist Church would become embroiled in its own

discussions regarding the roles of women in marriage and church life.

So what does it mean for a wife to submit to her husband? And what should the extent of that submission be? Because each of us interprets this passage through the lens of our culture, upbringing and education, we sometimes miss what Paul is actually trying to say.

To unpack the meaning of this passage, we must consider its context. To do this, we need to begin in Ephesians 5:1,2, where Paul states the following: “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Thus, Paul begins by calling us to imitate God and Christ. This is not a new idea. Already in the Old Testament, the Hebrews were continually called to imitate God. For example, in Leviticus 19:2 we find these words: “Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.” But in Ephesians 5:1,2 we find a new reason for Christians to imitate God: His love for humanity. There are three Greek words that are translated into English as “love”: *eros*, *fileo* and *agape*. In this passage, God’s *agape*, the highest form of love, is to be our reason for imitating Him. But there is more.

In Ephesians 5:2, Paul reminds us that God’s *agape* love is marked by giving and self-sacrifice. It was *agape* love that caused Christ to “give Himself up” (*paredoken heauton*) for us. Whenever these two Greek words are used to describe

what Christ did for humanity, it is an indication that the author is describing the highest form of sacrifice God could have made, His death on the cross. A similar concept is conveyed in Philippians 2:8: “[Jesus] humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on the cross.” It is this kind of love—humble and submissive—that we are called to imitate in our relationships. And it is these verses (Ephesians 5:1,2) that provide the broader context for the rest of the chapter.

Furthermore, Ephesians 5:22 is part of a broader discussion of marriage, which begins in verse 21: “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” How do we know that this discussion begins in verse 21? In the original Greek, the oldest and most reliable manuscripts omit the word “submit” in verse 22, and the verse simply reads: “Wives, to your own husbands.” Thus, the English verb submit in verse 22 is borrowed from verse 21. This is an indication that the context for the discussion of the marital relationship (vv 22–33) is mutual submission, as outlined in verse 21.

Importantly, this mutual submission finds its foundation in “reverence for Christ” (v 21). This phrase indicates that we are not dealing with a “submission” that can be demanded, just as God the Father did not demand the submission of God the Son. Rather, we submit to our spouses, mutually and voluntarily, because this reflects the mutual and voluntary submission that exists within the Godhead, and particularly Christ’s submission in voluntarily carrying our sins to the cross.

The principle of mutual submission, grounded in *agape* love and reflected in the Godhead, provides an example for all Christian relationships. This is why the New Testament writers described themselves as “servant” (*diakonos*) and “slave” (*doulos*). In this, they were following in the footsteps of Jesus, who also used these two words to describe Himself and His mission (Mark 10:43–45). Accordingly, Paul exhorted the early Christians to also follow Jesus’ example: “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God . . . made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a slave (*doulos*)” (Philippians 2:5–7). Similarly, in Galatians 5:13, Paul implored: “through love, slave (*doulos*) for one another”.

Having established that all Christian relationships are to be grounded in mutual submission (v 21), Paul goes on to explore the way in which this principle applies to relationships between husbands and wives:

“Wives [submit]¹ to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives submit in everything to their husbands” (vv 22–24).

In this complex and theologically rich passage, most people tend to focus primarily on the words, “wives [submit] to your husbands”. Some readers filter these words through the lens of contemporary culture, and so view Paul’s injunction as too restrictive and thus irrelevant. Others give it unbiblical overtones of “authority over”,² and so expect Christian wives to place themselves under the authority of their husbands. However, a careful reading of this passage reveals that Paul’s message was breathtakingly countercultural.

The first thing to note is that when Paul wrote of wives’

submission, he said nothing that surprised his readers, as this was a deeply ingrained aspect of ancient Greco-Roman and Jewish social and familial conventions. However, Paul’s insistence that wives were to submit to their husbands “as to the Lord” (v 22) introduced a radical new concept, as it implied a voluntary submission. Furthermore, Paul addressed these verses to wives rather than husbands, which was revolutionary and countercultural in the first century AD—a more culturally appropriate way for Paul to communicate would have been to address husbands, who would then have conveyed the message to their wives. The fact that Paul addressed wives directly was a further indication that submission could not be demanded, but rather, was to be voluntary. Thus, in stark contrast to the practice of ancient Greco-Roman men, Christian husbands were not to claim authority over their wives, as the first allegiance of a Christian wife was to Christ.

It is in verse 25, however, that Paul turns every Greco-Roman convention on its head: “Husbands, love (*agape*) your wives, as Christ loved (*agape*) the church and gave himself up for her.” The words “gave himself up” for her echo vv 1,2, where Paul had urged all Christians to love as Christ loved and “gave himself up”. In other words, husbands are exhorted to love their wives in the same way Christ loves—sacrificially. There is no instruction here for husbands to rule over their wives; rather, they are urged to love (*agape*) her, as Christ loved (*agape*) the church. By invoking the submission of Christ, who was “in very nature God” (Philippians 2:6) and yet took on the role of a servant, Paul overturned the traditional understanding of marital submission and instead offered a model of radically Christ-centred, mutual submission. Accordingly, when Christ is the exemplar for both husband and wife, Christian marriage can be a witness to the love of Christ and His sacrifice for His bride.

So, what does “mutual submission” mean in our marriage? It means that we submit to one another in our gifting—sometimes this is according to what are considered traditional gender roles, but at other times it’s not (Romans 2:6–8; 1 Corinthians 7:7). It means that, when facing decisions on which we disagree, there’s never a “final word” from either of us. Rather, we take time to discuss together until we reach consensus—or at least a compromise we can both live with (Colossians 3:12). It means that, in pursuing our individual hopes and dreams, we consider not just our own interests, but also the interests of the other (Philippians 2:4). We don’t always live this out perfectly; however, we continue to fix our eyes on Jesus, our model for loving well.

1. As pointed out earlier, in original Greek the word “submit” does not occur in verse 22 as it is borrowed from verse 21, thus linking the two verses.

2. Mark 10:43–45 shows Jesus’ explicit rejection of the concept of “authority over” other believers.

Drs Edyta and Darius Jankiewicz

serve at the South Pacific Division as associate ministerial secretary (women in ministry) and field, ministerial secretary and Spirit of Prophecy coordinator.

Roast beetroot, feta & rocket salad

 Serves 8  Prep 10  Cook 45

A great dish to take to a barbecue – its vibrant colour will make it stand out from the rest.

Ingredients

4 fresh beetroot
2 tbsp olive oil
500g sweet potato (kumara), peeled and diced
200g rocket
½ cup coarsely chopped macadamia nuts
100g feta cheese, crumbled

Dressing

1 ½ tbsp macadamia nut oil or rice bran oil
1 ½ tbsp lite olive oil
2 tbsp lemon juice

Method

1. Remove stem and leaves from beetroot and quarter unpeeled beetroots. Toss beetroot in half the oil and place on a lined baking tray in a moderately hot oven, 190°C for 15 mins.
2. Toss sweet potato (kumara) in remaining oil, place on a baking tray with beetroot and continue to bake for a further 30 minutes or until vegetables are tender. When beetroot is cool enough to handle, peel.
3. Toss rocket, beetroot, sweet potato, macadamia nuts and feta together in a large bowl.
4. Combine dressing ingredients and drizzle through the salad.

Nutritional Information (per serving)

ENERGY	CALORIES	PROTEIN	FAT	SATURATES	CARBOHYDRATE
1140kJ	273	6g	21g	5g	13g
SUGARS	FIBRE	CALCIUM	SODIUM	IRON	POTASSIUM
8g	4.6g	116mg	169mg	1.1mg	415mg



Food in Focus *beetroot*

Beetroot—a must have in a salad at any summer barbecue. But there's much more to the humble beet.

Is beetroot good for you?

Beetroot belongs to the same plant family as spinach and just like spinach, it is packed with nutrients. It contains vitamin C, folate, magnesium, and fibre—one cup of raw beetroot provides 5.1g of dietary fibre. It's also a source of nitrate, which may be how it boosts athletic performance.

What's healthier—canned or raw beetroot?

Fresh is always best and enables beetroot to be used in a broader variety of dishes from cakes to one-tin tray bakes. When it comes to buying cooked beetroot, vacuum sealed packs or canned are an ideal and convenient option.


How to cook beetroot

Cooking beetroot is often considered messy and can be daunting. Roasting is one of the easiest ways and brings out the natural sweetness of beetroot. If you prefer to boil it, you may want to put on a pair of rubber gloves to protect your hands from stains and carefully peel the beetroot skin.



Recipe of the Week

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Banned for handing out Bibles ... but cared for by God

One Friday afternoon John Robin was walking along the beach on his island Hiu, in the north of Vanuatu. To his surprise, he saw a fish lying on the beach. It was strange, because the fish was alive and unhurt. Quickly, he picked it up and went to show it to his new friend, John Joseph, to see if he had seen anything like this.

John Joseph was new to the island—he was visiting and had no place to stay when Robin invited him into his home. Joseph told Robin that he was an Adventist from Hitraty Seventh-day Adventist Church at Meleamat village, on Efate Island. Since Joseph had no relatives on Hiu, Robin treated him as his brother.

That Friday afternoon as the sun was setting Robin and his family gathered for worship. Their new friend Joseph had taught them wonderful messages from the Bible. That evening they learned more and that was how Robin and his family learned about the Sabbath.

Later that evening they saw a bright light shining inside Robin's home. It was so bright. They were all scared.

"The light was bright like a Coleman Light (a common kerosene, gas or battery lantern brand)," Robin says. Robin walked into the house and was surprised to discover his old light was somehow working again. It had not been working for sometime. He picked it up and while he was looking at it, the light dimmed and went off.

He took the light outside to the

group and they discovered the lamp had no battery. They tried to turn it on again but could not. Joseph then told Robin that this was a sign, a miracle.

Joseph stayed with Robin and his family for sometime and in 2014, Joseph took Robin to his family in Port Vila. They travelled by ship to the island of Santo and continued on by another ship to Port Vila. While in Port Vila, Joseph invited Robin to an evangelistic meeting held in a sports venue at Freshwota. A lot of people attended each night. They sat on the grass to listen to the international speaker. At the end of the meeting there was a big baptism. The candidates dressed in white clothes and followed a long line to the water ponds and were baptised.

Around 3000 people were standing for baptism. As Robin was watching, he felt that God was talking to him. He thought about his family, the fish he saw on the beach and the light that Friday evening. Robin decided to be baptised. Quietly, he walked from the group he and Joseph were sitting with to the baptism pond. Joseph did not notice when he left.

Robin cried while walking into the pond. The pastors noticed he was crying and asked where he was from. He told them he came from Hiu.

After the baptism Robin was standing with the baptismal candidates and that was when Joseph found out that he was baptised. He ran over and hugged him and cried.

After sometime in Port Vila, Robin went back to his island. Someone sent him 60 new Bibles. So he decided to give the Bibles to the people of the island. It was a new thing, to give out free new Bibles. There were other denominations so he asked permission to give out Bibles. While he was handing out Bibles inside one of the churches the chief sent his men to stop him. And so Robin walked out of the church with the rest of the Bibles and the chief told him to "Stop taking food from the garden" because Robin "disrespected" him by giving Bibles to people.

Robin and his wife and children struggled to find food elsewhere. At times they would go hungry. He would look for wild yams and wild fruits to feed his family. They had to clear new land and plant new gardens.

After a month a ship named *Kawale* came to the island. The crew came ashore with cargo. Robin was surprised when a crew member told him that he had 15 bags of rice on the ship. Robin took the rice bags home and together with his family they thanked God for providing them with food. To this day Robin still does not know who sent the bags of rice on that ship to them but his family had enough food until their new gardens were ready. Robin now looks after a church on Hiu Island.

Jean Pierre Niptik
media production, Vanuatu Mission.

HI KIDS!

We can prepare the way for Jesus by serving others.



HIS NAME IS JOHN

Zechariah is an elderly priest who is on duty at the Temple in Jerusalem. An angel appears on the right side of the altar of incense and tells Zechariah that his wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to a son. Zechariah doubts this message, and the angel Gabriel tells him that he will not be able to speak until his son is born. The next year his son is born. Zechariah's voice comes back when he insists that the boy be named John. The child grows up in the desert, where he gets ready for his special work of preparing the way for Jesus.



WHAT IS THE HEBREW NAME FOR JOHN?
Follow *pink dots* along the right path to find out.

ACTIVITY MAZE



JOHN IS A HEBREW NAME. WHAT IS ITS MEANING?
Follow *green dots* along the right path to find out.

MEMORY VERSE

"You will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him"
(Luke 1:76).





Conversations

Renewed hearts

Maryellen Hacko's observations in her departing message ("The great divide", October 30) are accurate but can be summed up in two words: "judgemental attitudes".

Leave all judgement to God; He is going to do it anyway. Let's focus on our greatest need, and plead to God for it—a renewed heart within me—not them—every day!

Kevin Brown, *via email*

A matter of conscience

If I transpose Glenn Townend's "Freedom and life" construct (October 18) back to Australia's World War 2 context, I get: "Conscientious objectors wake up to yourselves. The Government's war effort is what we're supporting and you'd better too. It's for the collective good and the protection of everybody. You're being purely selfish if you don't go to war as a non-combatant. Yes of course we believe in listening to your conscience—just don't listen to it this once."

In World War 2, the Seventh-day Adventist Church not only supported non-combatant Seventh-day Adventists. The Church also found a way to support those church members who by conviction of their conscience could be nothing but conscientious objectors. When your conscience grabs you, you can't back out of it without being a traitor.

The hundreds of loyal church members who are experiencing the present vaccination mandate as a conscience issue are similarly genu-

ine conscientious objectors.

A conscience which is objecting is not an opinion to be lectured at or instructed—it is spiritually sacred. It is disrespectful and misinformed to give the "it's only a health issue" lecture—that does not take into account the nature of a conscience's operation. Many present conscientious objectors have lost or are losing their employment. This demonstrates the depth of their personal conviction. Those I have heard would well appreciate not only spiritual support and understanding, but also practical assistance in the face of losing employment and the capacity to support themselves and their family.

Just as the Church supported conscientious objectors in World War 2, might we not also expect that our present Church supports members who are conscientious objectors to this mandate?

Steph Bailey, *NSW*

Spiritual concern

The article "On Ellen White and vaccines" (October 30) raises some serious issues.

Why should we be asked to believe that Ellen White condones the use of COVID-19 "vaccines" just because she used a vaccine in her day? Just as the word drug has changed meaning over time, so has the word vaccine. Vaccines developed today use radically different technology. In trying to have Ellen White on our side in the use of vaccines, at least let us use consistent logic. Ellen White being vaccinated

for smallpox tells us nothing about her attitude towards today's vaccines.

The article addresses vaccines and loyalty to God, with the statement: "The current situation does not involve worship and loyalty to God. It is difficult to see any religious element in it at all." Ellen White makes many statements to indicate that health is integral with spirituality.

Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16,17), so how can something that has been shown to be a serious risk to our health not be a matter of religious or spiritual concern?

Thus, someone who is being coerced into being vaccinated is being required to violate their conscience, and that is sin. Paul says in Romans 14:23, "If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning" (NLT).

Is it right to lay a guilt trip on someone who believes it is wrong to be vaccinated, saying although they have the right to choose "they need to consider the greater good of the whole community". So we should sin (violate our conscience) for the good of others? It is only because of the evil agenda that is driving this whole COVID pandemic that people are being deceived into such twisted moral reasoning. An unvaccinated person following Adventist health principles is far safer for the community than is a person who has been vaccinated. At least let us tell people about alternatives and get some truth into the debate!

Allen Sonter, *NSW*

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Wedding



REED—STEVENSON. Marcus James Reed, son of Mark and Lorelle Reed (Albury, NSW), and Catriona Frances Stevenson, daughter of Ian Stevenson (dec) and Jacquelyn Stevenson, (Wangaratta, Vic), were married on 3.10.21 in Landsborough Seventh-day Adventist church, Qld. Marcus and Catriona met while they were both studying nuclear medicine technology at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga, NSW. The wedding was to be held in Albury but due to COVID was moved to Queensland. While it was not possible for any representatives of the bride or groom's parents to be in attendance, thanks to Zoom, they were able to witness what was a lovely and memorable event. Prior to their marriage Marcus worked in Darwin and Catriona in Brisbane where they have now established their home. We wish this couple much of God's blessing.

Laurie Evans



JUDD, Pastor Claude Douglas, born 24.6.1920 in Drouin, Vic; died 26.9.21 at Avondale House,

Cooranbong, NSW. In 1943 he married Yvonne Brown, who predeceased him in April. He was also predeceased by his son, Warren. Claude is survived by his sons, Bruce (Sydney), Ray and Cheryl (Port Macquarie), Geoffrey and Ros (Maraylya); 10 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren; and daughter-in-law, Jan (USA). Claude was a San graduate who began his ministry as a colporteur and later joined several evangelistic teams and pastored churches. Following leadership in youth ministry he served as president in several Australian conferences. Later he became president of the Trans-Tasman Union Conference and then of the Trans-Australian Union Conference. In retirement he helped to set up the San Foundation and also pastored. Claude was an outstanding administrator and a wise counsellor. He was known to be kind, generous, strong of faith and one who enriched many lives.

Roger Nixon, David Judd



LABAS, Maria, born 4.1.1940 in Varazdin, Croatia; died 26.9.21 in Melbourne, Vic.

She is survived by

her husband, John; sons, Tommy and Daniel; daughter, Mandy; and grandchildren, Sofia and Hugh. John and Maria were blessed to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary earlier this year. Maria had a deep faith in God, pure love for her family and a passion for music. She was a witness to all, providing love, support and service to neighbours, strangers, the church and various communities. Maria was an active member of Geelong, Spotswood, Seddon, St Albans and Gateway churches. She received God's love and never missed sharing this with her family.

Manuel Tikulin

Obituaries



FUNK, Alan Lionel, born 14.7.1935 in Lake Cargelligo, NSW; died 25.5.21 in Kalyra Aged Care,

Adelaide, SA. On 19.10.1957 he married Helen. He is survived by his wife (Reynella); children, Terry (SA), Carol (Qld) and Vikki (SA); seven grandchildren; and one great-grandchild. Alan grew up in Lake Cargelligo, NSW. As a teenager, he moved to Gunnedah where he met and married Helen. Together they raised their family on a wheat and sheep farm. Alan then established Funk Engineering in Gunnedah before retiring to Adelaide. Alan and family became Adventists due to the "Dead Men Do Tell Tales" program in 1979. Alan's retirement hobby was making banjos, but he was always making something for someone and volunteering in any capacity. He held many church leadership positions, including deacon and elder, and was a member of the church music program.

Travis Manners

LISOVA, Maria, born 14.1.1926 in Akulichi, Russia; died 19.9.21 in Adelaide, SA. In 1941 she married Mihail Vu Yu Chi, who predeceased her in 1988. She was also predeceased by her son, Pavel Lisoff in 2009. Maria is survived by her children, Lydia Anchugova (Adelaide), Anna (Adelaide), Ruth Liaschenko (Adelaide), Angelina Liemar

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ARISE

(Adelaide), Leon Lisoff (Adelaide), Ben Lisoff (Sydney, NSW) and Tonia Kuharenko (Sydney). Maria was an inspiration to her family and those who knew her well. Despite the difficulties she faced, this resilient little lady never lost faith in God. In her early 50s, Maria was finally able to shepherd her family to a place of safety and security in Adelaide, SA. She enjoyed fellowship at the Adelaide City and College Park churches. Maria's family has thrived in Australia and she was their beloved mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother. Now Maria sleeps in Jesus awaiting the glorious resurrection morning.

Wolfgang Stefani



Vranjes, Petar, born 10.10.1940 in Vukovar, Croatia; died 5.9.21 in Brisbane, Qld. In 1963 he

married Angelina. He is survived by his wife; children, Svetlana, Zorana and Marijana; and grandchildren. The couple and their daughters moved to Australia in 1969. After spending nine months in Melbourne, they resettled in Brisbane where Petar served the Salisbury church in various positions. He loved spending time with his family and friends on the Sunshine Coast as well as travelling throughout Australia and overseas. Petar loved life, his family, friends and God. We say goodbye to Petar with the faith and hope that we meet him again when Jesus returns.

Sasha Todorovic

Zambelli, Patricia Ann, born 6.8.1937 in Lismore, NSW; died 17.9.21 in Lismore. On 19.7.1958 she married Johnny, who predeceased her in 1977. She was also predeceased by her daughter, Catherine in 2009. Pat is survived by her sons, Chris (Ballina), and Mick and Pam (Casino); and daughter, Lyn (Ballina). Pat served for many years as a deaconess in the Ballina church and was known for her loving, caring service. She gave to others, denying herself, so that she could bring care and

the love of Jesus to someone else.

Eric Greenwell

Advertising

PARK RIDGE CHURCH HOMECOMING. Park Ridge church is celebrating 45 years on December 4, 2021. To receive your invitation to join us in person or online, request details via email <homecoming@parkridgeadventist.church>.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES AND RECORD ON CD

The SPD's Christian Services for the Blind (CSFBHI) produces a monthly audio compendium of articles from recent *Record*, *Adventist World* and *Signs of the Times* issues, along with Sabbath school lessons, for the vision

impaired. If you or someone you know could benefit from this service, mail or email CSFBHI including postal address. Email <CSFBHI@adventist-media.org.au> or write to Christian Services for the Blind, Locked Bag 1115, Wahroonga NSW 2076. For the legally blind in Australia and New Zealand, CSFBHI also has a large audio library of Christian and denominational books available.

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MANAGER, ADVENT PARK MAIDA VALE, WA

The Western Australian Conference is looking for a dynamic, dependable and proactive individual who is passionate about the Church's camping ministry. This position is full-time and based at our camp facility at Maida Vale. The camp manager will be responsible for maintaining all buildings and equipment, keeping grounds clean and tidy and overseeing all activities that take place on-site. This self-motivated individual will ably navigate competing deadlines with a pleasant demeanour and ideally has previous experience in a similar role. This varied role requires excellent customer service skills, strong organisational skills and a hands-on attitude. To apply, please email a cover letter addressing the selection criteria, your CV/resume, three work-related referees and the contact information of your Seventh-day Adventist Church pastor, to Wilhelmina Williams at <wilhelminawilliams@adventist.org.au>. Only those who have current Australian work rights will be considered for this position. The appointing body reserves the right to fill this position.

SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP LIAISON OFFICER, AVONDALE UNIVERSITY COORANBONG, NSW. Three year fixed term contract.

Avondale University is seeking a school relationship liaison officer to provide support to Adventist secondary schools by connecting school students to entry pathways to study at Avondale University. In this role you will develop mutually beneficial relationships between Avondale University and Adventist schools staff and students, organise visits to Adventist secondary schools in Australia, and promote Avondale University as a preferred choice of further study to senior high school students and their families. Applicants will need a degree in teaching, communications, marketing or other relevant discipline, an understanding of and a willingness to support the mission, values and ethos of Avondale University, as a Seventh-day Adventist institution, demonstrated familiarity with the unique character and purpose of Adventist education, a solid understanding of school leaders, career advisors, senior students and their families and the forums in which they operate. Visit <avondale.edu.au/employment> for the selection criteria and details of this position. Email applications to <employment@avondale.edu.au>. **Applications close November 30, 2021.**



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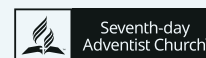
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