



# R



## Prisoner in a foreign land

Looking forward to  
a better place <sup>20</sup>

Church leaders take part  
in National Reconciliation  
Week <sup>7</sup>





We have much to be thankful for in the South Pacific Division. Let's come together as a church family to worship, hear stories of impact, be uplifted by beautiful music, and give thanks to God for His many blessings.

# #weRtheCHURCH

## FRIDAY, AUGUST 5

### SCHEDULE

<p><b>FRIDAY NIGHT</b> 5PM AND 7PM (AEST)</p>	<p><b>#WERTHECHURCH</b> (2 screenings) An episode of the children's show <i>The Tuis</i> will screen prior to #weRtheCHURCH.</p>	<p><b>WATCH VIA</b></p> <p> /adventistmedia</p> <p> /adventistmedia</p> <p>adventistchurch.com</p> <p><b>CC: CLOSED CAPTIONS ENABLED</b></p>
<p><b>SABBATH AFTERNOON</b> 3PM (AEST)</p>	<p><b>WORKSHOP: PRAYER AND MISSION</b> Hosted by Pastor Wayne Boehm SPECIAL GUESTS INCLUDE: Dr Pavel Goia and Alyssa Truman from the General Conference. <i>Plus</i> SPD leaders Dr Sven Ostring, Dr Nick Kross and Pastor Danny Philip.</p>	

For more info:

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

## Speaking the right language

Jarrod Stackelroth  
Editor

“

. . . we need to become masters of language, those who truly proclaim the gospel to every “tongue”.

I was recently watching a TED talk entitled “How language shapes the way we think” by cognitive scientist Lera Boroditsky. I came across a snippet on Facebook and went to find the whole video because, as someone who works with words all the time, I thought it could be useful and interesting.

“Does the language we speak shape the way we think?” she asks. The answer is probably yes.

One of the fascinating examples she shares is how the Kuuk Thaayore people, an Indigenous Australian group in Cape York, use cardinal directions (north, east, south, west) in their language instead of things like left and right. So for them, everything is oriented to the land, rather than their place in it. This means they have a much better natural orientation than someone whose language doesn't include those kinds of designations. Even their sense of time is anchored to the direction of the land (for example our timelines usually go left to right, as our writing does).

With 7000 languages around the world, containing different sounds, structures and grammatical rules, there are differences between us that we often put down to culture; but language is a big part of culture. And they are really differences in the way we think, not just what we think.

Given these differences in thinking, it is little wonder that when we meet as a global Church, as happened at the recent GC session, there are disagreements. These disagreements are often painted as different priorities or different levels of understanding, but they are actually different cultures and different ways of thinking. Profoundly different ways of thinking about the same concepts exist between different language groups (even within language) and it makes it that much harder to come to an agreement.

If language has the power to change the way people groups and cultures think, then we need to become masters of language, those who truly proclaim the gospel to every “tongue”.

As an editor of Adventist magazines, it has become obvious when I receive articles from those who have only ever read Ellen White and the King James Version Bible. Hard to read, obscure archaic words and roundabout passive sentences that are long and unwieldy. Some Adventists have a certain style that is really hard to read and does not communicate well, unless you have an Adventist background. That's before we even start with the Christianese. I'm not saying this to be overly critical but to bring home the point that we need to speak the language of the culture (and the vernacular) to be able to communicate the good news effectively. To be as Paul says “All things to all people”.

This reality has been especially brought home to me by editing the *Signs of the Times* magazine as well. Being intentional about the language we use, to make sure it is accessible and explains common Christian phrases, especially with the rise of those marking “no religion” on the 2021 Australian census. Over the past year we've wrestled with sharing our worldview and our faith in language that is not obscure or jargonistic.

We must be conscious of visitors in our churches. As we broadcast our services online, we must be aware that anyone could be watching, and our language must be language that can be easily understood and impactful.

James acknowledges the power of our words when he writes, “the tongue is a small part of the body but makes great boasts”. He is not speaking here literally of the tongue but the ability to speak and craft words and impart meaning. The tongue is not itself inherently dangerous. It is the words that are spoken.

As we move forward as a people of faith and wish to share our literature (or even online sources) we must update our language (modern versions of Ellen White's writings) while respecting our traditions to make sure that we're saying what we think we're saying, and that we're culturally relevant, appropriate and impactful.

We are a people made to share our faith, over food, fences or football, but we can only do so if we incarnate the things we believe into our lives and we speak the language of the culture that surrounds us.



INSIGHT:

## The value of reflection

Glenn Townend  
South Pacific Division president

I do not often get the chance to sit and listen to someone else preach a sermon on Sabbath. When I do the temptation as a fellow preacher is to listen and critique. The following questions go through my mind: Was the introduction appropriate and engaging? Was the Bible passage/s well explained? Were there enough illustrations? Were the illustrations just personal ones? Was the message too short or long? Was the conclusion and call to action clear?

Recently, as I have discussed life with other professional people close to me, they have challenged me to reflect more on my life. To sense the meaning, value and purpose of an occasion or personal interaction, instead of just going quickly on to the next event, committee or action on the “to do” list.

Most weeks now, I have been setting aside time for reflection. It gives me time to feel—frustration, joy, empathy, annoyance, peace . . . Often as I work through my emotions and thoughts, I end up being thankful. A month ago I had a birthday and all my close family were present (parents, siblings, children, grandchildren, in-laws, many uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews and nieces). As an introvert I was overwhelmed at my wife and children’s idea—but felt very loved. It was good to reflect on the value of family.

I have also tried the reflection discipline myself when listening to sermons and now I ask different questions: What is God trying to tell me? What can I learn from this message? What belief or behaviour needs adjusting? As I have done this, I leave worship sermons more blessed and challenged.

Every Sabbath hundreds of thousands in the South Pacific sit in the pews or view a message online. Those in the pew can’t change the preacher by going to another website. They receive what I, other pastors and lay preachers present despite their life situation. As we learn to reflect on the messages the Holy Spirit can open our heart and enable us to receive the truths that will bless and challenge our life (John 14:26, 16:13-15). Reflection is a worthy spiritual disciple for every disciple of Jesus.

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Australian performer Silvie Paladino with *Sing Noel* musical director Benjamin Milis.



The concerts are now in their eighth year.



The mission impact has not only been observed externally, but also internally.

## Wahroonga church concerts hit a high note for mission

📍 Wahroonga, NSW | Tracey Bridcutt

A twice-yearly concert program presented by Wahroonga Seventh-day Adventist Church (Sydney, NSW) has not only struck a chord with audiences, but it is having a significant missional impact on the musicians.

The *Sing Praise* and *Sing Noel* concerts are now in their eighth year. They have provided an opportunity to reach the community with high-quality music while also raising money for charities such as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, the Bible Society, Operation Food For Life and Eyes for India.

Past concerts have featured top Australian performers including Silvie Paladino and Rob McDougall, along with the Australian Girls' Choir, a 50-piece orchestra, and popular Adventist talent such as Sandra Entermann, Marleta Fong and Jana Lombart. The Sydney Adventist Hospital and Avondale University Conservatorium are valued supporters.

While the COVID-19 pandemic forced the 2020 concert to go online, it opened the doors to a global audience, with millions watching on digital devices and on Hope Channel around the world. Last year's *Sing Noel* concert was also restricted in audience numbers but was again broadcast in Australia and New Zealand on Hope Channel.

Founder and musical director Benjamin Milis says the mission impact has not only been observed externally, but also internally.

"What we've found really special over the years is that we've developed these amazing connections with non-Christian musicians who come on board and help us," Mr Milis said.

"Even if it's music that they'll normally not listen to or play, every song we sing references God's grace and fills you with hope, which is vastly different from what's on the radio—there's power in that. At the end of each concert we are all left with a warm, united feeling. It's like 'Hey we did this thing together and we raised money for charity at the same time', and I think people hold onto that.

"Some of our non-Christian musicians have been playing in our orchestras for more than six years now. For some of them it's the only time they step into a church and it's almost become their own religious experience.

"At our last concert there was a non-Christian guy who came in at the last minute because another musician pulled out. In the rehearsals it seemed like he wasn't really into it—he was there to do the job and that was that.

"But then towards the end of the concert I looked over and he had tears in his eyes, and he was singing one of the songs. When the concert ended, he came up to us and said, 'I just want you to know that this is actually my favourite type of gig to play in and I really, really loved it. Please, if you ever want me back, I'd gladly come back'.

"So for us, I think the surprise has been that this is like a mission field in itself and that keeps us going.

"God has given us this amazing gift in music. It unites people no matter what your religious background is, what race you are, how old you are. We've got everyone from school-aged kids up to seniors involved. It shows that multi-generational worship still exists and is important."

Organising the concerts is a big process requiring many months of work by a dedicated committee. There are also a lot of costs involved, with Wahroonga church able to provide the venue and subsidise some of the financial needs, but more support would be gratefully received. If you would like to donate, go to [egiving.org.au/wahroonga](http://egiving.org.au/wahroonga) (click on 'show other gifts' then select Sing Praise/Sing Noel Fundraising).

The next *Sing Noel* concert will be held on November 26. To find out more, search "Sing Noel" on Facebook.



Counselling strand and course convener, Paul Bogacs. Photo: Avondale University

## Accreditation of people-helping courses benefits Avondale students

📍 Cooranbong, NSW | Brenton Stacey

The accreditation of Avondale’s counselling courses by a peak body recognises their students receive some of the highest standards of training in the country.

The successful outcome of a “rigorous” assessment by the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) is “a vote of confidence by our peers”, said counselling strand and course convener Paul Bogacs. And it provides a benefit to students who complete the Bachelor of Arts (Counselling) and Graduate Diploma of Counselling: they are automatically eligible to apply for provisional membership of the professional association. “With membership comes credibility,” Mr Bogacs said.

While promoting development and practice, PACFA also respects and supports diversity of approaches—including that from a Christian worldview. “The idea that we reach for the transcendent,

for something outside of ourselves, is now well accepted in counselling and psychotherapy,” said Mr Bogacs.

He, his colleagues and their students address in class issues of congruence and tension. “We say, ‘This theory is good, but does it have an adequate explanation for evil? Is releasing our unfettered potential enough? What about the role of spirituality?’ And practice. An important question is how to counsel people of faith: is it appropriate to talk about God or quote a Bible verse? The discussion is healthy.”

The sense of wholeness spirituality brings to psychotherapy also appeals to those who do not identify with a faith tradition, said Mr Bogacs. “They feel connected because they recognise our courses are based on shared values, values such as unconditional positive regard and acceptance.”



The baptismal candidates.

## 17 baptised at Aboriginal college in WA

📍 Karalundi, WA | Juliana Muniz

Independent Aboriginal boarding school Karalundi College in WA finished the second term with a big celebration as 13 students, one senior staff member and three community members were baptised on Sabbath, June 25.

According to Karalundi chaplain Pastor Peniamina (Ben) Cowley, the baptisms are a result of the intentional spiritual focus on campus.

“Every school program or event must focus on Jesus. From the week of study and week of worship to social events and sports, the focus was always on Him,” said Pastor Cowley.

Emphasis on prayer is one of several initiatives to help the 36 boarding students and 25 full-time staff grow spiritually. “As the saying goes, ‘more prayer, more power’. Hence, why at every staff worship, we uplift two students in prayer,” he said.

The school also has a special prayer moment every day at 12pm, in which every person on campus must stop

and pray. “We started this during the world Church’s 40 Days of Prayer. It was a success, and the staff have agreed to continue this practice for years to come,” Pastor Cowley explained.

Students and staff are also provided with many opportunities to learn more about Scripture and practise discipleship.

“Bible studies are conducted every evening during school terms by the school chaplain to interested students and staff. We also conduct outreach programs in the Meekatharra Seventh-day Adventist Church and Wiluna church every term,” explained Karalundi principal Dr John Corcoran.

“Our focus here at Karalundi College is to equip our students for the workforce and, most notably, to prepare them to be disciples of Jesus. The Holy Spirit has worked miraculously for Karalundi College, and no doubt in mind, big things are yet to come,” said Pastor Cowley.



Display table set up with resources and placed in front of a map of Australia that highlights the territory of the First Nations.

## Church leaders take part in National Reconciliation Week

📍 Wahroonga, NSW | Jarrod Stackelroth

The South Pacific Division (SPD) has once again taken part in National Reconciliation Week (May 30–June 3) with a line-up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander speakers for staff worships, training and presentations on how different departments are partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ministries (ATSIM) at the Australian Union Conference.

Organised by the SPD Ministerial Association, morning devotionals were taken by Pastor Darren Garlett (ATSIM director), Pastor John Beck (ATSIM senior remote area pastor), Doreen Murphy (Bible worker at Brewarrina) and Connie Toga (ministry coordinator at Mamarapha College).

“The SPD has such an influence in its regions abroad but also right here in Australia,” said Pastor Garlett. “It’s great to see them leading the way to having better cultural understanding of First Nations people. Through this learning comes understanding, empathy and unity. Australia needs healing and through these opportunities of cultural exchange the Church will be strengthened.”

A display table with learning and sharing resources was set up in the worship room during the week, including free ATSIM Acknowledgement of Country bookmarks.

Ms Murphy was touched to be able to share some of her personal story tied in to devotional thoughts during the Tuesday session (May 31). “Doors are opening for people to be educated on how hard our lives are,” she said. “And God is touching hearts to be a part of our healing. We have longed so much for this. We need loving hearts to help First Nations people see that the only solution to our pain is Jesus Christ.”

During the week there was also a lunch and training program offered on Zoom, led by Pastors Garlett and Beck, entitled “A Fast Guide to Aboriginal Culture”. The session, attended by about 100 leaders from across the SPD, provided some great insights into Aboriginal culture and tips for engaging with and understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples better. There were a lot of comments and questions in the chat line which Pastors Garlett and Beck answered for the final 15 minutes of the session.

Speaking about the AUC’s Reconciliation Action Plan, Pastor Brendan Pratt said, “It’s not something we can leave to a department of the Church, but all of us have to take responsibility for reconciliation.”

## making headlines

### Evangelism Shark Tank

At the North American CALLED Convention, pastors pitched evangelism ideas for an opportunity to earn funding. A total of \$US120,000 was awarded to the top ideas and initiatives, as chosen by a panel. These funds will go to the churches for implementation of these initiatives. The first prize idea was to plant new churches by hosting free health clinics. —NAD



### New Portuguese Hymnal

After nearly four years of work, the new Adventist Hymnal in Portuguese has been released. The updated hymnal has a repertoire of 600 hymns and has been reformulated to give greater prominence to the doctrinal identity of the Church. Some of the changes include removing 230 hymns which were replaced by 220 other songs, simplifying language, correcting grammatical errors, and replacing words that have fallen into disuse or have acquired other meanings. —ANN

### Mayordomos de Jesús

The Adventist Church in North Columbia recently released the first episodes of an animated series for children to be used throughout its local churches. The series features two friends who live in a small village where they experience great adventures every day and learn to become “true stewards of Jesus”. —Adventist News Network

### Australia is less Christian

Recently released 2021 census data shows that, for the first time, a majority of Australians do not identify as Christians. This continues a trend of steep drops in Christian identification at the census—from 74 per cent in 1991, to 61 per cent in 2011, to 52 per cent in 2016, to 44 per cent now. —ABC News



## Igniting for Jesus

More than 75 young people gathered at Pascoe Park in Christchurch, New Zealand, to connect with each other and be equipped in their faith journey at the second Ignite event held from June 24 to 26. The event is run annually by the North and South New Zealand Conference youth teams. This year's event featured five speakers from across New Zealand, several workshops, a prayer space, a sports evening at MainPower Stadium and many activities designed to facilitate new connections and friendships. "Overall, the event did a wonderful job of drawing the young adults closer to God and to each other, equipping and strengthening them in their faith, and providing a space uniquely suited to their needs," said SNZ young adults director Pastor Jerry Flynn.—**South News**



## Timely talks

A recent series of presentations on health and prophecy inspired Ocean Shores and Byron Bay (NSW) Adventists and the community to restore their health and search for certainty. Around 15 people attended the presentations in Ocean Shores and 20 in Byron Bay. General practitioner, nutritionist and naturopath Dr Rachel Coelho presented the first part of the series themed "Restoring your health and vitality" over the first three nights. The presentation explored mental health, cardiovascular disease, dementia defence, cancer, immune restoration and improving your sleep. During the following two nights and on Sabbath morning, evangelist Rui Coelho—who has held evangelistic series in 22 countries—shared a presentation explaining Daniel 2 and how Bible prophecy predicts the future in an uncertain world.—**Lynn Scarr**



## Holidays to serve

Around 25 STORMco teenagers from Perth in WA volunteered their first week of school holidays in July to serve. The group dedicated their time to tidying up the Meekatharra church grounds and running a week-long program at the Meekatharra Youth Centre. The program featured engaging moments for children with interesting Bible stories such as David and Goliath. To conclude activities, on Sabbath July 9, the volunteers conducted the church service and served lunch.—**Meeka SDA Facebook page**



## Connected with God

Connecting children with God was the theme of a recent children's ministry camp-out held by Markham 2 district Adventists in Sakarak village, Lae, Papua New Guinea. More than 450 children attended the event, with Pastor Jacob Kwara as the guest speaker for the special weekend. The event was concluded with much excitement with the baptism of three teenagers aged 17 and above.—**Gibson Yudah**





## Endgame

Kempsey Adventist Church and the South Kempsey Aboriginal church (NSW) partnered with evangelist Pastor Geoff Youlden and M24 Media to run a two-week evangelistic series titled "The Endgame" in Kempsey from May 20 to June 5.

A preliminary "Dinner with Geoff" on May 15 paved the way for the initiative, with around half of the 101 attendees being local community members.

The series focused on end times and prophecy topics, presenting what the Bible says about the current uncertainty in the world and if there is hope for humanity. Hosted by Kempsey area pastors Marty Thomson and Quintin Dutlow, all night presentations were led by Pastor Youlden.

The meetings also discussed health topics featuring a cooking demonstration presented by nutritional medicine practitioner Leoni Gardner on the last day.

Around 140 people attended the first night, and the program was also live-streamed, reaching a broader audience online. "Social media advertising was focused on the Coffs Harbour to Port Macquarie region, but many others tuned in," said Pastor Thomson.

On the final Sabbath, Pastor Youlden spoke about baptism "which coincided with a beautiful baptism on the day", said Pastor Thomson. After the appeal, 22 people expressed their wish to be baptised. "We praise God for the outcome of the series," Pastor Thomson added. —**Juliana Muniz**

## have news to share?

Send info and photos to <news@record.net.au>



## Joyous occasion

A one-week evangelistic series at Parker Seventh-day Adventist Church on the island of Malekula, Vanuatu, was concluded with much joy and celebration on July 2 after 20 people were baptised. According to Malekula pastor Morex Bonglel and Parker church members, the joyous occasion was also historically significant as the baptisms were held at Sopel Pool, the same river mouth where baptisms used to be conducted by early missionaries Pastors Calvin Parker and Andrew Stewart. Pastor Bonglel said he is grateful for the leading of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who gave their hearts to Jesus. Despite challenges faced during COVID-19 lockdowns, Pastor Bonglel remains optimistic about church growth in the area, with plans for another baptism in August. —**John Tausere**



## New health director

The Fiji Mission has appointed Dr Akuila Tabuavou as the new Mission Health director and Hope Clinic director and physician. A former Adventist Education student, Dr Tabuavou is a graduate of the Fiji School of Medicine, currently pursuing lifestyle medicine. With 15 years of medical experience as a general practitioner, he has served in hospitals and private clinics in Fiji and American Samoa. He also served in the Middle East as a military doctor. Dr Tabuavou replaces Dr Alipate Vakamocea, who was instrumental in the inception of the Hope Clinic. Dr Vakamocea will continue to support the Mission's health work and the Hope Clinic. —**Joni Vatuvatu**



## Interview with SPD leadership team

# Leading a disciple-making movement

At the recent General Conference session, the leadership team for the South Pacific Division (SPD) were re-elected until 2025. *Adventist Record* sits down (virtually) with Pastor Glenn Townend (president), Pastor Mike Sikuri (secretary) and Francois Keet (chief financial officer, CFO) to chat about their view of the Church and where they see God leading.

### **Adventist Record (AR): You were recently re-elected at GC session. How did you find that experience?**

**Glenn Townend (GT):** The shock and awe of first being elected to serve as SPD president was not there this time, but I now understand in more detail the immense responsibility and the importance of developing trust in my role.

**Mike Sikuri (MS):** In the lead-up to session I prayed that the Lord's will be done. I've been in this situation a number of times throughout my ministry. When I accepted the call to follow Jesus many years ago I decided to follow God's will whatever that looked like.

**Francois Keet (FK):** This was the first GC session I've ever had the privilege to attend. With my birthday celebration falling at session, and the effort of our SPD delegation to welcome us to the role by making the most noise of all divisions (many much larger than ours), it was such a humbling and tear-filled experience. I had a strong sense of affirmation that this was truly God's calling.

### **AR: What are some of the things your role is responsible for?**

**GT:** The SPD president's role has huge scope. I am the lead shepherd for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific. This means I chair the executive committee for the SPD and oversee the leadership and governance of

the Church. I work most closely with the four union presidents (PNG, Australia, New Zealand Pacific and Trans Pacific), the five SPD institutional leaders (Sanitarium, Adventist HealthCare, Adventist Media, Avondale University and Pacific Adventist University), and the ministry-focused departmental directors at the SPD office.

**MS:** My role is to oversee the SPD's operations, policies and procedures to spiritually and operationally support the delivery of the SPD-wide strategic plan so the Church can continue to become a disciple-making movement.

**FK:** The CFO provides strategic financial leadership to the four unions and five institutions. In addition to that, the Division delivers centralised services through separate companies, which includes services like insurance, centralised banking, technology, corporate secretarial services and property, which all sit under the portfolio of the CFO.

### **AR: What excites you about your role?**

**GT:** I get excited when I meet Adventist people all over the Pacific who are naturally becoming better disciple makers. I listen to their stories, take photos and share the stories because they inspire me, and I hope to inspire others to make a difference like Jesus.

**MS:** I'm excited about the opportunities for growth and

development. We thank God and celebrate the Church with its systems and processes we've inherited to date and recognise those who made a difference before us.

**FK:** To see first-hand how God is leading His Church and how many lives are transformed in a miraculous way.

### **AR: What excites you about what is happening in the SPD at the moment?**

**GT:** The Church in the SPD pivoted well despite the challenges of COVID-19 travel and meeting restrictions.

- The World Changers Bible and the Bible Discovery Reading method were used extensively in groups. Now there are new gatherings of disciples meeting in smaller groups and churches in most countries of the SPD.
- 10,000 Toes—the lifestyle medicine strategy to stop type 2 diabetes and other non-communicable diseases in the Pacific is already changing lives. Pacific governments are partnering with us because they recognise our contribution to changing health in the village, workplace and home.
- Media is having a huge impact. The Church has television presence via Hope Channel in Fiji, New Zealand, Samoa, American Samoa, Tahiti and much of the Pacific. Faith FM radio in Australia and Hope FM in PNG, Fiji, Honiara and Kiribati. Also digital media ministries online such as Mums At The Table.
- There are many local community programs that are having an impact in everyday lives—community gardens, soup kitchens, food pantries and other social justice care ministries.
- Various leadership development programs and processes throughout the SPD.

There is much more! We have vision, plans, people and other resources to make a difference if we really focus.

**MS:** I love the clear focus on discipleship, embracing the fact that we are a priesthood of all believers. We all have a unique part to play. It's amazing to see how God is leading His last-day movement. It's always exciting when each of us follow Jesus and focus on His mission/agenda together.

**FK:** We are looking at new and better ways of doing discipleship, with an emphasis on innovation. It excites me to see how the Church came out of COVID-19 stronger in some ways—where small groups are now converted into churches, how our giving patterns have gone up beyond expectation and how agile we were.

### **AR: What are you looking forward to achieving in your role?**

**GT:** Expanding the disciple-making movement with the end-time message and seeing real progress in the biggest mission challenges we have—the cities of Australia and New Zealand.

**MS:** Given the significant membership growth in our Division, we must ensure that we have a strong pool of competent leaders to help fulfil the mission of the Church.

**FK:** For the past 10 years, the SPD has underinvested in technology. Recently we voted a Digital Transformation Roadmap that will bring technology in our local churches,

conferences, unions and Division up to date. This not only includes systems to cater for much-needed business processes, but also disciple-making systems. This will provide us with further data for decision making that we don't currently have.

### **What challenges will the SPD face in the next three years?**

**GT:** The SPD contains a very diverse cultural mix—Melanesian, Polynesian, Micronesian, Aboriginal, Maori, European and many more. We need to keep talking and listening to each other so we can claim the unity we have in Jesus.

Structures in church entities will need to be assessed again to see if they are really meeting our mission and purpose effectively. The way we do our church business in a changing world has to adapt because we don't want to be irrelevant; we want to be agile and really fulfilling our vision.

**MS:** I see challenges to the unity of the Church. The world is becoming increasingly divisive on many levels. If we aren't careful, we can mirror and incorporate certain prevailing negative traits. Before Calvary, Jesus prayed for the unity of the Church as He was concerned about it. Let us maintain the spirit of Isaiah where we can come and reason together. Our diversity adds complexity to us moving forward together but the reality is we are much better off as one body of Christ with many unique and equal parts.

I also see regulatory requirements increasing: while we strive to be good citizens, collectively compliance is requiring more and more time and resources.

**FK:** There is a continued growth in anti-Christian sentiment in society that will make it more difficult to operate our Church companies. Employment, in general, will be a major issue for us. There is a decline in Avondale University enrolments which will place major stress on our school system to find staff. In areas like accounting and IT, many times we advertise roles with not a single applicant. Many of our senior staff will retire in the next three years for which we need to plan. Two of our institutions have really struggled during the COVID-19 period, so the next three years will be critical for getting these institutions back on track. Pray for us as we work through these challenges and that God might intervene.

### **AR: What do you hope to see happen in the SPD during the next three years?**

**GT:** Jesus will come!

We hope to see more and more people know who they are in Jesus; be excited by Jesus' soon return; and do all that they can, personally and with their church, to make more and better disciples with Jesus.

**MS:** I hope that we continue to allow God the Holy Spirit to help us take discipleship to a whole new level. I pray this starts with each of us making the best decision we can ever make and that is to follow Jesus and I pray that we allow Him to be the Lord of all aspects of life.

**FK:** We long for the Holy Spirit to be poured out in a mighty way so we as a Church might experience revival and reformation as never before; and that the Church unites in taking God's end-time message to a dying world so we can see Jesus return to take us home.



# Providing a safe place for mums

**L**ike many other mums around the world in the past two years, Breane Chapman experienced motherhood for the first time in an unusual way. Giving birth to Jasper in early July 2021, just a few days after Sydney lockdowns were announced, she and her husband spent their first three months of parenthood isolated from family and friends.

Looking back, Breane can see some aspects of those challenging times as blessings in disguise. "For example, not feeling any pressure to go out, see people or meet others' expectations in those early weeks and months was very freeing. If I didn't brush my hair, it didn't matter."

But other aspects she describes as heartbreakingly difficult. "It was just my husband and I managing our newborn with no extra help like I had imagined. And our son was already three months old when most of our close family and friends were finally able to meet him."

The lockdowns also made it difficult for Breane to connect with other mums as the hospital didn't allocate her a mothers' group due to the restrictions.

Going through this challenging experience and feeling the need to have a community to belong to in this new stage of life, Breane felt inspired to do something for herself and many other mums in a similar situation. She decided to start a mums' group in her area.

"The goal was simple: make connections, and have some other babies my son could play with and get to know. I also felt like I wanted to be able to connect with other mums on a more spiritual level which I knew probably wouldn't happen so freely with a randomly allocated group via the hospital."

She approached her pastor with the idea of starting the mothers' group through their local church, and he suggested Mums At The Table (MATT).

"Once I realised what a great digital space they provide for mums, becoming a moderator just seemed like the most logical step," she said, referring to their online platforms and a Facebook group with a community of more than 10,000 mums from all around Australia and New Zealand.

As a group moderator, Breane helps the local MATT Upper North Shore Facebook group run smoothly by accepting member requests and posts and finding and sharing relatable content to get conversations happening in the group. "What I love best about it is being able to share real and relevant content that I come across to help group members feel comfortable sharing. Vulnerability breeds vulnerability, so it's a privilege to offer it up first as a moderator."

Running meet-ups every week since Sydney lockdowns were lifted in October 2021, she says that partnering with MATT allowed her to connect with mums in the local community, "which was like a giant fast forward to my ultimate dream for my mums' group!"

"Because they already have an online presence, it's been so easy to meet mums from the community. I just post in our Facebook group each week, and they come along! Some have even come to our kids' Sabbath school a few times," she said.

In each meeting, Breane tries to keep things simple, focusing on connecting naturally with the other mums over a hot drink and biscuits while watching their children play.

"Our mothers' group has become a safe place to share how we are feeling, how our week is going, and the highs and lows of motherhood. It's really refreshing to hear 'me too!' and 'oh this was tough for us also' when sharing with the mums about my week."

In running a MATT group, Breane finds and provides support while sharing the love of Jesus.

"Becoming a mother has been the most unreal experience, and a big rollercoaster ride—which I feel has diminished some of my capacity to serve in the ways I used to before having my son. Having said this, the stability of this group, meeting with these women who so generously share their lives with me, has been a bright spot in what can sometimes be a challenging week," she said.

**Juliana Muniz**  
assistant editor, *Adventist Record*.

# The 10

## Reluctant Leaders of the Bible

### 1. Jonah

This may be the first name that comes to mind when thinking of reluctant biblical leaders! Jonah did not want to preach to the people of Ninevah as God had asked. He was swallowed by a big fish as he fled in the opposite direction to Tarshish but ended up completing his assigned task.

### 2. Moses

The story in Exodus chapters 3,4 of God calling Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt is wild when you read all the amazing signs that God used to reassure Moses of his ability to lead. But Moses still said, "Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else." WHAT?! So, God sent his brother Aaron to accompany him on his mission.

### 3. Gideon

God charged Gideon with rescuing Israel from the Midianites. Gideon asked, "If you are truly going to help me, show me a sign to prove that it is really the Lord speaking to me" (Judges 6:17). After multiple signs and tests, Gideon believed in his calling and did great things for God.

### 4. Jeremiah

God had appointed Jeremiah as a "prophet to the nations" to which Jeremiah responded, "O Sovereign Lord, I can't speak for you! I'm too young!" (Jeremiah 1:5,6). After God reassured Jeremiah that He would go with him and protect him, Jeremiah set about preaching God's message faithfully to His very uninterested people.

### 5. Jehu

The prophet Elijah directed that Jehu secretly be anointed King of Israel in place of evil King Ahab. Jehu was reluctant to reveal to his fellow army officers the anointing he had received, but after more pressing, reveals what had happened with their full support (2 Kings 9). Jehu was given the task of eradicating Ahab's supporters and worshippers of Baal, which he almost accomplished—but did not destroy the idols of the golden calves. "Nonetheless the Lord said to Jehu, "You have done well in following my instructions to destroy the family of Ahab. Therefore, your descendants will be kings of Israel down to the fourth generation" (2 Kings 10).

### 6. Simon Peter

Denying Jesus three times, Simon Peter was fearful of being found as one of Jesus' followers (read the story in John



18). Jesus knew that Peter would deny Him, saying, "So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:32). Even though Peter was reluctant to identify himself as a follower of Christ in that moment, he redeemed himself by strengthening the other disciples and became a pillar of the early church, training others to also follow Jesus.

### 7. Esther

When the decree is made that all Jews will be killed, Mordecai asks Esther to appear before her King to plead for their lives. Reluctant at first because of the danger when appearing to the King uninvited, Esther eventually faithfully proclaims "though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die" (Esther 4:16).

### 8. Ananias

The story of Ananias is found in Acts 9:10-18, right after Saul encounters Jesus on the road to Damascus and is struck blind. The Lord asks Ananias to go lay hands on Saul to restore his sight. He is reluctant to go to Saul due to his reputation and mission to arrest believers. It's a happy ending, with Ananias finding Saul saying, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

### 9. Samuel

God gave Samuel the instruction to "fill your flask with olive oil and go to Bethlehem" to anoint a new King of Israel after Saul went astray. Initially reluctant because he mourned Saul's demise, Samuel says "How can I do that? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me" (1 Sam 16:2). After God gives Samuel further guidance, he travels to Bethlehem and anoints David as the future king of Israel.

### 10. King Saul

When the people of Israel are deciding who will be their king, Saul hides in baggage, aware of what his impending role will be. Check out 1 Samuel chapter 10 for the full story.

# IS GOD PLAYING DIVINE HIDE-AND-SEEK WITH YOU?

## Look who is hiding (Part 1)

**D**oes God hide? Isaiah would answer "yes". He asserts, "Truly you are a God who has been hiding, the God and Saviour of Israel" (Isaiah 45:15).

How would you answer?

In more recent times, theologians have used the term *Deus Absconditus* or "The Hidden God" to describe the apparent absence of God from those who seek Him or from circumstances where the godly are in extreme trouble.<sup>1</sup> Have you experienced God's remoteness, His seeming absence in your life? I know that I have—many times.

Martin Luther added a little twist to this notion of "The Hidden God" by pairing it with a phrase he coined: *Deus Revelatus*, which means "The Revealed God". For some, the two differing views of God cannot be reconciled.<sup>2</sup> Luther bridges the potential clash of ideas by proposing that God is an actively hiding God who can use this hiding to reveal God's self.<sup>3</sup>

I remember when I could not recall an impactful experience that I knew I had shared with a friend six months earlier. Its importance was unmistakable. I needed to know. I knew I had known. But I could not recall. I wanted to ask. However, to ask would seem like gloating. So, for a week, this crucial lost memory kept bugging me. I was beginning to wonder if something had happened to my brain. Then my friend called. As soon as I answered, the memory came back. I realised I was meant to re-share the experience with my friend at that moment. Without God hiding, my memory would have delivered a feel-good story just for me. With God hiding, I became part of a divine setup that revealed, in a new and powerful way, the deep love that God the Father has for my friend—just what he needed—at just the right moment.

Over the centuries, deep and thoughtful papers have debated, mused and pondered what seems to be an impenetrable characteristic of the Almighty Living Creator God—God's hiddenness and revelation. I do not wish to add to this volume of scholarly contribution. However, I do wish you to reflect on these questions: Have you ever wondered if God plays a divine hide-and-seek game with us? If so, why would God do that?

The parable of the hidden treasure provides subtle insights into such a divine game. "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field" (Matthew 13:44). In this parable, the man is not looking for treasure; he stumbles on it. It is as if God is present as One who hides to be found, in much the same way that I play hide-and-seek with my grandchildren.

As a grandfather, I have enjoyed playing many games of hide-and-seek with my young grandchildren. Am I hiding to try and win the game? No! I am hiding to grow our relationship. Could it be that God plays a divine game of hide-and-seek to grow a relationship with us too? I believe so. Perhaps God has been playing this game for a long time. I wonder if God played a divine game of hide-and-seek with the Old Testament patriarch Jacob? Let's consider his story, then you can decide . . .

We pick up the story where Jacob's life is in chaos. He has tricked his brother out of his birthright. Now, with his mother's help, he has deceived his father into giving him the blessing that his father would typically have given to the firstborn, his brother Esau. Esau is enraged and plots vengeance against Jacob for his trickery. Upon hearing of Esau's plan, his mother, Rebekah, asks her husband Isaac to send Jacob away until things cool off.

Jacob hurries from home, moving away from the promised land. Wanting to put as much distance between him and his brother, Jacob does not stop until darkness falls. He is exhausted, downhearted and disconnected. Jacob has done things his way, he is on the run and now he is alone. He only finds a stone for a pillow. You know life is hard when all you have for a pillow is a stone.

While asleep, Jacob dreams of a ladder that runs between heaven and earth. Angels of God are ascending and descending the ladder. Above the ladder stood the Lord, and He said:

*I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of your father Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the ground you are lying on. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west, east, north, and south. And so all the families of the earth may receive blessings through you and through your descendants. I am with you! I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you! (Genesis 28:13-15, New English Translation).*

What a treasure Jacob found that night in what we often call the story of Jacob's ladder. In truth, isn't it the story of heaven's ladder? It is not a story of Jacob climbing up. It is a story of heaven stooping down and doing so at just the right moment when Jacob is curious enough, open enough, desperate enough to want to seek God's presence. Jacob is surprised when he finds the treasure. We get this sense when we read what Jacob thought when he awoke from his dream: "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it" (Genesis 28:16).

I am just like that. Are you? I sometimes encounter God when I am not even aware of His presence. The good news is that the kingdom of heaven is mindful of our circumstances and is ever planning for a successful outcome in our games of hide-and-seek. The kingdom of heaven longed for Jacob to find the treasure of heaven. The kingdom of heaven also longs for you and for me to find the treasure of God's presence.

Jacob's experience reminds me of the words of a song: "So beyond repair. Nothing I could do. I tried to fix it myself, but it was only worse when I got through. And then you walked right into my darkness . . ."<sup>4</sup>

This encounter in the darkness gives Jacob hope. He sets up the stone that he used as his pillow into an altar. Is this symbolic of this hard place becoming a holy place? He makes a deal with God. "If you be with me on my journey and care for me and do indeed bring me back safely to the land promised to me, then you will be my God."<sup>5</sup> Even deals can highlight a growing relationship!

Jacob left home with little and now has discovered a treasure. Jacob's challenge is to make the treasure his own—a process that will take another 20 years of hide-and-seek. Why do I say that? Hasn't Jacob just found the treasure? Sure. But notice his deal. "If you be with me on my journey and care for me and do this and do that, then you will be my God." From outside the story, it is easy for me to exclaim, "Don't you get it, Jacob? God is 100 per cent trustworthy. What is this 'if you be with me' business"? But the treasure of a relationship is never instant. It develops over time. I don't just have one game of hide-and-seek with my grandchildren. I keep playing, and every game is growing something deep inside both of us until we realise that we are "besties".

So too with God. At a time when Israel was at their lowest, we hear the words of God spoken through Jeremiah: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness" (Jeremiah 13:10). God allows the consequences of our choices to impact our lives and those of others, yet still, God draws and invites us into deepening this relationship. Amazingly, God woos us to reconsider this treasure of a relationship together.

Jacob is at his lowest point. He is wearing the consequences of his past bad choices and actions. At this low point, the treasure is no less than a profound, life-giving relationship with God. For the next 20 years, Jacob keeps "playing the game"—now with hopefulness and expectancy in God because he has his Bethel story. He has seen the treasure. He has hidden the treasure in his heart.

Could it be that this treasure can truly become his? Could it be that Jacob discovers his true self and purpose through this game of divine hide-and-seek? Could it be that we discover our true self and purpose through this game of divine hide-and-seek?

Read Part 2: "What is God playing at?" in the August 6 issue of *Adventist Record*.

1. <[encyclopedia.com/religion/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/deus-absconditus](https://encyclopedia.com/religion/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/deus-absconditus)>, cited 21/03/2022.
2. <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_revealed\\_God#cite\\_note-4-3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_revealed_God#cite_note-4-3)>, cited 21/03/2022.
3. This proposition is articulated in: Paulson, Steven (April 2014). "Luther's Doctrine of God". *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, and is referenced in footnote 2 above.
4. Phrases from the lyrics of a song titled: "Broken Things", sung by music group Spectrum.
5. Paraphrase of Genesis 28:20-22.

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# A Year To Forget A Lesson To Remember

The year 2019 was not great for my family. Among the many trials of that year, our lowest moments came when my daughter was hospitalised, my husband broke his collarbone and a good friend passed away. In hindsight, one could be grateful about the fact that this all happened prior to the 2020 pandemic, but I digress.

When my daughter was admitted to hospital with pneumonia, we were told that a parent needed to stay with her and that we could expect to be there up to seven days.

I was thankful I could stay, but I figured a good book was needed to pass the time.

So I browsed the shelves of the hospital bookshop. My brow furrowed trying to select the right book—there were so many options but none seemed to fit with how I felt.

Eventually, I picked up a Philip Yancey book, *The Question That Never Goes Away*. Curious, I scanned the back cover to find the question: “Where is God When It Hurts?”

Given how I was feeling, the book had chosen me well.

I bought the book, but I did not read it at all during our hospital stay. It was too difficult to focus on reading while my little girl struggled to breathe.

My child’s healing progressed each day, and we were finally discharged from hospital. Grateful to rest in the quiet and comfort of familiar surroundings, our peace was quickly shattered when a call came through from my husband. He had come off his bike, broken his collarbone and required surgery.

During his recovery at home he picked up the book I’d purchased and read it cover to cover in a day. He insisted

that I read it too. Reading through the first few pages I was taken with Yancey’s explanation of the etymology of the word compassion—a Latin-derived word meaning “co-suffering” or “with one who suffers”. It suggested more than kindness; that compassion had a meaningful physical and emotional impact on a person.

Yancey refers to a university research study which recruited volunteers to test how long they could keep their feet in buckets of freezing water.

Researchers observed that when a companion was allowed in the room with the volunteer, the volunteer could endure the cold twice as long as those who suffered alone.

The researchers’ findings concluded, “the presence of another caring person doubles the amount of pain a person can endure”.

When someone is suffering through a tough time, I always worry that I might say the wrong thing, or make them feel worse. I tie myself up in a knot of self-doubt to the point that I either avoid the person or avoid the topic. With this new information, perhaps this fear was unfounded?

It is a struggle to overcome that sense of inadequacy when someone is suffering—it is uncomfortable and awkward. However, I have learned that this discomfort may be crucial to honouring a person’s pain and understanding compassion.

Yancey cites numerous tragic events that resulted in communities coming together to “be with the ones who suffer”, and he demonstrates the many ways in which people have shown compassion to others in the wake of tragedy.



The underlying message to those suffering, he states, is simple: "You are not alone".

I won't spoil the book by sharing too much from its pages. Instead, let me tell you about Alex\*.

My husband and I had a great friend, Alex, who passed away shortly before his 31st birthday.

We met Alex through our local cycling club when we were all quite young. He was a generous person with a welcoming smile. He made friends easily and always made you feel like you were the most interesting person he had ever met.

He was described by family and friends as the "Labrador" of humans—always happy to see you.

Alex's funeral, however, was an anxiety-inducing event for the many cyclists who were his friends.

I recall my husband receiving phone calls and text messages from friends who were unsure whether or not they would attend the funeral. Men and women who were once close yet competitive riders together, had drifted apart over the years.

The many reasons to miss the funeral were, at times, foolish—some weren't riding anymore and had lost fitness, others now had grey hair and wrinkles, a few had divorced. However, I believe the real reason behind these vain excuses hid underneath the surface. The heartache was almost unbearable as the circumstances of Alex's passing were beyond our understanding. Nobody wanted to feel the magnitude of such grief, especially not alone in the midst of broken friendships.

On the day of the funeral, we witnessed mates who had not seen each other in years put aside their insecurities and old rivalries to embrace and console one another. Side-by-side they comforted each other. My husband and I were comforted by their arms around us. Finally, we could "suffer with" each other and relieve some of the pain for ourselves, but most importantly to honour the grief of Alex's family who found strength and encouragement in the presence of more than 400 mourners that day.

I believe God moved all of us to rise above our insecurities in that moment because there were more important things at stake. God knew our hearts needed to be repaired with love and hope.

He knew that together we could better endure this unspeakable pain. It wasn't because of one person's effort, but rather the interwoven compassion of many, that in our discomfort we would find His comfort.

Anxious, hurting, but side by side with our arms around each other, it was a blessing and, to me, tangible proof of God's presence when we suffer.

Looking back on our daughter's time in hospital with pneumonia and my husband's broken collarbone, I am grateful for the many visits from friends and family. They were compelled to go out of their way and change their routine just to comfort us.

Parents from school provided our family with home-made meals. Colleagues from work sent a heartwarming gift. Friends and family visited us.

When my husband came off his bike, his mate took him to the hospital and stayed with him in the emergency department, visiting each night while I was home with our children.

Our friend changed his plans. Inconvenienced himself. Put in a special effort.

Another drove our car home, safely stored the undamaged bike and blessed us with a pot of soup. Once again, a special out-of-the-way effort.

The offer from family to mind our children while I visited the hospital was a godsend. My parents cleaned my house and cooked for us.

The compassionate acts of friends and family going out of their way—without expectation of reward or recognition—combined to help us withstand a double-portion of heartbreak and distress.

From these experiences came an epiphany—true compassion is uncomfortable and difficult because it is supposed to be.

Compassion is to "suffer with". It honours someone who is hurt or suffering when we humbly and prayerfully show up for them in their time of need. We can welcome any feeling of inadequacy knowing that it is God's effort, not ours alone, that will be used for good.

Galatians 6:2 says, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ."

This goes some way to answering the question of, "Where is God When it Hurts?"

God shows up, through us. When someone is experiencing hard times and we change our plans to help them, when we sit with them in their pain and when we help carry their burden, we bring God's comfort to them.

The Message paraphrase of 2 Corinthians 1:4–7 reads:

"He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us."

Philip Yancey notes that compassion is our Christian witness. He states, "Jesus never delivered sermons about judgement or the need to accept God's mysterious providence when people were experiencing the pain of tragedy. Instead he responded with compassion and comfort and healing. God stands on the side of those who suffer."

The year I'd rather forget delivered a powerful lesson—to be with the ones who suffer, to accept that it will feel uncomfortable and to remember that God knits together our compassion so that it honours, carries and heals those who suffer.

My prayer is for God to continue His work on our hearts to be compassionate, so there is never any question where God is—He will be seen when we show up for the lonely; make food for the exhausted; clean house for the grieving; mind children for the injured; pray with the heartbroken and sit with them in uncomfortable silence when there are no words.

\*Not his real name.

**Linzi Aitken**

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# Staples to help support *your immunity*

Keeping your immune system strong is an important way to help fend off dreaded winter coughs, sniffles and the flu.

While a single food, nutrient or supplement may not hold the answer to stopping a virus in its tracks, you can build up your defences by eating a healthy balanced diet. This helps your immune system work normally by supporting your body's natural defences to fight infections and illnesses. This is even more important as you age.

Give your immune system a helping hand by making sure your shopping basket includes:

## Healthy gut foods

It all starts in your tummy—a healthy immune system needs to be supported by a healthy gut microbiome or good gut bacteria. Recent research tells us that a healthy gut microbiome plays an essential role in the body's immune response to infection and maintaining overall health. For this you need prebiotics and probiotics.

Probiotics are live bacteria that are beneficial to your gut microbiome, and you can find probiotics in some yoghurts and foods with live cultures. While other fermented foods, such as kombucha, kefir and sauerkraut, may not meet the scientific criteria to be considered probiotics, they contain some live microbes and beneficial compounds that may also benefit our gut health.

In addition to probiotics, you'll need the prebiotics that feed them. Prebiotics are a special type of fibre that can easily be found in wholegrain foods, legumes and veggies like asparagus and onions. By feeding our gut bacteria with these prebiotics, they then produce beneficial compounds that help keep us well.



## Go healthy fats

Healthy fats can help regulate your immune system's response to infection, so make sure your shopping basket contains nuts, avocado and olive oil.

Unrefined extra virgin olive oil provides important polyphenols that other refined oils don't have. These are bioactive compounds that help fight against inflammation. A handful of nuts at least five times a week provides healthy fats for a healthy heart and can also provide a good source of zinc, which helps support your immune system.

Avocados are an important source of healthy fats and bioactive compounds to keep our heart healthy. But they contain other important nutrients that also help support our immune system, such as vitamin C, E and beta-carotene. Healthy fats help the body absorb some of these important nutrients.

## Powerful plant protection

Phytonutrients are chemicals released from plants to help them stay healthy. We can reap the same benefits by eating plenty of plant foods. Phytonutrient-rich foods include colourful fruits and veggies, legumes, nuts, wholegrains, and also herbs and spices. Try adding some turmeric, cumin, carrots and spinach to your shopping basket. Or if you are struggling to find fresh veggies, another great option are frozen or tinned veggies.

For more information and research references check out the full article on the Sanitarium website.



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# Dancing on the *gravestone* of Christianity

The 2021 Australian National Census makes sobering reading. Figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics reveal that the number of Australians who ticked the "No Religion" box has almost doubled in the past 10 years—up from 22 per cent to almost 40 per cent today. At the same time, fewer people are willing to identify themselves as Christian: 44 per cent, down from 61 per cent a decade ago.

Of course, not everybody thinks that is cause for concern. Dr Heidi Nicholl, CEO of Humanists Australia, says it's a turn for the better. She heads a movement that champions the philosophy of "being good without god".

But John Anderson, former deputy prime minister of Australia, thinks the evidence proves otherwise. It's quite out of place to be dancing on the gravestone of Christianity, he says, when the census does not indicate a concurrent improvement in Australian society. If less religion is a turn for the better, why are conditions in society getting worse? "Our society looks frankly more fractured, less trustworthy . . . less coherent than ever. So my question to those who are dancing on the grave, as they think they are, of Christianity—what's the alternative? Where is your better way?"

Good question, says one Facebook philosopher. "As an agnostic individual, raised in a Christian household, even I can see the cost in the loss of Christianity in our nation—especially as it pertains to a backwards step to cultural values. Whilst I may be agnostic to the existence of a god . . . I am a fervent protector of Christianity purely for its philosophical values on morals, ethics and how to conduct oneself throughout life."

However, it seems these larger questions are rarely considered by those who drift away from their faith heritage. What feels comfortable is what is good.

Sydney student Alexandra Wright, 24, is a good example. Alexandra grew up in a devout, church-going family and felt so connected to her faith that when it came time to choose a high school, she insisted on attending a Catholic college. In her mid-teens, however, she began to think that religion was not for

her, and in the recent census, chose "no religion" without hesitation.

"It's this generation," she said. "We all grew up with religion; but when you start living your life, you realise you don't identify with it."

Her story is all too familiar. Time-honoured values discarded because they no longer "fit". However, just because you don't like something, doesn't of itself mean it is not right.

But what is it exactly that she, and so many others, don't identify with?

When asked, Alexandra replied that, while there was undoubtedly a good side to religion, the church was riddled with corruption and the abuse of power by its leaders. She wanted nothing to do with a way of life that could produce such ugliness.

But was she, and many like her, turning away from Christianity itself, or a distortion of it? The mess that some people make of religion does not mean that religion itself is bad. Perhaps it is simply being misrepresented.

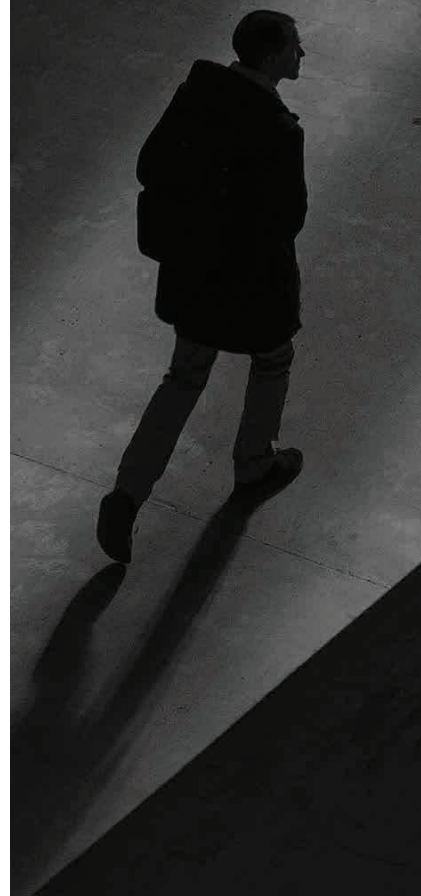
If, as a non-musician, I pick up a cello and try to play a Bach sonata, the result is likely to be less than pleasant. But if the sound I make is noise instead of music, that does not mean that the sonata itself is awful; it simply means that I don't know how to play it.

Jesus predicted that the majority of those who would profess Christianity wouldn't know how to play it. "The way that leads to destruction is broad," He said, "and its gate is wide for the many who choose the easy way. But the gateway to life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a few ever find it" (Matthew 7:13,14).

Based on current trends, non-believers could overtake Christians as the largest religious group in Australia by the time the next census is taken in 2026. But let us not conclude that Christianity is a failed religion.

As GK Chesterton famously remarked, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has not been wanted, and never really tried."

**Roger Vince**  
pastor, Norfolk Island Adventist Church.



# Prisoner in a foreign land

I'm a prisoner in a foreign land! Well not quite. I'm here of my own volition and Australia has been good to me giving me not least, my wife.

But I did not expect to end up living here upon finishing my studies, and I wonder when God and my wife will see fit for me to make that move back. I quite easily find myself scanning news articles for the words "New Zealand" that stand out amazingly in a sea of ink to a wistful expatriate thinking of "home".

Being away from that home and absorbed in the bigger culture of a larger country, I am surprised to recognise that I am not alone when I see the luminous names of those who I presumed naturally belonged where they now live. Michael J Fox, Keanu Reeves and William Shattner are Canadians living in the United States—just some of the names of those who live away from "home".

Earth is not my home. Not this old earth, anyway. The sounds of the hymn "This World is Not my Home" come into my mind as I say this. Whether Russia takes over Ukraine or I get displaced by rising sea levels from where I currently live—this world is not my home. And although I am to make the most of it for the short time I am here and invite others into God's kingdom, I believe I am to always take this perspective.

Although I would prefer not to imagine growing up learning the language of an invader nation with the cruelty of their practices at the time, there are far worse things that we can experience than living under an occupying force. Biblically we see this, and I don't believe times have changed in God's eyes. God and patriotism were invoked in the last world war, and yes, I did say I appreciated the benefits to my family, culture and freedom, because "my God" enabled my forefathers to

win the battle. However, if the story of Israel and the "Little Maid" under Syrian control tells us anything—and even God's allowing of a Babylonian exile—God is far more concerned with a person's spiritual state than their physical, and yes, even emotional comfort to a degree.

Not the most comforting words you might say as we watch the developments of possibly the largest threat to world peace in at least 60 years. But a comfort they should bring. The same God who enabled the widow of Zarephath to manage; sustained Elijah in the desert; and a little girl just doing what it was she was given to do and honouring Him in the process; would sustain you, God-forbid, should that time come.

**Arthur Hudson**

pastor, Greater Sydney Conference.





## Wedding

### GREEN—RICHARDSON.

Benjamin Green, son of Richard Green and Shannon Richards-Green (Elanora, Qld), and Chloe Richardson, daughter of David and Wendy Richardson (Guyra, NSW), were married on 24.4.22 at The Bower Estate, Natural Bridge, Qld.

Nick Kross

## Obituaries



**BAUDZUS, Lisa** Charlotte (nee Schwerz), born 10.8.1928 in Germany; died 12.5.22 in

Goulburn, NSW. On 12.11.1948 she married Arthur, who predeceased her. Lisa is survived by her children, Manfred and Rosemarie (Brisbane, Qld), Hannelie and Dusty Whitehead (Brisbane) and Martin (Goulburn, NSW); and grandchildren, James (Sydney) and Seraphina (Brisbane, Qld). Lisa and Arthur left Germany for Indonesia in 1951 and settled in Australia in 1958. Lisa was an active member of Goulburn church for many years and was loved by all. She loved her Lord and shared His love with others wherever she could.

Owen Ellis

**CARTER, Sylvia Clare Emma** (nee Bradden), born 21.3.1930 in Dartford, Kent, England; died 18.5.22 in Victoria Point, Qld. On 29.5.1948 she married John, who predeceased her in 2000. Sylvia was also predeceased by her son, Raymond in 1988. She is survived by her son, Carter (Qld). Sylvia loved her family and loved her Lord. She was very active and extremely talented, always giving her best. She is looking forward to meeting all her loved ones in heaven.

Neil Tyler

**FELKEL, Maria**, born 29.8.1935 in Poland; died 17.6.22 in Bright Hospital, Vic. She was married to Eugene, who predeceased her. She is survived by her children, Richard and daughter-in-law, Renee, and Sandra; and three grandchildren. Maria was a devoted wife and a beloved mother, who loved God and His Church.

Richard Felkel

**GORRY, William**, born 7.11.1939 in Cairns, Qld; died 12.6.22 in Victoria Point. On 9.8.1964 he married Bev Arthur. Bill was predeceased by his daughter, Dorrelle.

He is survived by his wife (Victoria Point); children, Dean (Ipswich), Deanne (Mansfield), Debbie Sue (Rockhampton), Dale (Brisbane), Dwayne (Sydney, NSW) and Daniel (Wadalba); 15 grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren. Bill's life as a public accountant enabled him to serve the Church well as a church treasurer. He acted as an elder and also served on the church school board. He was much loved by his large family. Bill's family would like to say thanks to the staff at the nursing home at Victoria Point.

Bob Possingham



**HARDES, Janice** Lorawyn (nee Allum), born 12.8.1944 in Port Macquarie, NSW; died 17.5.22 in Toronto. In

1967 she married Kevin. Jan is survived by her husband; children, Bradley and Kathy, Scott and Erica, and Kellie; grandchildren, Nicola, Riley, Lachlan and Andrew; and sisters, Judy Vysma and Julie Oliver. After completing the secretarial course at Avondale College, she graduated from nursing at Sydney Adventist Hospital in 1966. Later she became the assistant director of nursing at the San and then nursing education manager at the hospital until her retirement. Jan is remembered as a committed, caring, intelligent person, with a great sense of humour and a twinkle in her eye. With her unshakable faith and calm assurance, she awaits the call of Jesus on the great resurrection morning.

Barry Oliver

**HASELDEN, Julian** Harington, born 7.10.1944; died 7.5.22 in Christchurch, NZ. He is survived by his wife, Rachael (Canterbury); daughters, Olivia and Verity (both of Auckland); and son, Isaac (Christchurch). Julian was a man of the Word and a son of God, awaiting the soon coming of the One he worshipped.

Gordon Gosset



**IONITA, Constantin**, born 26.1.1935 in Bucov, Romania; died 18.6.22 in Wyong Public Hospital, NSW.

In 1958 he married Rodica in Romania. He is survived by his children, Daniel and Nikki (Tweed Heads) and Emi and Daniel Reynaud (Cooranbong); five grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. Constantin's career was in portrait photography in which he was highly skilled. In 1979 he and his wife escaped

communist Romania and became refugees in Austria for four years. He offered great practical assistance to other refugees. He continued his career in both New Zealand and Austria before settling in Australia. Constantin "lived his faith". He was patient, generous, selfless and a people-helper. He rests in peace awaiting the call of Jesus.

Roger Nixon, Daniel Reynaud

**IRVINE, Victor**, born 8.11.1933 in Brisbane, Qld; died 4.6.22 in Melbourne, Vic. Vic is survived by his wife, Bev; son, Andrew and his wife, Lisa; daughter, Maree and her husband, Peter; grandchildren, Shaun, Riley, Chloe and Daniel. Vic was called up for national service during the Korean War and with five other young Adventist men had to defend their non-combatant request in court. Despite facing challenges, they stood fast, later seeing one of their superior officers converted and baptised. Vic and Bev served the Lord through their respective callings: Vic as a male nurse and Bev as a teacher in a number of places including three years in PNG. During his retirement years Vic was an active supporter of the Warburton church and especially loved caring for his grandchildren and making memories with them.

Kevin Geelan

**NELSON, Betty Patricia** (nee Baker), born 13.11.1931 in Carlton, Vic; died 15.6.22 in Melton. She was predeceased by her husband, Alan and daughter, Aubary Sargeant. She is survived by her brother, Malcolm (Healesville). Betty was a beautiful lady who loved people, a great hostess and built up a beautiful and stunning garden. She loved her Lord and often held prayer meetings in her home.

Malcolm Reid

**NUSKE, Karen Lorraine**, born 16.11.1974 in Bordertown, SA; died 14.2.22 in Royal Adelaide Hospital. She is survived by her parents, Russell and Phylis (Jervois); sisters, Michelle (Victor Harbor), Theresa (Mannum), Angela (Murray Bridge), Sharon (Jervois) and Narelle (Mt Gambier); eight nieces; and six nephews. Karen was the youngest of six girls. She was born with spina bifida. She lived until she was almost 50. She was truly a miracle child. She focused on her abilities to help others, not her disabilities. She was not someone who ever gave up. During her last days she reminded everyone, "We are living in the last days." She died

peacefully with her parents, sisters and the pastor she had as a young adult close by.

Dave Hamilton

**PRICHARD, Douglas Ivan**, born 11.9.1929 in India; died 1.6.22 in Wyong Public Hospital, NSW. In 1958 he married Pamela Calvert. He is survived by his wife (Dora Creek); daughters, Suzanne Johanson (Tasmore, SA), Margaret Prichard (Sydney, NSW) and Marilyn Hooper (Brisbane, Qld). Doug spent decades working for the Sanitarium Health Food Company where his foreman leadership qualities were highly regarded.

Roger Nixon



**ROWE, Deidre**, born 1.9.1952; died 22.4.22 in Whyalla, SA, after many years of ongoing illness. She is survived

by her husband Wayne; children, Vicky, Brenda, Jason and their families. Deidre is sorely missed by her family, friends and church family who cherish many happy and fond memories of her. Deidre was firmly dedicated to Jesus and strong in her faith.

Dietrich Stahl



**RUDGE, Barry**, born 3.10.1942 in Sydney, NSW; died 9.5.22 in Yarra Junction, Vic. On 11.12.1966 he married

Dale Johanson. Barry is survived by his wife (Yarra Junction); son, Craig and partner Julie-Ann Rayner (Tewantin, Qld); daughter, Trish and Dean Price (Shell Pocket); grandchildren, Suz, Liam, Jaimee, and Ashlee; and sister, Wendy Fleming (Central Coast, NSW). Barry was a much-loved family man. He delighted in sharing his love of fun and his wide interests. Barry's strong faith in God has been well demonstrated by his recent text message ministry. Twice a week messages of hope and encouragement were received with much appreciation by family and friends.

Russel Stanley



**SIMONS, Ronald** Henry, born 30.3.1927 in Maylands, SA; died 6.2.22 at Highercombe Aged Care, Hope

Valley. On 5.2.1949 he married Shirley. The day after their 73rd wedding anniversary, Ron passed away. Ron is survived by his wife; children, Vicki, Deborah and Wayne; sons-in-law, Graham and Ian; 10 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren; and one

great-great-grandson. He served two years with the occupation force in Japan (1946) with the 66th Battalion and was stationed a few miles away from Hiroshima. Ron was well known for his loving care and support for both family and community. He was a deacon for many years at Para Vista church.

William Moala



#### **SIMONSEN,**

Raymond Bernard Victor, born 5.10.1940 in Armadale, Vic; died 15.6.22 at AdventCare, Nunawading. On 28.10.1979 he married Dora, who predeceased him in April 2021. He is survived by his brother, Ian (North Rocks, NSW). He was much loved and will be missed by those who knew him. Ray is now resting beside his beloved wife until the Lord's return.

Michael Mohanu



**TRIM,** Margaret Anne (nee Peach), born 15.8.1935 in Sydney, NSW; died 6.3.22 in Pindara Private

Hospital, Gold Coast, Qld. On 3.1.1957 she married Pastor Raymond Trim. She was predeceased by her daughter, Camilla, aged 23. Margaret is survived by her husband (Nerang); and daughter Bronwyn Lalas (Penrith, NSW). Margaret and Ray served in Victoria, Bougainville and Canberra to name a few. Margaret worked as a senior lecturer in nursing at the San. She added to her nursing qualification a BA Education, MA Psychology, MA Education and a Grad Dip Christian Counselling. Margaret was awarded the nursing profession's highest international honour, the prestigious Sigma Theta Tau International, Beta Sigma Chapter.

Mike Collum



**VIOLICH,** Ivy Mildred (nee Hannam), born 5.5.1923 in Featherston, NZ; died 23.12.21 in Tauranga.

On 2.11.1950 she married Raymond, who predeceased her in 2006. Ivy is survived by her son, Darryl and Evelyn (Tauranga); daughter, Leanda and Colin Shaw (Christchurch); and grandsons, Hugo and Kristen. Ivy touched the

lives of many with her caring personality and was much loved for her kind hospitality. She will be remembered as a talented seamstress and a keen gardener. She possessed great integrity, a deep faith, devotion and love for her Saviour, and was a faithful member of Palmerston North church for most of her life.

Anton van Wyk



**WATSON,** Margaret Winifred (nee Stubberfield), born 6.12.1926 in Kogarah, NSW; died 19.4.22 in

Gosford. On 6.9.1948 she married Arthur, who predeceased her in 1995. She is survived by her children, Robyn Radford (Narromine), Deniece Dixon (Long Jetty), Sandra Bradley (Wyoming), Trevor (Strathpine, Qld), Kerry

Howard (Lake Haven, NSW) and Jennifer Grainger (Five Dock). Margaret's life revolved around her family and church as a deaconess, school board member, caterer, and a lifelong knitter of dolls and clothing for needy children, until a week before her passing. The very large gathering at her funeral was eloquent testimony to a worthy life.

John Hammond

## Positions Vacant

### **HEALTH COURSE COORDINATOR (FULL-TIME) MAMARAPHA COLLEGE, KARRAGULLEN, WA**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia has a unique opportunity for a passionate health educator to join the small, yet dynamic Mamarapha team. Mamarapha is a mission-focused Adventist First Nations Bible college that trains faith leaders of tomorrow in health and ministry, whilst serving the student community of diverse Indigenous cultures. We invite expressions of interest from persons with health-related qualifications, preferring experience in VET teaching and assessment, and excellent communication skills appropriately sensitive to Aboriginal cultures. The successful candidate will positively impact Indigenous health in Australia through building strategic partnerships and deliver high quality teaching and learning opportunities. For further details contact [AUCHR@adventist.org.au](mailto:AUCHR@adventist.org.au). NB: The appointing body reserves the right to fill this position at its discretion and close applications early. Only those who have a legal right to work in Australia will be considered. **Applications close August 31, 2022.**

### **FINANCIAL CONTROLLER, WEST AUSTRALIA CONFERENCE WELSHPOOL, WA**

The successful candidate for this full-time position will be responsible for the day-to-day functions of the finance team, prepare monthly and annual financial stakeholder reports, have a minimum seven years' accounting experience ideally with a not-for-profit, have proven experience in financial reporting and management, high competency with Microsoft Office. A B(Bus) or similar with a CPA or CA qualification is essential. The successful candidate must be a practising, baptised member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with a clear commitment to its mission, values and lifestyle, and have a legal right to work in Australia. For a job description and more information, contact our CFO [graemedrinkall@adventist.org.au](mailto:graemedrinkall@adventist.org.au). Applications must include a statement addressing the key selection criteria above, your resume and references, including one from your current church pastor. Email your application to our WA Conference secretary [bradthomas@adventist.org.au](mailto:bradthomas@adventist.org.au). **Applications close 5pm AWST, August 12, 2022.**

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AND

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NOVEMBER 6, 2022

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1. Ellen White and Scripture
2. Nature of Inspiration and how it works
3. Personal Growth and Development in Ellen White. How does that work with the concept of inspiration?
4. Emergence and Acceptance of the Prophetic Gift by the Pioneers
5. How to use Ellen White's Writings Responsibly
6. The Godhead in the writings of Ellen White

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