

SEPT 24
2011

IntraVic

How can anyone put his faith in Christ if he's never even heard about Him? How can he hear about Him if no one tells?
Romans 10:14 (Clear Word)



Always a Place
at Our Table...

Sabbath ^{high}

Saturday
November

12

Dallas Brooks Centre
300 Albert Street
East Melbourne
9:30 - 4:30

SHARE

celebration • worship • food • music • fellowship • prayer



Come and hear General Conference President

Pastor Ted Wilson

November 12 is a wonderful chance for all our church members to fellowship and worship our great God together.

Come and hear Pr Ted Wilson, General Conference President, speak, and enjoy the strains of orchestral music and the ministry of guest vocals. Share in the celebration as three of our local ministers are ordained/commissioned.

Lunch is also available with the opportunity to give a \$5 donation.

Mark this date on your calendar.

November 12, 2011

Editorial...

Is there a shift in the way people are thinking today? With the current world climate, are they more receptive to what we as a church people have to offer in regard to lifestyle, moral values and a hopeful future?

Our church leaders certainly believe so. They also believe that we should not just be focusing solely on people who have not heard our message before; we should also be intentionally trying to reach again, those of our church family who have ceased to worship God. There is always a place set at the table waiting for them, and without them, God's family is not complete.

In March this year, the AUC held a summit, where the topic of discussion was how to reconnect with these missing loved ones. It became apparent as they discussed the issues, that successful reconnection is a dual phase process. Not only do absent friends and members need to be proactively sought out, the individual church environment needs to be such that it encourages current members, as well as those returning to fellowship, to remain.

In this issue, Pr Chester Stanley, AUC President, tells us about the summit and the driving passion behind it, and we have included information from Pr Richardson who presented there, as well as articles from people who have been involved in their own form of reconnection ministry.

Perhaps this is an appropriate time to think about those you have known within your church family who have drifted away. What can your church do to make itself a welcoming environment? What can you do to reconnect or even connect for the first time when a missing member comes through the door?

THERE IS ALWAYS A PLACE AT THE TABLE

He'd gotten used to living on the outside looking in...
Lonely was his only constant friend.
So when the invitation came that clearly bore his name,
He hardly could believe the words he read.

*There is always a place at the table,
There's a feast that's now waiting all your own.
Your place is set each time the family gathers...
It will never be the same 'til you're home.*

She'd made so many choices that had torn her life apart,
and hurt the very ones she loved the most.
She didn't even know where someone could begin
until she got this message from the host.

*There is always a place at the table,
There's a feast that's now waiting all your own.
Your place is set each time the family gathers...
It will never be the same 'til you're home.*

*Come home, come home. My child, come home.
There is always a place at the table, there's a feast that's now
waiting all your own. Your place is set each time the family
gathers, It will never be the same 'til you are home.*

By Gloria & William Gather & Larry Gatlin

In this issue

Always a Place at Our Table -
Pr Stanley talks about the AUC's initiative for a reconnecting ministry pg 4-5

A Challenge - is laid down by Pr. L. Hooper pg 6-7

Pr Paul Richardson discusses how to make our churches Connection Friendly pg 8-9

Not for the Faint-Hearted - a look at why people leave our churches pg 10-11

What can YOU do to Reconnect pg 11

News from our Churches pg 12-17

Health... Mind & Body pg 18-19

28 Stories with Pr. Dave pg 20-21

Conference News pg 23-25

Notices pg 26-28

Front photo courtesy Microsoft Office
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Copy deadline 1st of each Month



Always a Place at Our Table

In recent years, a number of our church members, ministers and church leaders have developed a passion for reaching out to past church members who no longer worship with us. Some churches have made a point of inviting old friends to fellowship in home study groups. Others have found ways they can be involved individually. Pastor Chester Stanley and the administrative team at the Australian Union Conference (AUC) have also caught this passion and are planning a number of ministry initiatives for this very purpose.

“For some time now we have been burdened by the fact that as an organisation, we have no strategic plan for seeking out this significant group of people,” said Pr Stanley. “It has been happening, but in a rather ad hoc fashion and it needs to be intentional. There are many good people out there who should still be at our table and we need to find ways to reach them.” Pr Stanley believes that with the current world environment now is the right time to become proactive in reconnecting with past members. “Secular writers are saying Australians are longing for meaning in their lives, that affluence is not delivering the goods and they are wanting a better sense of community. There has been a huge increase in the number of parents sending their children to private schools, and I don’t think you need to look far to see why. Parents are concerned and want their children to learn a value system not widely on offer in our society.”

So with this in mind, the AUC convened a summit on reclaiming former and missing members in March this year. Each conference selected lay people, ministers and administrators who shared this passion and approximately 60 people attended the summit, where Pr Ken Vogel introduced the urgency of the situation with a report showing that in some conferences recorded attendance is less than 50% compared to official church membership, with figures showing that for every ten people who joined our church, three leave it for some reason.

Pr Paul Richardson was invited to present at the summit where he spoke of his experiences and the progress being made in his division. He told how he had found that many who no longer attend still think positively of their church experience and that the majority had not left because of some massive issue, but had just drifted away.

“These people who have drifted do look back on the values they were taught,” says Pr Stanley. I heard just the other day, of a former Adventist who found himself giving a Bible study to his friend who had expressed concern about the climate of today’s

society. ‘Where did you learn all that?’ exclaimed the friend. ‘Oh, I used to go to the Adventist Church,’ he replied!”

Following the summit where a mission and vision statement on Reconnecting Ministry within the AUC was accepted, the AUC asked the conferences to appoint a Reconnecting Ministry coordinator or committee, and this has already taken place in some states. The AUC will also appoint someone on staff to take on this role. As part of the infrastructure, they also urge that there be someone at the local church level appointed too – someone with passion and skill in this area. This is an important ministry and requires specialised expertise across the board.

“Over the next twelve months I would like to see this ministry’s structure established and resource material begin to be produced,” says Pr Stanley, of how long he expects it will take to set up this ministry. “An intentional approach is necessary and sharing ideas is an important part of the process. Once the appointments and committees have been established, we will hold another summit and work on resources and ways of sharing experiences.

“Something else that we would like to see become part of this package is to help our churches become proactive in developing the kind of church that will discourage our members from leaving. How wonderful would it be for our churches to become known across Australia as warm accepting places!”

So pray for this newly emerging Reconnecting Ministry initiative. Encourage your church to consider taking it on board. And look for ways that you can be involved too. Let’s work to make our churches places where people can return to and feel at home.

*Pr Chester Stanley, AUC President
with IntraVic Staff*

The following vision statement and goals for Reconnection Ministry were prepared at the summit and later given in-principle endorsement at the mid-year meetings of the Australian Union Conference.

VISION FOR RECONNECTING

By 2016...

...We see each and every former and missing Adventist growing together with us in a relationship with Jesus, worshipping again in our Church community and becoming active disciples of Jesus as a result of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia nationally, regionally and locally working consistently and harmoniously to reconnect with each individual not participating in the community of faith; doing this with an urgency, knowing that Jesus is returning soon! This is being lovingly and intentionally achieved through grace-filled and equipped membership.

...We hear welcoming communication that is vibrant with laughter and joy yet quiet and deep when appropriate; with amazing stories of how God has drawn his own back to the community of faith, and how He has used faithful members to touch and change the lives of others.

...We feel the Holy Spirit continuing to move in our community, activating members and former members alike, increasing spirituality and involvement, the result being healthier and more vibrant and safe churches where gracious acceptance is experienced when attending any Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia and when bringing anyone that the Holy Spirit has led someone to invite.

GOALS FOR RECONNECTING MINISTRY

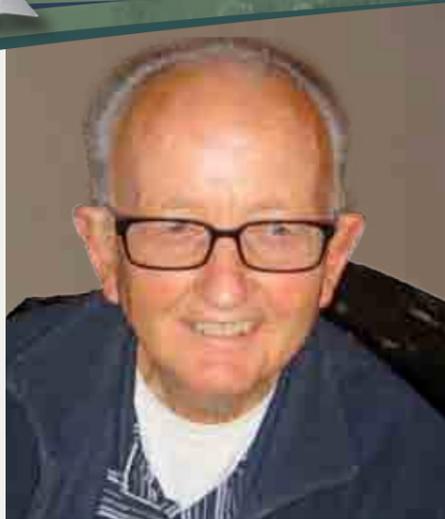
1. Develop and communicate a Biblical framework for RM.
2. Enhance attractiveness by re-focusing our churches to have a warmer and more loving, accepting, forgiving and welcoming culture and enhance the physical appearance of the churches.
3. Inspire our churches with the importance and urgency of RM, noting a particular need to give strong focus on our youth and those not yet baptised ensuring they remain connected.
4. Identification of former/missing members by ensuring all local church rolls are current to facilitate connecting with all known former and missing members during this quinquennium, and develop a system to assist members transitioning from one location to another, such as contacting churches more local to them.
5. The AUC and local Conferences facilitate the ministry through the appointment of RM coordinators at every Conference to

promote, advise and sustain the RM work and:

- Train and resource/equip administrators, local church pastors, elders and local church RM teams, in order to invite missing and former members to reconnect with Jesus and the Church (noting that all churches and regions are trained by the end of 2012);
 - Provide seminars on discipling and RM;
 - Resource pastors – this to include RM being an agenda item for the quinquennial Ministerial Summit;
 - Request Avondale College and AUC Training Centre to include RM in theological and education curricula.
6. Nationally promote RM strategies, develop a web-based forum for RM leadership, and effectively work towards using media in all its forms in RM.
 7. The AUC to set aside funds for the development and production of RM resources.
 8. Develop “Homecoming” events.



DISCUSSION GROUPS AT THE SUMMIT. PHOTO NATHAN BROWN



A Challenge...

...Do You Choose to Accept?

Pastor Lance Hooper, a retired minister in NSW, has a passion for reconnecting with members of our church family who no longer attend. He was re-employed part time to do just that, and through his experiences of working specifically with these people, he has learned a number of things.

- Firstly, very little of the cause of their being where they are has to do with doctrinal issues.
- Secondly, Lance has learned how to explain every facet of doctrine is evidence that God is loving and needs to be presented that way - even God's judgement.
- Thirdly, these people have often been offended and the extent of pain they are experiencing, even after many years of having been separated from us, is of such great depth, that many - both men and women - become tearful as they share their stories.
- Fourthly, they will reconnect as they come to realise how much Jesus loves them and apply it to themselves. Their participation at Church will become a response to Jesus' love rather than a duty.
- Fifthly, some of the spouses who previously had not been prepared to join the church will ask for baptism.
- Sixthly, the approach God has led him to, works across all age groups.
- Seventhly, his own personal relationship with his God has increased out of sight as he's experienced some of His emotion for needy people.

How has Lance found a way to reach out and connect with these people? He firmly believes that Jesus warned of disconnection in Matthew 24, when he said that many (which according to Biblical Greek, could also mean most) of His followers would be led into sin, that they would react by betraying one another which can lead to hatred and eventually their love would grow cold. Jesus said false prophets would be involved. Undoubtedly part of their work would be to encourage natural human reactions to hurt - an 'I'll show them - I'll hurt them too!' approach which can quickly result in the person leaving the church, even disconnecting from God. It's too easy for us to listen to some of the 'false prophets' Jesus warned of, who teach that when people disconnect, it is their own fault, or that there is little those left at church can do about it, or even worse, that people leaving is a purifying process for the church. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost and He commissioned us to do the same.

It was with this in mind, that Lance set out to try and reach people who no longer felt connected to our church and, based on his experiences, he now challenges you to try an experiment...

...The Challenge

Most importantly, pray earnestly. Then investigate the church membership role to develop a list of people who no longer worship with you.

Seek out their addresses and prayerfully and humbly visit them. Be open about who you are, and ask them "Would you do me a favour - would you be prepared to help us learn how to improve the church by sharing with me the reasons you are no longer an active member?" Then listen with your heart. Don't use your head to justify someone's actions or try and explain what they did, but seek to understand what the person you are visiting is feeling even



And then many will be offended, will betray one another and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. Matthew 24:10-13 NKJV

90% were happy to extend that invitation! It is essential, he warns, that you maintain the atmosphere of caring support initially developed by listening and empathising, by genuinely caring. This needs to be authentic and a part

of every step in the continuing process. As you study the Bible together, doctrinal issues may occasionally be relevant however the primary need will be for Bible study that builds the individual's personal relationship with our God. So start there, perhaps with the Gospel of John. As you read it together, discuss the detail and ensure that everything mentioned in the text is understood as evidence that our God is a God of love and that *that* love is focused on the person you are visiting.

The Bible studies need to emphasise that God does not allow trials and troubles to come to an individual that He is not confident can be overcome. The bigger the trouble, the greater the confidence God is showing in the individual (1 Cor 10:13 NIV). Furthermore, God promises that with His help, together He and the troubled person can succeed in standing up under the problem.

Finally, the person being visited eventually needs the Biblical challenge to endure offensiveness. Remember Christ's challenge in the thirteenth verse of Matthew 24 - to endure to the end. And one of those things that needs to be endured as mentioned earlier in the passage, is being offended.

though he may be mistaken about some conclusions he has arrived at. Express full acceptance of what they are saying, even if you don't feel so inclined; after all, you just asked them for help, so listen to what they say.

He warns that you will experience surprise, challenge, sadness and even personal hurt as you listen to their deeply felt needs. Quite possibly no one knew anything about their hurting because they couldn't make themselves more vulnerable by revealing it.

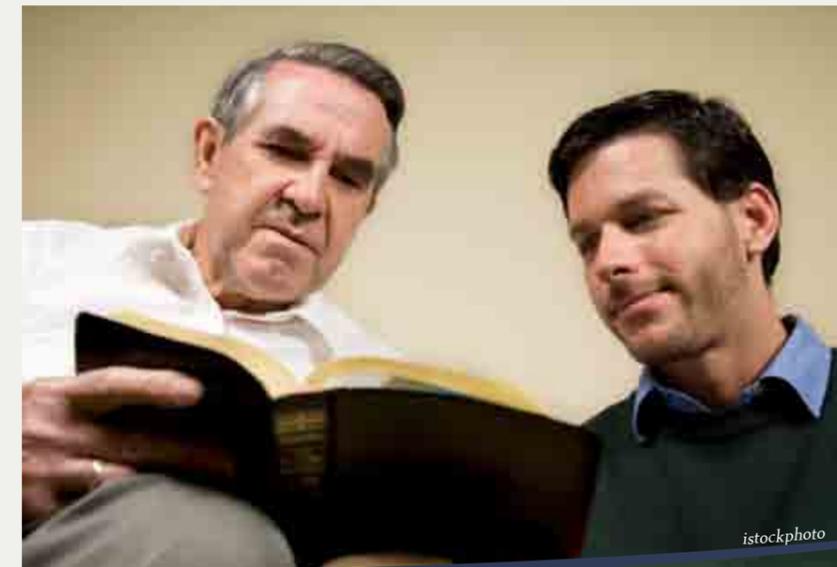
This first step in the process that Lance has developed takes time and considerable emotional expenditure. It also requires extensive forgiveness of everyone involved: the individual who left; fellow church members; even ourselves for not been as attentive as needed. Their willingness to be vulnerable to you will provide detail for your prayer for them.

Allowing the person to feel heard is just the beginning. You will need to be intentional about introducing studying the Bible together and as part of this challenge Lance suggests you also ask the person you are visiting if they would be prepared to invite you back to share some great things from the Bible with them. In his experience, over

So... do you accept the challenge?

Has the Holy Spirit sparked an interest in your heart as you have read this? Do you share a similar passion with Lance, a desire to see your church welcome back those who have drifted away and are still hurting, wanting to belong? Is this an 'experiment' you would like to try? Talk it over with God and then with your church leadership team. Perhaps that is all it will take to develop a reconnecting ministry in your own church, with you and others who share the passion, taking on the challenge and reaching out to reconnect.

*Pastor Lance Hooper
Please feel free to contact Lance on lfbehooper@gmail.com if you would like to discuss aspects of this challenging ministry*





Connection Friendly Churches

For seventeen years, Pastor Paul Richardson has been coordinating Reconnecting Ministries in the North American Division, and he firmly believes that while public evangelism has its place, it *cannot* be the Church's only focus; that God has brought people to our congregations and good stewardship says we *must* care for those we already have.

At the 'Always a Place at Our Table' summit in March, he presented eight habits worth cultivating within our local church environment: habits which will help make our churches more effective in reconnecting with past and missing members and retaining the ones we have - the two go hand in hand.

PROVIDE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

A good habit to cultivate is effective leadership. If the leaders of a church see something as important or unimportant, the congregation will likewise – attitudes rub off. If the leaders are united and proactively set reconnection goals and establish ways to develop a culture of grace and second chances, the congregation will follow.

MAKE GOOD FIRST IMPRESSIONS

How we greet is incredibly important – at the front door, before even setting foot inside the church, that first thirty

seconds may make all the difference. Paul tells the story of a son promising his mum he would come to church as his gift to her on Mother's day. As they walked through the front door, the words boomed from the other side of the foyer...

"Well, well, well, our little black sheep is home!" We can't assume greeters know how to greet effectively. Some are very gifted and we should learn from them as it does not always come naturally. In Paul's experience, churches who are training their official greeters are seeing positive changes and congregations that are creating a culture where every person is a greeter find that a larger number of inactive members are attending again. And what better way can you think of for everyone to get to know and talk to everyone else?

PAY ATTENTION

It is important to be aware of and notice predictable leaving patterns. If one Sabbath, half the congregation got up during the service and walked out, do you think the rest would take note? Perhaps ask why? But this is not what happens. One or two at a time slip out the back door. And they don't usually leave suddenly. The good news is that that gives us time - time to notice the signs and do something about it – if we are paying attention. So look for signs of withdrawing: if someone has been through a disappointing time of some sort, watch their back; if they unexpectedly withdraw or decline church office, stay connected; if they become irregular in attendance, let them know they are missed. It is much easier to keep

the connection while they are still there, than to try and reconnect once they have gone.

SPECIALISE A GROUP

Paul recommends that churches start a class in their congregation that acts like a city of refuge, specifically designed to process people's pain and provide a safe place in which they can bring their triumphs and troubles, doubts and dysfunctions. A woman bought her husband to one such class occasionally. Each time, somewhere during the course of the lesson study, he would bring up an incredibly painful incident in his life which became his reason for leaving church. Each time, the class listened attentively to him, knowing this problem was blocking him from feeling close to God. One day as he launched into his story yet again, he stopped abruptly, saying 'I've told you this before. I'm over it now!' Churches shouldn't adapt all their classes to this format, but if there is room and people with the right talents to be able to accept interruptions, listen and unconditionally love, this could be the small group or lesson study where astute greeters could bring returning members.

LISTEN WELL

We should listen far more than we talk. Listening to inactive members, with no stones in our hands, is a wonderful gift to give them. But good listening skills that enable you to hear another person's anger without reacting, or drawing out a shy person enough that they feel heard from the heart, need intentional cultivating. If we listen well, we love well.

THE FRIENDSHIP FACTOR

A large number of people who leave do so because they do not feel included on some level. Whether we want to encourage members to remain or encourage inactive members to return, we must increase the 'friendship factor', and part of this involves showing a genuine proactive desire to include them. If missing members return, it is essential to involve them early, within the first six weeks of their return. Introduce them to people with similar life experiences, invite them to join a team who serves others, socialise with them and get to know them and if you see them standing on the sidelines just watching, go up to them, don't wait for them to approach you. If we are not intentional about this, our own business will get in the way, and you can count on them leaving again feeling even more bitter because they have been burnt twice.

AWAY FROM THE CHURCH

Many of the painful memories precipitating a person leaving church are often directly linked with the premises: this is where the funeral was; it was in that room their deceased child went to Sabbath school; the husband used to take that Bible class, before he ran off with his assistant;

that is the boardroom where the argument hurt so much... So meeting away from the physical building reduces a potential barrier to reconnecting. As does planning fun activities attractive to inactive members, where they can associate with church members and see that they actually live a Christian life, not just talk about it. By providing a menu of activities away from the church as places to reconnect, you increase the chances past members will want to spend time with you again.

ACTUALLY GET OUT THERE AND VISIT

Be intentional about this. Set up a Reconnecting Ministry within your church and own it. Identify people still on the books who are no longer active – ministers come and go, not always seeing who has falls through the cracks – there is every chance it was several ministers ago that the people left anyway. With realistic goals and expectations, make a visitation and reconnection plan. Some will respond positively, some will repel with anger or indifference, some will have already involved themselves in another congregation. And there is a whole spectrum in between. So pray for the people who are undertaking this important ministry, step out and reconnect.

Paul Richardson
Coordinator, Reconnecting Ministries NAD
www.creativeministry.org



Warning – The Following is NOT for the Faint Hearted!

Leading up to the AUC summit on reconnecting with members of our church family who no longer attend, the president, Pr Chester Stanley, asked for feedback on perspectives and ideas on why people leave church and how to effectively invite them back, and he specifically welcomed the views of those who are no longer attending. Following are some of the replies he received. As you read these, some may prick a nerve, some you may disagree with and be tempted to scathingly dismiss and some will be in direct contrast to others or seem extreme. But we ask that you remember these are real comments from real people, some with very real hurts, and that you will prayerfully persist in reading, asking God to show you what could be relevant to you, personally and as a church, and where you can make a difference.

LOWER EXPECTATIONS

Stay connected, be consistent and authentic about what you are offering or asking of us. Allow room for us to be inconsistent as we are not very good at commitment anymore. Keep your expectations low – seeing us at church once a month is cause for celebration! And if we do come back, give us something to do that is meaningful and uses our skills. We are now realists not idealists - we are cynical these days, and have lots of sadness, or may still be dealing with betrayal or abuse. Be real, honest and connect with us not just on Sabbath. We yearn to belong and feel some peace – whenever and wherever we can.

SINGLE ISOLATION

The church I am attending actually has a big sign out the front that says this is a family friendly church. But if you don't have a spouse and 2 1/2 children you are very much on the outer, making it harder to feel part of the 'family'.

BACK TO OUR ROOTS

We are constantly looking for ways to 'spice things up' and make church more appealing – we have become absorbed and consumed with the way of worship, music, visual displays and sound systems and whilst this has its place Satan has done a good job in keeping the church focused on it to the neglect

of preaching and remembering what we are about.

CAREFUL SELECTION

Some people have a very good reason to be hurt and feel betrayed. For this reason when asking people to be involved in personal visitation and reconnecting with former members, they must be carefully chosen because I know in some cases a pastor or elder would be the last person a former member would want on their doorstep.

NOT OURS ANYMORE

We were unable to attend church for some time as we were caring for a mum and her young children, and could not all fit in the car. We had told some members from our church why we were not attending, but when we finally got a vehicle we could all fit in and attended again, to our hurt we found our name had been removed from the members' files.

WELCOME, LITTLE CHILDREN

Our churches need to be more child-friendly. Sometimes young mothers stop coming because of the difficulties with feeding and changing and then when they are older, toilet training and keeping their young ones quiet. And they just drift out... if people don't notice and keep in contact, they may not return.

TICK TICK TICK...

Often career and living in the 'real world' plays a big role in disconnection. Time is scarce these

days; missing church members may be barely dragging themselves home at night, preparing a meal then crashing into bed before starting all over again. The weekend gets replaced with sleeping and chores and they are no longer connected to a community.

MEET WHERE THEY ARE AT

Should we be asking these people to come back to church, or meeting them where they are at – at a coffee shop or restaurant, or perhaps hold a mid-week service somewhere?

A SPECIAL TIME

Friday night still feels different to those who don't attend church anymore. This is where you should start. Not with church or pastoral visits or fellowship lunches. But create an environment in which they can visit, talk about their week, their challenges ... help them find a way to refuel.

HEY BUDDY...

What about a buddy system? Text us or twitter us, find us on facebook or even email us– there are so many ways to reconnect, but keep it consistent and regular. We may not respond but we are listening.

HEAD VS HEART

I think the Adventist Church is very good at passing on knowledge to people in regards to understanding the Bible. But I think we are lacking in connecting people with Jesus and making Him real in their life. Head

knowledge is very different to heart knowledge. If people don't make personal prayer and Bible reading/ study a priority in their everyday life they will gradually drift away from the church. If on the other hand they are connected to God and soak up His word every day and talk to Him throughout their day seeking His guidance, they will remain connected to His church.

JUST ASK!

To get people back to our church is often so simple – just go and ask. Many have left due to hurts and disagreements, or feeling a lack of hospitality. We live in a world full of lonely people and all they want and need is to feel loved and to belong.

DON'T SELF-DESTRUCT

I believe many leave due to personality clashes and controversies within the church - Satan loves to see the church self-destruct. If we

want to keep our churches strong, we have to get along with each other. And not just for ourselves – what about the other church members who witness and become discouraged by our conflicts?

POWER WALK

Over the last year or so, God has shown me that if people cannot see anything different about the way I treat them and respond to life's crises then why would they want to have a relationship with my God? We need to become people of the Bible again, who not only read it but internalise it and apply it. If each one of us really had power in our Christian walk, it would eliminate many of the reasons people give for leaving the church.

CALL ME

When I stopped attending I was shocked at the way I was treated. I have no family and needed someone, but

no one called. Finally I contacted another who had a similar experience several years earlier and we met together Sabbath mornings for the first few months to pray and study until I could manage on my own. Here are some suggestions. If someone leaves for whatever reason, visit them as soon as possible – don't presume someone else is making contact. Ask them what went wrong – it is not always the person leaving who is at fault – and ask how can you help. Be quick to apologise if you realise there has been a mistake and don't be afraid to speak to those in authority if necessary.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

Reconnecting - What Can YOU Do?

There are many who have already tried their own form of reconnecting with past members. But there are also many who don't know where to begin. Having a structured ministry with resources and guidance will be a benefit, but don't wait until then to begin! Here are ten ideas Paul Richardson has gleaned from his years in reconnection ministries that may help.

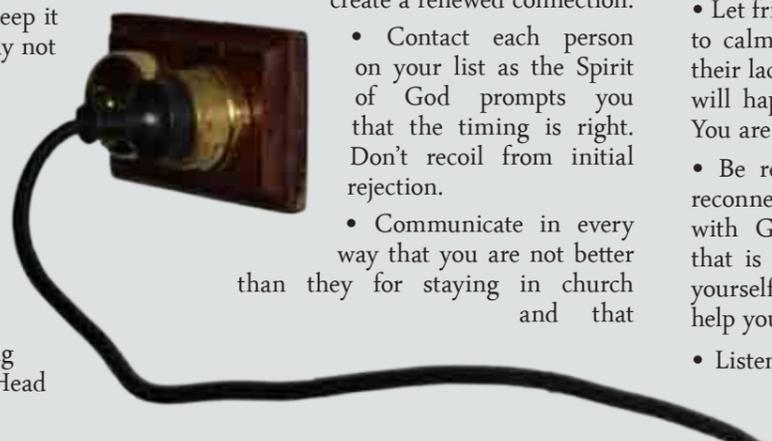
- Pray for specific people you know who are not now attending church. Specifically ask God to bless their lives abundantly and give you an opportunity to reconnect.
- Think of three friends and make a list of things you used to do with them that you could do again to create a renewed connection.
- Contact each person on your list as the Spirit of God prompts you that the timing is right. Don't recoil from initial rejection.
- Communicate in every way that you are not better than they for staying in church and that

you and the others at church are diminished because you are not all together.

- Find a way to meet on neutral ground. Go back to your list of things in common and find a way to do those together now or whatever resonates with your friend currently.
- Let friendship be enough. Ask God to calm your heart and mind about their lack of church attendance. That will happen as Providence provides. You are not responsible for that.
- Be real with your friend as you reconnect. Admit your struggles with God and other Christians if that is your experience. Presenting yourself as a perfect person will not help you reconnect readily, if at all.
- Listen to what they tell you about

their lives. When appropriate discover their feelings about family, work and religious people. Notice where they have relational pain.

- Apologise for that pain, especially what has been caused by the church. Find a way to minister to their pain in practical ways. Ask them to give a small group of authentic and inclusive friends a chance to redeem the day by meeting with them for fellowship.
- Advocate for these friends (especially when they are not in the room) with church people. Let the regular members know how spiritual these inactive members are and how much their friendship means to you and a growing number of others. Ask active members to withhold unfounded judgements of people they don't really understand or connect with regularly.



Reconnecting at Local Church Level

LILYDALE ADVENTIST CHURCH

This church felt a need to reach out to members and friends who no longer attend and for four years now has had an active ministry of reconnection. Throughout this time a reconnection ministries team, including faithful workers Bert and Joan Gibbs who were among those who attended the AUC summit, has hosted a number of reconnecting events which the rest of the church generously supported. Responses to invitations for programs such as a church reunion, a concert, and the yearly Christmas program have resulted in joyous reconnections being made.

Also throughout this time period, prayer groups have faithfully remembered this ministry in their prayers and have seen God at work as individuals have responded to His call and have simply returned to worshipping on Sabbath. But primarily, it has been through personal visits - when someone has been assured of God's unconditional love and grace, or when the church has humbly apologized to someone

and received their grace - that individuals have felt welcome to come 'home'. I remember well when I personally started visitation. I hopped into my car and drove around the suburbs, knocking on doors, praying earnestly that God would lead me. In His love He knew where I should go and the last door opened to a smiling friendly face. A dear lady, who loves the Lord,

GOD SHOWED ME!

I was brought up an Adventist and went through the Adventist schools, did a year of Pathfinders and attended church until my teen years. My relationship with my mother was strained, I didn't know my father, and I had nightmares and a visit from a demon at an early age. So when I prayed to God for help and security with all these things I felt He had not answered me at all.

I hated life, and making friends at school was a nightmare. Having always felt out of the loop and that church was boring, I rebelled against everything I'd been taught as an Adventist and started doing drugs, smoking and drinking. Later in life I began modelling and worked in the adult industry, all because I was looking for love. Yet I felt more alone, insecure, abandoned and

welcomed me in. Through her I met her daughter, Sheli, whom the Lord was calling 'home'. Consequently I had the joy of watching Sheli grow as God's word and love became precious to her, and of participating in her baptism where she declared she was a born again Seventh-day Adventist Christian. The following is her story...

Robyn Stanley

unloved than ever. I didn't know how to trust anyone let alone God, but He was watching over me the whole time. I still believed in Him, but wondered did He still love me? He was sure about to show me... One day a Jehovah's Witness came to my door. I had already told them "I'm a Christian. I don't need you preaching to me." But still, they asked me to read a little booklet titled "What does the Bible really teach?" I barely opened the screen door so they could push the book in and then quickly shut it again. That night I started reading it. I couldn't put it down because it seemed to make sense, reminding me of things I had learnt at church and school. In spite of everything, my Adventist beliefs were still there!

Robyn Stanley brought some people over to help me with this new transition I was in. With their prayers and the Holy Spirit's presence my head fell between my knees as I sobbed into my hands, realising what I'd done in my life. I repented and God reached out to me with His right hand as the elders anointed me with oil. God wanted to show me how NOT to live. My thinking

changed as well as my lifestyle, looks and priorities. God was working in my life and I couldn't even keep up! Finally, I got baptised. He opened my eyes to see the goodness that only He could give me. I realised that's what I was missing in my life. He continually gives me love and security, strength to talk

from the heart with love, strength to bounce back from hardships and to trust and listen to Him. Through Him I am able to remember some beautiful moments and forget an ugly past. God just keeps working in my life. He's taught me to die to myself and be humble and to let my personality grow in Him. I've

been praying for the Lord to soften my heart, the Lord has answered so many prayers now and given me a new lease on life. I found Him with all the love, tenderness, mercy and grace I could ever wish for.

Sheli Ratcliffe

PRAISE GOD FOR HIS PATIENCE

Out of the blue I received a phone call from a friend, telling me how their friend, Graham (who I didn't know), had decided to come back to church; that he didn't know anyone and would I call him. Before I had even had a chance to make the call, Graham had called me to ask if we

could meet. So we did and Graham began attending church. During this time we spent many hours together as Graham confidentially shared his story. This experience was interesting for me, in that it was outside any of my expectations of what I was able to do.

But I prayed for God's guidance and understanding and was grateful that Graham's needs were being fulfilled, as we spent those hours together. I praise God for His leading in Graham's life and for the privilege and blessings I have received, by being involved.

Lynton Scale

I began life in Maryborough, Queensland in an Adventist home. Sadly, I lost my father when I was only 10 years old and my mother became very sick. Within a few years, the family had separated and I just drifted away from church. I became a journalist and later moved to Tasmania where I got married and we had a daughter, Dena. In 1968, I felt drawn to re-join the church and subsequently lost my job with the ABC because of the Sabbath. So I sold books for about 18 months before moving to Warburton and working on the editorial staff of the Signs Publishing Company for a while.

In 2004, upon hearing the news of the Asian tsunami, a statement kept recurring in the back of my mind: "the waters of the deep will overflow their boundaries..." I went to the shed and after a search found it in the Review & Herald, October 19, 1897, in an article by Ellen White. I just knew I had to do something. I knew my wife (I had remarried a lovely Catholic lady) would be upset and I didn't know who to turn to. I contacted an old friend who lived in NSW, Dennis Charlton, and he

referred me to Lynton Scale, at that time an elder of Lilydale Church, and he became a wonderful and supportive friend. Soon after I was baptised by Pastor Darren Croft and welcomed into the church. Many of the members have helped with their friendship and their prayers. I thank them all. I am so glad the Lord was more patient with me than I have been with Him! He is a wonderful God, and I can't wait to see Him face to face together with my family and church family.

Graham Morris



ROBYN STANLEY WITH SHELI RATCLIFFE



LYNTON SCALE AND GRAHAM MORRIS

Little People: Big World

SEDDON CHURCH

Jesus loves me, this I know sometimes. With the cacophony of mixed messages bombarding our children each day, the one message they're most in need of hearing is this one from Heaven – Jesus Loves Me.

It was with this in mind that Seddon Church decided to run a Vacation Bible School during the second week of the mid-year school holidays. The theme was "Little People; Big World" and throughout the week we heard amazing stories of Little People used by God to achieve Great Big Things; the stories from long ago

inspiring us all to believe that little kids can still make a difference! Our time together was packed-full of songs, stories, puppet shows, games, art-and-craft, and most importantly joy and laughter. We praise God for the positive response from the community with over eighty non-Adventists attending over the course

of the week. This facilitated a time of enthusiastic sharing between existing church members and their newfound friends. Our prayer is that the seeds planted may continue to grow and bloom in God's Great Garden.

Heidi Soldat



Playgroup Wins Award

WARBURTON CHURCH

all about. It's about linking families and children in communities and it's about building communities. This group oozes community. I am really pleased to present to Warburton the Playgroup of the Month for August." She then presented Ngaire with a Crayola pack gift basket.

On August 24 the Warburton Christian Playgroup, run by church members Ngaire and Alan Holman, won Playgroup Victoria's inaugural Playgroup of the Month award. CEO for Playgroup Victoria, Vivienne Cunningham-Smith, told the group gathered to celebrate the award, "Seeing you all here is wonderful. This is what Playgroup is

This special event was attended by playgroup children and parents, local dignitaries from the Yarra Ranges Shire, Bendigo Bank, Yarra Ranges Playgroup Association, the pastoral team and many of the church members and many Warburton Adventist Church members and the pastoral team. In her presentation, playgroup parent

Simone said, "On behalf of the parents and children we would like to say that we are thrilled that Ngaire has won this award. We would also like to thank the Warburton Seventh-day Adventist Church for their support and for providing this wonderful venue."

Presenting on behalf of the church family, church clerk Dorothy Carvill said, "The Warburton Adventist Church would like to present Ngaire and Alan with this fruit basket for all the time effort and energy that they expend in organising and running playgroup." The formal speeches and award giving ceremony was followed by a time of socialising and morning tea.

Pastor David Edgren

Love, Laughter and Tears

NUNAWADING CHURCH

Two years ago, Barry and Karin Watts were asked to collect three ladies from Ringwood East to take them to church. This was the beginning of a wonderful friendship and a journey where they have shared love, laughter and tears.

The story began in July 2000, when Suzanna Sailo took her three children to a wedding, while her husband remained behind to look after their clothing shop. While away, her home was raided and her husband imprisoned because he was married to a woman who happened to be from a Christian minority descending from Mizoram and associated with a peaceful group that educated women on democracy and human rights. Suzanna did not hear from him again, until she received word six years later that he passed away in prison.

A neighbour got word to Suzanna of the raid and she knew she had to flee. Smuggled to the Indian border in a jeep, they finished their journey by foot with nothing but the clothes on their backs. And thus began an eight year struggle to survive in a foreign country where her people, fleeing from the dangers posed as an ethnic minority in military-ruled Burma, were still under threat of persecution because they were foreigners. They had no home, money, legal papers or citizenship and lived in constant fear of being caught and sent back.

Finally, toward the end of 2008, Suzanna and her children were resettled in Australia as refugees.

And thus it was that Barry and Karin found themselves being asked to pick up Suzanna and her daughters to take them to church, and their friendship bloomed. Suzanna loved cooking and was always sharing her favourite foods with them, comparing Mizo with 'white man' food. She enjoyed



SUZANNA WITH HER CHILDREN, RAVIANA, FRANKY AND CHRISTINA

social gatherings, and just loved talking of her Mizo culture. But she also loved Australia, 'the land of milk and honey', and was incredibly grateful that this country had taken her and her children in and given them a chance to hold their heads up without fear or shame. The women attended church regularly, had Bible studies and were eventually baptised by Pr Rod Anderson.

Suzanna had a passion for God, speaking of her love for Jesus to whomever would listen, and a passion for her community and the many problems refugees face. Determined to give back to the community, Suzanna completed a certificate III in Community Service Work and then began full time on a diploma in the same field at Swinburne, as well as involving herself in voluntary work and helping other new arrivals to Australia.

All of this while suffering from cancer which was first diagnosed soon after settling in Melbourne.

Just a few months ago, Suzanna was one of four refugees chosen to speak at the prestigious Dalai Lama's Melbourne Press Conference, in front of 1000 people. Leading up to the event, she was so weak and coughing so much she seriously wondered if

she would be able to attend, let alone speak. However the Lord answered her prayer, and she was able deliver her speech effectively without coughing once, courageously telling of her experiences and thanking God, who never deserted her.

"Please continue to be the voice of hope for the refugees who are still in these terrible situations all over the world," she said. "Give them a chance as you have given my family and many others. You never know how many tears and suffering are hidden behind lovely eyes."

Sadly Suzanna lost her fight against the cancer mid-August. Barry and Karin spoke at her funeral at Nunawading Church, telling of her brave fight and her unfailing faith in God. How, in spite of all she had been through, Suzanna taught them, and many others, about tenacity and survival, about laughter and talking, about loving life. They thanked Nunawading and Ringwood church communities for their support and prayers, as well as staff and students at Nunawading Christian College, where the two girls attended.

"My mum was a great fighter," eleven year old Raviana, Suzanna's youngest daughter told the congregation, "very strong and one of the greatest people

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

“They Just Didn’t Want to Leave!”

YARRA VALLEY ADVENTIST CHURCH

This has been an eventful year of seriously connecting with the community in the Yarra Valley. With a rich and relevant emphasis on health and lifestyle that clearly met the community’s interest and needs.

Local church pastor Dr Harold Waldrip kicking off with a multi-week series on “Healthy Weight Loss” - this is always a popular topic and drew neighbours keen for tips on how to deal with the unwanted bulge. This was hotly pursued with valuable direction on “Overcoming Anxiety and Depression” from the depth of Dr. Ron Brody’s experience. The series resulted in drawing another group of concerned parents and

friends who made their way to the Wandin North Senior Citizen’s Club to make the most of the informative presentations. The health emphasis was clearly well received so church members continued to keep the community informed with regular leaflet drops and local newspaper advertising. The next program spanned eight Saturday nights and targeted specific health concerns shared by many in the community, such as “Use It Or Lose It”, “We Are What We Eat”, “Our Bodies as Living Organisms”, “Water – the Forgotten Ingredient”, “Modern day Poisons”, “How to avoid Burnout” and “Sound Mind, Sound Body”. Among the team of professional health presenters was a mother and her two daughters, Drs Wilvene Hill, Ceilia Clifford and Stella Robinson. Dr David Bird came down from Narbethong to lend a hand too. This series, however, had a special twist: after each presentation,



DR. BIRD PRESENTING SIGNS OF BURNOUT.

Yarra Valley’s very capable kitchen specialists, including a professional chef, worked together to provide delicious and nourishing meals that were surprisingly and pleasantly different from what many of the visitors had experienced. This opened up that special dynamic only afforded when you get your feet under the table with friends. Church family members mingled freely with the visitors and bonds were formed with the rich interaction of sharing interests and challenges common to us all, creating a delightful fellowship.

“They just didn’t want to leave”, said Yarra Valley Personal Ministries Director, Dr. Ceilia Clifford. She went on to say, “This has created a great foundation for our evangelistic campaign starting in early September.”

Shirley Alsop



MEMBERS & GUESTS ENJOYED THE BUFFET

Love, Laughter and Tears CONTINUED FROM PG 15

in my life, and she hoped that she’d get better. But bad things do happen to good people.... I believe that my mum has gone to sleep until Jesus comes back. Maybe she thought that God hadn’t used her, but He has. Because I am going to use her life as a story of encouragement and hope that God uses people in many ways.

“I have learnt life can be lost in one instant. So make something of your life, because we each have a talent that we should use to spread the word of Jesus.”

This family’s journey has been difficult and full of many setbacks and struggles. Barry and Karin, who over time have become like an aunt and uncle to Suzanna’s children, appealed to those present, on their behalf. “We believe it is important that all of us take responsibility to support Suzanna’s children spiritually and emotionally, both now and into the future, as they face life without their mother.”

And they are leading by example. With Suzanna’s blessing, arrangements were set in place, and

Barry and Karin are now Raviana’s guardians, and their door will always be open to Christina and Franky whenever they wish or need it. We ask that you pray for these lovely children and their caring friends..

When a family hurts, those around them hurt too, as does our loving God. Suzanna has left behind a legacy of love for God and love and enjoyment of life, which will live on in the hearts of her children, and the many people she has touched in her short time here. *IntraVic Staff*

Northpoint @ Rockbank

NORTHPOINT CHURCH

Friday night, August 12, saw a new church plant launch at Rockbank, which will initially run on the second Friday night of each month.

Church members have been working for a number of years in the area with door knocking, letter boxing and contact follow up. Five home groups have been established in the area and this forms the base for the new church. For nine weeks prior to the launch, Northpoint ran a Prophetic Code Seminar on Sunday afternoons and some people from this came to the launch as well.

The Life Group attendees in the area distributed over four thousand letters inviting the public to come to church and more than 40 people responded to that letter. It was a real thrill to see the hall full on the first night with 91 people attending the first service.

Pr Geoff Youlden presented and Northpoint provided support with equipment, worship band and people to take care of the preliminaries. There were 25 children there, so during the evening the pastors took turns going to the back room to offer additional support to the children’s leaders who were caring for them there. This church plant project is sponsored by Global Mission through provisions for a

pastoral worker, Penese Faletasi, who is caring for the church plant.

Offering an invitation by way of the letter was a great way to reach people – particularly young people and single parents.

Sherrell Pratt was walking into the building through the car park and noticed a young lady standing there with her 10 year old son. She seemed bit nervous about coming in to church and explained that her son had found the flyer in the mail box and had said “Mum we’re going to church!” It was her first time at a church service and Sherrell walked with her into the building where they were soon surrounded by people. The young lady later said she had really enjoyed it.

Starting another church out of Northpoint has been fantastic for the church’s members because it has given them a new lease of life. It has once again thrust evangelism to the fore of their minds and has also provided opportunities for new ministries to flourish. There is great

enthusiasm among the people as they see God working with their efforts.

The location for the church plant was carefully selected, being in a growth corridor where plans are laid for new housing

to be rolled out in the area over the next five years. Northpoint’s vision is that Northpoint Rockbank will be a place to gather people to hear our wonderful message, and a place where members can be of service to new people as they move into the communities that surround the church plant.

Pastor Loren Pratt

Breakfast Together BAIRNSDALE CHURCH

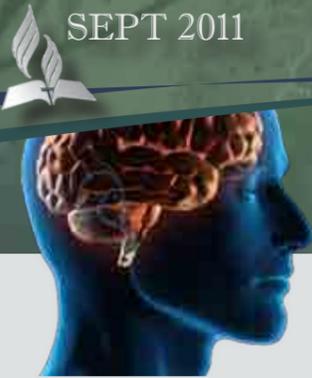
On Sabbath morning the 6th September some of the elders,deacons and deaconesses, along with a few family members, had a nourishing, delicious breakfast together in the Bairnsdale Church cafeteria.

There were 16 of us present and the time was nourishing physically, socially and spiritually, as Pastor Matthew Hunter encouraged us in our roles as servants of Christ. He spoke of the origin of deacons and elders in the first church, reminding us that the word for deacon, meaning servant, is both masculine and feminine, and that elders, (or as the word means, overseers/bishops), were the first pastors. Last year a similar breakfast gathering was also held and it looks like becoming an annual event.

Judy Walker



GRAEME SEIZER, ALAN WALKER, PAUL PUMP, MATT HUNTER, ROBERT TURNER & NAOMI, & MATT DOWD



health... mind & body



Admit It - You Are Powerless

“We admit we are powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviours, that our lives have become unmanageable.”

The first time someone explained this step in recovery to me, my palms started to sweat, and I felt a little frightened! I didn't get it. What did they mean by powerless?

The unmanageable part I got... my life had been 'unmanageable' for so long. I'd used drugs, relationships, sex, and whatever else was available in an attempt to at least have the semblance of 'normal'. If I looked around at the people I hung out with, I was as together as any of them, but... I didn't dare look inside.

In her book, "Co-Dependents Guide To The Twelve Steps" Melody Beattie states it so well when she says, "I thought my life looked so much more manageable than the lives of those around me - until I started looking within. That's

when I found the undercurrents of fear, anger, pain, loneliness, emptiness, and unmet needs that had controlled me most of my life." When I stepped into recovery I thought that all I had to do was stop taking drugs. But I found out pretty quickly drugs were not the only issue. I'd been abused and victimized my whole life but even more revealing was that I now owned that role... even found power in it at times... I needed someone to rescue me... to care for me... to love me... I didn't know how to exist outside of that victim role. And underneath it all, I really did believe all the lies; I was unloved, stupid, bad, only good for one thing and the list went on.

As I came to understand this step, I realized it wasn't just the drugs I

was powerless over, it was ALL of it: relationships; work; family; the lies I believed and the lies I told; the sadness, anger, and hopelessness... everything! My life WAS unmanageable

Then the coolest thing started to happen as I finally saw the value in this step and surrendered to this truth... I began to experience my life and to wake up to the possibility of healing.

I frequently come back to this step, especially when I find myself believing all the lies again, or I experience drama and stress in my life... I believe that the Holy Spirit...God... Jesus, my Higher Power gently nudges me and sweetly invites me to surrender it all to Him... admitting once again I am powerless...but He is not!

the treasure. Our human body, with all its flaws and weaknesses, is the perishable container. As humans we are imperfect and once we recognize the paradox of powerlessness, we can be relieved - we don't always need to be strong or pretend to be perfect. We can live a real life, with its daily struggles, in a human body beset with weakness and still find the power from above to keep going without being crushed and broken. (The Life Recovery Bible page 1483)

Cheri Peters
TrueStep.org

Breakfast Benefits

The morning rush frequents households in growing numbers across the world. Where families once gathered over stove-cooked porridge and freshly squeezed orange juice, we're now running out the door with burnt toast in hand or worse, nothing at all. Unfortunately, the ill effects of this forgotten ritual are expressing themselves in the growing waistlines of Australians.

Studies continue to indicate breakfast eaters as being leaner and more health conscious than those who bypass breakfast. From a nutritional perspective, breakfast eaters are also more likely to meet their daily nutritional requirements of important vitamins, minerals and fibre.

Skipping breakfast may save calories initially, however, the ensuing hunger corrodes our resolve. By 11am we may find ourselves tucking into pastries, sweet treats or sugar-laden beverages for an energy perk.

Consuming a wholegrain breakfast, such as oats, nuts and yoghurt, allow for a slow release of energy which can fuel the body through until lunchtime. Not only are people more engaged and energized after a nutritious breakfast, they are less likely to make unhealthy choices throughout the day.

For some people, breakfast is inconceivable due to time constraints or lack of appetite. For these people, there are more easily digestible

choices. Liquid breakfasts, such as Sanitarium Up&Go, are packed full of nutrients and provide long-lasting energy in a few simple sips.

As a business, management should promote the habit of daily breakfasts for improving staff morale, productivity and health. Whether offering healthy breakfasts at canteens on site or providing basic kitchen facilities,

employees can ensure they eat a healthy breakfast every day.

Enthusiasm at 8am is seldom seen in offices, however, a smile over cereal or the notion of crisp, fresh fruit may provide a small boost to the morale and spirit of the workplace.

Jessica Evans

Cultivate Health & Wellbeing Consultant

The Paradox of Powerlessness

We may be afraid to admit that we are powerless and that our life is unmanageable. After all, if we admit we are powerless, won't we be tempted to completely give up the struggle against our addictions, compulsive behaviours and hang-ups? It doesn't seem to make sense that we can admit powerlessness and still find the power

to go on, but it is not until we admit that we are powerless, that we can obtain the power we need. Paul tell us in 2 Corinthians 4:7-8 that "This precious treasure, this light and power that now shines within us, is held in perishable containers, that is, in our weak bodies. So everyone can see that our glorious power is from God and is not our own. We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed and broken." The picture here contrasts a precious treasure and the simple container in which the treasure is stored. The living power poured into our life from above is



NOT FOR THE FAINT HEARTED Continued from pg 11

AVOIDING INVOLVEMENT

Our disinterest was gradual and had its origins with what seemed to us a constant battle amongst various elements within the membership over rather trivial matters and vexatious

criticisms. We tried several different churches but eventually it was easier to just stay away and not get involved.

DON'T GIVE UP ON ME

Many young people make the choice to experiment with lifestyle choices

the church doesn't approve of. As a church we then tend to do one of two things - either ignore it because we don't know how to deal with it and hope they will get over it, or we take the high moral ground and marginalize them. We are very good at ostracizing people and not very

good at including them when they don't fit the ideal of the Adventist lifestyle. Proactive measures such as mentoring are needed to keep people feeling part of the 'club' even if they don't obey all the club rules.

MAKE IT RELEVANT

Most of the ex-Adventists that I

talked to still believe the church does teach true doctrine but they don't see it as relevant to them. They haven't left over doctrinal issues but because they didn't fit in anymore.

DISCIPLESHIP

Perhaps through teaching true discipleship rather than Christian

consumerism, we can prevent further loss and bring our lost ones back. Discipleship is appealing to postmodernists - it isn't just a once a week display, but a transparent and practical daily life.

CONTINUED ON PG 26



Dungeon to Kingdom

Joseph inserted the key into the door of the cell of the King's cupbearer and baker. The two men had been in prison for quite some time now and the three had become close friends.

"Time for breakfast, gentlemen," Joseph said as he took the plates from the servants behind him and set them on a worn wooden table in the middle of the small cell. The two men nodded their thanks and came to the table. As Joseph reached the cell door, about to leave, he realised something was making him uncomfortable. Something wasn't right. Neither of the two men, usually quite friendly, had said a word. Slowly he turned around and studied their silent faces as they ate. They seemed sombre and perhaps even depressed.

"Why do you look so worried this morning?" he asked, closing the door behind him.

The two men looked up at Joseph then at each other and finally back at their plates, in silence.

After some time, the cupbearer spoke, still staring into his plate as if searching for a sign among the scraps of prison food. "We both had strange dreams last night."

"Dreaming is not unusual," Joseph said. "We all have them."

"Yes," the cupbearer continued, "neither of us was all that concerned... that is until we realised we had both dreamed of pretty much the same thing on the same night. Such dreams are to be feared!"

The baker cut in, "We've talked to some of the other prisoners - no-one has a clue what our dreams mean."

"God alone can interpret dreams," Joseph told them matter-of-factly. "Tell your dreams to me."

"You start," said the baker.

"In my dream," The cupbearer began, "I was standing before a fruitless grapevine holding Pharaoh's empty goblet in my hand. Before my very eyes, grapes grew on three branches of the vine—fat juicy grapes. I picked them, squeezed them into the goblet, walked to Pharaoh and gave it to him." Joseph smiled, exclaiming "I understand it!"

"You do?" The two men said in unison, amazement on their faces.

"Yes!" Joseph rubbing his hands together excitedly as the cupbearer rose to his feet.

"Well... tell me," he cried.



WRITTEN BY DAVID EDGREN - PASTOR, AUTHOR AND DIRECTOR OF SABBATH SCHOOLS AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

"The three branches are three days," Joseph spoke quickly. "And the rest is your old job, back in action! So..." Joseph paused to get his thoughts and words right, "in three days, you will be restored to your position as Pharaoh's cupbearer!" The cupbearer clapped his hands twice and then clasped them to his cheeks as tears of joy flowed from his eyes.

"Can it be true?" he asked in wonder.

"Yes," Joseph said seriously. "Please tell my story to Pharaoh when you are back there. I was unjustly condemned to a life of imprisonment. Even though I was captured from my homeland and brought here as a slave, I have not been bitter or disobedient. I have served both Potiphar and the jailer with a good nature. And, yet, I am still in prison for something of which I am innocent."

The cupbearer nodded expressively, "I will never forget you, Joseph. I will tell of your honesty and integrity and that you are faithful in both big and small things."

The baker was standing now, excited about the meaning of his dream. It was so similar to the cupbearer's - surely his freedom must be approaching as well.

"What about my dream?" he asked. "Listen to mine!"

Joseph turned to the baker and smiled, "Of course! Tell it, and perhaps God will again grace me with understanding."

"It's so much like his dream," the baker said gesturing at the cupbearer, "it must mean the same thing! OK, here it is: There were three baskets of delicious pastries stacked on my head, the top one was for Pharaoh. As I walked toward the palace, birds dive-bombed me and ate the bread before I could stop them!"

The colour faded from Joseph's face. He stumbled to the wall and collapsed against it, sliding down its cold surface until he sat on the ground.

The cupbearer and baker rushed to his side. They knelt in front of him. "Are you alright?" they asked.

Recovering his composure, Joseph looked with anguish at the baker. "It's not good," he groaned. "Not good at all. The three baskets are three days... but that's where the similarity ends." Joseph went silent.

"And?" prompted the baker. "Will I get out of this jail?" "Yes," Joseph said and then in a whisper he added, "Pharaoh will have you impaled on a pole and birds will... they will swoop and... and..." Joseph couldn't even continue. But the picture was clear. The baker slumped back against the wall and remained silent.

And it was so. Three days later, on Pharaoh's birthday, he called for the two men, impaling one and empowering the other.

Two long years later the cupbearer remembered Joseph when the Pharaoh needed an interpreter of dreams. Joseph was summoned and he listened to the King's dreams.

"My God has made the meaning of your dreams clear

to me," Joseph told him. Seven years of prosperity approach. Seven years of desperate times—famine in Egypt and beyond—will follow. My advice, great King, is that you employ a wise manager to prepare for the seven lean years by making the most of the seven years of plenty. Otherwise this famine will destroy the land!" Pharaoh studied the faces of the wise men and officials around his throne room, all of whom had been unable to interpret his dream, then his gaze rested on the prisoner in front of him, as he asked the others "Who is as wise as this man, Joseph?" He looked again at the others but they could not hold his gaze. Nodding to himself he turned to Joseph, "Through you, the unseen God has revealed our future.

"For years, you have served faithfully where no one sees. Now, I place all of Egypt in your worthy hands."

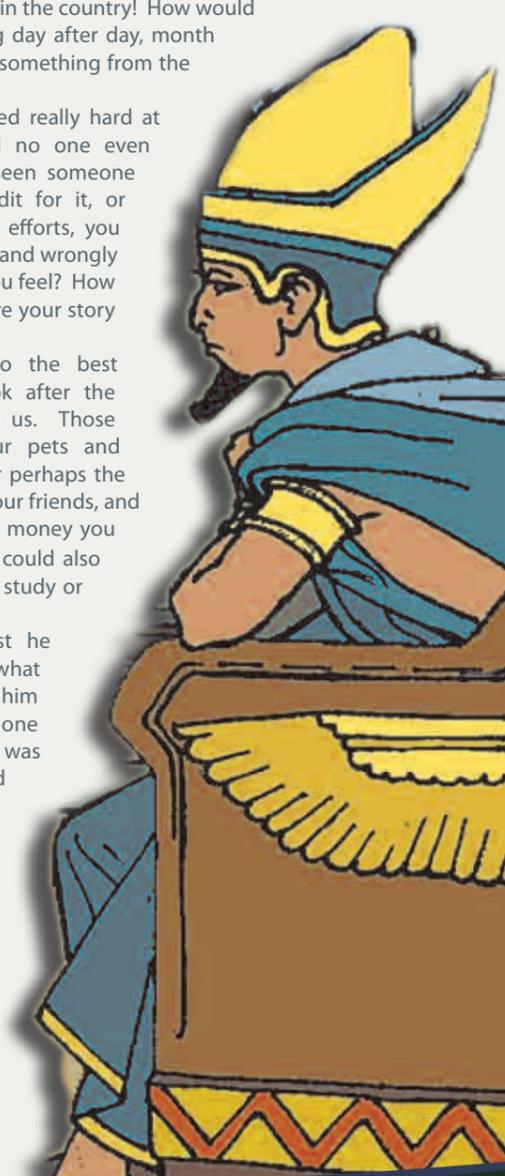
Imagine you were Joseph in prison after the cupbearer was released. He had promised to tell your story to the most important man in the country! How would you have felt waiting day after day, month after month, to hear something from the Pharaoh?

Have you ever worked really hard at something and had no one even notice? Or worse, seen someone else accept the credit for it, or in spite of your best efforts, you were misunderstood and wrongly accused? How did you feel? How long did it take before your story was heard?

God asks us to do the best we can and to look after the things He has given us. Those 'things' may be our pets and other possessions, or perhaps the people in your life, your friends, and as you get older, the money you earn. Those 'things' could also be your chores, your study or your work.

Joseph did the best he could to look after what God had given him - even when no one noticed, when he was falsely accused and when people forgot or just didn't even see...

But God saw, and eventually Joseph was rewarded.



28 STORIES IS DESIGNED TO STRENGTHEN ADVENTIST FAITH AS YOU EXPLORE THE 28 FUNDAMENTALS OF OUR BELIEFS. FOR A STUDY GUIDE FOR ALL AGES, TAKING YOU DEEPER, 28 STORIES IS NOW AVAILABLE AT THE ADVENTIST BOOK CENTRE.

Investing in Our Elders

MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION

Recently I had the opportunity to chat with Mildura Church's minister, David Butcher, about the wonderful team of six elders he 'inherited' when he took over from the previous minister, Daren Slade.

"They are functioning well together, and I think this can be attributed to a large extent, to Darren," David told me. "They are really committed, and this is setting a high standard for me as well." The elders are heavily involved in church activities; they all run Sabbath school classes across all divisions, the majority are involved in small group ministry during the week, some run kids in discipleship programs, and many are involved in individual Bible studies too and are competent and happy to preach when required. David sees the biggest challenge now is to not overload these enthusiastic leaders, but rather to streamline their efforts and empower other church members to step up and take on challenging roles. I believe you don't have to look far to understand what it is that is bringing these people together in such a way. Something Darren began with the



church, and has continued under David's ministry, has been the investment of time and money into the church's leaders - there is a strong emphasis on the development and care of their elders. Two and a half years ago at the conclusion of an elder's retreat, I challenged them to meet each week for eight weeks to experience group life and to hold each other accountable to what they had learned that weekend. These elders have continued to meet ever since! They meet together with David every week for an hour of Bible study and prayer, and once a month this extends into an elders business meeting. In addition the church recently organised a marriage enrichment weekend for the elders and their spouses, inviting other church members to join them if they wished, and there will be an Elders retreat with Pr Barry Oliver

coming up soon. I recall attending the family camp Mildura church held last year, and witnessing one of the elders sharing in the joy of the baptism of a young person they'd been studying with. I can just sense how much the elders are enjoying their involvement and this is now maintaining their level of commitment. An emerging challenge Mildura church now faces is to nurture the next generation of leaders, as more elders are clearly needed, without losing momentum. And what effect has the strengthening of its elders had on the church community at Mildura? This is the exciting part - in the recent church health survey, Mildura church showed a significant improvement since the last time the survey was conducted, which perhaps, speaks for itself.

Pr Rob Steed

Ministerial Association Secretary

Young Leaders Program

HERITAGE COLLEGE

Twenty students from ten secondary schools from around the Cardinia Shire participated in the Shire Council's Young Leaders Program.

YR10 students Debbie Tan and Nathan Meuwly attended a two day camp in August which featured many outdoor leadership activities and a Mandala art workshop. The following week they were collected each day from the College for activities that included a 'Great Debate' on current issues with the councillors, and then a 'Community Race', encouraging

the students to visit local community agencies and learn about what they have to offer Pakenham. The Young Leadership program concluded with a presentation ceremony at Cardinia Cultural Centre. Unfortunately Nathan couldn't be there as he was unwell, but each student was awarded with a certificate by Cr Brett Owen.



DEBBIE AT THE PRESENTATION CEREMONY

From the General Secretary

Pr. Darren Croft is back from his long service leave, and here he shares with us something that took place while he was in Queensland; a story that began with a chance encounter at a caravan park.

When we first met this dedicated Christian family, we discovered we had much in common. As we travelled we caught up with them several times. Arriving in Townsville we stayed side by side in our caravans and ended up sharing the Sabbath together.

Eating together Friday night the question came, could they join us for church the next day? They had never been to an Adventist Church and were curious. More than happy to take them along, still we hoped and prayed that the church we planned to go to the next day - that we had never been to before - would be OK.

Oh for a vibrant Sabbath school with an engaging discussion!

Please let the preacher be Biblical and uplifting!

God heard and answered. The teacher of the lesson led in discussion - not merely a lecture - and had us all working in our Bibles. When the discussion threatened to head into

strange areas, the teacher graciously steered it back on course. The visiting preacher preached a sermon that was spot on. The people were friendly and the church was obviously active with talk of an upcoming mission trip.

With Sabbath school and church done, we returned to our caravans and waited for the feedback. From their kids - they loved Sabbath school - the songs and the activities. At their church they didn't have many kids and whatever was done for kids was run simultaneously with the church service - and they were a family that wanted to attend church as a family.

The feedback from the parents fascinated me because again, most comment was about the Sabbath school. Their response bordered on effusive - imagine a place where people can come and openly discuss the Bible together even with different opinions! If only all churches could have the same opportunity.

We look forward to meeting up with these new friends again in future, and I consider our 'chance' meeting a reminder that God has His people everywhere.

He also reminded me of the benefits of what we so often take for granted - our Sabbath schools and churches - especially that Sabbath school, when done well, is really very good! And so I want to ask you - how is your Sabbath school? Do people eagerly participate, or reluctantly roll in late, or even avoid it?

A Sabbath school, built around groups, can form the basic building block for growing churches. It can be a place of community, accountability, mutual learning and joy. Maybe I'll catch you in Sabbath school one day- I hope so!

*Darren Croft
General Secretary*



What is ADRA Connections? Thanks to the support of its donors, ADRA Australia has been

empowering communities and changing lives around the globe for more than 50 years. Now you can join with ADRA on the ground and be part of the change.

Now, ADRA Connections gives you the chance to be part of a short-term project with life changing potential such as: helping train summer camp leaders in Vietnam; building a library and playground in Cambodia; or even helping Mongolian communities make the most of a desert garden.

It is not all hard work either, each trip includes some sight seeing experiences where you can discover new cultures and see the world you would have never imagined.

So are you interested in participating in a service trip? Give ADRA



Connections a thought. By joining one of our trips your church, school, interest group or organisation has the opportunity to make a long-lasting difference in the lives of people living in poverty.

So visit www.adra.org.au and see what your group can do in 2012 and 2013.

*Rebecca Auriant
Victorian Director ADRA Services*



PHOTOS - MLADEN KUKOLJA



Book Characters and History

GILSON COLLEGE

On Friday the 26th of August family and friends of Gilson College were invited to attend the annual Primary Book Character Parade and Secondary History Day.

The parade was held to celebrate the conclusion of Book Week. Throughout the week students in Prep to Year 6 were involved in a variety of activities themed around a selection of books. The purpose of Book Week was to highlight the value of reading and how exciting it is to 'escape' into the imaginary world of books. A lot of effort went into creating excellent costumes and there were dozens of different book characters ranging from The Hungry Caterpillar, to Where's Wally. There were special appearances by The Three Little Pigs, Gulliver from Gulliver's Travels,

The Man From Snowy River, Friar Tuck and 'beautiful' Queen Esther. The secondary school participated in History Day where students and teachers dressed as a significant person from history, and they too, joined in the parade.

Visitors to the school were thrilled to watch students and teachers parade around the gymnasium dressed up as their favourite book character or historical figure. Most of the primary students participated in the parade and the audience was delighted to see so many different characters

and costumes. As they walked they had to display the book that they had selected their character from. Secondary students had to answer questions about the life of their chosen person. Any students who did not have a costume were able to join in the parade by displaying an artwork that they had made during Book Week.

Everyone involved had a wonderful time and lasting memories were created of the excitement of books and the pleasure to be gained from reading.

MASTER CHEFS

EDINBURGH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Year 3 students had a fantastic time one Friday as they donned aprons and caps for a Master Chef challenge.

Students worked in groups to prepare a dip recipe. We had six students from Years 4, 5 and 6 judge the Year

3 groups on their ability to work as a team, the final presentation of their recipe and of course how good it tasted.

Many parent helpers were able to join in the fun and coach groups along. All students received a participation prize of a 'golden spoon' and the winning team won a 'fruit basket' each.

Elaine - "I loved the day and want to do it again!"
Luyando - "At the end it was taste



WINNING TEAM, KAYLUM, JOSH AND TERI

testing time! All the dishes tasted so good I couldn't stop eating! I hope we can do it another time!"



From the Treasurer...

You may recall that in the May issue we provided some of the historical information in terms of tithe. Since then there has been some good news regarding the financial position of the Conference.

Year	Tithe received	Percentage Increase
2009	10,731,441	2.95%
2010	10,680,443	-0.48%
2011 (to July)	6,581,466	7.28%

This is quite exciting particularly when you consider that to the same time last year the conference had received \$6,134,528. This is an increase of \$446,938 or the 7.28% as shown above. What is even more exciting is that this is well over our long term historical growth which was 4.41% for the last 20 years, however it does not exceed the results of 2005 and 2008 which were 7.72%

and 12.42% respectively.

Another interesting fact concerning tithe is the percentage of tithe that is now being given via e-giving. The following data will be of interest.

In 2010 the number of churches utilising e-Giving has increased from 51 to 55, while the average tithe received has gone from 8.5% to 8.9%

If you are interested in utilising this method but have not given it a go yet, log on and follow the prompts. You can also talk to your church treasurer or if they cannot help you, please feel free to come to us at the Conference for more information.

Next time I write a report for Intravic,

Gardening Update...

HERITAGE COLLEGE

Students have been very busy this term learning all about plants.

They have been engaged in a variety of activities as they learn about how to develop a vegetable garden: they have dug dirt, moved soil, measured out plots, planted potatoes, planted seeds, transplanted seedlings and started a compost heap.

In addition to vegetable patch developments, the children planted Hyacinth bulbs into pots to observe, measure and record their growth.

The students have been most excited about recycling every day items for reuse in our garden and have been bringing in various items for us to use. They used such things as egg cartons to grow their seedlings and old tyres for planting their potatoes. Year 4C are in the process of making a scarecrow using worn out clothing items while Year 3M have been painting a lovely sign using recycled

pieces of timber and rope. Year 3/4P have just finished painting some old shoes and turning them into pots for pansies and would like to thank Mr Woollard for helping with various activities. The students of Level 3 are most proud of their efforts and plan to display them in the vegetable garden very soon along with the setting up our new worm farm.



e-Giving
a convenient way to
give offerings and tithe
vic.adventist.org.au
and click on the
e-Giving tab in the menu

I will look at the offerings that are given and trends over the years.

Peter Lynch
CFO Victorian Conference

NOT FOR THE FAINT HEARTED continued from pg 19

LOVE WITHOUT BORDERS

Members need to know how to love and care for others who are doing it tough and who may not 'measure up'.

LOST IN THE CRACKS

Pastors move on, friends move on, kids leave school and move on – it is all move, move, move, and sometimes someone falls between the cracks and gets forgotten in all the movement. The church may say 'there's always a place at the table', but will it only be for those that the church have remembered to invite?

AUTHENTIC INVOLVEMENT

What would it take to bring people like me back? Genuine friendships. Mentors. Church activities that allow all generations to mingle, like the old Sabbath afternoon lunch in the gardens, or a church camp. Encouragement and affirmation. And involvement. We get much more

out of something if we are actually doing rather than observing.

LISTEN AND LOVE

Most former members I have encountered still believe the message. Some have tried to come back but were faced with a judgemental rather than forgiving congregation. The key, I believe, to helping these people find their way back, is to be a good listener. To not get defensive at their criticisms, or judgemental of their choices. But listen and love.

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER

Our words may say one thing but the unspoken says another and sometimes this other is a communication of cold alienation. As humans we struggle with anything 'out of the norm', so perhaps as a church we should go out of our way to 'preach' in all ways the true gospel of grace – that even though church members 'reject' abnormal (and

who is normal anyway?), God receives everyone.

VISITATION

As an 86 yr old retired minister, I share the concern over our church brethren leaving. I believe in part it can be because as a church culture, home visitation seems to be declining. I grew up in a church environment where the deacons had visitation books with the names of the families they were responsible for and would visit. But now, when the back door opens and someone slips out, few people notice. They have often been withdrawing for a while, and it is weeks and months before someone realises they don't come anymore - by then it is too late and the time gap only reinforces their decision.



CONGRATULATIONS Congratulations to Emily and Christian Kayler of Burwood Church, on the safe arrival of Alice Jane on July 14, 2011. May the Lord bless you and keep you as you care for this precious little one.

ADS AND NOTICES

ACCOMMODATION AVAILABLE – 1 bedroom in two b/room unit – semi furnished. \$120pw, located at Lilydale, 5 minute walk to station and bus. A young working male would be preferable. Contact Karolina on 9735 3927.

GIANT BOOK SALE – Held at Nunawading Church Hall, Central Road, with proceeds going to the church building fund. **DON'T MISS IT!** Thousands of quality used books available, average price \$3. Religion, theology, children's books, Ellen White books, Christian novels, biographies and more...

OCTOBER 16 FROM 11AM UNTIL 3PM.

CHRISTMAS OFFICE CLOSURE – The Conference Office will be closed from 5pm Thursday, December 22 until 9am Tuesday, January 3, 2012.

COMMUNITY EVENTS MINISTRY – OCTOBER 15 – Personal Ministries - ever wondered how to make our community outreach soul winning and people focused? In this seminar you will meet people who are being impacted for God through community programs. You will also receive tips and ideas as to how to make these programs intentional and relationship oriented. Come, discover a pathway to lead people to know our Lord and Saviour. 2:30-5:30 at Northpoint Church, Tullamarine.

TRUST SERVICES – Steve Whitson will be preaching at Healesville Church on October 1 and at Portland October 29 and available afterwards to discuss your Trust services needs. Otherwise an appointment can be made on 03 9264 7777. He is available after hours and some weekends, so give him a call.



Located at the Conference Office on Central Road Nunawading, the ABC is open 9-5 Mon-Thurs and 9-12 Friday.

Come and browse for all your Christian music, reading and study needs or check out the range of health foods and drinks available

The Editor reserves the right to edit and include or exclude any article from publication. Articles not included due to lack of space may be included in a future issue or placed on the Church website.

Please note, commercial advertising is not published in IntraVic. Only accommodation notices, if accompanied with a reference from Local Pastor.

Photographs of minors must be accompanied by permission to use the photographs in print and on the web, signed by parent/guardian.

Bible verses are from various versions which may include NIV, JJV, NJJV & Clear Word.

NOTE: neither the editor, nor the Seventh-day Adventist Church is responsible for the quality of goods or services advertised. Publication does not indicate endorsement of a product or service.

VOLUNTEER POSITIONS VACANT

MANAGER, TREASURER AND SECRETARY
ADRA OP – SHOP MITCHAM

Seeking suitably-qualified and/or experienced volunteers to fill above positions.

MANAGER: The successful applicant will enjoy working with and supervising volunteers, have attention to detail and accuracy, oral and written communication skills, a working knowledge of Microsoft Office and enjoys being organised and efficient with time.

TREASURER: The successful applicant will show attention to detail especially in managing budgets and reporting income and expenses, competent computer skills, a working knowledge of Microsoft Office, and preferably experience with database and accounting packages. 5- 10 hours per week.

SECRETARY: The successful applicant will show attention to detail, competent computer skills, oral and written communication skills- including minute taking, a working knowledge of Microsoft Office, and enjoys being organised and efficient with time. 5 – 10 hours per week. For additional information and position description, please contact Ruth Loy on mobile: 0450 357 359

Applications close: September 30th 2011



PATHFINDER INFORMATION NIGHT

Thinking about starting a Pathfinder club? Come along to find out what's involved, and how to go about it. Only one info night happens each year - so don't miss out!

FREE EVENT

Saturday, October 22nd 5-8pm
141 Central Rd, Nunawading

Please contact vicoyouth to register your attendance
vicoyouth@adventist.org.au or ph: 9264 7740

Sunset times
Bairnsdale time is 10 minutes EARLIER & at Hamilton the time is 12 minutes LATER

Sabbath	Opening	Closing
Sept 30/Oct 1	6.04	6.04
Oct 7,8	6.10	6.11
Oct 14,15	6.16	6.17
Oct 21,22	6.23	6.24
Oct 28,29	6.31	6.32

OFFERING SCHEDULE - OCTOBER

- Oct 1 - Local Church Budget
- Oct 8 - APPEAL expense
- OCT 15 - Edu/Camping Ministry
- Oct 22 - Local Church
- Oct 29 - Local Church



Vicyouth 2012 SUMMER CAMPS

- Junior Camp Jan 10-15
- Teen Camp Jan 16-22
- Youth Camp Jan 24-29

www.vicyouth.com

Under the Sun

Naamaroo Conference Centre, Sydney

DEC 28 - JAN 2

jbolst@adventist.org.au - 02 9847 3306

OCTOBER 8-16

2011 ADRA Appeal

HELPING PEOPLE
AND
AT HOME
OVERSEAS

You can make
a difference!

\$5

Can release a woman, like Aine, from poverty; giving her the tools to start a life changing business.



\$10

Can help purchase first aid supplies, for life-saving emergency response kits used when disaster strikes in Australia and around the world.



\$20

Can give Australian youths the chance to get their lives back on track and provide them with essential resources and books so they can receive an education.



\$50

Can give a person living in an isolated village in Asia something we all take for granted, the simple necessity of a private, clean latrine, helping to prevent life-threatening diseases.



Thank you for your support!
Because of your generosity, ADRA Australia can continue to provide assistance to people in Australia and overseas.



Please Give Today

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

These are examples of how your gift can be used by ADRA to make an amazing difference to people in need in Australia and overseas. Your donation to the 2011 ADRA Appeal will be allocated to the 'Where It's Needed Most' fund and used to support projects that provide activities like these. As you can see, it only takes a little to achieve a lot!



Adventist Development and Relief Agency
1800 242 372
www.adra.org.au

youth rally
22 October 2011

'Serve God, save the planet' - Matthew Sleeth

10am @ hsc - 141 central rd, nunawading
special guest speaker - jo darby
lunch provided afterwards

North-West Region
Victoria Bush Camp 2011

Friday, October 28 – Tuesday, November 1
Wentworth, NSW

Guest Speaker: Pr Leslie Ncube

Pr Leslie is from Zimbabwe, where he worked in the South Botswana Conference for 9 years, finishing his last year there as the Conference Youth Director. He and his wife Gugu and their 3 daughters (Awa, Waki and Wandi) moved to Australia in 2010 where Pr Leslie has enrolled at Avondale College to complete his PhD. He loves working with young people and has a passion for equipping families for eternity.

Powered sites and full catering available

Applications close October 14
northwestbushcamp@gmail.com
Contact Rhonda: (03)50213633