

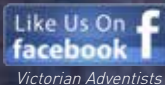


August 22
2020



Psalm 46:1-3 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

IntraVic
Journal



IntraVic Newsletter
a publication of VAC
Victorian Adventist
COMMUNICATIONS

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

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A note from the Editor's Office



What makes it hard for you to breathe?

If it wasn't so deadly, we could have said it's a bit like the Holy Spirit. "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes." John 3:8. Seems to me that COVID 19 is a bit like that. Racism too. With COVID, there's been a lot of community transmission which can't be traced but the reality has proven deadly for so many. Could we say the same for racism?

I'm shocked at what's going on in world. Disappointed too. In my time on planet earth, I've never seen anything like what we've all been experiencing this year.

I was stunned to see and hear the report of George Floyd's murder. "I can't breath." Real words. Symbolic words – oppression, restriction, limitations. Racism is ugly. It's deadly. It's unacceptable. It's not God's way. "But," I can hear some say, "We don't do that in our church!" Not everyone would agree.

I don't think I know anyone who actually likes being told, "You can't..." Yet restrictions have been rapidly imposed and we've complied so willingly – haven't we? Isolation, limits on gatherings, worship on-line, isolation, sanitiser. How are you going with wearing your mask? It's the necessary mask that make it hard to breath especially if you're going for a brisk walk.

It came through yesterday – a text message from a young guy I've known for decades. "Sorry I couldn't take your call. I'm in hospital, in ICU with COVID. I'll be here for a few more days – I think I'm getting a bit better." Why couldn't he take the call? He was having trouble breathing. But when George Floyd couldn't breath, there were no ICU staff to help him.

Over the restricted months of this COVID year, I've been delighted to hear what God is doing through His people. There's resilience, faithfulness and courage in the face of difficulty. Praise God.

In so many ways, things in our world are not as they ought to be. Our world is far from what God intended. So, with all that's going on, what are our Christian obligations? This edition of IntraVic gives you an opportunity to explore the issues.

Please continue to pray that God will grow us to be the people He wants us to be – to effectively share His love in healthy ways.

So let me encourage you to stay well, stay safe, stay on track with God and be kind to one another.



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Living **in Harmony**

Written by Lorraine Roberts YOUNG ACHIEVER AWARD RECIPIENT 2019

In Romans 12 Paul calls the Christians to live in harmony with others, love sincerely and prefer others over ourselves; even those who are different from us. It sounds pretty straightforward on the surface.

Be nice to people.

But is that what Paul is really commending we do? Recently, God has been shifting my thinking when interacting with others and it's been a sobering time of learning.

You see, in a world where you are expected to have an opinion on everything and everyone has the right to share their opinion, it can feel complex. How do we as Christians, navigate the call to genuinely live in harmony with others, with those who have different views, cultures, beliefs and values from us? Why should we aim to live in harmony?

I was having a conversation with a work colleague a few months ago about how we were both navigating Covid19 and other things in life, and as we were sharing he said "My ancestors are watching me and I need to make them proud." My brain registered the comment and I deemed it be not "THE TRUTH" and the curiosity switch in my mind went from on, to off. His opinion or life experience didn't fit into my world view so for the rest of the chat, we did some other small talk and I hardly asked anymore questions.

On the surface, it looked like I had been accommodating and loving, however, on the inside God and I could both see that I had placed this person in the "that's not truth so there's no point finding out more" box. It looked like I had been nice but in reality I disregarded him. Not, what I believe,

“ It would be easier if God just called us to be nice... ”

God calls me to do.

It got me thinking, ‘why should I love sincerely and live in harmony with all people?’ Other than the fact that God calls us to, as shared in Romans, Ellen White shares that “it is through social relations that Christianity comes in contact with the world” (Ministry of Healing pg. 496). That’s a pretty big reason for living in harmony with others. In fact, it’s definitely far deeper than being nice because it’s about allowing others to see who Jesus is, through our relationships with them.

When we look around the world today, we can see that the world needs Christ and Kingdom principles... we all do! In tuning out and switching off my curiosity towards my colleague, I lost the opportunity to be empathetic. I missed the opportunity to understand him, to see him as human and bring the principles of Christ into his life in ways he may be open to.

So how do I go from just playing nice to sincerely loving and living in harmony with others?

I remind myself that people are different. God made us different in some ways and people come from different upbringings, families, countries, education backgrounds and the list goes on. It seems like a pretty obvious thing, but if I remember that more often, then maybe I will stop expecting that people will be like

me or ought to be like me! I might remember that no two people in the world are exactly the same in thought and experience. Children brought up in the same household by the same parents don’t agree on absolutely everything, so why should I expect any less from a stranger? I think that reminding myself of this might help me take an approach of curiosity. To be curious, to learn more about others and their experience, to empathise with them and to truly see them as children of God. When we see each other’s humanity, it binds us together.

I check myself. Ellen White shares that “self is the enemy we most need to fear.” I ask myself, what is it that I am battling or protecting within me that makes it difficult to hear what someone else is sharing? Am I feeling attacked? Am I afraid of something? Do I want to hold onto being right more than I want to hear someone else’s thoughts and experiences?

In the case of my colleague, I’d decided I was right on this particular point and there was no point learning about why he thought the way he did. This attitude doesn’t open up room for Christianity to come into contact with his world because I’ve taken no interest in it.

Be quick to listen and slow to speak (James 1:19). Since I am trying to bring the world into contact with Christianity, it’s important for me to meet people

where they are at. Disregarding my colleague’s opinions and experiences, or Bible-bashing them, does not help me to get to know why he thinks the way he does. Listening and asking questions might. Andy Stanley is quoted as saying, “Everything everyone says or does, makes sense to them.” So if I am finding it hard to understand why someone does or says what they do, then clearly I’m the one in need of knowledge and I should be doing the asking. Sincere love requires sincere interest in people and their life experiences. Of course, I may still disagree with their conclusions or understandings, but I can do so in harmony – because I’ve listened and they feel understood.

It would be easier if God just called us to be nice. Then I could probably justify ignoring the parts of people I don’t understand or that scare me. But God calls us to a higher and a deeper standard. A standard that requires us to live in harmony so that others may see Him.



Hope Online

Written by Fraser Catton, David Maxwell,
Andrew Jasper and Wayne Boehm with
IntraVic

COVID-19 has been an unwelcome guest in many countries around the world and we Victorians have just faced another challenge as it returned again to invade our suburbs, homes and churches. The freedoms we all had just months ago are a distant memory and we have learnt live and worship in new ways.

Mission Unchanged

While so much of our lives have been changed by Covid-19, there's one thing that remains the same: our mission. The call to share Jesus with others and make disciples isn't impacted by pandemics. We just need to adapt HOW we do it.

It is Written's Offer

When It is Written was preparing an online evangelism program for churches in Florida, because of John Bradshaw's presence here in Melbourne last year and his affiliation with New Zealand, he offered the program to Victoria and NZ in early April.

"We recognised the opportunity to explore new methods of evangelism in a time when good news and hope was needed, and felt this was too good to keep to ourselves," says Harvest Victoria coordinator, Fraser Catton. "So, we invited other Conferences to join in." And the collaboration began! Meanwhile IIW decided to take their program globally and it was translated to other languages.

Mounting Pressure

The effects of the pandemic came upon us abruptly, but the Lord had already foreseen this challenge and had in advance, prepared skilled individuals to form a new media team which came together within two weeks of receiving the initial invitation from IIW, to meet this missional opportunity. The media taskforce was formed with representatives from the Victorian, Tasmanian, North New Zealand and Australian Union Conferences and the Division's Media Centre. The brief given to the Hope2020 team was to create an online evangelistic experience that engaged the community, seekers and church

Digital Bible Workers

Masterclasses

Hope Awakens - IIW

Digital Bible Workers Training



members, using technology previously untried in evangelism. It was essential to work collaboratively and the team met daily to plan, solve problems and get the job done. The pressure was on, as the programs were scheduled to commence early May.

The Three-part Program

The IIW program was to be presented on a browser-based platform making participation and interaction as simple as possible. IIW had also offered webinars to train volunteers in digital follow up with the contacts provided by IIW.

But as the Hope2020 taskforce started dialoguing, the initial plan morphed considerably to become a three-part virtual series offering a message of hope in Christ Jesus, relevant for this time in which we live and the current global climate of fear and suffering.

Gary Webster and Robbie Berghan from the Tasmanian Conference had already begun preparation for an online evangelistic program. This program became the first part of the series, Predictions of Hope, which specifically looked at issues relevant to the developing pandemic and commenced in May.

As the presentations concluded, viewers were encouraged to register for Revelation Today: Hope Awakens which ran four nights per week for four weeks. A change was made to the format of the program from IIW, so that the Predictions of Hope team could continue on with the viewers, introducing and hosting each of the Hope Awakens episodes.

While the time frame was very short, the gospel message in Hope Awakens was broadcast over four online platforms and people were urged to respond to the message and request offers via TXT message – this was untried technology and was a slight shift away from what had initially been offered to us by IIW, but more tailor-made for Australian and New Zealand cultures.

The final phase of the three-part series involved online Masterclasses, conducted by local pastors and offering various topics to further engage and disciple the viewing audience. This segment of the program was coordinated by Pr. David Maxwell,

who serves Benalla and Wangaratta churches. It proved to be no small feat as people signed up from across the South Pacific! The Masterclasses, offered to allow people to continue their spiritual journey or be involved in other areas of interest, covered topics such as Secrets of the Future, the Livemore Project, Forgive to Live, [truth]Link, Ancient Mysteries, Depression Recovery and an innovative children's prophecy event, God's Detectives.

Digital Bible Workers

The Hope Online Series also incorporated a new feature in evangelism with the introduction of Digital Bible Workers. Rather than using the webinars offered by IIW, our Personal Ministries director, Pr. Andrew Jasper chose to organise the training, having worked closely with the IIW team in the lead up to 2019's Revelation Today campaign. Trained church members followed up online interests that either asked a question, requested prayer support or responded to an appeal during the series. Nearly 100 Adventists across Australia and New Zealand registered to be apart of the initiative. They undertook brief training at the Australian Union Conference's website, disciple.org.au, attended weekly catch-up sessions and then waited to hear from attendants.

The purpose of the digital Bible workers was to make genuine connections with people so that a virtual contact would have a real person to interact with.

What was the impact?

We know that many seeds were sown. In the lead up to all the programs over 39,000 emails were sent out. 3209 people registered to participate (496 from Victoria) and over the two-week period Predictions of Hope aired, 212,499 people were reached via social media.

Just think about that for a moment. On any given week, we have around 6000 members attending church in Victoria. In just two weeks, over 200,000 people were given a glimpse of the gospel story. The programs have been viewed over 62,400 times and the number is still increasing daily. The viewing audience attracted more males than females, but the age of the viewing audience was split into two main

groups – 18-34 and 65+.

Across Australia & New Zealand, a total of over 340 people signed up for the Masterclasses, with over 500 from the Pacific Island's and other world regions who had not been specifically targeted in the lead up to Predictions of Hope and Hope Awakens, but is a testament to the reach of social media.

Although the Masterclasses were not as well attended as expected, there were still over 120 people actually participating and enjoying these courses.

One of the great successes is God's Detectives, being run by Sven Ostring and his wife. This course has more children attending now than were originally enrolled!

Another success was the ability to record professionally and then offer an "On-Demand" viewing option for the Secrets Of The Future course, with over 30 people working their way through that course with Robbie Berghan, co-presenter of Predictions of Hope.

The Future

This initiative has certainly broken new ground in evangelism and many lessons have been learnt which will guide future efforts. It has shown that evangelism can still take place while socially distancing. Our mission to reach our neighbours, friends and communities with the good news of Jesus isn't on hold, it's just packaged and delivered differently. With the future of large gatherings still unknown at this point, this is an important thing to hang onto – large scale sharing the Gospel can be done, with even larger scale - with immeasurable - reach.

We want to thank God for providing this opportunity and allowing us to stretch ourselves beyond anything we had previously considered, to try something new in this challenging environment. God alone knows the full impact Hope Online 2020 will have – we will probably only know the full extent when we meet those people in Heaven.

May He continue to bless these efforts and others, as we seek to reach as many as possible with the Good News about Jesus, to offer healing and hope in troubled times.



You have friends of different heritage right? And you don't see them as any different than yourselves... maybe it is time to see those differences. To ask them to share their stories and experiences with you. Perhaps by seeing the differences and listening we can all begin to heal...

Part way through our first period of restrictions, the world erupted over something unrelated to the pandemic; the abuse of George Floyd. Racism is something we as Christians need to consider and address. The Bible is clear, Back Lives Matter. Because ALL lives matter. We are ALL God's children.

Each Life Matters – the Blog Series

Our Victorian pastors meet regularly on Zoom, and soon after this ugly incident, before racism had been superseded by the next 'hot topic' in the media, they had a lengthy discussion on racism, its existence in our churches and what we can do about it. From this discussion was born a series we have been

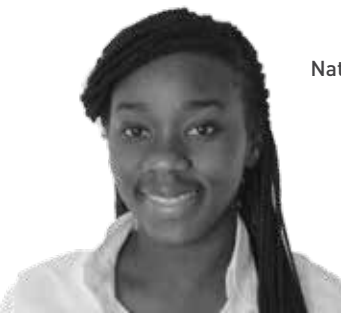
posting on social media, on our website and in the weekly e-newsletter that is published by the Conference.

Titled Each Life Matters, we take a look at racism and discrimination, sharing stories from those who have experienced it and from those who want to do something about it. And maybe, out of this, we will get to know our neighbours, to value them and see

them for who they really are. That we will appreciate our differences and love, as Christ loves. And in our own spheres, end the racism that exists.

If you haven't come across our series yet, check it out at vic.adventist.org.au/each-life-matters-2/ where we feature Lorraine Roberts, Nathan Brown and Jayneen Orwa to name a few.

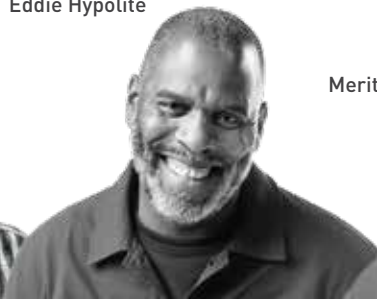
Ellen Akomeah



Nathan Brown



Eddie Hypolite



Merita Leitu



Jayneen Orwa



slice
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Credit: Depositphotos/lenavanova

four people hold an unconscious racial bias against Indigenous Australians – racism is that insidious. He goes on to look at what we as Seventh-day Adventist Christians can do about the racism in our own backyard, concluding that “racism is real, it’s painful and it hurts people. We have more to gain and achieve if we understand the depth of racism and how it is embedded within our society, our structures and our institutions. Only then can we truly start building bridges that bring people together rather than walls that divide.”

Read Darren’s full article here <https://record.adventistchurch.com/2020/07/03/pandemic-of-racism/>. Why not subscribe so you don’t miss out on news from our church across the South Pacific.

Aussie Table Talk

Luke Farrugia, a church member in Bundaberg, and four of his mates share something in common – a love for Jesus. They run a podcast where they explore faith and a range of issues related to it. They recently aired an episode called Which Lives Matter? Listen to this episode at www.austabletalk.com.au/which-lives-matter/ where five people share their stories, including Kelly Jackman from Victoria.



Pandemic of Racism

As we saw in Australia, the BLM movement became about much more than just injustice to African Americans. The Adventist Record shared an article by Darren Garlett on what this means to our own Indigenous community. As this edition was released during lockdown, you may not have read it. Here is some of what he said.

“Here in Australia the injustice called out by the protests is something Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are well acquainted with. Racism is real. It continues to plague our society. People are hurt by racism and when they see others going through racism, they join in and support, to bring the issue to the attention of a wider community audience...” He points out that Racism is a global problem and the South Pacific has not been immune to a history embedded with racial inequality and that the grief of injustice is traumatic and runs deep.

Darren asks how do you know if you are racist, and quotes a study saying three in



Statement on Racism

In response to the BLM issue, the Australian Conference President, Pr Jorge Munoz, released this statement:

The recent events in the USA where a man, George Floyd, was killed by a police officer have caused many to feel angered, saddened, and frustrated at the injustice of this death. Many are heavy hearted after watching such an atrocious act on their screens. A man pleading for air who just wanted to breathe. The sense of powerlessness is indeed real.

We feel for those who are mourning and especially for his family. We also pray for the entire country. May God’s Spirit impress the minds and hearts of all to be more like Christ.

In Australia, we too are not exempt from similar issues, and as followers of Jesus we speak against a spirit of racism and of hate.

As followers of Jesus we are called to create spaces where people can breathe freely in every way and feel free from prejudice, burdens and sin.

As followers of Jesus we are called to create environments where others may feel loved, wanted and reconciled in a spirit of unity.

May our hearts be tender and ready to be agents of change in our community and in our country. The need to be more like Christ is needed in our midst as never before.

*Pr. Jorge Munoz
President*

Adventist Church in Australia

Steve's Story

Steve Munsuang was born in Myanmar, a son of a Seventh-day Adventist preacher and teacher of the Gospel. He is now a ministerial intern, working with Ringwood Church. Here is his testimony.

Early in my childhood, when very sick, my mother prayed over me, "if you let my son live, I dedicate him to You."

As I recovered, and throughout my childhood, she continued her prayers of dedicating my life to God on my behalf.

As I grew, however, people would ask, "Is he really the son of Pr. Mang?"

When I told one of my past teachers I was studying ministry and theology, he hugged me, tears in his eyes, saying "I thought you'd be dead... Thank God!"

Honestly, growing up a pastor's kid can draw you away from church more than towards it as you witness perceived conflict, hypocrisy, injustice and politics within the church. Moreover, as a young person your focus tends to be on the faults of others' actions than on your own shortcomings.

While I detested ministry because of the challenges my father experienced, the challenges and conflicts I experienced personally, within the church, drove me into ministry. But my

journey was full of twists and turns.

I taught for several years, worked in marketing and management, then in humanitarian work in Malaysia followed by eight years with the Migrant Information Centre in Box Hill.

These experiences have opened my eyes to the greatest need of all mankind and that is Jesus Christ who is the ideal and judge of all humankind.

Ringwood, my home church, is multicultural, accepting of all peoples from around the world. Many believers from Myanmar have made it their home church.

Here, I have met pastors such as James, Denis and Brian who have really helped me rediscover my passion for ministry and recognise and accept my calling, offering me many opportunities and affirming this call.

Many say that the existence of injustices, conflicts and discriminations are proof that God isn't present in a church. But from



'In 2011, Australia became my home and country, and Ringwood my home church, which I served as a Lay Pastor from 2015 to 2019.' - Steve Munsuang

what I've learnt, what is "truly good" attracts all sorts of people and the devil is more active amongst those who desire the truth than amongst those who do not.

I am now blessed to serve Ringwood and Ascot Vale churches and can only say God is faithful and that it is God's faithfulness that realised a mother's prayer and changed a heart of stone, replacing it with a heart that is now committed to serving Him for the rest of my life.



It has rained when we arrive, and after packing up, but it has not rained once since starting.

Sharing What We Have

Members of Dandenong Filipino-Australian Church have been running a street feeding program since May.

Friday nights we hand-out over 150 meals, assorted grocery items and clothes to less fortunate people in our community. It is a vulnerable time and we regularly hear stories of people's struggles with unemployment, rent and every

day expenses... Furthermore, most aid organisations in the area had to stop.

However, God continually shows us how much He loves those in need by leading people to us and allowing us to be there for them, providing essential assistance during this time. Each week, there is a new friend and we never run short.

West Melbourne Help

Two sisters, Lydia Graham and Victoria (Buchla) Rasekaba, with the help of their Spotswood church family and others, established the West Melbourne Help charity in March, to help international students in their region, particularly those who had lost their jobs.

Well before we went to stage 4 restrictions, they were supporting about 50 students.

Read more about this project and how you can help at Vic.adventist.org.au under the news and notices tab.



Each week Brendan's team make time to connect with the teens, introduces guests and hand out 'challenges'



Jeremy Choo and his friends first started meeting in Jack Stott's back yard.

Thriving Teens

Animal of the Day, Kahoot Champions, interviews, animation tips and time to share lesson study are just part of the Lilydale Sabbath School for High Schoolers.

Each Sabbath since the closure of the church building around forty high schoolers have e-met on Sabbath morning with many staying on to chat afterwards well into the afternoon. While they miss being together physically, online Sabbath School has had some real upsides.

A highlight is the weekly Inspiring Ministry interview.

"It gives us a chance to meet people making a difference, profiling different ways to serve God. And it introduces our teens to our worldwide church beyond Lilydale," Brendan Pratt explains.

Guests have included people from the Union Conference, the General Conference, Sanitarium, Sydney Adventist Hospital, Revive Café in NZ and Avondale to name a few.

"Some join in from regional areas and while we are looking forward to being back together in person we will have to make sure we take the best of what we've learnt online and stay connected!"



We have only been able to share with you portions of these stories. They are available in full, along with all announcements and notices, on the Conference website, vic.adventist.org.au under the news and notices tab.

Avenue

Earlier this year, a small congregation was formally recognised as a Group by the Conference. Calling themselves Avenue, they began as a group of young people meeting in a backyard, for worship and to discuss various topics. Several months after recognition, an opportunity to be resourced became available to this church plant and they were planning to launch in June.

But then the wider problem of Coronavirus hit. "The pandemic evoked a sense of frustration," Jeremy Choo recalls, "and we wondered why God's timing had led us this far, only to find ourselves stuck."

Not to be thwarted, they reimagined what their church model could look like, coming up with a new plan. "This model involved our community meeting in multiple houses while still being connected via technology; this will also get broadcast to our social media platforms. The idea is to create a feeling of one larger church in many locations."

They are currently waiting for Victorian restrictions to ease so they can launch this model. They are unsure of what the future holds in this time of uncertainty but are trusting that God's will and purpose will triumph and their vision to be a younger generation of God-driven influencers, awakened by the Holy Spirit and making the love of Jesus tangible to the unchurched will be fulfilled.

Read more about Avenue and how you can get involved at Vic.Adventist.org.au/the-avenue



Online Survey

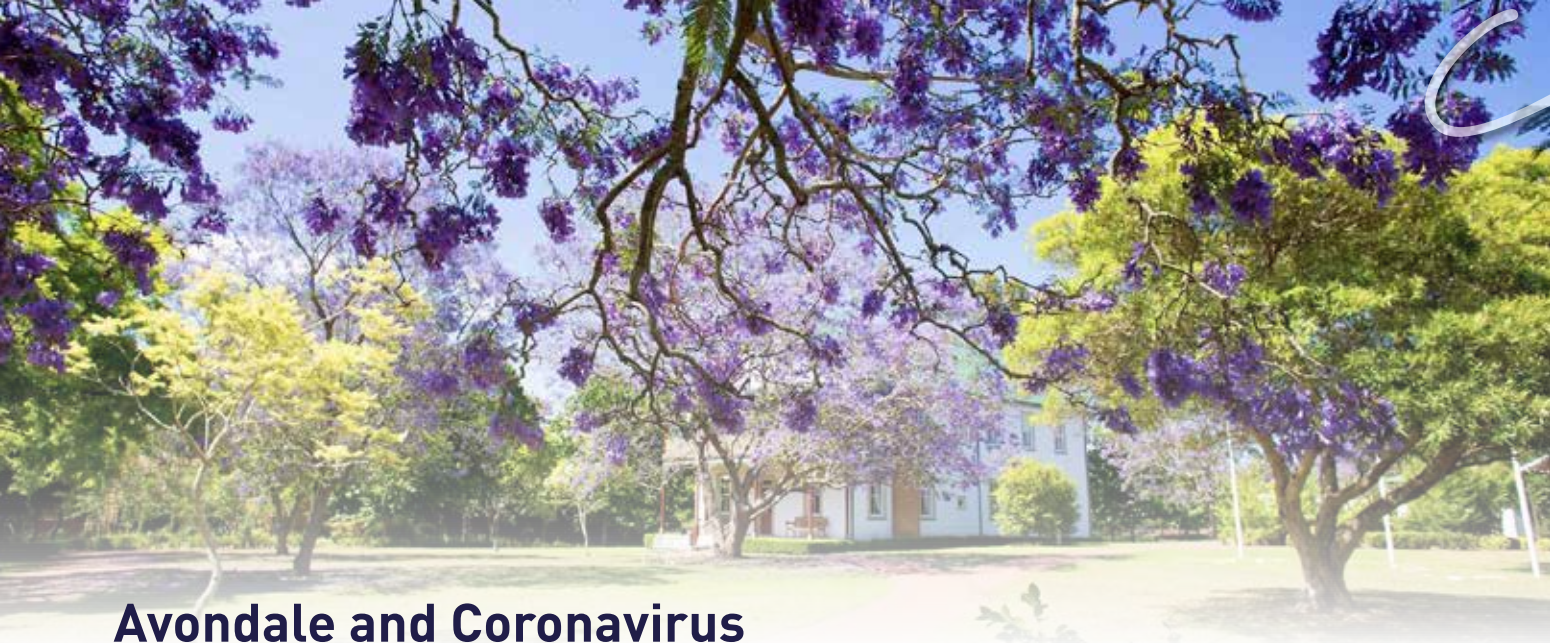
During this time of pandemic, our church families have continued to meet online and within the government guidelines. Recently we ran a short survey on our social media, with some interesting results... 76% of these respondents were under 40.

90% of our churches have been utilising zoom, with 35% including Facebook live and 30% YouTube.

Before lockdown, 85% of respondents attended church every week. During lockdown, 75% have connected online with their church families several times per month or more. And when churches are open again, 50% said they would definitely be there in person.

We asked what innovations have been appreciated and should continue. The option to participate online is widely seen as a plus, for many different reasons. So is the potential to reach more of the community through online platforms and being able to have guest speakers from anywhere easily join. Some of our congregations have been joining together for opening and closing Sabbath worship, and the ability to 'drop in' to church mid week, particularly for those living a distance from church, such as many of our country members, has also been greatly appreciated and is hoped will continue.

Read more at vic.adventist.org.au



Avondale and Coronavirus

Avondale College, the “experiment on the Dora” is in its 124th year. And what a year that has turned out to be with the challenges of coronavirus.



Professor Kevin Petrie, a former Victorian and Nunawading Church member, is the new Vice Chancellor at Avondale College

Professor Kevin Petrie is the newly appointed Vice Chancellor for the College. The Adventist Record recently shared an interview with him which you can read at record.adventistchurch.com/2020/07/17/meet-avondales-new-president/. In his entry interview with Brenton Stacey back in March, he said that nothing will hold back his vision to transform students who then go and transform their communities. In the context of an ever-changing situation, he emphasized flexibility and tenacity. And above all, placing trust in a God who reads the future as easily as He does the past.

Part of that vision involves ensuring the College remains viable by securing a solid financial base; a need that was unrelated to the pandemic but which the pandemic has naturally affected, providing even greater challenge. In May, a ‘roadmap’ was released with the aim of balancing the budget by 2023, with Professor Petrie saying he was convinced that with God, the task is achievable and requested prayer that

the vision of transforming students to then transform their communities will shine brighter than ever at Avondale.

By June, the College news was able to report that all had become acclimatised to social distancing and the other measures that had been taken to contain the spread of Coronavirus. Most staff were working from home and all students were studying by distance mode. Professor Petrie was impressed with the innovations in teaching and pastoral care (including a Festival of Faith via Instagram!) and students completed the semester successfully.



To ensure the College did not lose students because of personal financial hardship, Avondale’s annual appeal and the SPD’s June offering for the College was allocated support the economic hardship grants. You can donate to domestic or international student grants at www.avondale.edu.au/alumni/giving/scholarships/

Semester two also has its challenges... with the need to be flexible and responsive to the changing

environment caused by the pandemic.

Joining the College for Semester two, is one of our own pastors, Emanuel Millen. He has been asked to teach Hebrew 1A and Hebrew Prophets during second semester while remaining in Melbourne.

“My interest in Hebrew began while I was working in the finance industry,” he says, “after making it a life goal to read the Word of God in its original languages.”

He enrolled in a Hebrew introduction course that was offered to the community by a synagogue in St Kilda, which helped tremendously with Biblical Hebrew when he eventually went to Seminary at Andrews University. “Since graduating I have kept up my Hebrew by referring to it in my devotionals and in sermon preparations.” Emanuel goes on to say that Hebrew is a rich and multi-layered language which can communicate several ideas at once and it is fascinating to explore it.

“I look forward to the exciting opportunity to connect with future ministers at Avondale and to grow with them in our understanding of God and His Word.”



Emanuel Millen will continue his pastoral ministry at Yarra Valley Church while teaching online.

Conference News

Congratulations Wantoks

In July this year, the Victoria Adventist Wantok Group comprising of Melanesian Adventist people from the Pacific Islands living, working and studying in Victoria, was officially recognised as a Company.

The group was formed in 2006 as a bible study group to minister to fellow Melanesians in Victoria and has members mostly from PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, within the Melanesian region. Over the years it has grown from five families to about twenty, as more Melanesian migrants, residents and students came to Victoria.

Many Melanesians come to Melbourne and this company of believers has a target group which they can evangelise to and help smooth their cross cultural transition, and are determined to do that with God's grace. The group thrives on its historical identity as 'pidgin' speaking Adventists from

Melanesia. Wantok means 'we are one' and describes these people who share common traditions and social values as well as their language.

During lockdown this year, the group used its online platform to conduct worship services and maintain spiritual enrichment of its members. It is working to grow its online presence.

These church members are determined to reach their wider community with plans to reach out to the 600 Melanesians they know of here in Victoria, with the love of Christ and the hope that belief in Him brings.



Gathering for a fellowship lunch, back when we could.

Zomi Growth

In May, the Conference saw the Zomi Group, which has been meeting since 2014, recognised as a company.

This congregation is committed to serving Zomi/Burmese migrants from Myanmar, helping with their physical, mental and spiritual needs. Most came to Australia themselves as refugees and are keen to learn English so they can take part in our Church mission

in Australia. Their Women's Ministry group raises money to help migrants and those in refugee camps in Malaysia and India. They also visit community members who are sick and needing encouragement and prayer.

The congregation, which has grown from 20 to 60 adults and children, was involved in a multi-denominational evangelistic program, reaching out to the whole Zomi community in 2018 and they are keen to do this again when possible. They hope for recognition as a church within two years.



Victor (pictured with wife Anne) believes this crisis offers opportunity to minister to people in need

To Our Pastors

This year has challenged our pastors as they found new ways to do church and continue to minister personally, although remotely. By way of recognising their efforts, we thought we would share with you a glimpse into the life of just one of our many pastors, Victor Acuna serves Springvale and Western Spanish congregations. Fuelled by a passion to reach an audience "receptive like never before," he determined to "show the world that we care and that our God cares."

Early in isolation, he was averaging four hours sleep and rarely sitting down, even to eat. Quick to point out he is not a millennial, he had to learn about streaming, YouTube and Zoom and spent hours researching what other churches elsewhere were doing for worship and pastoral care. Then, as one of his congregations is largely elderly, he spent several days with each of them, getting them online and up to speed so they would be able to join in remotely. Then he had to adapt to 'preaching' in his home studio. And of course there were the many phone calls to members and visitors otherwise unreachable; preparing online church; the many e-meetings needed to keep church going; and implementing online evangelism too...

A huge shout out to our pastors. Please keep them in your prayers.

Financial Report

We are currently living in unprecedented times. Victoria has survived the devastation of bushfires at the beginning of the year only to be hit with the wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we review the past months, however, we can still see God's leading within our Conference.

Many of our members responded to the need of those caught in the bushfire ravaged areas around our state, donating to Conference offerings and bushfire appeals. The funds collected have been distributed to some of our members in the hardest hit areas, helping to provide a little relief for some of the necessities so desperately needed by those folks. This was in addition to the tremendous work and financial support provided by ADRA to those bushfire victims.

Our churches in Victoria have now been closed for approximately 15 weeks and that has recently been extended, and our church leaders have had to find new ways to engage with their members and community. We are grateful for the technology available in this digital age to connect and share with our membership and community. Of course, a significant aspect to worship is the giving of tithes and offerings and many of our members have turned to the eGiving website or app to facilitate their continued financial support.



Tithe income to the Conference saw a significant decline in March however tithe for April and May have generally met our monthly budgets, while tithe for June fell short of our monthly budget. We recognise however for June there are almost 50% of our churches that had not submitted their tithe and offering reports in time. We have noted that support to local church budgets and local church initiatives has decreased dramatically, making it difficult for some of our churches to meet their loan or rent commitments. We are so grateful for the faithfulness of our members in returning their tithes and encourage that same faithfulness in continued financial support for local church budgets as well.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you the results of our 2019 financials for both our church and school company.

The faithfulness of our membership enabled us to meet our tithe budget with Tithe income being just over \$16 Million for the year. This has allowed the Conference to fund our pastoral staffing, a major evangelistic Harvest Victoria event, provide funding to resource our departments and administration, and provide financial support to our education system. The Victorian Conference ended 2019 with an operating surplus of \$87,271.

Our school company has continued to grow in enrolments, which has bought with it challenges and the need to provide additional staff and teaching and learning spaces in some of our schools. Both federal and state funding make up a significant source of our education budget. Due to a budget shortfall in government funding for students with special needs our school company closed the year with a deficit operating result of \$309,190. Effort has been put in to ensure our 2020 budget will provide an operating surplus for the year.

Our Aged Care company has just

STATS ON E-GIVING

PERIOD	NO. OF DONORS	AMOUNT DONATED
Jan - June 2019	1087	\$2,428,005
Jan - June 2020	1862	\$3,927,039

concluded its 2019/2020 financial year and it is pleasing to note that after a tremendous amount of work and careful management the aged care company has closed with a surplus of approx. \$620,000 for the year. This has come about by careful management of occupancy and resident admissions with government ACFI funding significantly increasing due to the hire care needs of residents admitted to our facilities.

Our Pavilions apartment retirement facility is progressing well with completion of stage 1 expected to be before Christmas this year. This is

a project that presents many challenges in terms of unit sales and construction costs. Our project management team have worked with us through all these challenges to ensure a high-quality retirement living complex our church can be proud of. We still have around eleven units in Stage One to be sold and we continue to ask for your prayers regarding this project.

God has blessed His church in Victoria during last year and particularly this year with the impact of bushfires and COVID-19. We hang on to the promise that God will supply every need. Philippians 4:19

Graeme Moffitt, Conference CFO



Staying In Touch

Our means of communicating with church members has undergone significant change throughout this year.

Vicon, the weekly Conference email that goes to local church bulletin secretaries and pastors, has had a name change and is now available to everyone, and includes more than just bulletin notices. It now includes news from around the Conference while it is still fresh news, straight to your inbox so you can keep up with what is happening in other churches and in Conference departments, on the go.

Visit Vic.adventist.org.au and click on the News and Notices tab. Here you can sign up for IntraViCon, the weekly email and/or choose to receive the quarterly edition of IntraVic, which corresponds to the printed edition. You can also access news and notices as they are posted from the same tab.



Stage One still selling...

Please contact Mary George on 0455 616 337 or mary@pavilionsblackburnlake.com.au to make your private appointment. Pavilions Blackburn Lake 133 Central Road Nunawading. pavilionsblackburnlake.com.au

RETIRED LIVING

ENHANCE YOUR GIVING.

Schedules on the new eGiving app.

- Set up Recurring Gifts
- Conference Calendar Giving
- Tithe/ Offering Calculator
- Geo Location
- View Giving History



Melbourne City
ONLINE
REGIONALS

Through **IT ALL**

Guest Speaker
Pr Ted Wilson

*with music, testimonies and more,
to inspire through the crisis
and beyond.*

9:30 am • 21ST NOV 2020

*For more
information go to*
vic.adventist.org.au

In early November

