



MAY 22, 2021

Reflect
looking
back as
we move
forward...

Victorian
Adventists

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



After all is said and done...

We sat in a room together. That was a novelty! After months of restrictions, to have the freedom to meet in person seemed like something brand new. I perceived enthusiasm which seemed to be generating significant energy and I loved it!

It wasn't just another meeting. Our team of departmental directors were together and I had asked them a simple question. What have we done towards achieving our mission – to make disciples? Then we went through each of our seven strategic areas for the Victorian Conference.

I struggled to keep up with my note taking, as one after the other eagerly shared the highlights of what they'd been involved with. I don't anticipate I can adequately capture the enthusiasm that was in the room in just a short editorial – but here goes!

- **Christ Centred Living** – promoted by every department from Children's Ministries to Youth events and Women's Ministries and everyone in between.
- **Discipleship and Evangelism** – Revelation Today was the major initiative with Church planting being a great follow through.
- **Adventist Identity** – from church signage to Bible classes in schools, Pathfinders, Adventurers, the Health department – knowing who we are and what we stand for is vital.
- **Nurture and Compassion** – ADRA is all about nurture and compassion, but our schools, AdventCare and Women's Ministries are too, along with the other departments. Now that's no surprise.
- **Corporate Worship** – Children's Ministries and the Youth Department have done a lot to facilitate intergenerational worship experiences and to model how to involve all age groups.
- **Healthy Relationships** – from Biblical preaching to marriage enrichment and training ministers for premarital counselling to seminars at Big Camp and the Growing Together initiative, we're eager for healthy relationships.
- **Stewardship** – I thought I knew what our team have been doing, but I was amazed to hear the detail of how so many have done so much to help us grow holistically as faithful stewards.

I know I've shared just a tiny bit, but what are the results?

More members, more pastors, more churches, higher school enrolments, faithful members and tithe has grown by more than 15%, which has provided funds for mission – all in spite of the COVID challenge.

Membership growth: 7% over four years (which is approximately the same as the population growth in Victoria) even though we couldn't baptise people for most of last year. Praise God for every single person who's been sharing their faith with their friends!

I know. It's not enough, and there are people and churches that are struggling – especially after COVID. We need to do better – much better. There are so many who don't know Jesus.

I trust you'll enjoy this edition of IntraVic as we reflect on what our Conference departmental leaders have been up to.

We praise God for what He's doing and invite you to please pray that God will continue to work through His people right here in Victoria.

A publication of the



Victoria

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IntraVic

Keep up to date. Follow us on Facebook. News is available at the Conference website or the weekly eNewsletter. Events are on the homepage of the website in the events calendar. You can also add the Conference calendar to your own digital device. Signup forms and further information are under the News and Notices tab.



Commune with God

Seven Steps to a Better Prayer Life

WRITTEN BY IntraVic
from a presentation by David Shin

Don't let our dependency on the internet and all things online substitute for real prayer and time in God's Word.

During lockdown, normal life happened almost entirely online! It was the age we lived in, in 2020, and many are still enduring this overseas. Our time online has increased dramatically, much of which continues, even now as we are able to move around freely.

As a minister, David Shin found his time online increased exponentially, with zoom video conferences, video producing, editing, uploading... There were online Bible studies, emails and social media to keep up with.

"Praise God," David said. "Without the internet, we would not have been able to connect with each other." Not wanting to diminish the blessing the internet brought us, David does however, point out it is a two-edged sword. Here is some of what he said in a sermon in April, 2020.

I've reflected on our spiritual experiences as a community of faith transitioning into this online reality we are living in right now. I pray that we do not assume or come to the place where this becomes a replacement for our own personal Bible study and prayer life.

This should be supplemental and the irony of what I am doing today in our study is to use the online medium to encourage us to spend time offline, to put our phones into airplane mode and to turn off our computers. To actually open the pages of the Bible. Yes. That still exists. Open the pages of scripture rather than going to the iPad or online, because there are so many distractions.

I want to encourage you to go to the Bible and open it up and spend time in prayer... Today I would like to talk about strengthening our prayer life. Prayer is important and as Christians we know we should pray more... but it can be difficult to practice. A quotation that inspires me in my own prayer life is from Roger Morneau in his book, *Incredible Power of Prayer*. On pg 41 he says God "waits for our requests for help so He will then have the legal right in the sight of the universe to move with power into Satan's domain and rescue his captives."

Somehow, in the dynamics of the Great Controversy, when we pray for God's intervention in ours or someone else's life, it gives Him the authorization to move above and beyond what He would normally be able to do, because He has chosen to abide by the fundamental principle of freedom of choice. So when we pray for God's help, He is essentially given special access. Special authorization beyond the limits He set. Human permission to intervene.

This is a beautiful thing about prayer - the most powerful thing you can do in your relationship with God is to give Him your consent and then God says 'Ok, I have clearance.'

In her book, *Prayer*, Ellen White said "Prayer is the breath of the soul, the secret of spiritual power. No other means of grace can be substituted and the health of the soul be preserved. Prayer brings the heart into immediate contact with the wellspring of life." (pg 12) We need prayer like our body needs to breathe, and it is the source of spiritual power.

We are told not to worry about anything, but to pray about everything. So tell God what you need and thank Him for what He has done. This time of pandemic is a time of uncertainty,

anxiety and worry. Now is the time to bring those burdens to God. If ever there was a time that we as God's people should be praying, it is now.

So I want to share with you seven keys for strengthening prayer life while we are going through this quarantine period. And obviously these principles apply even when we are out of quarantine.

Principle 1 – Begin your day with prayer

When you get up in the morning consecrate yourself to God for the day. You may have done that at your baptism, you may have done that last week. But this is a daily matter. 'Lord I am yours, today. I give you my heart. Today. Begin your day consecrating every part of who you are to God.

Principle 2 – Give your will to God

"The will must be placed on the side of God's will. You are not able of yourself to bring your purposes and desires and inclinations into submission to the will of God, but if you are willing to be made willing, God will accomplish the work for you." Thoughts from the Mt of Blessing p 142.

Principle 3 – Pray for the Holy Spirit

There are certain prayers that are 'yes' prayers – promises from God that we know He will give if we ask, and prayer for the Holy Spirit is one of them. So when you get up in the morning ask for the Holy Spirit to fill you and you can know regardless of the way that you may or may not feel that day, that you have received the Holy Spirit by faith, because Jesus has promised it.

Principle 4 – Keep a prayer journal

Writing our prayers is a biblical practice. Many of the psalms we find in the Bible are written prayers. This practice of writing our prayers, I think, gives a certain focus to our prayers every morning.

Principle 5 – Pray with God as you would converse with a friend

Many times we talk about our relationship with God in this ethereal sense that is very hard to think about tangibly. We say 'Oh, I have a relationship with God.' But what does

that mean? If there is no conversation, there is no relationship. So prayer is conversation, and conversation is relationship.. The implication is that prayer IS relationship. Talk to God as you would a friend... He is the best one you can have.

Principle 6 – Pray throughout the day

Scripture admonishes us to pray without ceasing. Enoch set us an example as he walked with God. We should not restrict our prayer life to once or even twice per day. We can, and should, pray whenever we need to commune with our Father. In business meetings and in the classroom. At the shops when we are picking up the kids. At any time.

Principle 7 – Use a prayer acronym or some other aid to guide you through prayer

I recommend using a mental map of the Sanctuary for guiding your prayers. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, accept Christ's sacrifice at the altar. Exchange your sin stained robes for Christ's robe of righteousness as you wash at the laver. Feast on God's word at the table of shewbread, and be filled with the Holy Spirit at the menorah. And at the altar of incense offer up your intercessory prayers for others. And bask in God's presence at the mercy seat.

Then take His presence with you into your day.

David Shin is pastor in America. Twelve months ago, he preached on prayer life in Quarantine. His message is just as relevant today... His sermons can be heard on Faith FM and the AudioVerse podcast. These seven steps will be covered in more detail in our weekly eNewsletter. Visit [Vic. Adventist.org.au](http://Vic.Adventist.org.au) and sign up under the News and Notices tab.



MY STORY is His story

*Sharing stories of how God is at work
in the lives of our members...*

A Part of a Bigger Narrative...

Sharon Bayani grew up in a Christian family, attending a conservative church in the Philippines where her father was a pastor. She had committed her life to serving the Lord. As a family, they would attend church every Friday evening for worship and Saturday afternoon for practice, in preparation for Sunday service.

Upon moving to Australia from the Philippines, she compromised her worship style with less conservative praise and involved herself in hospitality ministry which often meant she missed out on the worship service and sermon, but she coped with it.

"My husband Regin didn't come with me," Sharon said, "because he strongly believed Saturday is the real day to worship God." While living in Sydney, Regin attended several different SDA churches. It was there he met Pr Jezreel. Upon moving to Melbourne, he was searching for an Adventist Church to attend. Online, he found a Dinner With Gary Kent program being advertised, and invited Sharon to attend with him. There they learned of the Revelation Today program with John Bradshaw and agreed to go.

While attending, they met up with Pr Jezreel again and ended up studying the Bible with him every Tuesday and, during 2020, joined in Dandenong Filipino Church's daily zoom worship, where they learnt more about the Word of God and the truth about the Sabbath.

In March, Sharon was baptised with her eldest daughter, Kristine, and Regin joined the church by profession of faith at the Dandenong Filipino Church.

This has not been an easy journey for Sharon, as it has involved giving up her Saturday job, but she is relying heavily on Matt 6:33 "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well," (NIV) and Phil 4:19 "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus." (NIV)



Sharon, Regin and Pr Jezreel - it was certainly a day of celebration for the Dandenong Filipino Church community

Games Night

Early March saw three of our churches join forces to host a youth Games Night. Joining forces was so successful they are planning to do it again!



Discover Vitality

Members of the newly recognised church plant in the Alpine Valley are already active in their community. They have commenced hosting an eight week health series with significant interest from community members.



Officially Open

Pavilions Blackburn Lake was officially opened in April, and we praise God for His leading and answers to prayer.



These stories and more are posted at [Vic. Adventist.org.au](https://Vic.Adventist.org.au) under the news and notices tab.

Or you can sign up to receive weekly news in your inbox, at shorturl.at/dx105



Executive Report

Pr Graeme Christian, Conference President

Zoom, zoom, zoom. So many meetings happen via zoom these days and our most recent Conference Committee was one more. We could have met in person, face to face, but we've learnt to like zoom. There was a time when I never thought that would be possible.

The obvious advantage for committee members is they're home as soon as the meeting finishes. Travel time and cost is cut to zero, and that's significant for all who've devoted so much of their time to overseeing the running of the Conference.

As a committee, we addressed each agenda item, but more importantly, we spent quite a bit of time in prayer seeking God's leading and His will in future directions for our Conference. For example, our committee sees merit in the establishment of a proposed new early learning centre in the heart of our big city, but that can only be possible if the AUC and SPD partner with us in this project. We and continue to pray for God to open the way according to His will.

There's been a review of the Conference Strategic Plan – see the editorial in this edition for a brief overview. It's clear to me that every one of our Conference team of departmental directors has promoted the Conference vision and worked effectively to achieve our mission, with clear and positive contributions in each strategic area. I thank God for such a cohesive team!

Pr Craig Gillis reported to the committee that, while membership growth was low for the last three quarters of 2020 (due to COVID restrictions on baptisms), accessions to the faith were higher again for the first quarter 2021 than the record high we saw in the first quarter last year. I'm sure you'll recall the Revelation Today series conducted in 2019 which resulted in the highest numbers of people joining the church we've seen in decades, and those results flowed through into the pre-COVID part of 2020. We believe that would have continued had lockdown not been necessary. We thank our pastoral team and for so many of our members for their faithfulness in following through with the core business of the church – soul winning. Revelation Today was an effective 'Total Member Involvement' project.

Mr Graeme Moffitt reported that for the first quarter of 2021, the Conference is

ahead of budget due to increased tithe income and reduction in some areas of expenditure. We praise God for His blessing, and let me say a huge thank you to all who faithfully return the tithe which funds ministry in our churches.

Mr Moffitt also presented financial reports for Adventist Schools Victoria and AdventCare. Both companies are doing well financially – solidly in the black.

The marquee was full for the official opening of Pavilions stage 1, mid April. The sales office has been busier since that event and there are now only a few apartments available in Stage 1. Stage 2 sales are well underway and we're planning towards commencing building Stage 2 later this year. Please continue to pray for God's leading and blessing for this project.

Sadly we accepted the resignation of one of our committee members, Mr Jason Parker from Bendigo. Jason will be moving to Canberra for work. His contribution has been appreciated and will be missed.

Finally, it was a delight to grant the request of the Mernda company for Church status. Another of our church plants that has grown to maturity.

There's so much to be thankful for. There's so much more to be done. Please continue to pray – that we may be the people God wants us to be; that our churches, schools and aged care facilities will be effective in spreading His message and that His name will be glorified. Thank you.



Notice of upcoming Victorian Conference Constituency Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the next regular Constituency Meeting of the Victorian Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will be held at Nunawading Christian College Hall, 161 Central Road, Nunawading, 26 September 2021.

The Constituency Meeting will commence Sunday morning at 8:00 am and conclude no later than 5:30 pm.

Delegates will be appointed in harmony with the Constitution. The business of the Constituency Meeting will include presentation of Administration and Departmental reports, Financial Statements for the years 2017 - 2020, all business as required by the Constitution and all matters as arising from the Constituency Meeting of 2017

General Secretariat

This year the Victorian Conference will hold its 95th Session, or Constituency Meeting as it is now called. These meetings allow us the opportunity to reflect upon the growth and health of our Church in Victoria for the period of four years since the previous meeting. Departmental directors prepare full reports which are shared with delegates to the meeting. The editorial team of IntraVic thought it would be good to share with our readers an overview of these reports, giving you a window into how our church functions and how our departments help local churches thrive and share Christ with each other and their local communities.

This report from the Conference Secretary is somewhat focused on numbers but while preparing it, Pr Craig Gillis was very mindful that each number represents a being created in God’s own image, whose value can only be weighed by considering the willingness in which Christ gave His life that all who believe will be saved.

This past quadrennium has seen some significant highs and lows. The highs came in 2019 with our evangelistic program, Harvest Victoria’s public outreach campaign, Revelation Today, and the people giving their lives to the Lord as a result. The lows came in 2020 with the unprecedented impact of COVID19 which restricted our public gatherings and even baptisms in an attempt to curb the spread of the virus.

The quadrennium under review concluded with the Victorian Conference having 118 worshipping communities consisting of churches, companies and groups, totalling a membership of 11,644. We currently operate six schools across eight campuses, five early learning centres, two aged care facilities, 133 Independent Living Units (including 41 in Pavilions Blackburn Lake), Camp Howqua and the Adventist Book Centre.

Despite the challenges of 2020, the past four years have seen positive **CHURCH GROWTH** in our churches and institutions, and we give all glory to our Heavenly Father for His ongoing blessings and guidance.

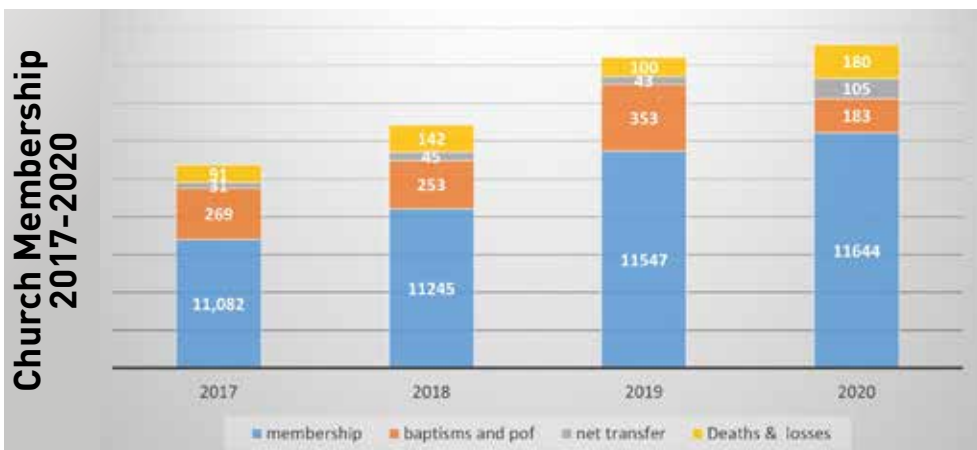
We welcomed six churches into the “sisterhood” of Churches in our Conference during this time. Gateway City (2017), Samoan Endeavour Hills (2018), Lynbrook (2019), Westpoint (2019), Gilson College Community (2020) and Werribee Karen (2020) Churches. Bendigo Karen Church joined in 2021.

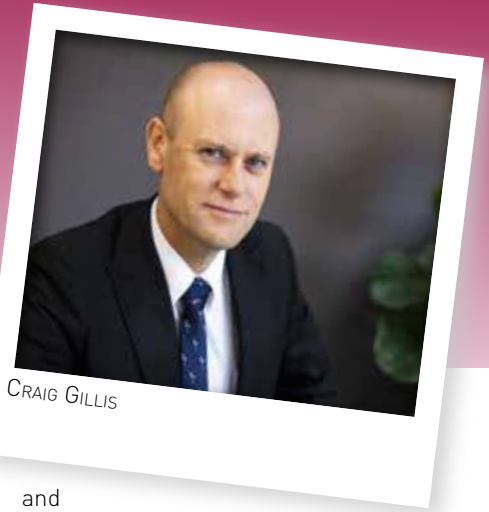
Sadly though, two of our congregations dissolved. We recognise the past ministry of Numurkah Church and Heritage Company, both which closed in 2019.

Fourteen new companies have officially formed and we welcome them. Australian Zomi (2020), Bendigo Karen (2018), Berwick (2018), Bundoora (2018), Gateway East (2017), Gateway Lighthouse (2018), Gateway West (2017), Melbourne City (2017), Melton (2018), Point Cook (2019), Samoan Hillside (2018), South East (Oromo Service)(2018), The Harvest (2018), and Victorian Adventist Wantok (2020) Companies.

While there is no formal process in the Church Manual for the recognition of groups, the Victorian Conference works with new groups and church plants in a way that enhances the mission of the Church in Victoria. We welcomed six newly authorised groups over these last four years. The Avenue (2020), Clyde Connect (2020), Karen Remnant (2018), Melbourne Vietnamese (2018), Myanmar (2019) and The Rock (2017) Groups.

The Conference’s **CHURCH MEMBERSHIP** has seen an increase of 1.8% per annum during this four-year period under review. (We also note that over the past ten years, the annual growth on average has been 2.38%.) Keeping in mind the population growth for Victoria over the same period has been almost 2%, while our Church has continued to grow, our current growth rate represents an ongoing challenge to the Great Commission we have been given.





CRAIG GILLIS

We note with sadness those who have fallen asleep in Jesus and we note the losses of those who have had their membership removed at this time. Please pray that God’s Holy Spirit will continue to work upon their hearts that they might come back into fellowship.

VICTORIAN CONFERENCE

EMPLOYEES are spread over three companies, Victorian Conference Ltd, Adventist Schools Victoria and AdventCare, and total 1,156 people. Of our Victorian Conference Ltd staff, the majority are field staff (ministers, bible workers, youth pastoral workers and lay pastoral workers), and at the conclusion of 2020, we had 64 full time positions and 42 part time. There are just over 30 full and part time administrative office staff. The four years under review saw an increase in staff of 11%, due to the growth of the Conference.

The Youth Pastoral Worker (YPW) Program continues to provide local church training and mentoring opportunities for young people to experience ministry employment in their local church. Local church YPW employment opportunities are reviewed annually, with the Conference and local church typically agreeing to a twelve-month funding partnership for approved YPW positions. This program also includes Lay Pastoral Workers and Bible Workers who provide pastoral support at the local church level.

Answerable to the Conference Secretary in meeting the needs of our workforce, government regulation and compliance, the Conference company also employs a HR manager, who manages the ministerial and departmental workforce, and a HR advisor who provides expertise in the management of office support staff, the ABC and Howqua staff.

To be compliance in Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) matters, an OH&S officer was employed at the beginning of 2017, the role being shared on a part time basis with Adventist Schools Victoria and the AUC. The officer has been instrumental in the adoption and implementation of numerous OH&S policies and procedures for the Conference Office and local churches. His expertise through the challenges brought about by COVID19 have been greatly valued by all.

The chart below (left) shows total employees across the Victorian Conference’s three Companies as of the close of 2020.

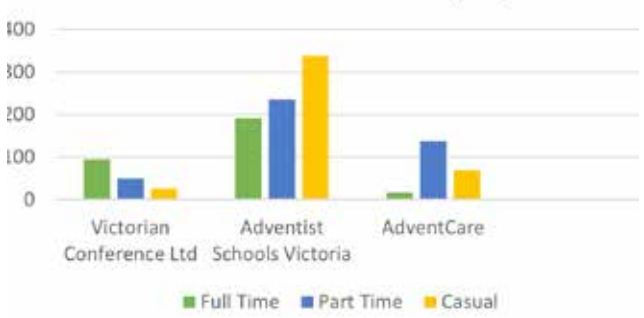
At the commencement of the four year term under review, **AdSAFE** began functioning as the service for protecting children and vulnerable adults in Adventist organisations across the South Pacific Division. AdSAFE’s role is to develop and implement prevention strategies to mitigate the risk of sexual and physical abuse against children

and vulnerable persons, and to assist Adventist organisations respond to alleged incidences of sexual and physical abuse against children and vulnerable persons. This includes the coordination of training for all Seventh-day Adventist Church denominational employees and Church appointed volunteers who interact with children and vulnerable persons; providing psychological support and legal justice or restorative justice pathways for survivors of abuse and their families; coordinating independent investigations into allegations received; and managing persons of concern and known offenders.

In 2020 AdSAFE released two new safeguarding documents which were adopted by the Victorian Conference and recommended for adoption to all local churches and companies: the Child and Vulnerable Person Protection Policy (replacing Safe Place Service’s Creating a Safe Place Policy) and Role Requirement Guidelines.

And prior to the close of 2020, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia and her various entities were formally declared by the Australian Government Minister as participants in the National Redress Scheme.

Victorian Conference Employees



Education

Seventh-day Adventist schools in Victoria (ASV) has continued to flourish over the past four years. Despite a challenging economy and the significant impact of COVID 19, we can see God's continued blessing on our schools. It has been particularly gratifying to see a few our schools that have struggled in the past, not only begin to grow but to thrive. There has been rapid development and improvement in quality infrastructure in our schools. Three new Early Learning Centres (ELC's) have significantly contributed to the sustainability of our education system.

"I believe," says our Education Director, Brian Mercer, "we are continually fulfilling our mission which is to create a thriving Christ-centred learning community. We are only able to do this by the witness of our committed principals, teachers, chaplains and support staff."

Our schools have a **SPIRITUAL EMPHASIS**, proclaiming the gospel to both the students and the greater school communities. Knowing this is best achieved by remaining connected to Christ, Adventist Schools Australia have developed the ABIDE program which actively engages teaching and non-teaching teams to abide in Christ. School Leaders and Chaplains undergo training to lead out in this commitment and we are seeing the blessings unfold in our schools.

75% of our enrolments are from non-SDA backgrounds. Our schools strive to bring students closer to Christ through curricular and extra-curricular programs. This includes the revised Adventist Encounter Bible curriculum, Friday night and Sabbath programs and off-campus camps. As well, there are the special spiritual emphasis weeks and chaplain-led Bible studies.

Three of our schools have on-campus churches and a number of them run Adventurers and Pathfinders activities.

Through 2020, class worship, Bible classes and Chapels were conducted online and feedback from families indicated that many waited eagerly for the programs and actively participated.

When students commit themselves to God and request further Bible studies, chaplains then ensure a follow-up to these commitments is made at a local school level. In 2019 alone, these strategies resulted in 678 taking Bible studies, with 65 participating in baptismal classes. We also baptised one non-SDA teacher into our church. In addition, in 2019, seven non-Adventist parents were regularly attending church, with one baptised.

'Service Learning' in our communities is integral to the mission of our Schools. Consequently, before the pandemic, overseas service was a central part of school programs, with all Secondary Schools taking part in annual visits to Vanuatu (Edinburgh

College), Cambodia (Nunawading Christian College), Myanmar (Gilson College and Henderson College) and Nepal (Heritage College). These trips are often life-changing events for our students as they develop leadership and team skills, and invariably engender a compassion for those people who do not live the privileged life so often taken for granted by the western world.

It became evident during 2021, that, thanks to our ASV ecosystem, **LEARNING AND TEACHING** can take place in almost any situation. Our professional development over the years had prepared our teachers for a new way of teaching. An invaluable part of the solution to last year's challenges in allaying negative impacts on our students was collectively staying connected to them, as we continued to transform our school cultures to thriving Christ-centred e-learning communities.

Effective practices of our educators include, as mentioned, a culture and framework of abiding in Christ and a strategic focus on the professional development to building the capacity of our educators with practical skills.

To assist with digital skills, ASV employed two digital educators and offer an Information Technology helpdesk. And there is a strong emphasis on partnering with professional external service suppliers



for training and coaching. Our schools also have Wellbeing Officers and augment collaborative assistance in identifying and supporting students with additional learning needs

ASV predicted in the 2017 Constituency Report an **ENROLMENT PROJECTION** of 2600 students by the end of 2020 (in 2016 there were 2321 enrolments). In reality, we had over 2700 students –more than 100 above our own predictions! This is a 17% increase. This increase is in contrast with many other private sector schools who have not shown increases, with some actually in decline. Praise God for His blessing.

We have also seen growth in our Early Learning Sector with five of our eight campuses now having ELCs, and it is anticipated that in the next quadrennium enrolments in ELC's will double. And in our schools, enrolments are up to 2841 and we project that by 2024, we will have more than 3200 enrolments with ELC students further adding to this total.

To provide the quality education ASV offers, our **EMPLOYMENT** includes a carefully selected workforce of 290 full and part time teachers who are crucial to providing competent learning structures and modelling Christian values to our students. More than 240 permanent ancillary staff as well as casual ancillary staff are employed, performing vital tasks for the smooth



operation of our schools.

State and Federal governmental grants have greatly assisted with **INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT** in our schools expansion programs. In the last four years, all our schools have received significant grants for various large-scale projects. In its 2020 round of funding approvals, the Victorian Independent Schools Block Grant Authority approved a total of over 2.5 million dollars, which will fund projects at Nunawading Christian College and Henderson College.

Education is not without its **CHALLENGES**. With continued growth, there is a need for at least 30 new teachers each year. Avondale University College has been an outstanding source of educators however ASV is also reliant on Adventist graduates from local universities to fill these positions. Please pray for this need, and if you know a young person studying education at a local university, please let ASV know so it can contact them and encourage them to take their teaching placements in our schools with the view to future employment.

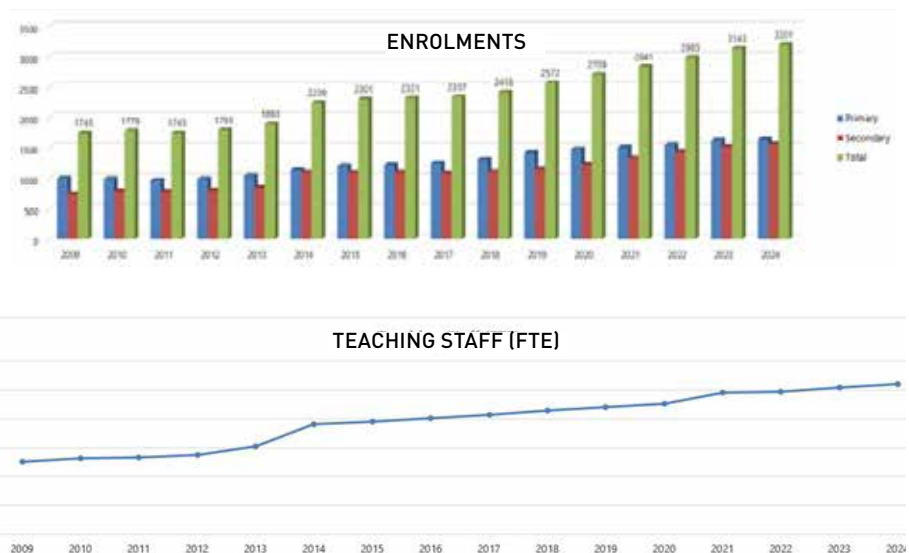
BRIAN MERCER

With Melbourne being one of the fastest growing cities in Australia, there is a continual search for land on the growth fringe to establish new schools. The cost of land is high so if you know of a suitable opportunity to purchase direct from the landowner, please let ASV know.

ASV also hopes to increase the number of ELC's but even with the governmental assistance, this is an expensive operation.

God is leading in our schools. He blesses and watches over these communities. ASV's Mission Statement is to Connect our school communities with Jesus Christ, and it's strategies continue to make this our schools' focus.

Thank you for your prayers and support for ASV as together we work to bring the good news of salvation through Christ, and of His soon return, to our school communities.



VicYouth has had many opportunities over the past four years to lead young people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, as well as train them for roles in leadership and in service. It has supported many in their personal walk with God through its different ministry areas. There is a focus on Christ-centred living evident in all VicYouth's programs. Discipleship and evangelism are also important features, and at every opportunity, VicYouth promotes healthy, nurturing relationships and compassion for others.

ADVENTURERS has recently undergone a makeover and rebranding, with Jesus and family central to this ministry. Clubs are flourishing and the ministry is providing a bridge to their communities for the eighteen churches involved.

The **AVONDALE CAMPUS** tours, which commenced in 2018, enable our young adults who do not attend church school and would otherwise miss out on an opportunity to visit Avondale, to broaden their horizons in education and training for mission and ministry.

BIG CAMP builds the faith of our youth and young people and offers a chance to share that faith as they invite their friends along. Opportunities are provided for fun activities, socializing,

worshipping and commitment, with inspiring presenters empowering attendees to go home and live up to their God-given potential in their own spheres of influence.

VicYouth recognises the importance of the spiritual development, accountability and sense of belonging that a **LIFE GROUP** provides. At each VicYouth event, the importance of belonging to a life group is shared through workshops, testimonies or preaching and offering options for people to connect with a local church life group. During the physical isolation of 2020, Sabbath School and life groups pivoted into the online space, giving rise to an increased collaboration across local churches, including with others interstate and even overseas. VicYouth will however, continue to place an emphasis on local church life group involvement.

Through **PATHFINDERS**, our youth, club volunteers and leaders grow in their sense of community, develop life skills and are encouraged in their spiritual journeys. The program is also evangelistic – many members were invited by friends and clubs often have children from the community join. The Pathfinders' schedule is a full one, and it wouldn't be the ministry it is without the many committed volunteers involved.

2019 saw the first Australia-wide Camporee held in Victoria in 28 years, with about 15% of Australian Pathfinders in attendance. Events such as this play a pivotal role in the spiritual development and growth of our young people. The same year, VicYouth held its largest Expedition on record too, reflecting the growth of this ministry in our Conference.

Most of our Pathfinder clubs persisted through the uncertainty of 2020,

adopting the COVID-friendly curriculum released by the Australian Union.

VicYouth would like to acknowledge the resilience, adaptability and positivity of our Pathfinder leaders and volunteers through a very challenging year.

SUMMER CAMPS serve to develop leaders, provide mentorship, foster healthy relationships, reinforce putting Christ at the centre and providing outreach opportunities. In 2020 they operated with the uncertainty of the bushfires, and GAP camp was not held as the camp was deemed to be in a high risk area. And in 2021, it was unclear until quite late in 2020, whether or not the camps could go ahead. But regardless of any difficulties faced, there has been a baptism at Summer camp each year for the last ten years and commitments for further Bible study and baptism are made by campers, year after year.

WINTER RECHARGE continues to grow. In 2020, VicYouth facilitated Winter e-Charge, online – a live discussion where viewers could interact with the hosts and presenters, fostering a sense of community.

Important events on the VicYouth calendar each year are the **YOUTH RALLIES**, with an attendance of around 4-500, including many young people who no longer attend church. In 2018 a Friday evening program was added to the Sabbath morning and afternoon programs and this worked well with the Friday evening and Sabbath afternoon having a discipleship and evangelistic focus. As well as these larger rallies, VicYouth liaises with and supports youth leaders in regional areas to run rallies for their local youth.

Another regular event is the





Converge



Adventurers & Pathfinders



PHILIP HYLAND & ROSEMARY ANDRYKANUS

LEADERSHIP WEEKEND, providing valuable training for our leaders across different ministries. In 2017 it was held at Camp Howqua but was subsequently shifted to Nunawading Christian College and we noted an increase in attendees. Last year, the weekend was postponed to allow for the Growing Together Summit and many of our leaders attended that instead.

There are a number of other regular events that have become an integral and collaborative part of VicYouth's programs.

Every four years the South Pacific Division runs a leadership development intensive, which has been well supported by VicYouth. At the last **MOVE WITH THE POWER** held at Stuarts Point in 2017, VicYouth had 70 delegates (more than any other Conference) attend for training in youth and young adults ministry, Pathfinders, Adventurers and Children's Ministry.

The General Conference provides resources for **YOUTH WEEK OF PRAYER** and **E-WEEK OF PRAY** and VicYouth promotes these, encouraging youth groups and individuals across the state to engage.

CONVERGE is an annual young adults (18-30) conference run by the Australian Union and supported by Youth Departments across Australia. The first was held in 2016, and in 2018-2020 the praise and worship team consisted of 15 young people from a cross section of churches in Victoria. These conferences have been a special time where attendees can nourish their relationship with Jesus and each other.

Across Australia, nearly 100 churches are participating in a program that teaches church leaders how to position their churches to engage younger

generations in a way that breathes vitality, life and energy into the whole church. This journey began for VicYouth, in early 2018 with the Youth Engagement Summit where local church leaders and youth discussed how to better engage and retain our young people. A year later, key leaders across Victoria attended the first **GROWING TOGETHER SUMMIT** in Brisbane. In March 2020, VicYouth held the a Growing Together Summit here in Victoria, entirely online, with fifteen churches from across Victoria participating. The second summit was in October, and this two year journey will continue into 2021.

VicYouth first participated in **SHARE HIM** in 2015 and continues to see the value these trips provide to participants, who step out of their comfort zone to present a full evangelistic series at a local church, as well as for the region where the program takes place. Working closely with organisers in the United States to ensure the best match of our speakers with the local church, the VicYouth teams have been to Botswana in 2017 and Philippines in 2019. 2020's trip was postponed, but it is hoped this ministry will resume in the future. More immediate possibilities are being explored for running a series in outback Western Australia.

Every year, local churches use their own initiative or team up with ADRA and participate in the General Conference's **GLOBAL YOUTH DAY**, where young people focus on being the sermon. This is heavily promoted across VicYouth platforms and VicYouth helps support their initiatives. In these last four years some of the projects include organising worship programs in nursing homes, handing out food and other essential items and collecting donations for the less fortunate.

STORMCO

is another community service focused program our young people can be involved in. It is best described as an affordable short term mission trip, led by local church youth leaders. These trips serve local communities during school holidays, with kids clubs and other community based needs, but as with other ministries, COVID curbed plans for StormCo in 2020.

In conclusion, VicYouth would like to take this opportunity to thank two past team members. Bruce Moss retired at the end of 2018 after giving more than three decades of outstanding service and leadership to Pathfinders as a District Director. Jody Lawson also hung up her boots after many years serving as a Club and District Director. They are both sorely missed.

Our culture is undergoing rapid shift. VicYouth is committed to cultivating durable faith in the lives of our young people by journeying with them as they find their purpose in the world. VicYouth is committed to building the leaders of today for a world of tomorrow through relevant training and resourcing. "As we lift Jesus Christ in all that we do and in who we are," says Director, Phil Hyland, "we pray that those we minister to may come to know Him more."



Summer Camps

Adra



BECAURIANT

ADRA Victoria is part of ADRA Australia and thus the global ADRA network, reaching over 110 countries. ADRA works with local communities as well as overseas, helping them lift themselves out of poverty and creating a brighter future.

At the beginning of this four year period under review, the Director, Rebecca Auriant, set three goals.

GOAL 1 To continue to be nurturing and compassionate to our local communities through opening our churches during the week to become Centres of Influence. In the first stage, the aim was to have a Centre of Influence in six pastoral districts, supported by an ADRA Op Shop and/or ADRA Café, which highlight the following: support services for people facing hardship, pathways for education and employment, family and intergenerational outreach and a platform to share our Adventist health message.

There are currently twelve Centres of Influence across Victoria. In just the last twelve months there have been 69,264 beneficiaries, 244 active volunteers per week and 114,192 volunteer hours equating to an in-kind

dollar value of \$799, 344.

GOAL 2. To continue to be seen as an agency of excellence with key stakeholders in the community service and emergency management industry in Victoria.

GOAL 3. To continue to train and educate church members on reaching out to their local community through meaningful service.

These two goals are often achieved simultaneously. ADRA was activated at Bairnsdale during the fires in the summer of 2019/20, and across sixteen local government areas during 2020 for COVID support services. Additionally it has received over 500K in government grants. Both these facts indicates confidence in ADRA's services. It has partnerships with Westfield Fountain Gate, the Victorian Police and Afri-Aus Care to operate a youth resilience project.

Ongoing education has been enhanced with online platforms rolled out by ADRA. Training is available for churches interested in starting a local ADRA project.

Some more specific projects that have been consolidated during this time

include a support program for students with intellectual disabilities in Springvale and Warburton; support for women from South Sudan (funded by the Department of Justice and Community Safety) in Springvale; and throughout 2020 a number of our churches became involved in offering hardship support to their communities with meals, food hampers and other goods (and many times 'just happening to find' the specific goods needed in their supplies, even when they had not even heard of the requested item beforehand!)

And of course, when we are able to travel, there have been the ADRA Connections trips which change the lives of those going, as well as helping the communities they travel to.

The increase in ADRA activities and the achievements to date have been a result of God blessing the ministry and opening the doors, compassionate churches serving others and financial resourcing through the ADRA Appeal and ADRA Op Shops based in Bairnsdale, Boronia and Mitcham. While COVID has resulted in a loss of income for the ADRA Appeal, the Op shops have been there all the way to lend a hand. And ADRA has also served its volunteers. ADRA Victoria has a WhatsApp group who share in a regular worship email. And at each ADRA project, prayer is facilitated with the volunteers, if a meal is involved, they offer prayer, and at the close of an event, guests are also encouraged to join in a final prayer.

Thank you to all our many volunteers and the staff who have contributed to the growth of ADRA over the last four years. We give all glory to God for His leadership and overseeing the ADRA department in Victoria.



Children's Ministries



JULIE CATTON

Jesus welcomed children, told us to become like them (Matt 18:2-6), and warned us strongly against causing these precious little people to stumble (Luke 17:1&2).

If He placed such importance on children, then undoubtedly, we should too. As adults and leaders in our church we should not only be teaching them but also equipping them to be lifelong disciples of Jesus, in the small window of opportunity we have to support them in making a faith decision.

At least 2/3 of decisions made to follow Jesus happen before the age of thirteen and these children are much more likely to stick by their decision. (Barna Group, 2009)

Thus, Sabbath school lessons, Adventurers and Rally Days, Big Camp and holiday Kids Clubs are important, helping our children learn to love Jesus more and want to share that love with other people.

When planning for our **REVELATION TODAY** program in 2019, Children's Ministries ensured the kids also covered the same topics as their parents, presented in a child friendly way to enable them to connect with both their heads and hearts... over 50 children made decisions to have Bible studies or be baptised.

Children's Ministries believes **EMPOWERING CHILDREN** to use the gifts that God has given them is important, and endeavours to intentionally do so in it's programs.

The primary focus in Children's Ministries is **EQUIPPING AND EMPOWERING PARENTS** to teach our children about Jesus and His love for them and helping us show kids the absolute joy that comes from being a

true follower of Jesus.

Some new **INITIATIVES** have been developed over the past four years to support families, including a baby dedication package where pastors work with new parents to begin a lifelong journey of sharing their faith with their children, and a Children's Ministries Advent Calendar distributed at Christmas time, providing a Bible reading and targeted discussion question.

Children's Ministries provide and promote family friendly **RESOURCES** and organise training events.

Obviously **BIG CAMP** was not able to go ahead in 2020 and 2021 due to restrictions placed by COVID. In 2020, the Children's Ministries directors from around Australia worked together to create an online big camp for kids and in 2021, Victoria again provided online Big Camp for our kids. While nothing replaces the in-person experience, our kids still had a fun way to learn more about Jesus.

The department offers **LOCAL CHURCH SUPPORT** ensuring the invested leaders who engage in ministry to children are fully equipped in their various roles.

The focus over the last four years has included GraceLink, Faith Shaper, Resilience and Family Worship workshops and regular newsletters full

of resources and ideas including VBS resources. They worked with the Youth Department to coach through the Growing Together cohort and to provide training for Children's Ministries at VicYouth's Leadership weekend.

While every year is different, 2020 certainly threw a few curve balls at all of us! The Children's Ministries department became aware that one age group was not being catered for. This prompted the development of 'Reset', an online worship program for Juniors and Teens designed specifically to lead our young people into a closer relationship with Jesus and to give them skills to be His disciples.

Over the past year, work has also been done with **KIDS HOPE** to find churches that are willing to connect with local schools. This is a great way for church members to connect with and mentor children who come from challenging home situations or who are experiencing a difficult time.

Also on offer is **SCHOOL SUPPORT**, by supporting chapel and festival of faith programs.

"This is one of my highlights in Children's Ministries," says director, Julie Catton. "2020 has made us aware of the ever-changing world we live in and the need to build resilience and a sense of identity in our children."

She has found that 2020 expedited new ways to do ministry, emphasising that while God does not change, there are times the Church must. "Supporting and building up resources for churches navigating an ever-changing world is essential to ensuring our children are nurtured and have a sense of belonging no matter the format of church."





GROWING TOGETHER

2022 - 2023

THE VICTORIAN CONFERENCE

is excited to launch the second cohort of the
GROWING TOGETHER PROJECT

early next year. Local Churches are invited to participate in this
EXCITING LEARNING JOURNEY which seeks to equip local church
leadership with education, training, and a **PRACTICAL STRATEGY**
for enabling their congregations to grow together.



*If your church would like to participate in 2022,
please contact VIC4YOUTH@ADVENSTIST.ORG.AU*



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