

northpoint

NORTH NSW CONFERENCE NEWS



A StormCo team from Avondale School served the community of Cobar in outback NSW during April



JUN 2010

PERELMAN CONJECTURES

Brilliant, but eccentric, there's a lot to like about the attitude of Grigory Perelman. He hit the news recently as the man who said no to \$1 Million.

A Russian mathematician, a few years back he claimed to have solved a problem that had baffled mathematicians for 100 years — the Poincare Conjecture. His solution has just been accepted as correct and worthy of the \$1 Million offered.

What was Henri Poincare's conjecture? When I checked out Wikipedia I came to the conclusion that half the problem is understanding the question.

"I'm not interested in fame or money," said Perelman when he refused to accept the prestigious Fields Medal at an International Congress of Mathematicians in Madrid. "I don't want to be on display like an animal in a zoo. I'm not a hero of mathematics. I'm not even that successful; that is why I don't want everybody looking at me."

How refreshing is this in a world where celebrity and fame have become ends in themselves. Ours is a world where people clamber over each other to be seen and celebrity has become a marketable commodity, even for airheads.

This Russian 'Mathsputin' is now a recluse living with his mother and sister. It seems he currently has little to do with mathematics. When a journalist tracked him down to ask about the \$1 million, he called out through his closed door, "I have all I want".

That can't be right! We have a multi-billion dollar industry working on making us dissatisfied so we'll want more. With Perelman they've failed.

His attitude is biblical: "Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have." For the God believer there's more, "For God has said, 'I will never fail you. I will never abandon you'" (Hebrews 13:5, NLT).

That's better than money in the bank.

**Pastor Bruce Manners,
Avondale College Church**



Upcoming
Events...



OUR SERVICE

Fourteen Years of StormCo in Cobar

This year, a team of 40 senior students and staff from Avondale School took part in the annual trip to Cobar in western NSW. The StormCo group made a huge impact on the community and individually gained a lot from the experience of serving with no strings attached.

StormCo stands for 'Service To Others Really Matters' and involves a number of community-based activities and projects. Students take the time out of their school holidays in mid-April and pay \$150 each to go and serve the town of Cobar. Avondale School Principal, Dr David Faull came along as bus driver this year and his help was much appreciated.

The team stayed in the Cobar High School and this year included five local Cobar people — most of whom had themselves experienced the benefits of StormCo visits in earlier years. Their involvement in leadership was a huge highlight and an asset to the team from Avondale School, as a contact base for networking and for planning the Cobar trip.

Every year, the group organises and facilitates a free Kids Club. This time, it attracted 200 local kids every day. The interactive



program is made up of singing, stories, puppets and drama, games, face painting, balloons — all led out by the StormCo team who have spent weeks preparing.

"This is the miracle that happens every time to those who really love; the more they give, the more they possess." — Rainer Maria Rilke

The team spent the first weekend washing windscreens free of charge in the main street of Cobar. A group of students also helped the local Assemblies Of God Church by stripping some signage and getting it ready to re-paint.

During the afternoons, the StormCo team broke into groups of four and walked through the town, offering people assistance with jobs around their houses. These home visits were very much appreciated by the local residents. Some community members who really needed help were pointed out by Cobar local, Angela Webb, from the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. She even provided tools for the students to use for their work during the week.

On top of this, the Avondale School students visited the local Youth Centre and talked to the young people there. One afternoon, StormCo provided pancakes for them, with 250 kids and at least 25 parents attending. The team also visited the local aged care facility, talking and sharing their time with the residents.

On top of everything that the StormCo team gave those at Cobar, they returned blessed from the experience. The opportunity to serve in a group of enthusiastic and encouraging peers is one they won't forget.



OUR MINISTERS

Pastor Mark Craig — A Legacy of Faith

On 20 March 2010, Mark Craig was ordained to ministry at Avondale College Church where he serves as Associate Pastor. His father, Pastor Adrian Craig, preached the sermon for this special occasion and his brother, Pastor Bevan Craig, also participated in the service.

Born to missionary parents, Mark spent his first years in Papua New Guinea. His education was continued in Australia, where he graduated in Optometry from the University of NSW.

To Mark, serving others was always a top priority and soon after graduation he funded a trip to Africa. He worked with an ophthalmologist in eye clinics giving sight to cataract-blinded eyes.

On returning, Mark began to spend much of his spare time working with the young people at his church. Giving became a large part of his life. He eventually reduced his weekly working days at his clinic to three and gave the time to volunteer pastor at his church in Sydney.

In 2004 Mark married Sally Weekes and since that time, they have made two more trips to do volunteer service in Africa.

Mark was convicted that he needed to give all his days to working for Jesus. He graduated with a Masters degree in Youth Ministries in 2005 and has been in full time ministry since then. He and Sally are passionate about serving their community both here and overseas and love encouraging others to do the same.



PHOTO (L-R): Pastor Mark Craig, son Harrison and wife Sally during the ordination prayer. To view footage of Mark's ordination visit <http://nsw.adventist.org.au>



I just really admire Mark, who is open to the Holy Spirit in his life. That scripture that says "it's no longer I that lives" — I see that in Mark, it's real for him. Mark doesn't want to be in control of all his life, of this church, or us, he just wants to let the Holy Spirit be in charge and that's amazing.

Josh Brown

Mark has a huge vision for ReGen and for what it's doing. His vision lines up with what I would love church to be like — a community being involved in service and being a place that is genuine and authentic and freeing and all that stuff. Being involved in all that helps me on my journey. I get to jump on board with a whole lot of other people who want to do the same thing.



Kim Brown

<http://regenlife.com.au>

Mark and Sally, I'm sending you this message from a refugee camp in Port au Prince, Haiti. I wish you were here with me, but more than that I wish I were there with you on this incredibly wonderful Sabbath. Mark, when I think of you as a pastor, three things come to mind. First is your transparent and unmovable commitment to Jesus Christ and to your family. Second, is an awesome gift God has given you to be a listener. You know how to listen, to hear exactly what the spiritual and ministry needs are of the group you are with and then more than just listen, come up with creative solutions to enhance their ministry. And the third thing — that gift to know how to enhance the ministry of whoever you are working with — you both do it so well.

I thank you for what you have done to help Maranatha be more successful, especially in Africa. Please know that we are actively praying with you and for you on this Sabbath, knowing that your ordination is an affirmation from God that your ministry is truly His ministry through you.

Pastor Dick Duerksen
Maranatha International



GIVING IN A POSTMODERN

Stewardship in Postmodern Culture

In the United States only nine percent of born again adults report they give 10 percent of their income to charity.¹ Is stewardship skating on thin ice in our postmodern culture? Does it really make a difference anymore?

The following facts provide a startling glimpse of the economic landscape of postmodern America. The United States is the wealthiest nation in the history of the world.² If you earn \$1,500.00

per year, you earn more than 75 percent of the world's population.³

Americans save very little. The savings rate of most Americans is negative, and for those who do save, it's a little over four percent.⁴ There were over one million bankruptcy filings in 2008.⁵ Stress has a negative influence on the personal and professional lives of half of all Americans.⁶ The

number one reason for divorce is money or the handling of it.⁷ In July 2009 the average credit card debt per household was \$7,861.⁸ There are more Barbie dolls in the US than people⁹ and more boats than harbor slips

to hold them.¹⁰ In 2007 we spent \$9.9 Billion on soft drinks.¹¹ The square footage of homes is increasing while the number of occupants shrinks.¹² Penalty fees on revolving credit cards made up almost half the industry profits.¹³

It is within this economic landscape that postmodern theory states, "Truth is not universal, is not objective or absolute, and cannot be determined by a commonly accepted method... truth is socially constructed, plural, and inaccessible to universal reason."¹⁴ Jill M. Hudson states, "No longer are the rules and principles that formerly governed society understood to be passed down through families, religious groups, or community norms. Morals, ethics and values are created and re-created out of personal experience."¹⁵ And finally, postmodern psychologist Robert Jay Lifton states, "Those who are consistent in their beliefs, who try to live according to a specific set of principles, and who imagine that they have a single core identity are mentally ill."¹⁶

The stewardship of giving, according to postmodern theory, means that you can create your own ethics and morals about giving. It is a personal subjective experience, not an absolute belief to be governed by. Your belief may be different from others but can coexist in harmony. No one can tell you how to give, because it is your business and you make it what you want it to be. There is no question that the stewardship of giving and postmodern theory are difficult, if not impossible, partners. It is the encroachment of postmodernism that puts stewardship on thin ice.

Stewardship in the Church

Money is to some degree considered a taboo subject in churches. There is fear that its discussion will create guilt and anxiety, so pastors avoid preaching on the subject.¹⁷ Clergy do not want to offend or make members uncomfortable. Many of today's churches have an inward focus, a "keep-the-doors-open," and "let's-take-care-of-ourselves" attitude known as the "scarcity syndrome."¹⁸ Reports show that bank financing accounts for approximately 52 percent of church buildings with mortgages and the largest portion of the congregations' budget going to pay that mortgage.¹⁹ Randy Alcorn states, "There is more blindness, rationalisation, and unclear thinking about money than anything else."²⁰ It should be no surprise then, that giving has declined for the past 30 years²¹ and now some think that the parachurch ministries do most of the biblical teaching on money. Members appear to be participating in church and worship but doing other things with their money.

CULTURE

It is proposed that in postmodern culture, churches cannot expect that the old methods of giving will continue to fund the local work. Articulating vision will regain the momentum of church stewardship.²² If American Christians averaged giving 10 percent tithed to their organisations, the phrase “it would transform the world” would be an understatement.²³ Did you know that those Christians giving the most percentage of income earn the least amount of money? “Americans who earn less than \$10,000 gave 2.3 percent of their income to religious organisations, whereas those who earn \$70,000 or more gave only 1.2 percent.”²⁴ The working poor are the most generous.

Stewardship in the Bible

The study of stewardship in the Bible reveals that, first, God owns everything (Psalm 24:1). Secondly, we are stewards of His property (Psalm 8:6-8). The third principle of biblical stewardship is to be found faithful (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). It is this third principle that is the baseline and the foundation for commitment that should differentiate the Christian from postmodernism. Faithfulness involves believing in a consistent and specific set of principles called absolutes. The best evidence of faithfulness is how we give and manage money.

One day Jesus was watching people give to the temple treasury. He observed the pious Pharisees giving with obvious display and ceremony. They wanted to be noticed and seen. Yet just a few days later, with murder in their minds, they were on their way to arrest Jesus. Money and power often go together, along with a sense of self-worth and self-satisfaction. They held giving in high esteem but failed to understand genuine faithfulness of the heart. They practiced one thing but did another. Church statistics and research in this postmodern culture seem to indicate that members are participating in church and worship but do not stand on the baseline of stewardship, which is faithfulness. We tend to give lip service but manage our money as secular postmoderns.

In the crowd that day was a poor widow who hesitantly approached with an offering in hand. With her decision made, the gift was completed quickly and unnoticed. Hoping to remain in obscurity, she hurried away but her eyes met the eyes of Jesus. Her gift was nothing compared to that of the Pharisees, but His gaze noted the passion of her heart and that gift of faith lighted the countenance of Christ. This now penniless widow with eyes riveted on Jesus heard Him say to His disciples, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put in more than all of them.”²⁵ The gift she gave fearfully was returned to her in Christ’s loving affirmation. Tears of joy welled up in her eyes as she left the temple. Jesus observed her active faith give sacrificially. She gave all she had to support the work of the temple and to a cause she loved.

Her gift was a genuine expression of her faith that has contributed “in a thousand directions to the extension of the truth and the relief of the needy.”²⁶ It was a conviction that held consistent beliefs in absolutes. In return, her faith grew stronger, confident, and active. Only faithfulness to a vision or a Person produces this kind of gift. Could we do the same with our last fifty cents? Faithfulness will always do more than required. That’s the kind of faithful stewardship that really makes a difference.

John Matthews, CSPG, CSP
Planned Giving & Trust Services Director,
Southwestern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

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OUR CHURCHES



Grafton Ladies Support Missions

In 2003, many Grafton Church ladies took up their knitting needles and crochet hooks and commenced making rugs for the needy in Third World Countries. Adding to this skill in 2008, they have followed up with jumpers, beanies, socks and dolls for AIDS babies. Now in 2010, a further addition to their skills has been matinee' jackets for newborns in the Solomon Islands.

Faye Benn from Grafton and a group of Woodburn ladies have also joined the effort and donations of wool have been gratefully received. Over the years hundreds of articles have been sent to precious needy souls. These ladies truly know the meaning of the words that Paul records Jesus himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35. If you are interested in joining in contact graftonSDA@gmail.com.

Grafton Rejoices

Grafton Adventist Church celebrated on 20 March 2010 when Michael and Grace Grass were accepted into church fellowship. The service focused on three homes; Eden lost, the church and Eden restored. It was shown how the church is the Lord's family for support on our spiritual journey. In the afternoon we shared a beautiful meal and celebrated Michael and Grace's return to the Adventist faith. This decision was the result of the Holy Spirit and ongoing studies with the minister, Paul Richardson. Their Profession of Faith was also witnessed by Michael's mother, Janet.



Boolaroo Fundraiser for Africa

Boolaroo Adventist Church members and friends put on a fundraiser Harvest Festival for last quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, for the East Central Africa Division. It was a huge success, due to all the support from the church members and friends. The music and singing added a wonderful touch, in addition with all other activities. They had a delightful meal that was enjoyed by everyone.

The auction was a complete success — fun, enjoyable and amusing. Many had planted produce, made various craft things and cooked food to sell. The variety of great items up for sale helped the bidding to go higher and higher, with one pumpkin being sold for \$41, which aided a lovely sum of \$1,339.50. This was combined with the Thirteenth Sabbath School Offering of \$381.55 for a grand total of \$1,721.05. We pray God will bless this offering for His purpose in the East Central Africa Division.



Camden Haven Focuses on Health

Members of the Camden Haven Adventist Church focused on distributing 5,000 pamphlets in their local district throughout March promoting "Commonsense Health Lectures". These were conducted by Barbara O'Neill, who is a qualified naturopath and nutritionist. Barbara is a health director of Misty Mountain Health Retreat and writes articles on health, produces DVD lectures and is writing a book. Camden Haven has historically struggled to attract the local community, who are predominately Catholic, to any of their organised outreach programs. After many prayers and a large promotion through the media, approximately 115 people from the community attended these fabulous lectures.

A survey distributed indicated the community was very keen to follow-up with other relevant programs. As part of this follow-up, Gary Grant, Consultant Clinical Psychologist and a member of the Camden Haven Church spoke for two evenings in May on "Stress and Anxiety". The majority of those who attended were from the community and stated how helpful Gary's talks and discussion were. It's great to get such positive feedback and response.

OUR COMMUNITY

Free Computer Lessons for Wingham Community



Free computer lessons were offered to members of the Wingham community on the four Mondays in March. On the first three nights participants were shown by Heidi Fowler how to word process, create a simple spreadsheet and make a slide show presentation.

Everyone was able to bring their own laptop, which meant they were working on a computer familiar to them with their own software. They were able to practise their new skills straight away. On the fourth night Scott Reinhard demonstrated how to buy and sell on Ebay using a wireless internet connection.

After hearing Leo Schreven at Big Camp last year talk about using whatever skills we have to bring people into our churches, I felt inspired to do free for the community what I do in my job each day.

For each seat we put out, the Lord brought someone to fill it, most of whom have never been inside our church hall before. Each night saw between 9–11 people attending, culminating with 12 for the last evening session.

The program resulted in one lady signing up for some Discovery courses and the majority indicated an interest in attending once a month for the rest of the year. Our local church members are excited about being able to help meet a need in our community and make new friends for eternity.

Heidi Fowler



NNSW Conference Sends Relief Container to Fiji

NNSW has sent a 40-foot container to Fiji to help with devastation left behind from Cyclone Tomas. Most of the volunteers were from the NNSW Conference and some from the Wairoonga Church. Special thanks to the Wairoonga 'Dorcas' who donated clothing, household linen, blankets and kitchenware.

Also sent were eight hospital beds with good mattresses and 10 pallets of new hospital theatre linen for use at CWM Hospital or any hospitals that have been devastated by Cyclone Tomas. The linen was part of a donation of \$1.5 million. Central Coast Linen Service also donated sheets, pillowslips, towels and blankets.

The ship left Sydney on Thursday, 15 April for Suva. It was a great opportunity to support this project, and we are sure it will be very much appreciated in Fiji.



OUR GIVING

At A Church Near You

Change sometimes frustrates and irritates me. Sadly, the law of impermanence guarantees that nothing is as sure as change. The bottom line? We can't ignore change. Our task is to ensure that change is an advantage for the Church. There is enough that inhibits the Kingdom of God on earth.

Julie approaches the table designated by a distinctive sign. It is equipped with an eftpos machine, a pen and tithe envelopes. Deftly she transfers \$50 directly to her local church's bank account. She fills in her name and amount on the tithe envelope and places the transaction slip inside. As others do, she places the tithe envelope in the offering as it passes her in the pew. Julie

is 27 and has a well paying job. She is accustomed to internet banking, BPAY and generally stays away from the bank in the main street of town. Now her Church has taken Egiving seriously. How helpful it is to support her Church through the Egiving site:

<https://nnswegiving.adventist.org.au/nnswegiving>



When there is a special appeal for funds or she has left her purse at home, Julie can still give by using the Offering Point in her local church foyer. The process is less work for the Treasurer and much safer than writing a cheque or using cash. There is less to steal if the church is robbed before the money can be banked on Monday.

Without a doubt, this is a dynamic and useful change that will fund mission into the 21st Century. Traditional methods of returning tithe and giving an offering are ever valid for another demographic. I don't like change, but I love the advancement of my Church and its mission in the world.

Pastor Peter Cousins
Director of Stewardship

OFFERING POINT



North New South Wales Conference | nnswegiving.adventist.org.au

ADRA Launches Health & Nutrition Appeal



Around the world, a high number of children, infants and even babies lose their lives every day due to poor health or nutrition. Before today ends, 20,000 children under the age of five will lose their life due to a preventable illness. Meanwhile, 20 million more children will go to bed hungry.

ADRA has started a special appeal to raise \$750,000 before 30 June 2010 to help continue and strengthen its health and nutrition work in Africa, Asia, South Pacific and here in Australia, as well as to help establish new water, sanitation and food projects in both Cambodia and Laos.

Your tax-deductible gift to ADRA's work before 30 June 2010 can make an amazing difference! To donate, call 1800 242 372 or visit www.adra.org.au.



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President: Pastor John Lang | Editor: Sharlene Guest | Designed by Sharlene Guest

Readers are invited to send news items and photographs to:

PO Box 7, Wallsend NSW 2287 | Telephone: (02) 4951 8088 | Fax: (02) 4950 1102

Email: northpoint@adventist.org.au | Website: <http://nnsww.adventist.org.au>