



Textbooks used in the early days of the South Pacific Institute of World Mission.
Photo courtesy of Barry Oliver.

Institute of World Mission, South Pacific Division

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Graeme Humble is a consultant missiologist, former field secretary and director of Adventist Mission for the South Pacific Division (retired 2019). His doctorate explored redemptive analogies and contextual theologising within a Pacific culture. He served in Papua New Guinea for 16 years as an area supervisor, mission president, union ministerial association secretary, senior lecturer, and dean of Pacific Adventist University School of Theology. His publications focus on contextualization and missiology.

The inaugural Mission Institute orientation program for missionaries, run at Avondale College, Australia, January 6-19, 1986,¹ birthed what later developed into the Institute of World Mission (South Pacific Division). The programs were modeled on the General Conference's Institute of World Mission (GCIWM) at Andrews University and were energized by Gottfried Oosterwal's passion for mission as the GCIWM director. His annual visits, together with other Adventist missiologists and South Pacific Division departmental leaders, provided orientation and instruction for new and midterm missionaries.² Oosterwal continued to inspire Mission Institute attendees until 1993³ (except for 1990

due to a severe malaria attack when Robert E. Ford substituted for him⁴). Subsequent GCIWM directors, Jon Dybdahl,⁵ Pat Gustin,⁶ Lester Merklin,⁷ and Cheryl Doss⁸ also participated in SPD mission institutes.⁹ The aim of the programs was “to help new missionaries come to grips with transition to new cultures . . . (by giving) instruction in cross-cultural communication, contextualisation, and the global mission of the church.”¹⁰ The initial programs included childcare but by over successive institutes this transitioned into specific orientation and activities for missionary kids.¹¹

The initial annual two-week Mission Institutes were coordinated by South Pacific Division (SPD) departmental personnel: in 1986 by Gerald Clifford, education director,¹² from 1987 to 1988 by W. Peter Truscott, ADRA associate director,¹³ and Rommert (Bob) Spoor, associate education director for the institutes 1989-1992 and 1994.¹⁴

After the 1990 Mission Institute, Spoor proposed that “we have the necessary expertise in this Division to operate successfully. [Local] personnel can provide the basis for an effective program.”¹⁵ Oosterwal was “convinced . . . that the time has come for the Division to run this institute fully, to give it a special charter, and to appoint one of your experienced workers as its director.”¹⁶ A subsequent meeting in 1992 convened by SPD administrators, together with Oosterwal and key SPD missiologists, and considered the future of the Mission Institute in the South Pacific Division.¹⁷ The scope of mission and cross-cultural training needs within the division led the committee to “recommend that a full-time appointment be considered for the Institute of Mission in the South Pacific Division” with the observation that “if it is deemed impractical to employ a full time budget to meet the needs outlined above (there were 14 recommendations), then it is strongly recommended that the duties be assigned to an existing portfolio that is compatible.”¹⁸

In 1993 the organization of the Mission Institute was transferred to the SPD ministerial association secretary, John Gate, a former missionary to Papua New Guinea and an experienced administrator.¹⁹ In order to align better with the General Conference entity, the name of the Mission Institute in the South Pacific was changed to the South Pacific Division Institute of World Mission.²⁰ As director of the Institute of World Mission (SPD), Gate led out in the mission institutes of 1993 and 1995 to 1996.²¹ Seeking to implement the major recommendation of the Oosterwal report, Gate pressed to have the full time IWM leadership appointment implemented.²² However, he was advised by Bryan Ball, the SPD president, that regrettably “there is not a budget available for a full-time appointment to this assignment.”²³

When R. Bruce Roberts was appointed as Division stewardship director in late 1995, he was also appointed as the director of the Institute of World Mission (SPD) “with the guidance that it take about 25 percent of his time.”²⁴ Roberts held a degree in anthropology, race relations, and sociology and had extensive mission experience in Vanuatu, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands’ Mission (now Kiribati and Tuvalu), Papua New Guinea, and later as director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ministries for 15 years.²⁵ He introduced an annual re-entry debriefing program for missionaries returning to their homelands on permanent return, “a first for the worldwide Adventist Church.”²⁶ To better care for missionaries across the Pacific, “in-field debriefing in every Pacific island union mission” was also established.²⁷ Initial in-service retreats were held at Loloata Island Resort, Papua New Guinea (June 12-14, 1998), and Pacific Harbour, Fiji (1999).²⁸

At the SPD session in Canberra, Australia (2000), after Roberts was appointed as Western Pacific Union Mission president, Brad Kemp became the SPD Leadership and Pacific Resource director, as well as director of the Institute of World Mission (SPD).²⁹ Kemp had served in various capacities for 12 years in Papua New Guinea. He consolidated the initiatives of his predecessors in the annual Mission Institutes held at Avondale College,³⁰ the shorter Re-Entry Retreats,³¹ and In-Service Retreats.³² Kemp explored training for short-term mission³³ and self-supporting or “tent-maker” mission.³⁴

Upon Kemp’s appointment to SPD as associate general secretary at SPD’s final session in Melbourne, Australia (2005), Ray Coombe was appointed as the first SPD director of Adventist Mission, in conjunction with his appointment as Public Affairs and Religious Liberty liaison.³⁵ Coombe’s extensive mission experience across the Pacific provided a firm foundation for his responsibilities, not only for the IWM (SPD)³⁶ but every aspect of Adventist Mission—from mission offerings and camp meeting mission promotion to global mission projects for unreached people groups.³⁷

Since Coombe’s retirement in 2010, the IWM (SPD) has operated under the auspices of People Services.³⁸ Korey Dowling, the Human Resources manager, operated the Mission Institutes and Re-entry Retreats until 2014.³⁹ Kaylene Humble, Expatriate support manager within People Services, in conjunction with Graeme Humble, Adventist Mission director and SPD field secretary,⁴⁰ conducted the IWM (SPD) programs from 2015-2018 under the direction of David R. Potter, SPD People Services general manager.⁴¹ The Humbles had previously served in Papua New Guinea for 16 years and held multiple degrees in Global Leadership and Intercultural Studies. Upon their retirement at the end of 2018, Carol Boehm, SPD Mission Service and Support Manager within the SPD People Services group, and former missionary to the Solomon Islands and Fiji, has operated the IWM (SPD) programs.⁴²

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