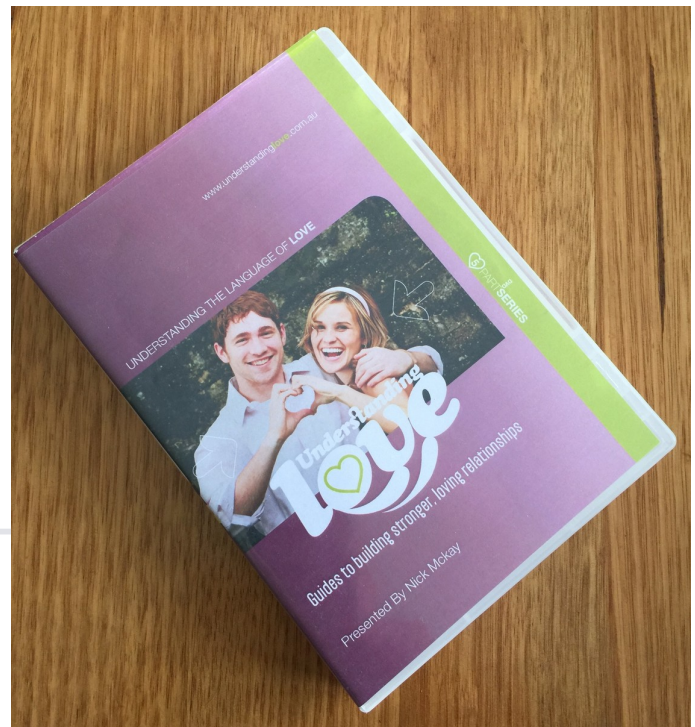


Adventist Institute of Family Relations, South Pacific Division

BARRY OLIVER

Barry Oliver, Ph.D., retired in 2015 as president of the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Sydney, Australia. An Australian by birth Oliver has served the Church as a pastor, evangelist, college teacher, and administrator. In retirement, he is a conjoint associate professor at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored over 106 significant publications and 192 magazine articles. He is married to Julie with three adult sons and three grandchildren.



One of the productions of the Adventist Institute of Family Relations, South Pacific Division.

Photo courtesy of Barry Oliver.

The Adventist Institute of Family Relations (AIFR) in the South Pacific Division was established by Bryan Craig, family ministries director of the South Pacific Division.¹ It is located in the headquarters office of the South Pacific Division.

The goal of the AIFR is to work to strengthen marriage and family relationships. It is committed to providing education about the family and marriage with the view not only to optimize marriage and family relationships but also to prevent the breakdown of family relationships. It also seeks to support couples in their parenting roles and to safeguard the happiness and well-being of children within the family.

Functions of the Institute

AIFR has four major functions:²

1. Management

Developing the strategic directions for family ministries in the South Pacific Division

Fostering the development of a ministry to Adventist singles and providing ongoing support for the work of the Adventist Singles Ministries board

Facilitating the National Christian Family Conference

Overseeing the planning and provision of the Certificate in Family Ministries

Fostering and supporting the master's degree (family ministries) through Avondale College

Promoting and supporting the provision of a basic counseling skills course, with special focus for pastors and chaplains

2. Research

Coordinating ongoing research projects into specific aspects of Adventist family life

Publishing research information that assists marriage and family professionals in their work of strengthening family relationships

3. Resource Development

Producing resource materials that assist those involved in family ministries to meet more adequately the needs of individuals, couples, and families seeking help

Providing an updated catalog of available resources for family ministry leaders

4. Training

Providing training for marriage and family educators and those who minister to families within local unions, conferences and missions

Offering continuing education in relationship counseling for individuals working in marriage and family education and counseling.³

Training Opportunities Provided by the Institute

To assist in the achievement of its objectives, the institute offers the following training events:

Family Ministries Leadership Development: a workshop or weekend retreat that trains lay volunteer leaders to take responsibility for developing and maintaining a successful ministry to families in the local church

Beginnings: a training event that prepares pastors to provide a comprehensive premarital education program for couples contemplating marriage

Basic Counseling Skills Workshop: a workshop that teaches individuals to learn and integrate the basic skills required for being an effective people helper

Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (TJTA) Training Program: a two-day workshop designed to educate pastors on how to administer and interpret the TJTA to marital partners and premarital couples

Understanding and Dealing With Family Violence: a workshop that helps pastors and church ministry leaders to understand and deal with child sexual abuse and physical violence within the family

Short-term Marital Counseling for Pastors: a workshop that explores a model of marriage counseling designed to help pastors develop an adequate pastoral care and counseling ministry to couples in the local congregations.⁴

Seminars Provided by the Institute

Growing Together: a 12-hour marriage-enrichment program designed to help couples improve their marriage relationship by focusing on the process of communication, conflict resolution, and sexual satisfaction

How to Live With a Teenager and Survive: a workshop for parents of teenagers providing insights into adolescent development tasks, teenage attitudes and behaviours, depression in teenagers, teenage suicide, counseling teenagers, communicating with a teen, and faith development

What Kind of Parents Grow the Best Kids: a workshop for parents outlining the various styles of parenting, ways to empower children to maturity, the family-religion connection, the major tasks of parenting, and how to transmit values to their children.

Dealing With Family Stress: a 12-hour program looking at the way stress impacts individuals, couples, and families; the symptoms of stressed families, and how to deal with stress more effectively

Building Self-esteem: a workshop that looks at the sources of a healthy sense of “self,” the ways people sabotage and negatively impact their self-esteem, and ways to build and sustain an appropriate sense of self-value and worth

Building Happy, Healthy Marriages: a workshop that deals with the various stages of marriage, couple communication, dealing with anger and conflict, establishing clear boundaries, and ways to build and strengthen marital intimacy

Dealing With Midlife Crisis: a program that addresses the common issues around a midlife crisis, how to deal with marital and family issues, work and career expectations and demands, and ways to move forward

Family Ties That Bind: a workshop that addresses family rules and roles, family communication, family systems, and developmental tasks across the family life cycle

Manhood, Mateship, and Marriage: a workshop that takes a closer look at what it is to be “male,” and how men can play their pivotal role in marriage and family life, as well as manage and master career and work demands and live a fulfilling and successful life

Preventing Marital Burnout: a workshop for married couples that explores the issues around marital burnout including gender differences, the signs and causes of burnout, dealing with marital loneliness, and ways to beat burnout

Addicted to Misery: a seminar that addresses marital and family boundaries. It provides an understanding of why boundaries are imperative for couples and families, how to effectively establish boundaries, and how to avoid and deal with codependent behaviors

Love, Sex, and Marriage: a workshop on marital sexuality that considers the stages of friendship, love, and infatuation, the reasons the Bible says no to sex outside of marriage, and how to grow and develop emotional and sexual intimacy in marriage

How to Affair-proof Your Marriage: a workshop that highlights the ways to build marital intimacy and emotional closeness, build marital resilience, commitment, intimacy and empowerment, and how to protect the marital covenant.⁵

The National Family Life Conference

Since 1987 National family Life conferences have been conducted, for much of that time in association with the institute, which have attracted family life professionals, particularly from Australia.⁶ At the first conference international guest presenters, experts in their respective fields were invited. They were Alberta Mazat (professor of marriage and family therapy, Loma Linda University), Bruce Narramore (professor of psychology, Biola University, California) and Ron Flowers (director of Family Life Ministries, General Conference).⁷ The conferences have attracted a high profile. The second conference in 1988, for example, was opened by Hazel Hawke, wife of the prime minister of Australia.⁸

At each subsequent conference specific themes were chosen for consideration and specialists invited to address the issues under consideration. Examples of themes have included “Strengthening the Australian Family,”⁹ “Empowering Families for Growth and Change,”¹⁰ and “Raising Sons, Raising Daughters.”¹¹ In 2019 the thirty-third National Family Life Conference was conducted in Sydney.

Conclusion

The Adventist Institute of Family Relations continues to make a contribution to family life in the territory of the South Pacific Division. The directors, Bryan Craig, Trafford Fischer, and Edyta Jankiewicz, have continued to ensure the effectiveness of the institute and implemented their programs to achieve the goals of the Institute.

SOURCES

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"Division Holds First Christian Family Life Conference in New South Wales." *Record*, September 26, 1987.

"Family Life Conference." *South Pacific Record*, April 25, 1987.

"International Family Life Conference." *Record*, February 19, 1994.

"Raising Sons, Raising Daughters." *Record*, June 29, 1996.

NOTES

1. The author is indebted to Bryan Craig, former family ministries director, South Pacific Division, and Trafford Fischer, also former family ministries director, South Pacific Division, for much of the information in this article.
2. Trafford Fischer, email to author, January 28, 2020.
3. "Adventist Institute of Family Relations," brochure held in the office of the family ministries director, South Pacific Division.
4. Trafford Fischer, email to author, January 28, 2020.
5. Ibid.
6. "Division Holds First Christian Family Life Conference in New South Wales," *Record*, September 26, 1987, 9.
7. "Family Life Conference," *South Pacific Record*, April 25, 1987, 15.
8. "Family Life," *Record*, June 18, 1988, 9.
9. Ibid.
10. "International Family Life Conference," *Record*, February 19, 1994, 15.
11. "Raising Sons, Raising Daughters," *Record*, June 29, 1996, 14.

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