

A flood of evidence

The picture of Noah's Ark as a round wooden boat with giraffes, elephants, zebras, pandas and monkeys hanging out the windows is a familiar and well-loved image in children's stories. The question, though, is whether this picture is only a children's story. Or did a catastrophic flood actually cover this entire planet?

The South Pacific Division's Faith and Science Conference 2023, held on the Gold Coast, focused on this question. More than 160 people gathered at Surfers Paradise from July 3 to 6 to explore the historicity of the biblical Flood account and its related geological issues. Up to 290 people watched one or more of the video recordings of the presentations on Facebook.

Presenters at the conference included Professors Stacie Hatfield and Richard Davidson from Andrews University, Michael Oard and Dr Tasman Walker from Creation Ministries International, Dr Birgir Óskarrson from the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Dr Limoni Manu from Fulton Adventist University College, Professors Suzanne Phillips and Leonard Brand from Loma Linda University, and Dr Jose Imona from Pacific Adventist University. They presented delegates with a flood of fascinating biblical and scientific evidence over these three days and pointed out the evidence that supports a global Flood. The presenters agreed that our beliefs need to be based on the Bible, and that using the biblical position as a starting point leads to achieving better science. They also acknowledged areas of uncertainty and the need for further research and understanding.

"To see how the biblical narrative is supported over and over again in science just reinforced my belief in the Bible as God's Word," said Dr Jean Carter, the Adventist Schools Australia director. "I also really appreciated how the presenters provided us with honest scientific reporting."

"The conference provided an excellent opportunity to review the recent



advances in creation science, thus supplying an alternative to the prevailing naturalistic worldview embraced by secular science," said Dr Darius Jankiewicz, the SPD field secretary.

Dr Malcolm Coulson, the SPD education director, noted, "Adventist education has always promoted the importance of critical thinking and ongoing dialogue to advance our understanding of the faith-science interface."

Participants appreciated the opportunity to learn and deepen their confidence in the Bible. Pastor Senitiki Waqa, the Fiji Mission secretary, stewardship and Youth director, is still soaking it all in. "This conference gave me time to reflect and grow as a pastor and church administrator as I listened and learned from our exceptional presenters," he said.

Serah Keliwin, the PNGUM director of education, reported that a head of science in one of the Adventist schools in PNG said they had really enjoyed the field trip and are determined to develop similar field experiences for their teachers and students.

"As a school chaplain, the Faith and Science Conference has equipped me with evidence and answers to support what the Bible teaches about origins and, in particular, the global Flood," said Pastor Dayne Habermann from Ipswich Adventist School.

Dr Steven Simmons from Mountain View Adventist College agreed. "I thoroughly enjoyed the worship time that was incorporated into the program," he said. "From the perspective of an Adventist high school science teacher it was great to learn how I can ground students in a stronger relationship with God and His Word."



Laura Lecciones, who is an Adventist teacher at Swan Christian College in Perth, Western Australia, said, "It has been eye-opening to see the insights in the geology of today that supports the biblical account of Noah's Flood. I left encouraged and equipped to share how God's Word is just as relevant today as millennia ago."

There was strong support for holding another conference to focus on cosmology which would form a trilogy of faith and science topics. Using artificial intelligence for Adventist mission was also a topic of interest in the faith and science space.

If you are interested in watching the presentations or reading the papers, you can access them on the Faith and Science section of the SPD Education website: <education.adventistchurch.com>. The SPD Faith and Science Committee is also interested in hearing from you about fascinating and relevant areas that we can focus on which would be helpful for you in your education or ministry situation. You can contact the Faith and Science Committee by email <SPDFaithandScience@adventist.org.au>.

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