

**EMMY AWARD-WINNER'S
BEST STORIES P.10**

**JULIE DEFINES THE
AVONDALE EXPERIENCE P.8**

FROM TUCKSHOP TO TOP JOB

I can barely keep up. It's not that Bree Hills is a fast talker. She lives life with a certain determination and the capability to carry a big load. Her welcoming smile makes everything she does look easy, leaving you wondering if she can say "no." Well, she can. Doing so has helped transform a dwindling school to one that's thriving and blessing its community.

Read more of Bree's story inside >

EDITOR'S NOTE

My reading consists largely of true stories, biographies or documentaries. I'm fascinated by the experiences of others, their motivations and their responses to misfortune, privilege or prospects. Knowing someone's genuine reality creates a connection I don't get from fictional stories.

Communities the world over, especially post-COVID, crave connection through empathy, compassion and advocacy. I believe this is an involuntary response to the way our Creator wired us.

Avondale stories excite me. Untold though thousands may be, I'm keen to know and share them. Everyone has a story; yours may just connect us better together.

This newly-named and redesigned magazine is a response to feedback from Avondale alumni and friends, who are seeking a better connection with each other. Thank you for your thoughts.

Please keep in touch. We value you and your journey.



Rachel Humphries



FROM TUCKSHOP TO TOP JOB

Bree Hills' journey began at Avondale. She studied primary teaching but finished the degree at the University of Canberra. After graduating, she taught at a public school, met husband Robert then followed him and his Royal Australian Air Force career to Adelaide, where she taught at the Prescott Primary Northern Seventh-day Adventist school.

With plans to start a family, Bree and Robert returned home in 2004. A call to serve as a teaching principal of Canberra Christian School, her alma mater, soon followed. The decision weighed heavily. While committed to following God's leading, she felt she lacked the necessary skills. Declining the invitation played on her mind.

Taking a detour, Bree joined an online learning company. Her can-do attitude saw her climb the corporate ladder—she managed million-dollar budgets and teams of 30 staff. Bree describes the experience as "a pathway of stepping stones."

She had her first son during this time. When old enough, Bree enrolled him at the school. But it was an uneasy meeting of childhood memories and grown-up reality—the familiarity of the facilities on the one hand, the lapsed functionality and low student numbers on the other. Epitomising the attitude "you give up the right to complain unless you want to be part of the solution," Bree started where she could, in the tuckshop. She cooked, cleaned and connected with students and families.

Within a couple of years, Bree joined the school council.

Another call to be principal came while on maternity leave following the birth of a second son in 2013. Despite new skills in project management and strategic planning, Bree still felt ill-equipped. A quip from Robert—“Can you say no to God twice?”—helped her reassess. With a sense of assurance, she accepted the role. On Boxing Day, she received the school keys and began painting the office.

The first two years were difficult. Bree had only a small number of staff and students and a dilapidated infrastructure to maintain. She also needed to register the Early Learning Centre (ELC) before it could be completed, which required an in-depth understanding of legislation. Through it all, Bree managed to teach students for half the week. She worked weekends and evenings, family alongside her, to build momentum. Finding humour in the hardship she said to herself, *If this is as hard as it gets, it'll be fine.*

The school grew from 26 to 40 students within two years. Bree's concern dissipated as she saw the evidence of God, always showing up and providing the right people at the right time.

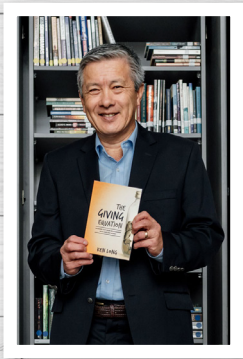
Bree re-evaluated the school's approach to education. She wanted to base learning on a student's ability, not grades. “We ditched textbooks in my first year. It gave us more flexibility to tailor our teaching to the students

and to more quickly find the gaps in their learning. We found students pushed themselves harder.” She has also introduced creative themes and programs like Pit Stop, which takes students out of mainstream study to focus on numeracy and literacy for a term. “Confidence, and feeling like you *can* achieve, is a huge part of achieving,” says Bree.

Staff members have worked tirelessly to build community. About 60 per cent of the families in the school are Christian, including a large contingent from the Bhutanese community. All families are invited to an opening Sabbath event on campus once a month. Due to the transient nature of the city and minimal family support, the school even introduced a Date Night, where teachers look after students, leaving parents free to enjoy quality time.

In 2020, Bree led the school through the COVID-19 pandemic and finished her studies, graduating with a master's from Avondale. “Coming back was like coming home.” Bree began a PhD this year. Her thesis will examine teacher wellbeing, particularly large attrition rates among new teachers.

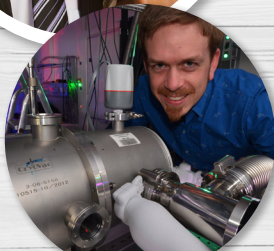
The ELC through to Year 6 school now has 300 students and 38 staff. In recognition of the achievement and what it encompasses, Bree won the 2020 ACT Telstra Public Sector & Academia Award. She is quick to credit her “pit crew,” including her dedicated parents. “It's a team effort and I'm humbled by the people God has put in place.”



AVONDALE ALUMNI ARE TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

all over the world

SUBSCRIBE TO READ THEIR FULL STORIES



AVONDALE RANKS HIGH

THE RESULTS ARE IN!

An independent survey* of students in higher education in Australia, ranks Avondale:

#1 NURSING

#1 EDUCATION AND TEACHING

#1 MINISTRY AND THEOLOGY

**Top
10 UNIVERSITIES FOR
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| study@avondale.edu.au

| +61 2 4980 2377



Applications for
Semester 2, 2021
are **now open**.

*Survey results are provided by Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT), a suite of government-endorsed surveys for higher education, which cover the student life cycle from commencement to employment. Visit www.compared.edu.au for more information.

CURRENT TRENDS

MEET OUR STUDENTS

Sophie-Lee Johnson

BUSINESS | 3RD YEAR | OFF-CAMPUS | COORANBONG, NSW

Do you believe in having a five-year plan? Yes. It gives me direction and focus.

How do you pick yourself up after a setback? I don't focus on the setback. I use it as a positive learning experience.

What energises you about what you are studying? I hope to open my own business. Knowing I am learning how to make this a reality motivates me.

What do you value about Christian education? I've made great friends who are always encouraging me in my relationship with God.



Broden House

MINISTRY & THEOLOGY | 2ND YEAR | ON-CAMPUS | MARYBOROUGH, VIC

Do you believe in having a five-year plan? While studying? Yes.

How do you pick yourself up after a setback? I try to correct it, then I meet Jesus in prayer. He cheers me up.

What energises you about what you are studying? Learning how to share the Good News in powerful ways.

What do you value about Christian education? The understanding of self-worth, being able to see that, and knowing God is deeply in love with you.

Kate Suchanek

MINISTRY & THEOLOGY | 3RD YEAR | DISTANCE | BELLENDEN KER, QLD

Do you believe in having a five-year plan? I have goals, but God has different plans, so it's important to stay flexible.

How do you pick yourself up after a setback? It doesn't define me, it just marks the path I'm on.

What energises you about what you are studying?

Learning to read the Bible in its original language.

What do you value about Christian education? It has a different "why." It prepares you to fill your place in the world well because you're part of something bigger: God's plan.



Zac Hobson

TEACHING (PRIMARY) | 3RD YEAR | OFF-CAMPUS | COORANBONG, NSW

Most used phone app? Instagram and TikTok

How do you pick yourself up after a setback? Have a good nap, get up and try again. With some Netflix or sport in there, too.

What energises you about what you are studying?

Making a difference. I feel there's a need for male role models in students' lives.

What have you ticked off your bucket list? Travel to Vietnam, Europe and a mission trip to Cambodia.

Nathan Stoneley

NURSING | 1ST YEAR | OFF-CAMPUS | CENTRAL COAST, NSW

Most used phone app? Music, news and anatomy apps.

Do you believe in having a five-year plan? The past five years haven't gone to plan. I'm waiting for God to open doors.

What energises you about what you are studying? Learning new information and correcting what I thought I knew.

What have you ticked off your bucket list? I don't have one. I see something and go do it (or save up to do it).

What do you value about Christian education? Freely discussing my faith with teachers. There's a sense of family or mateship I haven't experienced since high school.



JULIE DEFINES THE AVONDALE EXPERIENCE

Julie Michel has a front row seat watching students develop during their time at Avondale.

"I get to see them grow into confident adults. That's what I love about this place."

As head of Cleaning Services on our Lake Macquarie campus over the past 20 years, Julie employs student workers to ensure everything is "spit spot." Working with them is a highlight, for the most part. "They are the source of my greatest frustration and greatest love." She has stumbled upon many a prank, recalling, for example, an artfully decorated hay display in the foyer of Andre Hall. "I was impressed but I wasn't cleaning it up," she says with a cheeky grin.

For a number of students, Julie is their first employer, introducing necessary life skills. "I respect those who roll up their sleeves and get their hands dirty."

Seven years before accepting the cleaning services role, Julie cared for the women's residence laundry and used the opportunity to befriend the students. "I wanted to know their names, and I wanted them to know I would listen if they needed to talk." She particularly remembers encouraging students who felt homesick. "I'm where God wants me to be. He loves all these students, and I get a chance to model that to them," she says.

The transformation of students is not the only thing Julie has seen over her time at Avondale. Culture, infrastructure, leadership and staff have changed, too. But Julie feels advances in technology have had the greatest impact.

"Students can now learn online by distance, but I do miss having them on campus."

Julie has benefitted from the encouragement Avondale gives staff to further their education, graduating with a Master of Leadership and Management in 2020. Avondale benefits from Julie's knowledge and experience through her contribution to the Innovation, Economic Hardship and Work Health and Safety Committees.

Many students maintain their friendship with Julie even after graduation. The *Jacaranda* yearbooks they've signed are part of her home library collection. "Avondale is a transient place and I miss the students when they go," says Julie. She's been invited to a few of their weddings, "but no one's named their kids after me yet."

Want to say "hi" to Julie? Send a message to alumni@avondale.edu.au. She would love to hear from you.



TAKE THE HOMECOMING Honour Year Quiz

What world events took place during your time at Avondale?

Take our short Homecoming honour year quiz* and see how much you know.

1. In 2001, Apple introduced what device?
2. What famous American sitcom about a young middle-class housewife in New York City, debuted in 1951?
3. Whose famous 1981 wedding took place in St Paul's Cathedral in London?
4. In 2011, what country was struck by a 9.0 magnitude earthquake, and subsequent tsunami, killing thousands and damaging four nuclear power plants?
5. What Pulitzer Prize-winning children's author died in 1991?
6. In what year did construction begin on the Berlin Wall?
7. In what year did the attempted, but unsuccessful, assassination of United States President Ronald Reagan take place?
8. In what year did the New Zealand waterfront dispute begin, lasting for 151 days?
9. What country formally regained complete independence after the four post-World War II powers relinquished all remaining rights?
10. In what year was the first ever One Day International cricket match played?
11. What date and year did the United Nations select as the symbolic date when the global population reached seven billion?
12. In 1971 the first book in the *Mr Men* series was published. What Mr Men character titled the first book?
13. In 1961, who was sworn in as the 35th president of the United States?
14. What infamous terrorist attack occurred on American soil in 2001?

*All information sourced from Wikipedia.

Answers: 1. iPod 2. I Love Lucy 3. Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer 4. Japan 5. Dr Seuss 6. 1961 7. 1981 8. 1951 9. Germany 10. 1971 11. October 31, 2011 12. Mr Tickle 13. John F. Kennedy 14. The September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, The Pentagon in Washington and other locations.

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2011 | 2001 | 1991 | 1981 | 1971 | 1961 | 1951

HOMECOMING 2021



A CONVERSATION WITH A FILMMAKER

Emmy Award-winning filmmaker and alumnus **Kyle Portbury** (BA/BTch 2001) tells transformational stories. He's explored life's biggest questions, followed seven disabled climbers up Mount Kilimanjaro, and recreated the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. At the time of recording this interview, he and his family lived and worked in Cape Town, South Africa. They have since returned to Australia. Here's a part of Kyle's conversation with Alumni Relations Officer **Rachel Humphries**, adapted for publication.

MUCH OF YOUR 18 MONTHS IN SOUTH AFRICA HAS BEEN IN LOCKDOWN. DID YOU GET TO EXPLORE THE LOCAL AREA?

We took trips before the pandemic hit. Once restrictions eased we could drive around. You can see a lot of wildlife within 20 minutes of our house—a penguin colony, zebra, ostrich, koodoo, elan and bontebok in the national park near us. We see baboons roaming about on the way to the kids' school.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO FILMMAKING?

After graduation I taught for a year in Australia, got married [to Andrea Hay] and moved to the UK. I retrained and completed a master's in performance at Drama Centre London. I started in filmmaking by writing a business plan for a BBC director. He didn't know much about computers, so he took me along to a funding pitch because I'd made the pitch digitally. The investors just assumed I was producing—so I did.

WHAT DID YOU DO NEXT?

After five years in the UK, we returned to Australia so I could serve as creative director of film and television at Adventist Media Network. I worked on the Complete Health Improvement Program, and directed *Beyond the Search* and *Tell the World*. From there, our family moved to Texas where I was a film professor at Southwestern Adventist University. Then an opportunity came to be a writer and director at an animation studio in South Africa.



DESCRIBE ONE OF YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES AS A CREATIVE?

I produced and directed a film called *The Mountain Within* that followed seven disabled climbers up Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. It was physically demanding; you can't tell seven climbers with a disability to backtrack for a crane shot. You get one go at it, so I would have to stand in for the rehearsals. This meant a lot of running up and down tracks— not easy at altitude.



YOU WROTE AND DIRECTED AN ANIMATION ABOUT SOJOURNER TRUTH'S SPEECH "AIN'T I A WOMAN?". WHY?

She came up a lot during the research for *Tell the World*. She didn't identify as an Adventist but lived around Battle Creek in the mid-1800s. She knew the Whites and the Bates as they were all active in the abolition movement. She had the audacity to speak at a women's convention where only men were speaking. Her speech has been covered a lot but I took a different angle: the context around what provoked her to speak. Winning an Emmy was a pleasant surprise, and the film did well on the festival circuit, too.



YOUR NEXT PROJECT IS ALSO AN ANIMATION.

It's *MacGyver* meets *Schindler's List*. It will tell a slither of the story of Johan Weidner, an Adventist who saved 1000 Jews and allied pilots during World War II.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO PRODUCE TRANSFORMATIONAL STORIES?

I like to provoke people, and myself, to think and feel differently in response to characters, real and fictional, who make choices we might not. For instance, I'd like to think that put in the situations Johan found himself in, I'd do what he did and put others before myself. The reality is I probably wouldn't and that's why we, and I, need to be provoked.



Scan the QR code to watch the full interview.

Kyle and his family are in Australia, for now. He continues to produce meaningful stories. View his work at www.kyleportburyfilms.com.



Let all that you do be done with love.

1 Corinthians 16:14

NKJV



freepik.com

THE JOY OF RUBBISH

TAKING AIM AT LIFE'S CHALLENGES

With COVID-19 restrictions easing in Australia after some fairly strict lockdowns, we could finally resume spending face-to-face time with the World's Greatest Grandchildren (WGG). Naturally, we prepared for the reunion by purchasing loads of toys to fast track their appreciation of us.

Seeing the WGG again after just a couple of months, I noticed how much they'd developed. It was fun watching them rediscover the toys at Grammy and Pa's house. Our Mighty Grandson (MG), nearly three at the time, quickly took back control of the workshop blower I use to remove dust and wood shavings. And he insisted on wearing my face shield and ear muffs—you can never be too safe. Using the blower would keep him occupied for quite some time.

During one visit, MG beelined for the blower and got to work scouting out the workshop, driveway and veranda. His mission: to hunt down rubbish. A look of intense concentration would change into one of pure satisfaction after he found rubbish and blew it away.

Rubbish evokes a different response from me. I see ugly mess and extra work.

It's annoying. But MG sees opportunity, finds fulfillment and feels joy.

Our own view is not the only valid one when it comes to perspective and attitude. Rubbish, or life's challenges, considered from only one viewpoint may mean we miss possible opportunities. Could changing our view, and opening ourselves up to someone else's, transform the outcome or even ourselves? MG and I would have both dealt with the rubbish, but his satisfaction was far less resentful than my own. And I know he had more fun.

When faced with life's challenges, I like to take **AIM**:

Acknowledge its presence. It's not going away, and it requires you dealing with it, sometimes with great care.

Initiate action. It can take time seeking alternative options and the views of others, but don't spin your wheels forever. Commit to do something, even if small.

Move on when it's done. Learn from it, taking measures to improve ideas, relationships and future outcomes.

Dr Warrick Long is a senior lecturer and course convenor for the new MBA at Avondale University College. He and wife Kerri enjoy the company of their two WGG "immensely."



AVONDALE OFFERS NUTRITION SHORT COURSE

Research is clear: there is power in nutrition and food to act as medicine for our wellbeing. If you are a doctor, health educator, allied health professional or have a keen interest in nutrition and wellbeing, you can be among the first to study Food as Medicine as a short course at Avondale in semester two, 2021. Usually offered within our Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma in Lifestyle Medicine, this is a unique opportunity to study Food as Medicine as a stand-alone unit. Students who complete the short course will receive an academic certificate of recognition for their learning.



Scan the QR code to download more information.



AVONDALE WELCOMES NEW PROVOST

Avondale's new senior academic has a record of leading strategic change by engaging students and staff members in cultural transformation. Professor Kerri-Lee Krause began as Provost (Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor) in April. An alumna and former Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Provost at The University of Melbourne, Kerri-Lee began her career as a teacher in the Seventh-day Adventist school system before moving—with a master's and PhD—to the higher education sector. A self-professed "glass half-full leader," Kerri-Lee believes in "turning challenges into stepping stone opportunities" through God's sustaining guidance, a positive mindset and a passionate community.



SCHOLARSHIPS TRANSFORM LIVES

Avondale, in partnership with donors, offers up to \$600,000 in academic, course-specific and service and leadership scholarships to students every year. Scholarships enable journeys of transformation. They recognise academically-gifted students, assist those struggling financially and encourage students who are committed to leadership and service. "Receiving a scholarship showed Avondale's investment in my identity—in who I am under Christ—not just in my study and my skills," says Caitlin Smith, a scholarship recipient who is studying to become a teacher. When you make a gift to our scholarship fund, you enable more students to serve their world for good.



Scan the QR code to support students by making a tax-deductible gift today.



HOORAY! BIRTHDAY A REMINDER OF BLESSINGS

We celebrated our 124th birthday last month (April). To commemorate, we asked our students and council members to recreate a historic photo of Bethel Hall. The original from about 1897 shows our pioneers standing on the verandah and balcony of what is the first building on our Lake Macquarie campus. Chancellor Pr Glenn Townend offered a blessing before the shoot. Of all the changes we've experienced, he singled out this one in his prayer: "the change that happens in the world because of the transformative education that happens here." Our birthday wish is that this continues.



Scan the QR code to leave a comment on our Facebook page.

A few days ago we received an email from a graduate thanking Avondale for going above and beyond in helping him through his degree. As an international student studying in a language other than his own, there were a number of areas needing support. It was, however, the ending to his email that was most encouraging. He wanted staff to know that because of his experience at Avondale, he had been inspired to believe in God and had been recently baptised. Those who read his email shared a similar and almost involuntary reaction, expressing it simply as, "That is why we exist!". And indeed it is.

It can be tempting to view the transformational process as a singular act, bringing instant change to a life. Typically, however, it is a gradual journey that takes the heart by stealth rather than by storm. Little acts, faithfully and consistently performed. That is the exciting part of each new day, the privilege to work alongside Christ. Every email, each conversation, even the next meeting is a fresh opportunity.

LETTER FROM THE VC



A potential mistake for organisations is to view "change" as synonymous with "transformation." Yet as one author argues, change in itself can be almost addictive, serving as a method for creating the illusion of progress, yet producing little (*Transforming Students* by Johansson and Felten).

Transformation, on the other hand, often takes place in small increments, one decision at a time—often evident only in retrospect. The difference between the two is usually the strong sense of mission and purpose that guides the latter.

Over the past few months, Avondale has re-examined its purpose, leading to the conclusion that we are here to "transform lives through Christ-centred higher education." That's a high calling and one well worth pouring our full energy into. The book *Education* provides a glimpse into what is possible: "The mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite. The effect of such communion on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate. In this communion is found the highest education."

May God give us grace and strength as we strive in His power to fulfill our purpose.

K. J. Petrie

Professor Kevin Petrie
Vice-Chancellor and President

Editor
Rachel Humphries
Alumni Relations Officer
alumni@avondale.edu.au

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avondale.edu.au/alumni
+61 2 4980 2222

