

Autumn reflections on the Church

By the time this edition of *MESSENGER* arrives in your hand, the 63rd Session of the South England Conference held recently at the Portsmouth Guildhall will be history (5-8 September). A full report will be provided in the next edition of *MESSENGER*. Until then, here are some reflections on the Church's purpose by Ellen White.

'The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organised for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvellous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," the final and full display of the love of God. Ephesians 3:10' (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.)

'The church, enfeebled and defective, needing to be reprov'd, warn'd, and counselled, is the only object upon earth upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard. The world is a workshop in which, through the co-operation of human and divine agencies, Jesus is making experiments by His grace and divine mercy upon human hearts.' (*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 2, p. 355.)

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen G. White (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

'As you meet from Sabbath to Sabbath, sing praises to Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood" let the heart's adoration be given. Let the love of Christ be the burden of the speaker's utterance. Let it be expressed in simple language in every song of praise. Let the inspiration of the Spirit of God dictate your prayers. As the word of life is spoken, let your heartfelt response testify that you receive the message as from heaven.' (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 367.)

'Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples. But like every other promise, it is given on conditions. There are many who believe and profess to claim the Lord's promise; they talk *about* Christ and *about* the Holy Spirit, yet receive no benefit. They do not surrender the soul to be guided and controlled by the divine agencies. We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us. Through the Spirit God works in His people "to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil. 2:13. But many will not submit to this. They want to manage themselves. This is why they do not receive the heavenly gift. Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given. The power of God awaits their demand and reception. This promised blessing, claimed by faith, brings all other blessings in its train. It is given according to the riches of the grace of Christ, and He is ready to supply every soul according to the capacity to receive.' (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 672.)





Personal care products and wellbeing

In an online *Guardian* article titled: 'Pretty hurts: are chemicals in beauty products making us ill?'¹ this sobering question is analysed by journalist Lauren Zanolli. The article, published 23 May 2019, outlines the key concern:

'Cosmetics and personal care items women use every day are packed with a constellation of chemicals that health advocates say could be connected to a host of health problems.'

The article lists the following concerns and highlights chemicals named among the 'top toxic substances' found in personal care products:

- Formaldehyde – a suspected carcinogen found in some keratin hair treatments, body soap and nail polish
- Coal tar – found in some hair dyes and shampoos
- Heavy metals like lead – found in lipsticks and clay-based products
- Parabens and phthalates – endocrine-disrupting chemicals, which mimic human hormones

The article states:

'Women, especially black women, have been found to have a higher body burden of certain chemicals found in cosmetics, including parabens and phthalates. . . . Of particular concern to researchers, they can have effects at very small doses and have been linked to numerous health issues.'

These latest health concerns mirror previously published research.

One report was published in the *Mail Online*, 8 March 2016, reporting on research findings of some popular cosmetic products. It

states: 'Chemicals in certain makeups, shampoos and lotions have been found to disrupt hormones. That disruption increases the risks of cancer and other illnesses later in life. . . .'²

With reports like these emerging, it is important to check all the lists of ingredients in the products that we buy, however popular, and not just assume they are safe because they are on the market.

Consumernotice.org brings a stark warning when buying products. It reports: 'The average adult uses about nine personal care products every day – and most consumers don't give their daily regimen a second thought. They simply trust that the shampoo, sunscreen, deodorant and other cosmetics they're using are safe.'

'But that's not always the case. Between 2014 and 2018, consumers made more than 27,000 complaints to the US Food & Drug Administration (FDA) about cosmetics they suspected harmed them. An examination of those records by Consumer Notice revealed injuries ranging from allergic reactions to hair loss to chemical burns to infections to cancer.'³

Homework:

- Take a moment to reflect on your daily skin and hair care regime.
- Examine the list of ingredients in each product and research them.
- If there are any potentially 'toxic' ingredients listed, opt for more natural product alternatives.

Good health!

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/may/23/are-chemicals-in-beauty-products-making-us-ill> ² <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-3482330/The-dangers-lurking-make-up-eliminating-certain-cosmetics-3-days-lowers-level-cancer-causing-chemicals-body-45.html> ³ <https://www.consumernotice.org/>



'I have a dream of a church which is a worshipping church . . .

. . . whose people come together to meet God and worship Him, who know God is always in their midst and who bow down before Him in great humility, who regularly frequent the table of the Lord Jesus, to celebrate His mighty act of redemption on the cross, who enrich the worship with their musical skills, who believe in prayer and lay hold of God in prayer, whose worship is expressed not in [Sabbath] services and prayer gatherings only but also in their homes, their weekday work and the common things of life. I have a dream of a worshipping church.'¹



Observe the ever-increasing rise of the global charismatic movement, and it's a statement beyond the obvious that God's 'immanence' is in vogue. 'I want to feel God's presence deep within me, know Him, feel His love, trust that He will never let me go.' Before folk of my generation roll their eyes at this sentiment, it's actually not a lot different in essence from: 'You ask me how I know He lives – He lives within my heart.' I share that portrayal without the slightest sense of ridicule or judgement. The personal presence of

the Holy Spirit living in each Christ-follower turns our grey into gold! But, at the same time, when it's only the immanence of God that captures our attention, we run into the danger of making God in our own image, and the sacred gets lost.

In contrast, there's a contemporary generation of people who take seriously the words of the apostle John (Revelation 14:7): 'Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgement has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.'

Could it be that the Adventist message and mission is today's heaven-sent reminder for today's worshippers that God is both 'transcendent' and 'immanent', and that keeping both in their rightful place contributes to true worship?

That reminds me of a line of a verse from the old hymn, 'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind'. Says the last line of the first stanza: ' . . . in deeper reverence, praise.'⁶

What is worship? The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes worship as the 'feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a deity'.² Since history began, humanity has found many an alternative from the true and living God to worship. Some are made of precious metals; others are in the form of animals and humans; and don't forget the most prevalent form of idolatry: the worship of self.

When it comes to defining Christian worship, William Temple expresses both balance and depth:

*'To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.'*³

As we try and understand what this means, we do so in the context of a secular society, with God having little or no place. Admit it or not, our everyday surroundings somewhat influence and shape our understanding of God. John Paulien, in his book *Present Truth in the Real World*, describes the process we experience as 'secular drift'. According to Paulien, the first step occurs 'in the private prayer life. In its very secrecy, private prayer life is the ultimate personal barometer of spiritual commitment. Prayer is the first thing to go. . . .'⁴ Why do I need prayer as much as I once did, when technology can solve my problem? Why do I need to talk with God about my relationships, when a psychotherapist can help me understand myself? The unintended consequence is that the distinction between what we understand to be sacred and what is not gets blurred.

The Bible talks about *sacred conversation* (prayer – Luke 11:2-4), *sacred funds* (tithe – Malachi 3:10, 11), *a sacred people* (the church – 1 Peter 2:9), *sacred lives* (humankind – Psalm 139:13-16), *a sacred place* (the sanctuary – Hebrews 8:2), *a sacred time* (the Sabbath – Luke 6:5), and *sacred words* (the Bible – 2 Timothy 3:16). When Moses stood on 'holy' ground, he was told to take off his shoes (Exodus 3:5). When the apostle John in vision looked through a window into heaven, he saw thousands of angels offering praise and worship to God (Revelation 5:11, 12). Moses and John demonstrate what happens when the created meet the Creator. There is respect, awe, wonder and reverence! They ask the key worship question: who am I, in relation to Him? As we connect with God through His Word, are we not compelled to ask the same question?

Theological trends have also contributed to the blurring of what is sacred. As theologians try to understand the nature of God, they describe both His 'transcendence' and His 'immanence'. His transcendence explains His 'otherness', His distance from us, His power as Creator and Ruler of the universe. His immanence describes the God who is up-close and personal, through the presence of His Spirit. The experience of David demonstrates this well. On night duty as a shepherd, he looks up into the dark sky. As he sees the stars his mind goes almost into overload as he ecstatically declares, 'When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?' (Psalm 8:3, 4).⁵ In contrast, as he is seeking the mercy and forgiveness of God, with very different mood music, he clearly understands that the very same God is more than up-close and personal. 'Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!' (Psalm 139:7, 8.)



Stanborough Press Open Day guest speaker, Dr Ranko Stefanovic, Professor of New Testament at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, shares insights into approaching the study of Revelation.

Can you believe it . . . ?

Adventists, Diet, and Salvation

Source: General Conference 2018 Global Membership Survey GCMS 2018 Q51.5, n=55,822

When asked, "Does diet and lifestyle contribute to one's salvation?" people responded in the following percentages:

Response	Percentage
Strongly agree	23%
Agree	24%
Not sure	15%
Disagree	19%
Stongly disagree	19%

Let's Be Clear

"The Adventist Church does not support the belief that following its health message ensures salvation to any degree. Salvation is a gift from God. The Adventist health message emphasizes physical health, mental health, emotional well-being, social support, and relationships as a part of spiritual growth. . . . Pastors and church leaders worldwide should pay more attention to clarifying the relationship between salvation and, among other things, the health message."—Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research.

This graph first appeared in the August edition of *Adventist World*. Used with permission.

Food for thought:

- William Temple uses the line, 'to purge the imagination by the beauty of God'. What do you think he means?
- Is my worship experience a healthy balance of both head and heart?
- Is it possible for Christians to suffer from the 'worship of self'?
- Why is the worship hour in some places the most segregated hour of the week?
- What is true worship?

Newbold principal – on a mission!

Dr John Baidam has served as the principal of Newbold College of Higher Education for the past six years. When he walks into a room it lights up with energy. Passing conversation might be about opera, cricket, or Reading Football Club; but, within a minute, ‘Newbold’ drops into the conversation. Instantly the listener picks up enthusiasm, passion, and vision for the college. While operated by the Trans-European Division, Newbold’s heritage and location make it an integral part of the British Union Conference. As the new academic year gets underway, I took a few moments with Dr Baidam to discuss this relationship.

John Baidam – Newbold has been a resource to the church ever since we were founded in 1901. I particularly want to strengthen Newbold as a resource to the local Conferences (North and South England) and the Missions (Welsh, Scottish and Irish). We are very much open for business to the local constituencies.

David Neal – Recently I had opportunity to stay at Newbold for a few days. As I walked around the campus I noticed buildings and classrooms that look smarter today than when I studied there in the early 1980s. I also couldn’t help but notice a high level of customer service from support staff. It gave me an impression that Newbold is serious about serving with excellence, not least in hospitality.

JB – The brilliant refurbishments already completed on our campus (with more in the pipeline) make it a great place to meet for special events – whether for the Evangelism Expo that the SEC holds here each January with well over 1,000 people attending, conferences and seminars, family celebrations, or small groups just wanting to meet up together to relax and retreat. All our staff and students are ambassadors and recruiters for Newbold, and there is a warm welcome for all who grace our campus.

DN – The British Union Conference is the most diverse Union within the Trans-European Division. Does Newbold leadership today reflect that diversity?

JB – We are a small multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and multi-cultural family campus of between 50 and 60 nationalities which include students and staff from North and South America, Africa, Europe,

and, of course, Britain. Colleagues in senior leadership and managerial positions come, for example, from Ghana, Nigeria, Bermuda, the Caribbean, Italy, Norway, Brazil and South Africa. Can I say that we are a microcosm of the British Union Conference, and more? Staff at Newbold are employed on the basis of the best person for the job as a result of transparent advertising, shortlisting and interviewing.

DN – I want to turn to how Newbold prepares pastors for ministry. The late Canon Michael Green, British Anglican evangelist, theologian and Christian apologist, reflecting on ministerial training in his own community of faith (and others), made this observation about today’s teachers and pastors:

‘We want to get away from the sad fact that many evangelists don’t have much theology, while many academic theologians have no heart for evangelism. . . . What discourages me is how shallow much of our modern Christianity is.’ When it comes to ministerial training, what does Newbold offer that helps safeguard against this trend?

JB – Large universities concentrate equally on teaching and research. A small provider such as Newbold College of Higher Education must essentially be a teaching institution, but must also engage in sufficient and appropriate research to enable its lecturers and students to remain at the cutting edge. At Newbold we strive to prepare pastors who also have a solid academic background and understanding. We are also aware of the Church’s added need to prepare academic experts in biblical studies, pastoral studies and systematic theology, who in turn will be able to teach future

generations of students preparing for pastoral ministry.

DN – I notice that you’ve recently appointed two new members of staff to the Department of Theological Studies (DTS) teaching team.

JB – Pastor Julian Thompson comes to us from the South England Conference, having served in several churches as a pastor for the last six years. Dr Laszlo Gallusz has 17 years of teaching experience at the Hungarian and Serbian theological seminaries; but for 10 of his 17 years of teaching he also served as the Mission Director for the South-East European Union Conference. Both are theologians and pastors with a tremendous mission outlook. This they share with their DTS colleagues, preparing students for the complexities of today’s pastoral ministry, so that they receive not only vigorous theological understanding, but also theological conviction.

DN – For the last two summers Newbold has held an Evangelism and Church Growth symposium in collaboration with the Trans-European Division. Attended in the main by pastors and members from outside of the British Union, is this a further signal that Newbold is committed to mission?

JB – As I shared earlier, I want to strengthen Newbold as a resource to the Conferences and Missions within the British Union. We are partners in mission together in this ever-changing world. Learning about being more effective in mission is at our core, and we want to support that. My colleagues and I are keen to attract more and more local pastors and members to this



particular programme, as well as additional students from within our own home Union.

DN – Finances: Newbold has a balanced budget for the fifth year.

JB – I want to say thank you to the members of the Trans-European Division, and the British Union Conference in particular, for their continuing trust and confidence in Newbold’s ministry with their financial support. We are most grateful, as this increases our ability to be an effective partner in our joint mission. It’s also worth mentioning here that this is a continuing investment in European Adventist youth, their faith development, and preparation for lifelong service.

DN – As this edition of *MESSENGER* goes to press, the autumn semester begins. What is the expected enrolment of students for the 2019/2020 academic year and in what disciplines?

JB – We anticipate a healthy enrolment of some 30 students in our undergraduate Biblical & Pastoral Studies programmes; 55 in our MA in Theology/ Postgraduate Certificate in Ministry and Mission; 40 in our English Language Centre; and 55 in our Business and Humanities provision (Bachelor of Science in Business Studies, Bachelor of Arts in Humanities or Religious Studies, Year in Mission and Service, University Year Experience, and Study Abroad programme). These numbers are in addition to around 50 students continuing with our MA Leadership and Doctor of Ministry programmes, as well as large groups of students attending a variety of short courses and symposia.

DN – Thanks for sharing with *MESSENGER* readers. I trust the year goes well. We will keep you and all the Newbold family in our prayers.



Abigail Wright, Chief Financial Officer

Keeping Adventist education accessible

At Newbold College of Higher Education we believe that an Adventist education should be affordable and accessible to anyone who would like to study on an Adventist campus, and we’ve done our best over the years to keep our fees low and to provide financial support and flexible payment options.

Part of our commitment to keeping Adventist higher education as accessible as possible to students from within the UK and Europe is to keep our fees as low as we are able. At the moment we are approximately twenty percent lower than the average tuition fees for undergraduate study in the UK.

There is a variety of options available to students in terms of financial assistance. The college is in the process of registering with the government’s new Office for Students, and, if successful, this would enable our 2019/20 UK and EEA students on designated undergraduate and postgraduate Biblical & Pastoral Studies and Theology programmes to apply for student loans.

Scholarships, grants and discounts from twenty-five up to seventy-five percent of a student’s fees are offered through the British Union Conference and the Trans-European Division, and almost all of our students are eligible to apply for these, although the number available is limited.

Financial plans are also available to students, after their first semester, to make fee payments more manageable. We are constantly working with other organisations on new ways to provide financial assistance. This year the Trans-European Division offered 100% scholarships to eligible students for our Year in Mission and Service course. We receive frequent contributions to our various student hardship and support funds.

This year we are pleased to announce that, with the support of the college’s Board of Governors, an additional £100,000 has been allocated to student scholarships, and we are looking into the best ways to make this money



available so that we can continue to make an education at Newbold accessible to anyone who would like to study here.

(This article first appeared in the recently published 2019 edition of The Newboldian, and is used with permission.)



Stanborough School

Stanborough Secondary School

Open & Taster Day on
Thursday 19 September 2019

Choosing a secondary school is one of the most crucial decisions that a parent needs to make. To assist parents in choosing a secondary school, we are offering a tour of Stanborough Secondary School and a full day’s experience of secondary education for Years 5 and 6 pupils.

Stanborough Secondary School is a co-educational, independent school surrounded by 40 acres of beautiful parkland in Watford. The school fosters an atmosphere of community and family, catering for pupils from Year 7 to Year 11.

Please mark Thursday 19 September 2019 in your calendar. Our programme on the day will be as follows, and lunch will be provided.

Taster Day (for Years 5 & 6 students) – 9am-3pm
Open Day (for parents) – 2-4pm

To register, please email: ehussey@spsch.org.

We look forward to meeting the pupils and parents!

British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Evangelism Department

Who: Total Member Involvement
Resources: Hope for Today’s Families, The Power of Hope Focus Magazines, Health and Wellness
Result: Testimonies

POWER OF 40,000
Day of free Literature Distribution

Date: 28th September 2019
Time: 10.30am – 6pm
Venue: Your Local Church

For more information please contact:
Kerrine Guthrie: kerrineguthrie@adventist.uk,
01923 672 251

As supplied, errors and omissions excepted

One in Christ

We pray for a renewed sense of our being one in Christ and for a deeper sense of our belonging together and to each other;
for a new joy in being the people of God and a fresh delight in each other's fellowship.
May our life together bring glory to God.

We pray for the desire to help, care for and support each other, and a new readiness to give encouragement and thanks for all that we receive through our fellowship in Christ;
for a new joy in accepting and affirming even those with whom we disagree.
May our fellowship in Christ bring hope to our neighbour.

We pray for a new acceptance of each other's worship and a new openness to share in each other's praise;
for a new willingness to listen to each other's witness to the truth and for a new ability to break out of our prejudiced positions and to break down the walls that divide.
May the love of Christ bind us together.

We pray for a new sharing of each other's pain and sorrows, a new listening to others' doubts and fears, a new desire to accept and affirm every member and a new welcome for all who feel they are strangers.
We ask to be set free from any sense of self-righteousness and from anything that would hinder the declaration of the good news.
May the power of the Holy Spirit make us new.

We pray for a church that can live with diversity and with the tensions caused by those who think we are different;
for a church that can welcome all those with different hopes and fears, different visions and dreams, different words and ways, different songs and prayers, who are of a different colour and from different nations.
We ask for God's grace to blend them (us) into one body in Christ.
May our oneness in Christ bring glory to God.

We pray for a church that will not be afraid of standing for the truth, and for a church that will always be seeking new words and new ways of making the Gospel known.

We pray for a church that never settles for second best; that is always committed to declaring the forgiveness of sin and new life in Christ.
May the joy of Christ flood into every part of our life together.

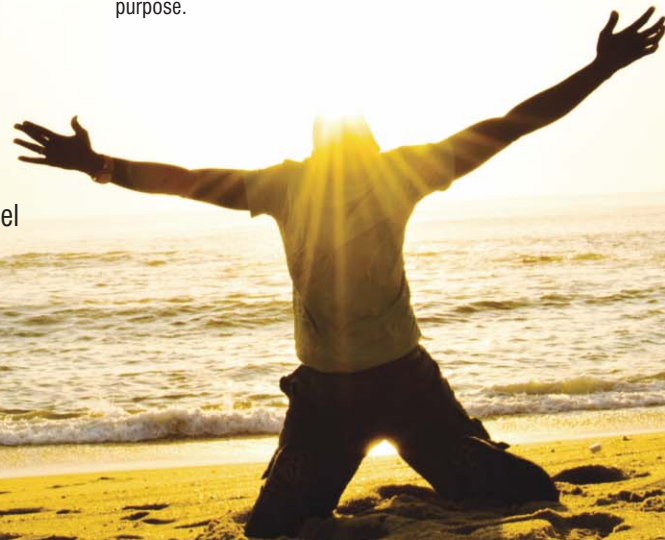
We pray for a church that is concerned for those who are lonely and rejected and reaches out to those who are bitter and lost;
for those whose lives are filled with sadness and sorrow, and for those who feel defeated and of no value;
for a church concerned for the hungry and starving, and the needs of a nation that has lost its way and has forgotten to trust in God.
May the power of the Spirit give us wisdom.

We pray for a church that declares the good news for the poor in body, mind or spirit;
for a church that gives high priority to prayer and outreach, to mission and service, to the gifts and fruits of the Spirit;
for a church that declares Christ as Saviour and Lord and places Him and His kingdom at the heart of all that it says and does.
May the Spirit set us free for Christ.

We pray for ourselves and our longing to be open to the work of the Spirit and to allow Him to change all that we say and do in Christ's name.
We ask for freedom and joy in our witness, and a deeper experience of walking with Christ;
for a peace and a courage and a hope that lead others to a knowledge of Christ as Lord.
May the Holy Spirit use us in ways we never expected.

In Christ's name, amen.

David Clowes, 500 Prayers for All Occasions, pages 332-333 (adapted). Kingsway Publications, Eastbourne, 2007. Reproduced with permission for a non-commercial purpose.



Pastor James Shepley gave thanks to Pastor and Mrs Smart for their support and encouragement



The Swindon Pathfinders

Swindon news

On 1 June 2019 Swindon Church witnessed a wonderful service which included an Adventurers investiture and the retirement of a dearly loved pastor, Pastor Mick Smart, who has served for over 37 years.

The retirement

The investiture and the farewell to Pastor Mick Smart and his wife Sarah Smart were witnessed by a congregation consisting of individuals from more than 29 different nationalities.

Pastor Namushi Namuchana, the Area 2 coordinator, officiated during the retirement part of the service and presented a heartfelt speech on how Pastor Mick Smart mentored him in the early years of his ministry. Pastor Namushi Namuchana remembered Sarah Smart giving him advice on how to accept people, how to meet people at their point of need and how to care for them in his first few months in ministry. He remembered Pastor Mick Smart's catchphrase, 'We are family', and that statement has never departed from the memory of Pastor Namuchana. In his words, Pastor Smart is an 'anchor, an advisor and an encourager'.

Pastor James Shepley, Swindon pastor, made special mention and gave special thanks to Pastor Smart for the support and encouragement he received from him upon the loss of his mother. He referred to Pastor Mick Smart as 'a friend, a mentor and a pillar'.

In a closing statement, bearing the gifts given by the church, Sarah Smart emphasised the need to remain as a family, to pull through difficult times. Pastor Smart continued to charge the Swindon flock of God, encouraging us to remain strong, to be watchful and wait.

The investiture

Serbina Ramharacksingh (Area 5 coordinator), Pam Catchpole (Area 2 coordinator) and Vernon Noel (Area 7 coordinator for Pathfinders) officiated during the investiture. More than 30 Pathfinders and Adventurers were invested.

At the close of investiture, Pastor Smart said, 'This is the best day ever to see what Swindon has been; to see so many children. We love you, we are not disappearing, and we will be coming to your home for free food.'

We would like to thank our Father in heaven for ensuring that the day was a success and the children were made ready to be invested. We would like to wish Pastor Smart and Sarah a happy retirement.

VIVIAN ZINYEMBA



Left to right: Marc Rivet, Michael Applewhaite, Ralph Lombart, Sylvia Lawaty, Claris Lombart, Robin Spearing

The Deep Persuasion Gospel Group in Concert at Marienhöhe, Darmstadt, Germany (24-26 August 2018)

Those who grew up in the 1970s may well remember the gospel music group 'Deep Persuasion'. They were very much in demand and sang throughout England and in the rest of Europe. The group consisted of three Lombart brothers – Ralph, Fernand and Claris – and their friends, Robin Spearing, Marc Rivet, and Michael Applewhaite.

Deep Persuasion were particularly appreciated in Germany, where they performed many concerts. They still have a strong following there today, although those who attended the concerts are now parents and grandparents.

In 2018, Ralph was contacted by Sylvain Romain – one of the musicians who used to perform at the concerts with Deep Persuasion in the '70s. There was an invitation for a reunion concert for August 2018; so preparations were made. Marc Rivet flew in from Australia, where he now lives. Robin drove down from Scotland with his double bass. We all met at Ralph's house in Canterbury. Claris drove across from Binfield and Michael from Oxford.

Deep Persuasion then drove in one MPV from Canterbury across to Darmstadt in Germany. The weekend event was advertised as a 'Revival Wochenende'. The two main musical acts were Deep Persuasion and a solo singer, Sylvia Lawaty. Sylvia had worked with Deep Persuasion on numerous evangelistic projects and concerts in Germany, France and Belgium in the '70s. She is also extremely well known in the Adventist Church in Germany and greatly appreciated for both her music and events that she organises.

The weekend went very well, with all concerts fully attended. There was a great spirit of revival and community as the concert attendees joined in familiar songs such as the theme song of the group, also entitled 'Deep Persuasion' – or, as some know it, 'Deep In My Soul'.

It is amazing to see how, 40 years after the group first sang in Germany, there is still such a great appreciation for their gospel music and songs. God was praised and everyone was truly uplifted. The presence of God's Spirit was supremely felt at the event, making all the efforts and sacrifices by all connected with organising and attending the event worth it. On behalf of the group, Claris appealed to the attendees to 'never give up' and to keep continuing their walk with God, in spite of the challenges of life.

If 40 years can go by so fast and fellow brothers and sisters can meet again to praise God, how soon will eternity dawn, when we will all be able to sing songs together in that great celestial choir?

CLARIS LOMBART



Croydon's Great Veggie Cook-off

Croydon Church held its first ever Great Veggie Cook-off on 26 May 2019 in support of National Vegetarian Week, with three home chefs competing in one of three categories for one of three prizes: (1) Best Dish in Category (starter/main/vegan dessert), (2) People's Choice Winner, and (3) Grand Veggie Home Chef.

- Each contestant had the task of either:
- Transforming a regular everyday dish which usually uses meat or fish as a main source of protein, replacing it to create a vegetarian or vegan dish;
 - Transforming a classic vegetarian main or starter into a vegan dish; or
 - Transforming a dessert into a vegan dish.

The contest kicked off with each contestant being quizzed on why they chose their items, and at this point you could imagine you were a part of that very British TV show, *The Great British Bake Off!* Leslene Pete-Brown chose to go with a savoury dish, and with no other competition in this category it seemed a safe option, but would the audience favour this over two sweet dishes that made your mouth water just reading the descriptions? It was too early to tell.

Teenager Theodore Gervais selected the classic and much-loved sweet treats, brownies! He adapted his recipe using only vegan ingredients and would dress the warm brownies with a creamy *Coconut Collaborative Yoghurt* (yum!). How could anyone beat that?

Annadine Atkinson had little time before the event to decide what she would make, but chose a cake that is very fond to her, and one that she has spent much time perfecting, although making it vegan was a new twist to her famous Christmas cake. The ingredients laid out on her station showed how much attention would go into this cake.

While the competitors were busy preparing their cakes and dishes, the audience members were asked questions about health to raise awareness, and those with the right answers who were first to raise their hands were gifted with wonderful kitchen appliances that encourage healthy home cooking. There were several vendors at the event, selling vegan cakes, popcorn, freshly squeezed fruit and vegetable juices, The Body Shop products, aloe vera products, art, clothes, shoes and warm street foods like roti and channa.

Finally, the competitors were putting the finishing touches onto their masterpieces, and the crowds started to gather around with the sweet-smelling aromas that floated through the church hall. With mouths watering and eagerly awaiting judges looking on, the competition was over. The tasting commenced, with audience members going back and forth between the three stations, some with second and third helpings – just enough to make us all want more – and soon it was all gone.

The dishes were judged by three judges on presentation, taste and performance; all other guests in attendance were also given the opportunity to vote for their favourite dish in each category and favourite overall dish. Voting commenced, and the time had come to count and reveal who would be the winner of the May 2019 Great Veggie Cook-off.

The winner of the Grand Veggie Home Chef prize, voted by the panel of judges, was Leslene Pete-Brown! Congratulations to a well-deserved winner, who had us all amazed by how much flavour her dish gave with only a pinch of salt to season.

The Great Veggie Cook-off event was graciously hosted by the health & lifestyle team in collaboration with the social team and assistance from

our panel of judges: Maureen Simpson, Doriel Benjamin and Nerry John. The three competitors were Elder Leslene Pete-Brown, Theodore Gervais and Annadine Atkinson.

Winners by category, voted by the people, were:

Main

- Winner – Leslene Pete-Brown

Dessert

- Winner – Annadine Atkinson
- Runner-up – Theodore Gervais

We hope there will be even more of you attending the next competition, but a great time was had by all who were there.

Special thanks to those who helped make the day possible, including all cake donors for the cake sale; camera and media production: Helena Simpson, Gail Henry, Clive Coutet Senior, Dominic Augustus and Civan Rennock; and all supporters who attended, tasted and voted.

HELENA SIMPSON

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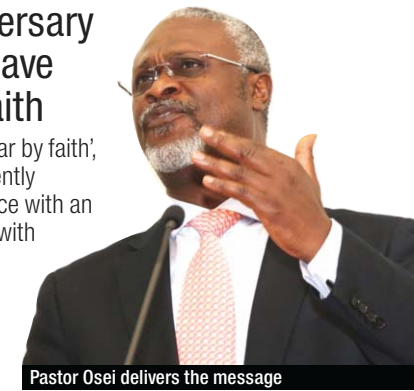
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Balham 50th Anniversary celebration – we have come this far by faith

We have definitely come 'this far by faith', and at Balham Church we recently celebrated 50 years of existence with an exciting anniversary weekend with that theme.

The Friday worship session included congregational singing, interviews with some of the founders of the church and a message from SEC President Emmanuel Osei, who challenged us to move the church forwards.



Pastor Osei delivers the message

One of the very touching highlights was the tribute to those members who have died, as their names were listed on the screen with the background music being 'We'll Never Part Again', which highlighted our Christian hope.

Highlights on Sabbath morning included the lesson study led by Pastor Keith Boldeau, one of our former pastors, and the sermon by Pastor Errol Lawrence, who was present at Balham when the church started and now pastors in Canada.

Other features of the day included a tribute to the senior members of the church, which included inviting them to the platform while we sang 'I'm Climbing Up the Rough Side of the Mountain'.

Those present included the mayor of the council, a few other pastors, and even members who had to be brought to the church in wheelchairs, such as their determination not to miss it!

The afternoon programme included video tributes from several



A tribute to the seniors



The eldest member received recognition from the pastor's wife



Pastor Akakpo with the Mayor

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pastors of the past, and included a musical and verbal tribute from Pastor Mbui.

There were a number of musical items from past and present Balham members, with the London Male Voice Choir being our guests.

Pastor Anthony Fuller (SEC Youth Director and son of Balham) invited us to provide an environment where youth can develop and grow.

We ended the day with 'ceremony', where an Olympic torch, one used by our current youth leader in the London 2012 Olympics, was passed from the first Balham youth leader to the current one.

The Sunday fun day was aimed at current and past members as well as our neighbours, graced with the presence of one of our former pastors, Michael Mbui.

Features included various stands, games and demonstrations such as music and vegan cooking, with plenty for the children, including the ever popular bouncy castle!

Fifty years is a long time, but at Balham we are committed to being of service to God and the community in the years to come.

ERROL ANDERSON (HEAD ELDER, BALHAM CHURCH)

PHOTOS: MARK GREY



Ordination at Manchester Southern Asia Church

On 10 August 2019, three members from Manchester Southern Asia Church dedicated their lives in the Lord's service. Elder Prasanna Byrarapu and deaconesses Meenu Bazroy and Susan Mathew were ordained by Pastor Victor Marshall to serve the church and support the pastors, members and sister churches.

DIAMOND SATHE, COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

A beautiful, blessed baptism

On Sabbath 16 March the members and visitors at Erdington Church were blessed to witness Dorothy Palmer and Adam Matthews declare their intent to become 'Christ followers'. The day was wonderful, as the congregation were blessed with the presence of Pastor Patrick Johnson and his talented family from the Trans-European Division. Pastor Patrick Johnson, who recently received his Doctorate in Theology and Ministry, gave a moving sermon on emulating God's character in everything we do. We should be 'qudash in quedeshi'. We should be holy in the places where we are, whether at work, church, home – wherever it is, and we must let the character of Christ shine through us.



Elder Goodleisure Ngoma read the baptismal vows. Dr Patrick Johnson baptised Dorothy first, with her daughter reading her favourite Bible scripture from the book of Isaiah. Adam was baptised afterwards, his special item performed by Celia Jules and her daughters Mia and Riana Jules-Dantzic. Overall the day was moving and memorable for the candidates and their family members and friends, many of whom expressed their desire to attend the Adventist church again due to the touching and consecrated service. The Erdington congregation pray that God will protect and direct Adam and Dorothy as they navigate through the storms of life, and that they will continue to demonstrate the character of God in everything they think, say and do.

REBEKAH ECCLES



Welsh Mission Day of Fellowship

'Make God Known' – a task that Jesus Himself tasked us with, and the theme of the Welsh Mission Day of Fellowship on 1 June at the Pavilion in Llandrindod Wells. With one of the highest turnouts in recent years, attendees from all over Wales and the border counties joined together for a day of praise, reflection and a reminder of all that God continues to do in our mission field.

The first part of the morning saw the Welsh Mission pastors recount their churches' activities in their communities, video testimonies from people currently undergoing Bible studies in their homes, and a moving testimony from a man who found faith, acceptance, love and family as he was welcomed into the church fellowship.

The main speaker for the morning was Pastor Ian Sweeney, who reminded us that the phrase 'Yes, Jesus loves me' is more than just a children's song. It is a mantra to encourage us daily that, no matter our struggles and failings, Jesus still loves each and every one of us.

Our churches brought together their creative gifts of song, instruments and poetry (in traditional Welsh fashion!) for an afternoon of praise and worship. One could argue that our children's enthusiasm and participation were the highlight of the afternoon, showing that perhaps they are not just 'the church of tomorrow', but also 'the church of today'!

Everyone was blessed and uplifted to have attended the event, and we all look forward to next year!

EMANUEL BRAN



Pastor Ian Sweeney, BUC President



Pastor Jacques Venter, with Pastor Emanuel Bran and his wife Camilia beside

'Stand up and look'

by Sara Renard

I grew up in Stanborough Park Church and was baptised there on 11 May 2019. I got baptised because I love my Heavenly Father, and He has shown me that He has wanted me to follow Him since I was a little girl.

As I grew up, I relied on my Heavenly Father more and more. At a young age, when things were not going as expected, God seemed to help me in astonishing ways. I began to understand God better in my early junior years. I slowly became interested in baptism and I asked my parents a lot of questions. I started to know God better as I prayed, especially when I saw God's answers. Every day He had a little gift for me or a stern but loving lesson.

When I was around nine years old, my family went to Martinique to meet the extended family and my grandparents. Since we were preparing for my grandmother's birthday we drove to the north, where my grandparents live. On the way my parents remembered that there was a beautiful river nearby, called Grande Rivière (meaning Big River), so we made our way there. Strangely, I had this uncomfortable feeling as if I was in danger. I clearly remember not wanting to wear my swimming suit, which is really bizarre, as I love swimming.

We crossed the river to get to the 'kids' area where it was a perfect natural swimming pool. Passing by, we saw two young women in the water further down. We carried on walking to that lovely spot to enjoy it as a family. I remember my dad picking up stones from the riverbed until he found a special one called granite. Then he gave it to my mum, and, when she bent over to pick the stone up, she was stunned to see a school of fish dashing down the river. Less than 10 seconds later, to my mum's surprise, she heard a clear voice saying: 'Stand up and look.'

Mum obeyed instantly, and, to her utter shock, she saw a massive brown wave making its way towards us at rapid speed. I can hardly recall what happened; all I can remember is my mum

screaming to my dad, 'Get out of the water!' My mum grabbed the bags as she rushed to try to reach the bank. But I was next to her, running barefoot on those sharp stones. I could not run, so she ended up carrying me. I remember seeing my dad playing with my little brother in the middle of the river. But as soon as he heard my mum screaming, he managed to reach us and make his way through the water just in time before the wave swept behind him. We were all safe on the edge of the bank and on a large rock, but I noticed the water was rising fast. Frightened, we prayed – and the water stopped rising. Dad ventured down off the rock while grabbing some vines. Next, he made his way to a part of the footpath and then he returned for us to bring us to the safe place.

As we were waiting a long time, we were hungry, tired and annoyed with the mosquitoes that appeared out of nowhere. Then we found the two women that we had seen swimming earlier. Now the two women were up on the vines and jungle plants, shouting at us to climb up with them before the water rose and carried us all away, but my dad reassured them that nothing would happen to them. They immediately came down.

The two women started to tell us what had happened to them. One of the ladies was a believer and was trying to convince her friend of the existence of God. But that lady didn't believe in God. She said that God never listened to her prayers. During their argument, the wave fell on them without warning. They tried to hold hands, but the water forced them apart and they were carried away, deep under the water. Afterwards, the lady who believed in God found her way out. Unfortunately, her unbeliever-friend was swept further away. That same friend (the unbeliever) recounted how she felt in the deep waters. She finally prayed to God and said: 'If You exist, Jesus, please save me.'

After sharing all our

experiences, we were still waiting on that tiny footpath. Suddenly I saw a man in the car park, so I began to shout, waving my red towel, and soon all of us were waving our towels too. The man turned and shouted in French over the crashing waves, 'I will call the firefighters.' Then he jumped into his car. We stayed there for what seemed like an eternity (which was really just a couple of hours) and I started to wonder if there were even firefighters in this region! When they finally arrived with two fire engines, even some of the locals came to see.

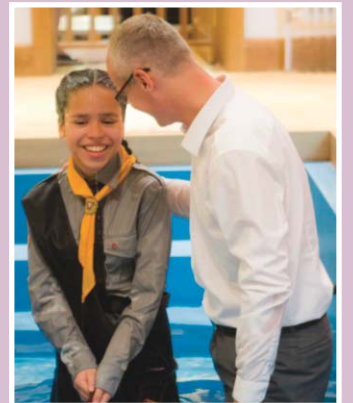
As we waited to be rescued, I marvelled to hear the river and the huge stones crashing their way downstream with an amazing speed. Later, when all the equipment was ready, one of the villagers made his way through the water up to the remaining path that we were on, and we observed how brave this man was to risk his own life to come and rescue us. He attached ropes and led us, one by one, out into the safe land. Children went first, so that meant my brother and I were the first to feel the mighty rush of the river. At the end, some tourists watching our rescue gave us some beautiful towels and blankets to cover us and warm us up. Eventually, everyone was brought to safety.

At my grandparents' house later, after discussing how the day's events had escalated, I personally thanked God for watching over us. It was almost unbelievable, but true. My trust in God has grown stronger and deeper every day since then.

Knowing about God's power was not sufficient, but experiencing it was amazing, as was having the assurance of His constant care towards us, and especially me, even though we are unworthy of it.

The text that I chose for my baptism was based on this experience. Psalm 18:16-19 (NIV) says: 'He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the LORD was my support. He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.'

This passage has become one of my favourites, because God did reach down into deep waters and rescue me. I hope that my favourite Bible text will become an inspiration to your life too.





New Addington International Day

On Sabbath 13 July 2019 New Addington celebrated International Day, with tables and chairs set up in a horse-shoe formation in the hall, and flags and tablecloths displaying nations of the earth. For this special day, members dressed in national colours and cooked their national dishes for lunch. As the Sabbath's programme began, members shared a mixture of how the Gospel message is being spread in their homelands and cultural diversity. For worship time each nation represented sang songs in its own dialect and language and proudly showcased its upbringing. As the fellowship moved from spiritual to physical food, members sampled national dishes from Angola, Barbados, Grenada, Dominica, the United Kingdom, Trinidad and Tobago, the Philippines, and Zimbabwe. Japan and South Korea were also represented throughout the day. All members and visitors alike enjoyed the day and were truly blessed by the first-of-its-kind international day hosted by the New Addington church.



EDWY CHANDLER

'When life is wild, God is good!'

The Hanwell Junior Sabbath School Department opened its doors to the children in and around the area during August for a one-week Holiday Bible School programme called ROAR. This was attended by 15 children between the ages of 5 and 11 years, who took part in the exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land. Along the way, our trekkers learnt that 'when life is wild, God is good'. They learnt that although it was unfair for the Israelites to be slaves in Egypt, God was with them. Even when Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites leave and God sent the scary plagues, none of the Israelites were affected by the plagues: God is good! Travelling in the desert was a new experience for the Israelites; they were reminded that when life changes, where there is no water or food, God is good, because He sent them manna and quail. He provided water for them in the desert.



Our trekkers learnt that when we are sad due to the loss of a parent, a friend or a pet, God is close to the broken-hearted. When they crossed the river Jordan into the Promised Land, they remembered God's goodness and built a memorial to remind them that He is good.

Our trekkers met amazing African animals and learnt powerful messages along with awesome scriptures of promise. A fun-filled week was enjoyed by students, helpers and volunteers.

DENESE CHRISTOPHER

Poetic preacher publishes first book

Clarence Jackson, Men's Ministries leader at the Ilford Lane church, has written his first book. *The Journey from Yard to Broad: Stories of Trial and Triumph* is the coming-of-age story of how a little boy rose from humble beginnings to become a spiritual force in a country far away.

Born in Portland, Jamaica, Clarence (35) is a dynamic preacher, youth mentor and seminar presenter. He is also a highly popular and sought-after performance poet.

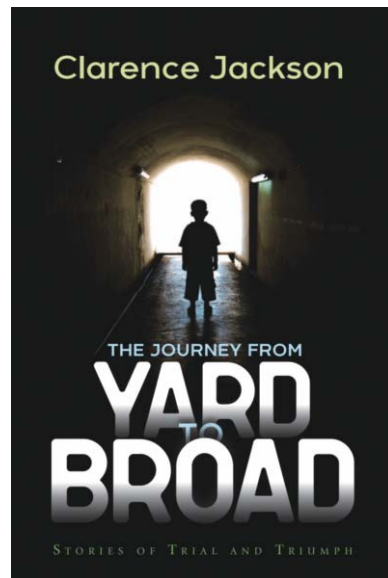
Besides testifying of the goodness of God in poetry and preaching, Clarence is also the director of *The Purposition Project*, where he mentors young people in the community on personal and professional development. Clarence sees a need for inspiration, direction and God's awesome power in this generation. He said, 'I'm always telling youth who I work with that they are born for a purpose and wired for great works. Life is about being; fully utilising our giftedness; and maximising our potential to the fulfilment of our purpose.' He added: 'Everyone has a purpose, and the only way to find and fulfil that purpose is to find out who made you – and it's God who made you. So if anything goes wrong in your life, it's best to go back to the Manufacturer, the Author of life, who understands us.'

This advice results from the experiences Clarence had when he arrived in London from Jamaica as a teenager, encountering his fair share of language differences, culture shock, peer pressure, poverty and depression. Yet, through it all, he learned to trust in Jesus and found that in Him he has an identity and a purpose in life.

'There were times when I questioned where God was during some of the most difficult periods in my life: but then He would work things out miraculously in my favour to let me know that, along with Moses, Peter and the apostle Paul, I too have a story to share with others.'

The Journey from Yard to Broad: Stories of Trial and Triumph is available on Amazon.

DARELL J. PHILIP



K(wids) for KIDS

In November of last year *MESSENGER* readers read about *Finlay's Quest for Romania*. This is a follow-up. Finlay had raised £6,000 for three projects in Romania, one of which was a school of 84 children. *Finlay's Quest* is now finished, but a new initiative for the school is underway, organised by the writer, Finlay's great-aunt.

It is heartbreaking to see the needs of this school in the Carpathian mountains in Transylvania, Romania. All 84 children are from disadvantaged homes suffering from divorce, abandonment, alcoholism, abuse, and outright poverty. Three village schools were closed by the government because they did not reach the standard expected of them, and this meant the children had no school to attend. The nearest government school was a long way away and was a dangerous journey for the children. This meant they would stay at home and get into mischief, which could lead to petty crime, or they would fall into the hands of disreputable people who would not stop short of human trafficking, organ donations, abuse and other heinous crimes committed against children. They were not safe.

A kind-hearted Adventist lady, Vali, could not see this happen, so she started a small school where the children are loved and cared for and kept in a safe environment. The poverty is so great that they cannot afford to pay any school fees and they are malnourished. Vali clothes them, gives them a good breakfast each school day, transports them to and from school and gives them a good Christian education, meeting the requirements of the national curriculum. The age range is from 5 to 14, and academically the range is from educationally challenged to very bright.

Aston Newtown's chariot of fire

One day I hope to supersede Usain Bolt's sprint legacy of 12.3 metres per second or 27 miles per hour.' According to Professor Peter Weyand's study of the human frame, I can do just that. Professor Weyand's findings purport that human beings are capable of running speeds up to 40 miles per hour – nearly double the Bolt capacity!² What conditions need to be in place for me to achieve high-speed runner status?

The VO₂ max: a speedy runner's body will operate at the maximum capacity in transporting vital oxygen volumes, and through training this capacity can be improved by 25%.

Living at higher altitudes: this increases the number of red blood cells in your body and contributes to a lower heart rate, which in turn enables you to run for longer distances.

Bird-like body: a running motion that enables a flow and bouncing off the ground is achieved by having 'birdlike legs, with long and thin levers'.³

Leg muscle and height: sprinters have faster-twitch muscle fibres that allow powerful bursts of movement, enabling them to accelerate quickly. Usain Bolt as an outlier combines the mechanical advantage of being taller (therefore having longer strides, generating greater force) with having fast-twitch muscle fibres.

'The first man runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok,' said the watchman of Ahimaaz in 2 Samuel 18:27 (ICB), who started running at a disadvantage, but came from behind, and took the inside route 'by way of the Jordan Valley and passed the Cushite' (vs. 23, ICB) to reach the finish line and tell the 'good news' to King David. This suggests to me that there is more to achieving full running potential than physiological factors. Having the Ahimaaz mindset of 'No matter what happens, I will run' (vs. 23) also applies.

I'm sure you have heard the *Chariots of Fire* music inspired by Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell. Harold Abrahams trained for 9 months to become an Olympic gold medallist and was certain about two things: that in running it is how you begin and how you finish that matters. Eric Liddell trained for the 100-metre sprint, was entered for the 400-metre race and got a gold medal, based on his motto, 'Run fast, and then faster.'

In June the school was successful in passing a very intensive inspection of teaching skills, resources and mountains of paperwork. This means that the government will give them a little money each month, and while this will be a great help it does not cover the monthly salaries bill. The shortfall is about £360 per month.

Here's an opportunity to put this quarter's Sabbath School lessons into practice! The school is in need of financial help. It is a unique school in that the children are unable to pay any fees, so it is totally dependent on donations. If you feel prompted to help, please contact the writer, Ruth Farrer, by email: ruth@ruthfarrer.com.

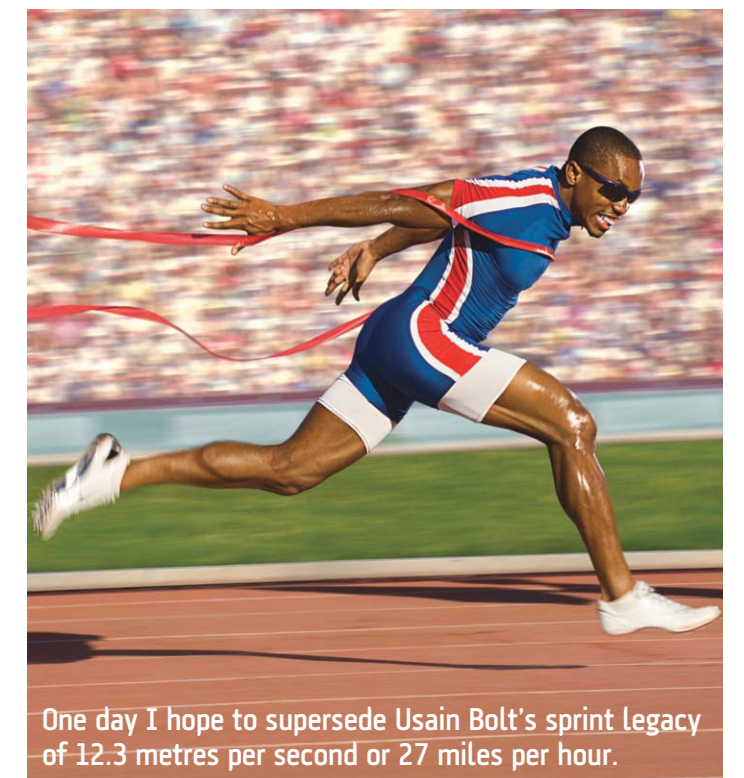
The school's new website is: www.scoalasolideogloria.com.

RUTH FARRER



If anything, I'm glad that there is no definite human speed limit right now, as the answer to that would rob us as humans, athletes, and spectators of inspiration and motivation to continue to 'run in such a way as to get the prize' (1 Corinthians 9:24, NIV) in mindset and body.

INSPIRED BY ASTON NEWTOWN PATHFINDER CLUB GUIDE CLASS – NATHAN, NAHOM LEMMA, KYMAR AND JAMAR



One day I hope to supersede Usain Bolt's sprint legacy of 12.3 metres per second or 27 miles per hour.



The empty loin and empty womb – a look at infertility in the story of Ruth

The story of Boaz and Ruth touches on the issue of infertility – the biological inability to have children. The cause for this might be hereditary, a life-changing accident, a life-changing illness, exposure to chemical reactants, or in some cases lifestyle choices. The effect of infertility can be the lost hope of being able to biologically have a child of one's own.

This experience of childlessness affects not only those who are married but infertile, but also those who have not yet married, as well as those who have experienced miscarriages. (In the UK alone, one in four pregnancies ends in miscarriage – see *Mariposatrust.org*).

The experience of childlessness

Childlessness can cause a haunting feeling that one day one might hear the first cry of one's own child, while living a day-to-day reality of emptiness or loneliness without a child, while at the same time hearing the clock of time ticking away.

The cold blanket of childlessness is made more challenging when our church community expects children from every marriage, and having a child outside of marriage is frowned upon. How, then, are young, single women to cope with childlessness? How, then, are the couples who have married, but who are unable to have children, to cope with childlessness? Where are they able to discuss their challenges and dashed hopes? How are the men within our church to deal with their issues of infertility, and where can they find support?

As we contemplate the above questions, can some ancient words from the biblical character of Ruth help us?

Three points to ponder from Ruth and Chilion

In the male-dominated world in which the Bible narratives were written, it was not uncommon for the matter of infertility to be considered the woman's problem. However, this tale of Boaz and Ruth raises a few questions that are worth recognising.

First point: Ruth or Mahlon?

Firstly, in Ruth chapter one, Ruth is married to Mahlon (4:10), while Chilion is married to Orpah. Both are married for ten years. Both die without having conceived any children. As we read the text, we may ask why the author did not assume that Ruth was infertile, like Sarai; the mother of Samson; and Hannah. However, Abraham and Elkanah were able to have children with other women, whereas Ruth later went on to conceive and bear a child with Boaz; so it would be difficult to pose that Ruth was unable to bear children, even though chapter four does include the point that the 'LORD gave her conception' (KJV). (However, it can't be

concluded categorically from this that the infertility had hitherto lain with Ruth, but rather that the Bible at this point in the narrative indicates the involvement of the Lord; furthermore, the meaning of the name Mahlon is 'sickly', which may have been an allusion to Mahlon's health, which in turn may have rendered him infertile.)

In other words, does the fact that the text does not mention Ruth's infertility imply that the matter of infertility was considered to sit at the feet of her husband Mahlon?

Second point: male privilege?

Secondly, is it possible that the text does not mention Mahlon as being infertile because of the way infertility was seen in the ancient world as being the fault of the woman, and not the man? Is it possible, due to the privilege and dominant status men were afforded in the ancient world, that the text has remained silent about this?

Third point: male infertility in the Bible – really??

Thirdly, is it possible, given the immensely strong cultural expectation to have children, and Mahlon and Chilion's failure to do so, that Mahlon and Chilion were both infertile? Given the fact that the meaning of the name Chilion is 'pining' or 'wasting away', it follows that he, as well as his brother, may have suffered from poor health and infertility. Is it possible that these two brothers may have suffered from an inherited condition that prevented them from having a child?

I wonder, therefore, if God, in His wisdom, was leading the Bible writer to provide us with the first narrative account of male infertility within Scripture? Well, why not? If Scripture provides real-life accounts of how people's faith in God helped to shape their story, why would there not be an account of male infertility?

Male infertility today

In an article in *Men's Health* magazine (Sept. 2018), entitled *Shooting Blanks*, Sarfraz Manzoor indicated that over the past forty years male sperm counts for men from Western societies have more than halved. Male infertility is a growing concern that affects one in six heterosexual couples, and in over a third of those cases 'the cause lies with the man'.

Therefore, I believe we should be mindful of how infertility might make a man feel about himself, his aspirations, his future, and his legacy. This will help us to be a greater support to someone who may be affected by this.

So, what can we do to support someone who may be living with infertility?

Shared parenting

Well, in Ruth, chapter four, Boaz takes on the

responsibility of raising up children to the name of Mahlon. In other words, he shares his child with the heritage of Mahlon, in such a way – according to the custom of the day – that his son, Obed, is also known as Mahlon's son. Putting it another way, Boaz *shares his own son* with the memory of Mahlon.

What can we learn from this?

I believe this passage is saying that we who are blessed to have a child can share that child with another person. By allowing our child to spend time with a person who is childless, we invite another person to become another uncle or aunt to that child. By sharing parenting in this way, we invest in the parenting experience with others. Shared parenting in a safe and secure environment is one of the benefits of a church community through which we can create a more caring community of faith for all.

Empty womb and empty loin

Yet, what more can be done for the young single women, those women identified in Luke 23:29 as the 'the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck' (KJV)? What can be done for married couples who live with the empty womb or empty loin syndrome? Perhaps we can create a safe zone where women can talk with people who know and understand their journey so that their experience can find validation and healing.

Similarly, speaking about these issues from the pulpit may give permission for these issues to be expressed in a non-judgemental, non-bellittling manner. Indeed, if we can create a space where men and women can talk about infertility, perhaps we can begin to promote healing and wholeness not only for the individual, but for the whole church as well.

So, what can be done? Here are a few suggestions.

- Begin with prayer.
- Read Bible stories about infertility. One book is *And Hannah Wept: Infertility, Adoption and the Jewish Couple*, by Michael Gold.
- Plan a sermon or AYS programme looking at infertility in the Bible.
- Set ground rules for the programme.
- Draft a local church statement about infertility and childlessness to promote awareness and understanding.
- Plan a men's meeting to talk about the topic of male health and infertility.
- Celebrate and affirm those who do not have any children within your congregation.

In conclusion, let us be mindful that not every married couple or single person may wish to have a child or children, and that infertility affects many, regardless of colour, culture or class.

If you would like to discuss the issues raised in this article, please feel free to contact the author at a.r-h@hotmail.co.uk.

'Driver – go back to the dodgems!'

The forty-first Special Needs Camp took place in Aberdaron from 14 to 21 July this year. We had the largest number of campers for several years, and, because of the date change from the beginning of the month, we were able to include some younger disabled campers attending with their mothers.

Our theme was 'Jesus Is Our Friend' and our theme song was 'Jesus Is My Best Friend'. It was fascinating to see friendships form during camp, among our campers and the team. Our youngest camper, Alex, and Lena Rancic, the daughter of our padre David, and her brother Luca, gravitated towards each other. Introductions were simple: 'I'm Lena and I'm four and I'm taller than you.' 'I'm six, so I'm older than you!' The rest of the week was spent sitting together in worship and running around hand in hand.

One of my favourite moments this year was during the concert on Thursday evening. One of our new younger campers, Josephine, aged 11, had repeatedly raised her hand during the concert. Finally, Richard Gray, who was the compère, went over to see what was wanted. This might have been difficult because Josephine does not speak, apart from an odd word understood by her mother. It soon became apparent that she wanted to perform our theme song, 'Jesus Is My Best Friend', so she jumped on the stage and sang it beautifully.

One of our new campers, Ryan, is a wheelchair user, and I had been told by his mother that he enjoys just sitting on grass, feeling his surroundings. We were able to extend this as he went to the beach one afternoon, and Andrew, his carer, along with David Rancic, helped him to experience the feel of the sea on his feet as he had his first ever paddle. The huge smile on his face indicated the measure of his pleasure. Ryan indicated his enjoyment of his holiday by making it rather difficult for team members to get him on the coach to return home!

The usual programme, well known and prompted by Jenny, who has been attending for forty years, progressed fairly smoothly, apart from a few unexpected issues. There were suggestions that this report should be entitled 'The devil defeated', as we experienced several problems in the period before camp and even as we arrived on site. For some reason it was very difficult to recruit staff this year, and we had to continue this process until the last minute. I am very grateful to Sophia Prince at the BUC, who supported me this year by recording and accessing the checks.

As the new cook who had agreed to come did not arrive as we expected, for the first time I had to telephone a team member on the incoming coach to advise the members of the kitchen team of the situation, which meant they had to go to the kitchen immediately to prepare a meal. The most disastrous event as far as the campers were concerned was that on Wednesday the coach driver forgot to stop at the dodgems, but returned directly to the site! We had been missing Pastor Curtis Murphy all week as he has now resigned from camp, and the rest of the team is still catching up on everything he did, including reminding the driver!

Our main aim – to give a holiday to our campers and show them Jesus – was achieved, and all our campers and others who couldn't attend this year have asked us to reserve places for them next year. I express sincere thanks to the whole team who supported our mission this year: the carers; the kitchen team; the new arts and crafts leader, Carolyn Schulz; the pastoral team; and the wider group at the BUC, Lucinda and Daniel



and the rest of the Treasury team, and Pauline Allcock, who has dealt with all our post and copying this year. Our mission next year will be 12-19 July 2020. Are you interested in joining us? Staff forms will soon be available on our website, specialneedscamp.co.uk, and camper forms can be obtained by emailing the info email address on the website.

JOY BUSSEY, CAMP DIRECTOR



Grantham's children lead worship

On 27 July Grantham Church celebrated Children's Sabbath in good form, with a dozen or so children (and their adult helpers) presenting gospel songs and Bible readings before a very appreciative Sabbath morning congregation.

MIKE COWEN

A matter of prayer

We pray, Lord, that, as children and youth return to school or college after the summer break, they will treasure their time at camps and camporees over the summer. As a result, we pray that their relationship with You is all the stronger. In their school or college, we pray for them that they be confident, committed Christians, guided by Your Spirit in all matters.

Messenger

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Sunset

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	Lon	Card	Nolt	Edin	Belf
Sept 13	7.21	7.33	7.26	7.37	7.46
20	7.04	7.17	7.09	7.18	7.28
27	6.48	7.01	6.52	7.00	7.11
Oct 4	6.32	6.45	6.35	6.41	6.53

We are the Pathfinders strong!

Time to hear from a cross-section of BUC Pathfinders. What did they think of the Trans-European Division Camporee? The *MESSENGER* editor went out and about to find out:



Malachi Phiri from Croydon, **South England Conference**:

'Where I live, life can be tough at times and you have to be careful. I've grown up a Christian and I've always believed that you should do unto others as you want them to do to you. The reason I like Pathfinders is because it gives me legacy, a grounding, and even helps me stay off the streets. It offers solutions to life. The Pathfinder song plays on my mind and I think about what it says in my daily life.'



North England Conference, Leeds District Pathfinders – Edson Xavier, Keneil James and D'Shaun Wyatt:

Edson: *'I've made new friends that I could not find anywhere else.'*

D'Shaun: *'Camporee is a great place to make friends and get close to God. It's an amazing experience. Often life is hard with many social pressures, but Camporee, like church, is family!'*

Keneil: *'I am enjoying just being around so many young people. Even though many of us don't speak the same language, I feel very connected.'*



Scottish Mission Pathfinder Samia Tushemerirwe, from Paisley, with staff member SsHaa GranDiece, probably the finest Pathfinder cook in the world:

'Camporee is amazing. You leave here in a different way from when you arrived. You feel renewed and closer to God. I loved the praise and worship time. It was energetic and interesting. I very much identified with the theme song.'



Irish Mission Pathfinders and staff from the Royal Dublin club – left to right: Irish Mission Pathfinders Grace, Simphiwe, Mellian, and Olivia, with two of their leaders, Mellissa and Heather.

'The best thing I like about Pathfinders [says Olivia] is drilling, and my favourite honour is the baking honour.'



Welsh Mission, Ellen George:

'In the Welsh Mission our clubs are small. Coming to Camporee gave us a sense that Pathfinders is global. We enjoyed making new friends from around Europe and worshipping God together. Bonfires were very special, where we would exchange gifts and sing together. It was interesting that even though we come from different places, we sing the same songs.'



Trans-European Division Pathfinder and Camporee Director, Peter Bo Boshen, taking a moment to reflect