

Irish Mission Session Belfast

Sunday 6 October 2019

by David Neal

Photos: Richard Daley and David Neal

The Irish Mission – growing stronger

As Shupai Matewa gave her Children's Ministry report to the Irish Mission Session in Belfast on Sunday 6 October, she could not have predicted the response of Coleraine delegate Kenny Doherty. Instead of asking a question from the floor, he shared an interesting experience.

Kenny works for a Coleraine menswear shop in Northern Ireland. One day, while serving a customer, he engaged in conversation and discovered the gentleman concerned to be a retired Presbyterian clergyman. Cautious about inappropriately sharing his faith in the workplace, Kenny gently enquired if the clergyman had ever heard of Seventh-day Adventists.

'Interesting you should ask that question,' replied the clergyman. 'Until recently I served as the minister of the Presbyterian church in Sligo, Ireland. I know your people – they rent out our hall out every Saturday for worship. Do you know their leader, Shupai Matewa? Can I tell you something? I wish she were a member of my congregation!'

Kenny and Shupai are both salt and light in their respective communities, living 120 miles apart in two different and distinct nation states: but, of note in these Brexit times, one Irish Mission district! Kenny, a faithful member of the Coleraine church, born and raised in his Northern Irish town, works in the marketplace with his fellow members, making a difference for Christ. Shupai – New Irish, originally from Malawi – entered Ireland in 2010 as a refugee, purpose-driven to lead a small group of worshippers in Sligo, and has been serving the wider Irish Mission as Children's Ministries Sponsor. With joy she whispered in my ear, '*Pastor – I am now a full Irish citizen.*' It would be easy to pass this over as irrelevant for this report, but for Shupai, and for as many as 150 'New Irish' members and worshippers, this has been and continues to be a 'refined by fire' experience.

Mission President, Pastor Dan Serb, is clear about the church he serves. His report to the Session describes a church that is 'colourful, dynamic, and ever active', listing choirs, Pathfinders, Bible study groups, youth projects, family camps, fundraising events, and outreach. He sums up the last three years in three words: growth, challenges and opportunities.

Growth – membership doubled over 13 years

As Evelyn Wilson shared, responding to the former executive secretary's report by Pastor Paul Lockham, '*Not many Irish seem to be joining the church, but I want to thank the non-Irish people who have come to join and support the work in Ireland.*' The first part of Evelyn's statement continues to be the number 1 challenge, but the second is a wonderful signature statement of how Irish Mission members feel about their diverse church and calling.

To the 97 delegates present, former executive secretary Pastor Lockham reported for the 2016-2018 years, but enthusiastically



Irish Mission President sharing his report



Shupai Matewa and Kenny Doherty





Antibiotics: to prescribe or not to prescribe?

Antibiotics are back in the news. These medications are under the spotlight again, but this time from the opposite angle – their reduced use. An article in *The Guardian* carried the headline: ‘Rise in persistent UTIs could be linked to antibiotics crackdown’.¹

The report comments on the recent significant increase in hospital admissions for chronic urinary tract infections. Highlighting key research findings, it states: ‘More than 12,000 patients, the majority women, attended hospital with persistent urinary tract infections (UTIs) or cystitis last year, up from around 4,500 in 2001.’

The article further reports: ‘Experts warned that the increase could be linked to a crackdown on the prescribing of antibiotics by GPs owing to fears about antimicrobial resistance (AMR), resulting in some patients developing intractable infections that require admission to hospital.’

In the same article, Professor Jonathan Duckett, a consultant urogynaecologist and chair of the British Association of Urogynaecologists, states: ‘We’re on a drive to decrease antibiotic prescriptions . . . and the side-effect of the drive to cut antibiotic use is that you see more serious infections. That’s how I interpret it.’

Previous news reports highlighted the increasing challenges of antibiotic overprescription. One such warning came from the World Health Organisation (WHO), which stated:

‘Antibiotic resistance is accelerated by the misuse and overuse of antibiotics, as well as poor infection prevention and control.’²

Among the dangers of antibiotic resistance, the WHO lists the following:

- A growing number of infections – such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, gonorrhoea, and salmonellosis – are becoming harder to treat as the antibiotics used to treat them become less effective.
- Antibiotic resistance leads to longer hospital stays, higher medical costs and increased mortality.

Earlier this year *PULSE* published an article with the headline: ‘80% of GP antibiotic prescriptions for respiratory conditions “are too long”’.³ Their report highlights recent research from Public Health England (PHE), the University of Oxford and the Brighton and Sussex Medical School.

The study, published in the *British Medical Journal*, analysed almost 1 million consultations that took place between 2013 and 2015. It revealed the tension felt by doctors as GP leaders disclosed that the profession was under ‘huge pressure’ to reduce antibiotic prescribing, noting the urgent task of decreasing course lengths where possible. They concluded: ‘It was “extremely challenging” balancing this with situations where the decision to prescribe antibiotics or not could mean “life or death” for patients.’

If you are concerned about antibiotic use, visit: <https://antibioticguardian.com/keep-antibiotics-working/> for more information.

Good health!

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/oct/04/rise-in-persistent-urinary-tract-infections-could-be-linked-to-antibiotics-crackdown>
² <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/antibiotic-resistance>
³ <http://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/clinical/clinical-specialties/prescribing/80-of-gp-antibiotic-prescriptions-for-respiratory-conditions-are-too-long/20038328.article>



‘I have a dream of a church which is an expectant church . . .

. . . whose members can never settle down in material affluence or comfort, because they remember that they are strangers and pilgrims on earth, which is all the more faithful and active because it is waiting and looking for its Lord to return, which keeps the flame of the Christian hope burning brightly in a dark, despairing world, which on the day of Christ will not shrink from Him in shame, but rise up joyfully to greet Him. I have a dream of an expectant church. . . .’

During the 1990s we lived in a house on the corner of a suburban road in Abbots Langley, located a couple of miles from the British Union Conference (BUC) office in Garston. Living in a house at the ‘end of the road’ and the ‘beginning of another’ meant that we would hear cars slow down on approach, and accelerate once around the corner. As is often the case with background noise, most of the time it was not noticed – with the exception of one car.

This car was different. As our children ate breakfast before school, ‘Dolly’ the Citroën 2CV with its distinctive air-cooled-sounding engine would come around the corner and accelerate away. Give or take a few minutes, ‘Dolly’ always passed our house at 8.05am, driven by Mrs Carolyn Bellamy, heading for the BUC office to begin work promptly at 8.15. The testimony of her punctuality for work was my reaction to hearing the sound of ‘Dolly’ each morning. ‘Is that the time?’ I would say to myself in a panic; ‘time to get a move on’ – the school run was imminent.

If there’s one thing true about Seventh-day Adventists, it is that we’ve done everything within our power to ‘keep the flame of the Christian hope burning brightly in a dark, despairing world’. Some of our friends charge us with being obsessed with time – overreactionary, at times sensational and somewhat misguided – which causes me to reflect sometimes and wonder if Christ’s soon return is truly grounded in Scripture, or merely the result of theological imbalance on our part.

A survey of the gospels is a good place to start by considering what Jesus taught. Much of what He said as recorded in the first three gospels is connected with His expression, ‘The Kingdom of God is like. . . .’ There is a consensus in New Testament scholarship, says A. N. Hunter, that this statement refers to ‘both present and future aspects to this teaching of Jesus’.² To put it another way, when Jesus took on humanity and ‘moved into our neighbourhood’, so to speak, He ‘brought with Him a demonstration of the powers of the age to come’³ already in operation, in advance.

Matthew extensively records what Jesus taught about His kingdom, one of grace: current grace – and glory to come (Matthew 5-7). In Jesus, the bright future had already begun, even in the middle of evil times (Matthew 24:36-51). **Mark** shows Jesus appearing before Caiaphas the high priest, who asks, ‘Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ ‘I am,’ said Jesus, ‘and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’ (Mark 14:61, 62.) When the kingdom of God looked all but lost – on trial – Jesus looked forward not only to a future at God’s right hand, but to His return. **Luke** reminds the reader to be right with God, because ‘whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels’ (Luke 9:26). **John** went away and reflected on what he had seen, and writes over 50 years later. His unique perspective does not mention Christ’s return in the clouds. Nonetheless, he talks about ‘eternal life’ beginning with the presence of Christ now (life more ‘abundantly’ – John 10:10), and a future promise: ‘If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again’ (John 14:3).

As we move through the story of the early church, **Paul’s letters** are full of urgency, reflecting his mission. It was urgent that men and women across the Roman Empire should know the ‘Risen One’ and His ability to save by grace through faith. The new age which began at Pentecost (the in-between time) ends with the Parousia, when the living and the dead will be judged ‘by his appearing and his kingdom’ (2 Timothy 4:1) – the certainty of His return – because of His resurrection.

‘We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his’ (Romans 6:4, 5).

Prior to writing his gospel, **John recorded his vision on Patmos – about Jesus**. It was to be an encouraging message to the Christians to keep going in the middle of great distress. He also is given a perspective on the future, about the Lamb that wins against the dragon. The distress will increase before it gets better, and there is a decision to make about who is to be the focus of our worship – but it won’t go on forever, is the promise. ‘Behold, I am coming soon’ (Revelation 22:12).

If we still struggle to be convinced, is it worth a reminder that the early Christian watchword was ‘*Maranatha*’, ‘Our Lord, come!’ (1 Corinthians 16:22)?



‘Dolly’ the Citroën 2CV with its distinctive air-cooled-sounding engine

We live a long way from those ancient words, both by time and by place – still in the ‘in-between’ time. Not one of us knows when Jesus will return, but by faith we trust that it will be soon. The sheer progress of time tells us that we are closer than before. And then we live in an age when the Gospel continues to go around the world, reaching people never once thought possible – the most significant sign (Matthew 24:14). Add to that the increasingly desperate change of mood about the very survival of our planet,⁴ and perhaps to be a biblically ‘time-sensitive’ Christian is not so off-beam after all.

. . . to be continued.

¹ John Stott – excerpted from *The Living Church* by John Stott, © 2007 John R. W. Stott (publisher: InterVarsity Press, Norton Street, Nottingham NG7 3HR)

² *The Advent Hope in Scripture and History*: chapter 3, ‘The Advent Hope in the New Testament’, Harold E. Fagal, page 48

³ *Ibid.*, p. 50
⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/feb/02/the-devastation-of-human-life-is-in-view-what-a-burning-world-tells-us-about-climate-change-global-warming>

Photo: Paul and Carolyn Bellamy, with grateful thanks.

All Scripture quotations in this editorial have been taken from the anglicised English Standard Version (ESV-UK).

Prayer pointers

- The urgency of the Gospel is: today, someone I know may go to their grave without knowing Christ. What am I doing about it, Lord?
- The urgency of the Gospel is: one unexpected day in the future, Christ will return. Lord, help me to be personally ready, and also to help others.
- Lord, our church – is it expectant?

Letters to the editor



Dear Editor
 Just a point about
MESSENGER 19
 (27 September).

There’s a photograph of Hazel Hill – she was Hazel Sanders until she married Ken Hill and moved to Canada. Under the picture she is ‘believed to be the oldest surviving’ Park School student. I have a photograph of all the school, about thirty in total, in which I am about 8 and Hazel is just in reception, about 5. There is another, Molly Norris (Richter) in Brisbane, and I am sure she is older than Hazel.

You were ill-informed by someone.

In fact, Arnold Blackburn was older at the time of the school anniversary but has died now.

Thought you would like to know!

PASTOR ROY BURGESS

Editor’s response
 Pastor Burgess is absolutely correct. The editor’s description was a guess rather than based on fact.

Dear Editor
 Thank you for your great work since you took over as editor of the *MESSENGER*. It was a good read before you became editor; however, it’s changed: it’s different and it’s better. Thank you for all your hard work and insight.

Thank you for recent coverage of TED Camp. I was not there but now feel I was, after

the comprehensive and well-written reports. Thank you for the Response, Devotional and Youth Matters sections, which are readable and enjoyable. Also, the News section feels contained but relevant, rather than sprawling and a bit hard to follow (which previously may have been down to contributors rather than SP staff). Your editorials make us want to ‘do something’ and I am going to pick up my Bible after your last editorial in the 30 August edition.

DESALINE SIMON

Dear Editor
 I have a confession to make. I have always detested maths. In fact, I was heartily glad to abandon the subject after GCE O levels back in 1951 and switch to my first love of languages. One thing, however, I have never forgotten. Two plus two equals four. At least, I have always thought so. But after a careful look at our Sabbath School lessons for October, I am not so sure. I am wondering if the study of prophecy has led us to bend the rules of maths and time for our convenience – or, indeed, to turn a blind eye to clear facts.

Let me explain. In lesson three of the current lessons on Ezra and Nehemiah we are presented with the rationale for our understanding of the familiar prophecies of Daniel 8 and 9, around which so much of our last-day theology is based. In fact, in the teachers’ edition of the lesson we are reminded fifteen times of the accuracy of the year 457 BC as the basis for the start of the 70

weeks and the investigative judgement. But when I look at the textual basis for this date, I find what I believe is an astonishing inaccuracy in harmonising the facts.

In lesson 1 we read that King Artaxerxes began his reign in 465 BC, a date which is solidly backed by historians and by our lesson pamphlet. Then in Ezra 7:7 we read that a large group of Israelites returned to Jerusalem, under Ezra’s leadership, during ‘the seventh year of Artaxerxes’ reign’, arriving in the fifth month of that year. Now comes the problem: if Artaxerxes began to rule in 465 BC, the seventh year of his reign can in no way be made to stretch to 457 BC. The third year of his reign would be 463/2, the fifth year 461/0 and the seventh year 459/58. Ezra had left Babylon on the first day of that new year, arriving in Jerusalem in the fifth month of that year. No other dates are mentioned in the account. So my problem is this: how do we justify our insistence on the year 457 BC when the biblical account seems to indicate a date one year earlier? 465 minus 7 will always equal 458 – not a year later. Perhaps some of our theologians can help us – otherwise we are in deep trouble. Have we perhaps missed something in our study of this subject?

PASTOR MARTIN ANTHONY

The Editor would like to invite MESSENGER readers to offer their responses to this letter. Our own response will be published in the next issue.

couldn't help but provide a broader picture. Headline – in the past 13 years membership has doubled! As he looked to the future he observed, 'I would expect the doubling of Irish Mission membership to take less than the next 13 years. Over the past three years we have experienced 72 accessions by baptism, and 20 by profession of faith. Go back to the 1980s, and that was nearly our total membership.' He also sadly reported the deaths of 11 members, for which the delegation stopped business to take a moment of private reflection. Pastor Jacques Venter, the current executive secretary, reported that, as of 1 October 2019, Irish Mission membership is 984. Longford, once a small company in the Irish Midlands, was formally voted into the sisterhood of churches.



All in favour!

Unique for an Irish Mission session was the presence of the South England Conference President, Pastor Emmanuel Osei, who noted that 'the number of baptisms is encouraging, but I wonder if the Irish Mission is experiencing the same challenge we are experiencing in the South England Conference? What's the demographic? It's important to know. If we're not making an impact on the host community, then we need to consider our strategy accordingly.'

three years include:

- £2.3 million tithe returned: a 36% increase on the previous three years
- £450,000 contributed to world mission
- £84,000 returned in Gift Aid to NI churches over the last three years
- Continued support from the Emerald Foundation (USA): £150,000
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All this is the result of faithful stewardship by both the members and the administration.

Delegate questions & observations

Questions from the floor were many as the delegates considered the reports of the Mission sponsors. Is it wise to invest funds in a campsite (Kilnasoolagh) when there continues to be a great need for church buildings? If Irish Mission youth and young adults commit to studying for pastoral ministry, will they eventually gain Irish Mission employment? Will the administration consider setting up an Adventist school? Youth Ministries has a strong Pathfinder and teen ministry, but, regarding ministry to young adults, 'There is a vacuum,' said Iphithule Mhlanga from Dublin West. Can the Mission improve its overall strategy for ministry to youth, making it a priority area over the next three years? Youth ministry across the Mission needs to connect so that isolated youth in small churches can regularly experience gatherings with the larger critical mass for fellowship and support. Linked to this was a request for a network of Adventist professionals, made up mainly (but not only) of college graduates who've entered the workplace, to serve as mentors for children and youth.

In response to youth matters, Pastor Dan Serb responded in agreement that senior youth ministries is a critical issue, one which he is spearheading himself with the organisation of 'The Outpost', which featured in the last issue of MESSENGER, a full report of which can be found online at: adventist.ie/news/article/go/2019-09-27/the-irish-mission-outpost-youth-project/.

Mission & outreach

Natasha Didkivska shared how a group of Dublin Ranelagh members have been



Betty O'Rourke (Galway), Irene Dickie (Coleraine) and Evelyn Wilson (Portlaoise) enjoy lunch together



Patrick Appiah and Bernard Owusu, elders of the Longford church

distributing copies of *The Great Controversy* in the city; but they task themselves to distribute them discerningly. Natasha reports that the method they use is to engage Dubliners in conversation about spiritual matters. Once interest is apparent, a copy is given away.

Heather Keough, manager of the Dublin Cuisle Centre, reported that over this last summer a born-and-bred Dublin lady has been baptised and is absolutely passionate about her new-found community of faith. Sharing some wonderful experiences of her work managing the centre of influence, she summarised the work there with the soaring line, 'If our church were closed, we would be greatly missed in our community!'

A reflection

To this observer, the Irish Mission continues to be a Mission full of promise and hope. The mood among the delegation was Spirit-filled, feeling free to share their concerns. As one delegate shared with me, 'We are passionate about our church, and sometimes feelings do run high, but we are without angst.' Pastor Serb shared his overriding challenges, not least the regeneration of the church in Northern Ireland; and, sure enough, there does need to be an intentional strategy: but, at the end of the day, it's members like Kenny Doherty of Coleraine and Shupai Matewa of Sligo, going about their everyday business, gently sharing their faith in the marketplace, who will move the Irish Mission forwards.



Pathfinder Sponsor, Petru Bogdan Stan and Ilona Roxana, both fully committed to Pathfinder Ministries



Heather Robinson (Larne)



Pastors Weiers Coetser and Paul Lockham – thank you for your dedicated service to the Irish Mission

What the people said . . .

Pastor Lorance Johnson

This was my second opportunity to be present at the Irish Mission Session. Upon my appointment here in October 2016, I attended the session held in Swords, Dublin. Now, having spent three years in Ireland, experiencing ministry here and getting to know the people, I can only say that it was truly a delight to be

among such a diverse constituent group that demonstrated a focus on the task they were delegated to carry out. Sensitive matters were not avoided, but what I witnessed that was also evident was the spirit of openness, honesty and transparency, expressed with Christian grace, humility, meekness and love.

Adopting the BUC method of conducting Session this year worked very well for us in the Irish Mission. We were able to conduct our business with efficiency and in good time. It is wonderful to see that the Irish Mission is growing financially and numerically, to the extent that we can consider becoming a Conference.

It was a rich and rewarding experience indeed! It's great to hear about the plans this Mission has for the next term, and great to be among a delegation with a desire to fulfil the Gospel Commission and make a difference in their community. The future is indeed bright for the Irish Mission, as long as we keep our eyes upon Jesus and 'stay' upon our knees. May God indeed richly bless the work here.

Pamela Cardozo (Dublin Ranelagh)

This was my first time at an Irish Mission session. I found it to be very well organised, and the meeting flowed well. I really appreciated the home-cooked food prepared for the delegates at lunchtime. Congratulations to the hospitality team; and it's a great example of stewardship of our resources.

I was very interested in the youth report. I have a son aged 17. I've heard that if a young person does not have five friends in church of their age, then they are not likely to want to stay around, and that's a challenge for me right now. But I also want to tell you about Edith MacNaughton, the Dublin Ranelagh 'mother in Israel'. Edith loves Keith and has watched him grow up, and does everything she can to keep connected with him.

That is so special for me, and even Keith thinks so fondly of Edith. This gives me hope!

Cilla Andrasi (Dublin Ranelagh)

I enjoyed the session. We can be predictable at times in the matters we raise. I sensed some frustration in that some issues delegates want to talk about were not always addressed how they would have liked.



Precious and Makka Madubeko (Newmarket)

I think the process of the Nominating Committee deliberating on their business prior to the delegates meeting together in Session is a good one. We appreciated the openness and the honesty – passion without aggression.



Pastor Emmanuel Osei (President, South England Conference)

I found the session to be very inspiring. I am really excited to see where the Mission is going, not just structurally, but also in its evangelistic reach to the many different peoples that make up Ireland and

IM Executive Committee

Pastor Dan Serb	IM President
Pastor Jacques Venter	IM Executive Secretary
Earl Ramharacksingh	IM Executive Treasurer
Honeylette Cao	Cork
Ionuț Cioloca	Dublin Romanian
Caroline Donaldson	Banbridge
Pastor Lorance Johnson	Cork
Iphithule Mhlanga	Dublin West
Jeason Kanagaraj	Ranelagh
Caroline O'Brien	Belfast
Betty O'Rourke	Galway
Pastor Andrew Willis	Banbridge

Nominating Committee Report

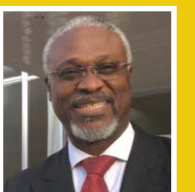
Sponsors

Adventurers & Pathfinders	Bogdan Stan
Children's Ministries	Petar Popivanov
Family Ministries	Precious Madubeko
Health Ministries	Nomsa Gusha-Zinyemba
Media & Communications	Pastor Christian Salcianu
Men's Ministries	Ngabeni Hlongwane
Prayer Ministries	Pastor Lorance Johnson
Stewardship Ministries	Angus Rothwell
Women's Ministries	Lilian Cooper
Youth & Campus Ministries	Pastor Greg Davis
Youth Associate (ROI)	Pastor Adam Keough
Youth Associate (NI)	Pastor Andrew Willis

Strategic plan for 2019-2021

1. To proceed in prayer for registration to be completed with the Irish Charity Commission.
2. To proceed with the project for a second building in Dublin. The British Union has been supportive in giving a grant of £50,000 and a loan of £50,000.
3. To develop the Kilnasoolagh family campsite.
4. To employ and engage more staff – a full-time Irish Mission youth pastor to be employed, plus a district pastor in Northern Ireland. Church growth, particularly among youth, is a priority.
5. To develop and implement a strategy for church growth and evangelism in Northern Ireland.
6. To support Adventist education. Galway School is rented out now. We will challenge Galway to start a school again in 3-5 years, and would encourage Adventist members to support Adventist home schooling.
7. To launch Adventist Professionals – Ireland.
8. To appoint someone to lead Adventist Community Services in Ireland.
9. To pursue a change of status from Mission to Conference.

Northern Ireland. There were many interesting things about this session, but the report that inspired me most of all was by your Pathfinder sponsor, Bogdan Stan. He seems to be doing a fantastic job, along with all the volunteers who help him.



Keep watch, be ready, and go!

Remembering 11 September 2001

Nearly half of 'Gen-Z-ers' (born mid-1990s to mid-2000s) – that is to say, roughly our 13-to-24-year-olds today – were born after the four coordinated terrorist attacks on the United States 18 years ago. That means they have never known a world without the long security lines at the airport. They've never known what it was like not to have to take your shoes off and walk barefoot through an X-ray scanner; not to have to limit your fluids in your carry-on bag to 3 fluid oz (100ml)

your ethnic background) pat-down by a sometimes-friendly security officer. The list could go on and on. But what happened on that sunny, blue-skied Tuesday, 11 September 2001, in New York City (the Twin Towers), in Washington, DC (the Pentagon), and outside Shanksville, Pennsylvania (the crash of Flight 93) has not only altered our travel routines. It has, sadly, also altered our view of Muslims and eventually all immigrants, tinging our perceptions with a lurking fear

the world we knew on 10 September 2001. September 11 has rewritten all of our lives.

In fact, it can be argued that endemic societal fear took a massive leap forwards on that Tuesday 18 years ago. We live in a culture afraid of everything now. Oh, sure, the shoot-'em-up mass killings that have escalated in recent years no doubt contribute to our insecurity and angst. And perhaps so does the 'selfie, me-first' narcissism that too often turns human beings into solitary individual fortresses afraid to trust anyone outside our immediate social context . . . perhaps.

It could be that our Lord Himself foresaw this global paralysis, predicting that it would eventually become endemic: *'People will faint from terror [recognise that word?], apprehensive of what is coming on the world'* (Luke 21:26, NIV). It's not surprising, then, that Gen-Z-ers now manifest the highest percentage of college entrance students ever with self-diagnosed mental health issues. You can

or suspicion of these strangers' alliance with evil. Who can deny that radical Islam exists? That terrorist attacks have continued unabated since 9/11 is obvious. That lone-wolf anti-Muslim retaliation has subsequently shot up mosques the world over is also common knowledge. No, the world we live in today is not each; not to have to set your laptop on a conveyor belt for high-tech X-ray analysis; not to have to undergo the occasional (or frequent, depending on

Dwight Nelson



blame the technological impact of the smartphone, but we can thank 9/11 for preparing the way.

But why such gloomy thoughts on this sunny, still-blue-skied 11 September, 18 years later? Because, of all people, those who call themselves 'Adventists' (believers in the soon coming of Christ) should be analysing the rapidly gyrating news cycle and drawing the conclusion that we now live in the self-disintegrating world which ancient Scripture predicted.

While the Bible doesn't calculate a calendar date for The End, we'd be fools to ignore Jesus' sombre admonition, *'Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him'* (Matthew 24:42-44, NIV).

Jesus, our soon-coming thief? Of course not. Rather, Jesus, our soon-coming Saviour, 'the Saviour of the world': which, if it doesn't learn about Him, will not only be caught unawares, but will be lost. This means that if we consider ourselves Adventists, it is *ipso facto* our 'Adventist' mission to tell others this truth. Inviting them to worship with you is a blessed idea. Sharing with them something you've read that's inspired you is another effective method. So is 'loving your neighbour' into a continuing conversation about the meaning of relevant Bible truths ('the truth as it is in Jesus'). Choose what works for you.

But let's not simply yawn our way past this eighteenth anniversary of 11 September. What a waste of opportunity! In the words of Jesus, 'keep watch', 'be ready', and 'go' – and *'I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age'* (Matthew 28:20, *The Message*).

The original version of this commentary by Dwight Nelson was posted on *The Fourth Watch*, the New Perceptions blog. Used with permission.

Dr Ranko Stefanovic



Revelation: Only one more act

The following article is the second of a series sharing Professor Ranko Stefanovic's presentation on the book of Revelation at the recent Stanborough Press Open Day.

Let me ask you, can you open any of the four gospels and read about what Jesus is doing today in heaven? Why not? Because the four gospels conclude with the point when Jesus ascended into heaven. You see, where the four gospels end, the book of Revelation begins. The book of Revelation takes over the final point of the gospels – that Jesus ascended to heaven – and it is telling us what He is actually doing today in the heavenly places. The book of Revelation is not the only Bible book telling us this. Both Revelation and Hebrews deal with the same topic, covering the same aspects of Jesus' ministry – except that in the book of Hebrews the emphasis is on Jesus' high priestly ministry, whereas in the book of Revelation the focus is on the royal aspect of His ministry. These two books must be studied together.

So the book of Revelation informs us about Jesus Christ in His post-Calvary ministry. He is working on behalf of human beings for the same salvation that is described in the four gospels, but He's no longer the human being in the flesh: the Man of Calvary is now the glorified Lord, working out the salvation that He secured on the Cross of Calvary on behalf of us. Have I persuaded you that the book of Revelation is indeed the gospel of Jesus Christ?

It's the same as if you have a bush of beautiful roses in front of your house and you are constantly complaining that you are unhappy about that bush because of the thorns that are there. Just so, unfortunately, many people focus in the book of Revelation on those things that really cause fear, but they don't focus on those roses, on that central message of the book of Revelation. It tells us that the book is about our Saviour who loves us so much, who is described in Revelation 1:5-8 (NIV-UK) as *'Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. "Look, he is coming with the clouds," and "every eye will see him, even those who pierced him"; and all peoples on earth "will mourn because of him". . . . "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."'*

You will notice that the longest passage in the prologue is about Him. First, this passage is telling us who He is. And we have His three titles here, which are followed by these three kinds of activities that He has done on behalf of human beings – and what He is still doing on behalf of us. The book of Revelation, the main intention, the main focus of this book, is of the One who came down to earth to provide salvation for all of us. There is only one more act that is to come. He will come down to this earth to take His children home – those who have accepted that salvation. You know what we read in John 3:16 (KJV): *'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son'* – that's what He did for us – that all those who believe in Him, who by faith accept that salvation, will have eternal life: and the book of Revelation elaborates on this topic.

So my question to you is: if the book of Revelation is really about this – about what we just covered – then why is the word 'apocalypse' such a scary word among Christians? I'm sorry. Maybe there is somebody sitting among us who is terrified of the very thought of the final events: to be more specific, the close of probation and the second coming of Christ.

Let me illustrate it with the testimony of a woman who told me this story. 'I was a drug addict and I was put in prison for a number of years. Finally, they released me from prison, but I was put under probation for one year.' She said, 'Brother Ranko, you cannot imagine! Wherever I moved I had to carry with me something on my leg. I was always under watch. Wherever I went, I always had to report where I was. You don't

understand how much I was in slavery. Finally, at the end of that year, they told me, "Your probation is over." I felt freedom.'

Brothers and sisters, you can be a Christian and say that Jesus Christ died for you, but, because of some things that people misunderstand from the book of Revelation, you can be in a deep state of slavery. I have good news for you – to tell you that the book of Revelation is the Gospel as much as the four gospels are. Don't be afraid of the close of probation.

You have probably heard that

because of the close of probation we will have to live without an Intercessor. Have you heard that? Oh, yes. Is it true? Yes! But you will never, never find that statement in the pages of the book of Revelation. It is in Ellen White's writings. **Yes, we will be without an Intercessor because intercession will be closed. But during those times we are promised that our Saviour will always be near, not our Intercessor: our Saviour will be near.** The problem with some of us is that we think that, in order to stand before God at that time, we have to *do*, we have to *do*, we have to *do* – it's always *'we, we, we, we, we'*. I call it *'we-ology'*. Actually, praise God, the book of Revelation tells us, 'when God, when God, when God' – that's our only hope. *That's why this book is called 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ'*.



365 days later: an interview with a young Christian

This interview is with a 'babe in Christ' who was baptised on 12 May 2018 at Great Brickkiln Street Church in Wolverhampton.

When a baptismal event takes place, much joy and happiness is expressed. The candidate(s) usually have invited special guests, friends, relatives and colleagues from a variety of places. The event is a wondrous and memorable occasion, and rightfully so: Jesus exclaims in Luke 15:10 that 'joy breaks out in the presence of God's angels over one sinner who changes both heart and life' (Common English Bible).

As customs or traditions go, the event will be written up and sent to *BUC News* and/or the *MESSENGER* for wider publication; and that is usually that. Well, not this time! Following is a brief interview with a young Christian, 365 days after she was born – again.

Joseph Higgins (JH): Please introduce yourself for the readers.

Ms Janet McDonnell (JMCD): I'm a divorced single mother of two grown-up children and five grandchildren. I worked for over 35 years as a personal assistant/office manager in the public sector. I'm now semi-retired but I'm busier than when I was working, doing exam invigilating, teaching English to speakers of other languages (ESOL), acting as a host parent to overseas students, conducting student support, being a weight management consultant, and doing grandma duties, among other things.

JH: You look and sound very, can I say, mature for a 1-year-old, Sister Janet!

JMCD: You're as young/old as you feel, and I feel 1 year old! (laughs)



JH: Well, tell us what you can remember of the day.

JMCD: It was an amazing day. When I came out of the pool I felt lifted, lighter and totally cleansed. It also reminded me of being married, and I felt like a celebrity on the day.

JH: That's fabulous, and I'm sure many have felt the same way, but let's be real: just as a baby will find challenges/obstacles as it learns to acquaint itself with new situations, was this your experience at all?

JMCD: Yes, I faced challenges, and the acutely sensitive ones were from my children. I have a close bond with my son, and as far as I can remember every Mother's Day he books a table at my favourite restaurant and we spend a good few hours together. Well, he was looking to spend this Mother's Day with his new partner, but, not wanting to miss our tradition, he booked the table on a Sabbath without telling me first! 'What could a mother do?' was my first thought, but then almost instantly after came the thought, 'What must a child of Jesus do?' Through baptism I had taken an 'oath of allegiance' to be true to God. My son, understandably, was taken aback and a little hurt, but he respected my decision and position. He now is more thoughtful to arrange events which don't intrude on the Lord's Sabbath. I should also mention that my daughter for a few months used to stare at my face for a few minutes and shake her head, but said nothing. After the sixth month of staring she blurted out, 'Mum, . . . I'm just so amazed how you've not returned to wearing lipstick! I thought you'd cave in by now! Jesus must really mean something to you!' – the reason being that my daughter knew that I never went out, not even to the corner shop, without my lipstick! So this has been a journey for me and work in progress. And now I've been sharing the little I know with her ever since – please pray for them.

JH: Well, our time is almost done. What message of encouragement would you like to leave with the readers?

JMCD: I'd say, have no regrets in following Christ, and remember that we're His work in progress – Philippians 1:6.

JH: Thank you, Janet, for sharing, and thank You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for keeping this newborn young Christ-follower in the family of God. Amen.

JMCD: I'd say, have no regrets in following Christ, and remember that we're His work in progress – Philippians 1:6.

JH: Thank you, Janet, for sharing, and thank You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for keeping this newborn young Christ-follower in the family of God. Amen.

JMCD: I'd say, have no regrets in following Christ, and remember that we're His work in progress – Philippians 1:6.

ELDER JOSEPH HIGGINS – COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT



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'Welcome to the family' – baptism celebrations in Bristol

Sabbath 23 February saw much rejoicing at Bristol Central Church as six new members were welcomed into fellowship. The Bristol district's Pastor Royston Smith baptised them, assisted by First Elder Kwasi Dankwa.

Despite never having witnessed a baptism before, one who took his stand for Christ was Rahiem Grandison, the 14-year-old son of one of the members. Speaking after the service, Rahiem said, 'I'm just feeling so spiritual and blessed!'

Rahiem went on to say that in the past he had 'not been with God, and something bad happened to me', but that his dad drew him into church, and 'I started to fully understand what God can be like, and what He has done for us! His father, Dale Grandison, was beaming with joy as he spoke about seeing his son baptised. He said, 'I'm feeling so good that my son has finally taken the right path.' He went on to explain that he had been praying about it for three years, and was trying to be a good example to his family through doing Bible studies together at home and praying together as a family. Dale also paid tribute to the church family, saying that 'Bristol Central is a good



From walking past to walking in

On Sabbath 20 July Leamington Spa SDA Mission were delighted to host a baptismal service for three people who were publicly committing themselves to Jesus: Barbara Hadden, who has attended Leamington Spa SDA Mission for a number of years while studying in the area; Alex Turrell, who is the youngest son of Stacey and Colin, following in the footsteps of his older brothers, who were also baptised recently; and Paul Stevens, a local resident who had a Christian upbringing. He regularly walked past the mission on a Sabbath morning and wondered why people were going to church on a Saturday. After some time, he picked up the courage and walked into church one Sabbath morning. The rest is history. He decided to give his life to Jesus and be baptised.

Barbara and Paul were baptised by Pastor Milan Gugleta, the minister at Leamington. Alex was baptised by Pastor Paul Haworth, who had previously baptised Ben and Jon, Alex's older brothers.

Barbara, Paul, Alex: we welcome you with open arms into the fellowship of Leamington Mission. May your walk with Jesus bless you all abundantly.

HAZEL LAYLAND, LEAMINGTON SPA SDA MISSION

church to belong to, and a good place for my son.'

There were many joyous faces in the congregation as 16-year-old Enikő Lajos, from Hungary, was baptised. Having come into the country not knowing any English, Enikő has grown so much in the church, and in her own confidence. Enikő was taken under the wing of Pathfinder

Director Claudette Brown, who, along with others in the church, encouraged and nurtured her, and Enikő is now a fully active member of Bristol Central Pathfinders. Enikő said she was very happy after her baptism, as she'd wanted to be baptised for a while.

Another of those to be baptised was Latoya Kelly, who reconfirmed her commitment to the Lord. As she went into the waters she looked so happy and peaceful, and she came up praising God.

Britney Drummond's spiritual journey began as a Catholic, but she discovered something special about the Adventist family and wanted to be a part of it. Her baptism left her with the biggest smile of all, sharing that she was 'feeling great and feeling cleansed. I've been attending South Bristol Church for a long time, and I love the family at South, but wanted to be fully part of the family.'

Josephine Dohr was baptised with her husband Neciah, who was voted into membership on profession of faith. A faithful and enthusiastic young couple, Neciah and Josephine made their decision to join the church together. Both of them shared a similar experience, as Jo explained: 'I'm happy, happy, happy, but it's a bittersweet moment, as I'm the only one to join the Adventist Church in my family, for the rest of my family are all Catholics, going back for generations. My family weren't happy about my decision, but they accepted it. It was an emotional day, but it felt like it was the right time to be part of the church, to do more, and to be more active as full members of the church.'

Neciah said, 'It's not easy being the one to step away from what your entire family does, but I know from the bottom of my heart that I'm doing the right thing, and so I'm just following God's voice.'

The visiting preacher, Jefferson John Melki, challenged members to take a daily spiritual prescription, focusing on vitamins E, P, B and S. These stood for:

- An Encounter with Jesus every day;
- Prayer (talking to the Lord like your best friend);
- The Bible (faith comes by hearing the Word of God); and
- Service (whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God).

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, BRISTOL CENTRAL CHURCH

We apologise for the delay in reporting this event.
Editor



Bristol Central – a centre of health, hope and healing



Saturday 31 August saw a great celebration in Bristol Central Church as it was officially inaugurated as a centre of health, hope and healing.

For the past five years the church has increased its involvement in the community through a variety of health and community events and programmes, and this has now been recognised by the British Union Conference. BUC Director for Community, Health and Women's Ministries, Sharon Platt-McDonald, granted the status to the church on behalf of the Conference. Centres of health, hope and healing are an initiative of the BUC Health Ministries Department together with the Adventist Community Services Department. They recognise churches which have a clear commitment to promoting health and maintaining well-being, providing hope through spiritual and emotional wellness, and healing through restoration and support in their local communities.

The inauguration service took place in the afternoon, and started with the welcome of the Lord

Mayor of Bristol, Councillor Jos Clarke. The Lord Mayor was invited to make a speech and officiated over the cutting of the ribbon. The centre was officially declared open by Sharon Platt-McDonald to shouts of 'Amen!' from the congregation. The Bristol Pathfinders Drum Corps then demonstrated their skills, to many cheers and the keen interest of passers-by. It was a great atmosphere.

Noted for a special commendation was Mary Philip, Bristol Central's Community Ministries leader, who was instrumental in organising not only the day, but also the majority of the events over the past five years. Mary has brought dedication, dynamic enthusiasm, organisational skills, and passion to the role, which she loves. As the main powerhouse and driving force behind many of the health and community initiatives since the first main event in 2014, Mary has built up a range of contacts and partnerships with various organisations, making many friends along the way. She has also received training and been

recognised as a local mental health champion.

To illustrate the breadth and range of Bristol's community outreach, a selection of photos was shown in a PowerPoint slideshow of over 30 different events and programmes from the past few years. These events were conducted in association with organisations as varied as Bristol City Council, Avon and Somerset Police, Avon and Somerset Fire Service, Diabetes UK, Glenfrone Primary School, the Alzheimer's Society, the University of the West of England, Bristol University, Rethink Mental Illness, NHS Blood and Transplant and many more. Many of these events and programmes, as Bristol District Pastor Royston Smith noted, were made possible due to the ongoing support and encouragement of the South England Conference, which, through the Bristol Joint Evangelism Committee, had supported and financed many of these initiatives over the past few years.

The Lord Mayor, who had already attended the Life Colours event in June, complimented the church on its care for the city and the community, emphasising how important it is to help people in society. She described the occasion as joyous, and found it a great pleasure to be part of.

Local Councillor Dr Carole Johnson has been a major supporter of a number of the church's events and programmes for a number of years. A committed Christian, she related how, when she first met Mary in a council meeting with other council leaders, she suggested praying before the meeting, which was met with shock and surprise. Quoting Jesus from Matthew 7:16-20, she emphasised the church's responsibility to produce 'good fruit' in terms of authenticity, integrity, and standards. She also informed the church that she changed her lifestyle when she attended the very first Life Colours event at Bristol City Council. Life Colours is Dr Chidi Ngwaba's programme. It is a successful

annual health event organised by the Community Department of the Bristol Central church and has been running for the past three years.

A particularly inspiring testimonial was given by a consultant neuropsychiatrist, Dr Monica Mohan, a colleague who has known and worked with Mary Philip for 10 years at the Rosa Burden Centre for Neuropsychiatry at Bristol Southmead Hospital. She explained how getting to know what Mary was doing as an active Christian had led to her department getting involved firstly with the ADRA Shoebox Appeal for three consecutive years, and then with supporting the community meal for the homeless. She went on to explain that although she came from a Hindu background, she felt that she was on a journey to know more about the Christian faith, and it had been helped by knowing people like Mary and other Christians. This was met with much rejoicing in the congregation, and Sharon Platt-McDonald was invited to pray a dedicatory prayer for her.

As someone who had got to know the community really well, Police Community Support Officer Jacqueline Harper also expressed her pleasure in supporting the day, as she had been working with Mary Philip from the first major event in the local area in 2014. She explained her admiration for the church and the way it was helping solve real problems in the community, especially the joy she felt as she saw young people in a positive environment, and she would welcome the opportunity to work with the church on a project to help families with young people who were not so fortunate, especially on issues such as wellness and mental health.

Pastor Smith captured the essence of the day in his opening remarks as he described the ethos of the church, using a Jamaican proverb, 'Every mickel mek a muckle' – which he translated as: 'Every little bit that you do makes much.' In other words, in every little thing you do, do it so others can be blessed. This has been demonstrated by the contributions both big and small of many members, partners and supporters in reaching out to the city of Bristol and seeking to make it a better place.

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Church delivers mental health training to community groups

Sharon Platt-McDonald

'Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad' (Proverbs 12:25, NKJV).

Take a moment to envisage with me the following scenarios. Just imagine meeting someone on the street who was experiencing severe mental distress: what would be your reaction? Perhaps someone visits your church and it is clear that they are suffering from heightened anxiety: what would you do? Or maybe a church member shares with you that they are seriously depressed: how would you respond?

These were some of the mental health challenges that were analysed on Sunday 25 August 2019 at the Stanborough Centre (Stanborough Park Church) as individuals were trained in their response to mental distress.

So how did this event come about?

Following an invitation to the One Vision Café inaugural launch in February this year, Sharon Platt-McDonald (BUC Director for Health, Community Services and Women's Ministries) noted the mental health support needs of

some of the clients who attended the café. Speaking with Enoch Kanagaraj, chairman of One Vision and member of Stanborough Park Church, Sharon presented plans to undertake mental health first aid training to One Vision Café's staff and volunteers. This, she stated, would assist in better understanding the complexities some café users encounter, in particular those experiencing emotional and mental health challenges. It would also assist in knowing how to respond to individuals who were in emotional and mental distress, offer support, and signpost them for intervention where necessary.

The mental health first aid (MHFA) training is a national certificated course from Mental Health First Aid England. The training includes opportunities for self-reflection, exercises and group work, which teaches individuals to look after their own and others' mental well-being. Additionally, it provides skills in effective communication, support,

and referral. It also explores societal attitudes and behaviours regarding mental health, and challenges stereotypes regarding mental ill health.

These were the key aspects of the training delivered on Sunday 28 August to a group of twenty-one keen and highly motivated learners. Among the diverse attendees were representatives from local charities, leaders from community and support groups, and heads of organisations from the borough of Watford.

Grace Walsh, NEC Director for Health, Community Services and Disability Awareness and MHFA instructor, delivered the training as the principal presenter, along with Sharon Platt-McDonald, also trained as an MHFA instructor.

It was a joy to hear the responses from the attendees in their evaluation of the training and of how relevant, informative and practical they had found it.

Liz Burns, CEO and founder of the Veterans Service group in

Abbots Langley Parish in Watford, explained how she had found the training pertinent to her work and very empowering. She was thrilled that she could now go back better equipped to deal with some of the emotional and mental health challenges that sometimes surface in the daily lives of the veterans she encounters. She concluded by stating: 'It's wonderful that the church can put on training like this to meet the needs of local people, many of whom are often overlooked. I would certainly recommend this training to others.'

Segments of the course such as language and mental health issues, supporting people in distress and understanding mental health conditions were among those receiving the highest appraisals.

Proverbs 12:25 highlights the 'good word' that we can speak to individuals experiencing emotional or mental distress, whether it be anxiety, depression or other forms of mental ill health.

The attendees left the MHFA training better equipped to speak 'good words' of comfort, support and hope to those in emotional and mental distress. They also realised the importance of their own self-talk when they themselves go through these challenges.

In his evaluation of the day's training, Enoch Kanagaraj concludes: 'I personally find a great need for mental health training in our community. It raises the awareness of mental ill health, particularly stress, depression and anxiety. We demonstrate serving God by serving people. As Scripture states in Mark 12:31: 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (NIV-UK). And I say, 'Amen to that!'



New things and revived visions

Isaiah 43:19 (NCV): 'Look at the new thing I am going to do. It is already happening. Don't you see it? I will make a road in the desert and rivers in the dry land.'

2019 has been a year of new things and revived visions at the North England Conference (NEC). Here are some of the highlights...

Executive Committee Roadshows

For the first time outside of an NEC session, members from around the NEC were able to ask questions of the NEC Executive Committee about issues important to them via the NEC Executive Committee Roadshows.

The question posed most frequently related to communication. In response, we have sought to improve our communication with you via increased use of our social media platforms (@necadventist), more communication sent to your pastors and elders, and a revamp of our website. We aim to develop an NEC app, to be a single point of reference for all information relating to the NEC.

Finance

We are grateful for the dedication of our members to the ministry and mission, which allowed for an upturn in our financial position.

A consistent query has been about debit card payments during church services for offerings. In response, we have been trialling the use of electronic card readers to collect offerings in two churches since the start of the year. In addition, card readers were used in the youth service at the NEC Camp Meeting, and at the NEC Athletics Day.

The use of the card readers has proved to be successful thus far, and we aim to roll out their use across the NEC in 2020.

Harper Bell School

Through rigorous consultation, determination

and fervent prayer, Harper Bell School has returned to the governance of the NEC.

When looking at the 2017/2018 data for progress scores in reading, writing and maths it is clear that the effort and support for the school continues to yield positive outcomes.

We are grateful to all of the staff, parents, students and members of the NEC who have continued to support the school in various ways.

NEC strategy

The revived NEC strategy has been shared directly with the churches, posted on the NEC website and featured regularly on the NEC social media sites.

The directors of the NEC have continued to host and support programmes and initiatives linked to the NEC strategy, which in turn address issues which matter to you.

These initiatives and programmes have ranged from the first young women's conference to Prison Ministries Day, Men's Ministries Day, Disability Awareness Day, the youth relationship focus seminars, Youth and Teens Prayer Conference and PEACE. Details of upcoming programmes and initiatives can be found on the NEC website and also the NEC social media pages.

Human Resources Department

Within the NEC there have been operational changes which have already proved to be invaluable regarding the development and growth of the organisation and our employees.

One such change is the appointment of the NEC's first director of human resources and the establishment of a human resources (HR) framework. This has been a long-term vision of the Officers' Committee and the Executive Committee. The realisation of this vision and the appointment of a director of human

resources brought a dedicated and strategic approach to establishing a HR framework and developing existing HR internal processes and procedures, as well as supporting the NEC in achieving its strategy.

Under the leadership of the Director of Human Resources, and in conjunction with the Communications Department, the 'We Need You' campaign was launched.

During this campaign the organisation sought to identify persons of various skills across the NEC membership to create a directory of specific skills and experience in a range of fields which the NEC will seek to engage as and when required. This campaign yielded much interest, and as a result several persons were able to be engaged for various projects across the NEC.

One such project was the Directors' Leadership Development Programme, which was spearheaded by the Human Resources Department in consultation with the NEC administration. The bespoke programme was for all directors of the NEC, and the skills identified during the 'We Need You' campaign became irreplaceable. Videographers and trainers were identified who were able to participate in the preparation and implementation of the programme.

The NEC has ongoing plans to use the skills identified during this campaign, and we would encourage anybody who wishes to offer their skills to be included in the directory to contact the Human Resources Department (recruitment@necadventist.org.uk).

We thank all those who have come forward thus far to serve in this way.

Renovating the NEC office

Another project which benefited from the skills identified during the 'We Need You' campaign was the NEC office renovation project. Much-needed renovation works have begun at the NEC office; these renovations were well overdue, and the essential works which have been carried out further support the growth and development of the NEC in all aspects of the organisation. The renovations have allowed us to provide employees and visitors to the office with a welcoming and easily accessible place to work in and attend.



Aberdaron

Having purchased the additional piece of land at Aberdaron which provided additional space, and also arable land, it was an honour to host this year's NEC Adventurer Camporee at Aberdaron. The camporee was well attended and was heralded as an enjoyable event. We are hoping to host further camporees at Aberdaron. A full article was written about the camporee earlier this year, which can



be found on the BUC website.

Over the summer period Aberdaron has continued to host family, junior, early teens and youth camps. The continued efforts of on-site staff and volunteers regularly maintain and preserve the beauty of the site, thus allowing it to be modernised to meet the increased demand of usage. We are grateful to the Aberdaron work party who spent time on the site earlier in the year, carrying out repairs and renovations.

Aberdaron, much like the Ravenhurst Street Guesthouse, can be booked for holidays and short breaks. Full details can be obtained from the NEC office.

A growing Conference

The NEC has seen steady membership growth since July 2016; in July 2016 the NEC membership was 10,459, whereas the membership at the time of writing is 11,289. We thank God for every single soul who will enter into the Kingdom. We continue to pray for all our members, particularly those who have recently made their decision to follow the Lord.

We encourage you all, 'Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we

will reap a harvest if we do not give up' (Galatians 6:9, NIV).

Hope FM

Hope FM has been provided with financial support by the General Conference so that the radio station can continue to provide a variety of shows, music and content which provide knowledge about the Word of God and His plans for our lives.

Hope FM is available on DAB digital radio across every part of the UK, online at hopefm.live and via apps such as TuneIn (search for 'Hope FM UK').

Hope FM can be found on the following multiplexes:

- Ensemble name: Lincolnshire – Block 12A
- Ensemble name: North Yorkshire – Block 10C
- Ensemble name: NE Wales W Chesh – Block 10D
- Ensemble name: Hereford Worcs – Block 12A

The Great Commission

There is still much to be done in the vineyard as we continue to 'extend God's Kingdom – nurturing each other and winning another'. The NEC administration continues to seek your prayers and support as we fulfil the commission of Matthew 28:19, 20.

THE NEC OFFICERS' COMMITTEE (PICTURE QUALITY AS SUPPLIED)

Surprised by joy

'We imagine that when we are thrown out of our usual ruts all is lost, but it is only then that what is new begins. There is much, much more before us,' Leo Tolstoy opined in *War and Peace*.

I am internally indebted to our minister, Pastor Jovan Adamovic, whose unwavering dedication to community work gave birth to the idea of doing a 25km (15.6 miles) challenge up and down Pen-y-Fan (886m in height) to raise money for the local learning disability charity Aspire Living, from whom we rent the building where we hold our services.

Knowing myself to be bereft of fundraising talent, and only ever having taken part in sprint athletics as opposed to distance running, and my challenge partner also being a novice, I could foresee nothing but an unmitigated disaster ahead. As the day of the challenge drew ever closer, our giving web page was showing little sign of activity, despite Pastor Jovan telling every man and his dog about it. Hope was beginning to fade.

However, prayer avails much. One morning at work after the night of our weekly prayer meeting, our receptionist volunteered unsolicited help to walk around the offices with a collection tin. From then on, our donations thus began to flow in and have not ceased, even two weeks after completing the challenge.

Our period of fundraising coincided with the Hereford Night of the Churches. This is an evening when all the city-centre churches in Hereford throw their doors wide open for the general public to wander in and ask any curious questions they may have about the particular church and its beliefs. Our imminent 25km challenge not only provided a good conversation piece, but was also a seamless bridge to talking to people of the wonderful work ADRA does throughout the year. It was so exhilarating to hear people positively reappraising their views about Seventh-day Adventists. Unlike last year, when we had only a few visitors, this time we had so many that we struggled to talk to all of them.

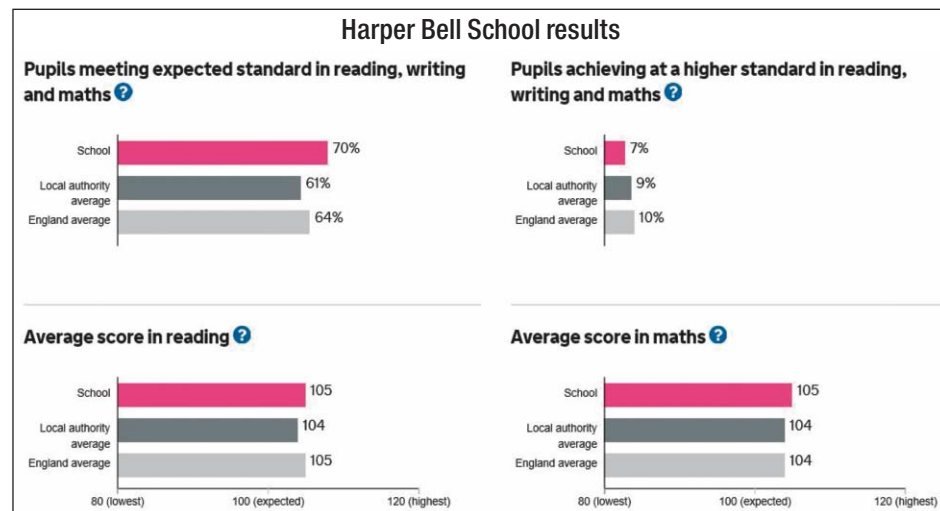
The Brecon Trekfest challenge was



approaching fast, and I had been praying for good running weather. I'm sure God loves you all very much, but I have to say I think I am His favourite. The weather was just fresh enough for running – overcast with a slight breeze. When the starting gun went off I took off like Elijah fleeing Jezebel, and, unlike Lot's wife, never looked back. I won the challenge in 3 hours 20 minutes, with my challenge mate Pastor Jovan finishing a respectable 25th out of more than 500 entrants.

C. S. Lewis, in his autobiography on his conversion to Christianity, speaks of being surprised by joy: a joy so elevated and so good that nothing that had come before could compare. We too experienced a serendipitous joy; for not only did we exceed our targeted £500 goal, but we improved our church's standing in the community, all the while gaining enormous pleasure from helping the charity. We really cannot wait to get our hands on the next community project.

BRUCE KHUMALO, ELDER OF HEREFORD CHURCH



Utopia: Can the world be better?

'He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work . . .' Exodus 35:35 (NIV)

'Down Your Way' this month visits the Central London church, located just off Edgware Road. An international, multi-ethnic, multi-racial community, members mainly commute into town to worship from all parts of London, literally north, south, east and west. Overseen by the senior pastor, Colin Stewart, and his leadership team, this past summer the church engaged in a community outreach project with a difference: starting in London, but ending up in Cornwall.

For a week from 21 July 2019, the Central London church (CLC) located in Crawford Place, just off Edgware Road, opened its doors to the community by holding an art exhibition, which culminated with Sabbath worship on 27 July. Using an upper room with lots of windows for our exhibition, we displayed seventeen pieces of art, three installations and one audio-visual booth, created by eight artists. Of our artists, six attend CLC regularly or occasionally, one attends a different church, and one more doesn't attend any church. One aim of the exhibition is to showcase the work of fellow Christian artists alongside Adventist artists, to share our common faith in Christ through our gifts of creativity and the arts. Our intent is also to engage where we can on big topics of interest, to which we may have different approaches or responses.

'Utopia: Can the world be better?' gave the artists an opportunity to engage with this theme. We wanted them to think about what a good or perfect world could look like, and how we want the world to be now. The creative responses to this were inspiring, focusing on a wide range of perspectives, ranging from the environment to heaven, and from the Beatitudes to Kingdom-people, and more. Of course, our aim was not just for visitors to enjoy inspiring art, but also for them to reflect on the theme of how we can make our current world better and find hope in the world to come. We enjoyed some interesting conversations!

Over the course of the six afternoons, fifty-five visitors from the community viewed the exhibition, most as a result of passing by the doors of the church. Some had a quick look round, while others stayed and chatted for a while. Some shared their own journey of faith: many of whom once had a faith, but in more recent times had lost it. This seemed to be a recurring theme, and it was encouraging to be able to have in-depth conversations not just about the art, but also about what faith in God is, and what that means for our context today.

The exhibition was supported with four evening talks from Monday to Thursday, and an Open Mic night on the Friday evening, supported with excellent musical contributions. We have work to do on connecting the exhibition with the evening talks for our community guests. That said, the talks gave much food for thought. 'Art & Theology', 'Art & Therapy', 'Art & Hope', and 'Art & Ministry' along with the Open Mic night tied into our theme of utopia again. It was the perfect introduction and link for Sabbath morning worship on the theme of heaven, Jesus and creativity. The service included the spoken word, music, a display of artworks, a creative response and a mime. There was a warm response from members to our creative worship service in praise of our Creator God. Engaging members and the community to share their God-given creative skills (whether they recognise it or not) was one of the key aims of the exhibition.

As the exhibition ended, on this same Sabbath we also celebrated a joint baptism comprising Central London and Central London Portuguese churches conducted by our senior pastor, Pastor Colin Stewart, and associate pastor, Clebson Braga. Joyful songs of praise ascended with short testimonies, and the three new friends shared their favourite scriptures.

What a wonderful week of making Jesus known through art and declaring Him publicly as Lord through baptism! God be praised!

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Community Camp 2019: 'Finding Your Life Purpose'

by Pastor Colin Stewart

'Fantastic, inspiring and exciting' were just some of the words used to describe the seventh community camp in Chapel Porth, Cornwall. Sixty campers were on site, of whom twenty-five were non-Adventist. The two main churches that supported the camp were the Central London and Milton Keynes churches.

Overlooking the Atlantic ocean on the tip of Cornwall, the view was stunning, the waves were majestic, and, as always, the fellowship was warm. The camp was strategically planned and well supported, not just by the churches, but also, more importantly, financially by the Trans-European Division. The President of the South England Conference also directly supported the community camp, as he did last year. Our humblest thanks go to our supporters for believing in the camp.

Our theme for this camp was 'Finding Your Life Purpose', and our main speaker was João Macedo, a recent Newbold Ministerial graduate. Morning devotions were led by Pastor Colin Stewart, and evening devotions were taken by João Macedo.

This long-term, patient outreach programme attempts to introduce people to our faith and ultimately our Saviour in a fun, healthy and relaxed environment with plenty of time to socialise and learn. As well as morning and evening devotions, other activities, including bike riding, horse riding, go-karting, and a day at the leisure centre and much more, enabled everyone to connect and become friends.

We say a massive thanks to Victor, our personal chef who took time off



from work in a busy London establishment to work to serve us, as he said he loves serving. He blessed our hearts with his food presentations. To God be the glory. Listen out for our follow-up programmes.

My colleague João shares his personal experience below:

When the preacher struggles with camping by João Filipe Macedo

If there is one thing you should know about me it is that I *hate camping*, and I have hated it since I was a little kid. Don't get me wrong: whenever I would take part in our Pathfinder camps back in Portugal, I would love the activities – daytime and night-time walks, worship, games, so-called 'radical' sports, and so on. However, I was never able to feel anything but disgust towards the whole sleeping-in-tents business.

It comes as no surprise, then, that I felt happiness and relief when we finally arrived at the Chapel Porth campsite. Firstly, the site is framed by a breathtaking view over the ocean, and the site's surroundings are astonishingly beautiful. More importantly, however, there were no tents in sight – just comfortable, warm, full-of-walls-and-ceilings caravans. My heart was content!

If the first impression was positive, even more positive were the days I was to spend there. I was invited as the main speaker for the week and this probably meant that, unlike all of those who had to listen to my devotionals, I could truly enjoy the camp to its fullest. The biking under heavy rain on the first day, the time spent at the Carn Brea leisure centre, the horse riding, and the midnight walk on Wednesday evening were some of the highlights for me.

But there were also two other aspects I truly enjoyed during Community Camp 2019. The first was the food. With the Central London church's group came a true chef – a man who has worked in some of the best-rated restaurants and hotels in London. This meant that the food served to us throughout the week was simply top-notch: or, in the words of a Chapel Porth veteran, 'the best food I've ever tasted in this place'.

The second truly enjoyable aspect was the possibility to minister to people with real needs, issues and struggles. Without going into too many details, the type of ministry a theology graduate like me can practise in a camp like this is unlike anything we hear about in the seminars or encounter in the church pews; and, somehow, having the opportunity to engage in this type of ministry gave me a sense of personal, professional and spiritual fulfilment that I've been finding difficult to come across elsewhere.

Overall, being at Community Camp 2019 was an experience that truly brought joy to my heart. I was able to connect with people, to go on amazing adventures, to minister to people with real needs and to enjoy outstanding food. So, maybe I should reconsider my stance on this whole camping thing. . . .

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Chill in a Field returns to Pride Rock

What a fantastic sight: driving down a country road towards the coast with the bright amber sun setting into the sea. This was the sight we saw as we arrived safely at the Chapel Porth campsite on Friday evening (20 September) as Sabbath drew in. Everyone was just beginning to tuck into the fantastic food prepared by Earl and Jackie Ramharacksingh.

Worship at Chill in a Field is quite different from other events. Sitting around in a cozy circle of sofas, beanbags and cushions surrounded by soft lighting and house plants brings a real sense of community and friendship.

Christle Jasint flew in especially from Holland to lead out in the discussions over the weekend and challenged us to evaluate our lives.

Our theme for the weekend was based on the worship song, 'I Am Who You Says I Am!' Each activity and discussion was designed to make us think of how God sees us and to discourage the negative feelings we have about ourselves or have heard from others.

Worship in the evening was led by Steven Hulbert (event organiser) on the guitar and Rosie on the cajon with powerful worship songs such as 'Cornerstone', 'King of My Heart' and 'Days of Elijah'. In a time of prayer everyone was asked to consider in a word what they hoped to gain from the weekend. I simply wrote, 'Peace'. After a hectic week, if only for a weekend, I needed to relax and reflect on who God says I am.

On Sabbath morning Christle guided us through the story of Joseph, from childhood to slavery to prison. We dissected each section of Joseph's life and found there were a lot more negatives than positives, but came to the conclusion that we see his strength of character in the negatives. Throughout his story Joseph stays true to who he is and recognises that he gets his strength from God.

Throughout the weekend Christle returned to the story of *The Lion*

King. Mufasa takes young Simba up to Pride Rock, where all can see him, and shows him all the pride lands and says, 'Everything the light touches is yours!' Simba is put on a pedestal and it all goes to his head, and Mufasa has to come to his rescue and lead him out of harm's way.

After a fantastic lunch everyone gathered to hear the personal testimony of two young friends, Barney Jackson and Edward Hilburn. Barney shared that he was inspired by his older brother Jake's baptism and felt the final push at Big Church Day Out, a huge Christian camp of 25,000 people in May. He then realised how much God had been there through his life.

Ed mentioned how strong worship sessions had influenced his decision and moved him to be baptised, and also shared how events in recent years had made him realise how much he needs God in his life.

Pastor Robert Vine, Ed's grandad, then shared a few words, stating that all life is a miracle, and likened our stages of faith to big stages of life. First we hatch in birth; then we are matched in marriage; and then we are dispatched in death. In baptism we are reborn in Christ: we make a voluntary commitment to Him in 'marriage' and we believe that He died for all of us. He finished by stating that if we have Christ, we have nothing else to worry about (Colossians 2:9, 10; John 17:3). Before heading down to the beach Jena and Steven sang one of Ed's favourite songs, 'I'm Just a Poor Wayfaring Stranger'.

At the Chapel Porth beach, friends and family gathered at the water's edge to see Barney and Ed baptised in the sea. Ed was baptised by his grandad, Pastor Vine, and Barney by Pastor Sam Gungaloo, both assisted by Steven Hulbert (frontier evangelist).

The evening's exercise challenged us to think about dreams we would want to pursue if money wasn't an issue, what we are willing to struggle for, and in five years what we would be happy doing/being.

Christian singer/songwriter Chloe Reynolds joined us for the evening and shared music from her latest album, which reflected the topic for the weekend. She mentioned that initially she hadn't wanted to sing about her troubles, but later she realised that sharing 'down' times helps to build relationships with others who are struggling and highlights the resulting strength of character and trust in the Lord. Out of these thoughts came 'Broken Beautiful', a popular and very touching song. She later sent a quick message of thanks and commented, 'I love the events that you guys put on. Real. Authentic... a chance for people to come together as community and do life together. I love it!'

Our final worship together on Sunday morning focused on the 'circle of life'. The rollercoaster of Joseph's life came around full circle and he ended up saving his family, just like Simba in *The Lion King*. God is always there for us and encourages people into our lives at just the right time to help us through.

JENNIE HALL



Family and friends gather on Chapel Porth beach, ready to witness the baptism



Barney, baptised by Pastor Sam Gungaloo and Steven Hulbert, watched by his friend, Edward Hilburn (left), and Pastor Robert Vine (right)