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Messenger

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Serious times



A message from the Officers of the British Union Conference,
Ian Sweeney, John Surr ridge and Earl Ramharacksingh.

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**Pastor Ian Sweeney,
BUC President**

‘Without putting too fine a point on the matter . . .’



The ongoing pandemic that is COVID-19 has challenged and tested the faith of Adventists across the globe. With loved ones dying, questions have been asked as to why God has not protected the life of faithful Adventist members.

Questions are also being asked of God as to why He has not protected His members and church from the financial fallout which has resulted in church institutions across the globe now having to lay off employees.

Without putting too fine a point on the matter, if the situation does not improve in the next 8 months, and if the British Union Conference does not make a response by way of reducing expenditure, the BUC will be effectively bankrupt by July 2021. This was reported at a recent extraordinary BUC Executive Committee meeting by our treasurer, Earl Ramharacksingh.

The situation we face has led to numerous questions such as, ‘Why is the Seventh-day Adventist Church facing a financial crisis?’ and ‘Are we not the richest church in the world?’ If you have just lost your job, or redundancy is a very real threat, I am sure you are asking questions too and calling into question the validity of some of God’s promises, such as Malachi 3:10, 11 (NIV 1984):

‘Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in

your fields will not cast their fruit,” says the LORD Almighty.’

It is not unreasonable to ask when you have lost your job and are struggling to pay your rent or mortgage, ‘Where are my Malachi blessings, Lord?’ This question demands an answer, particularly when consideration is given to the fact that you have faithfully returned tithe and generous offerings and have given countless hours of time to support the church. Might part of the spiritual challenge of COVID-19 be based on our belief that financial hardship should not be touching the lives of God’s people or His Church?

As a child I read the illustrated version of the book *Your Bible and You* by Arthur S. Maxwell. My love for this book is undiminished, and I would commend you to purchase and read a copy. I loved the chapter that spoke of the blessings that attend tithe returners. Maxwell made mention of H. J. Heinz of ‘57 Varieties’, H. P. Crowell of Quaker Oats, J. L. Kraft of Kraft Cheese, William Wrigley of chewing gum, and William Colgate of toothpaste. All these men put God first in their finances.

I was only a child but I could join the dots together, and my conclusion was, ‘If I return tithe, I’ll become rich.’

I was also fascinated by the story of the tithe-returning farmer whose crop was about to be devastated by the army beetle. While he was at the point of despondency, his little daughter reminded him of the promise of Malachi 3.11, and they knelt and prayed in the field. On opening their eyes, blackbirds

descended on their field and devoured every beetle!

Again, I joined the dots together and concluded that tithe returning equates to divine protection. Surely it is not unreasonable to conclude that tithe returning will protect us from the ravages of the recession.

Here’s what I have learned from further Bible reading, exegesis and observation.

1. Our tithe returning is not a guarantee of wealth or success. If faithfulness is a guarantee, then Jesus clearly was not faithful when He lived on earth. By His own admission, Jesus was apparently poor and certainly not a home owner, according to Luke 9.58 (NIV 1984), where He said, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’
2. We must discover our true motivation for returning and giving. We can return tithe and give offerings because we love money! If our primary motivation for giving is to receive and claim material blessings and financial security, rather than love for God, this is a problem. We must return and give with the right motive. As the apostle reminds us in 1 Corinthians 13:3 (NIV 1984), ‘If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.’ God is looking at the motive behind the giving: do we love Him or do we love His money? Only tithe returning and offering giving that is accompanied by love for God is pleasing in His sight.

‘Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.’ (Matthew 19:21, 22, NIV 1984.)

Malachi 3:10 was never a promise that we should expect something back from God as a result of our giving. We should not give because we expect something back. This concept of getting something back is at the heart of the prosperity Gospel message, which simply excites our greed. Giving and returning is not about buying blessings or paying a Christian insurance premium to grant entry to glory. Malachi’s promise is still good today, but it is more than material blessings.

It was because Paul was blessed that he could write in Philippians 4:11 (NIV 1984), ‘I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances’, and in verse 12, ‘I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.’

‘I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.’ (Philippians 4:13, KJV.)

Copies of *Your Bible and You* are available from <https://lifeforcebookshop.co.uk/>.



Stewardship in a COVID world

by Pastor John Surridge, BUC Executive Secretary

COVID-19 has caused massive changes in our world, perhaps the biggest changes that some of us will see in our lifetimes. Our entire way of life has changed during lockdown, affecting everything we do – shopping, socialising, work, worship, to name but a few.

Not all of the changes have been bad. Pollution is down, use of communication technology is up, and there is (arguably) a greater sense of unity in our country. There is a new respect for the National Health Service, and those who deliver other services, such as supermarket and Amazon delivery drivers, are hailed as heroes.

In the church there has been an amazing outpouring of creativity. Before the pandemic which of us would have thought that a video church service could provide anything like the experience of a live service? And yet they are happening all over the country, and people are receiving a blessing – some say a double blessing – through them.

Our young people have been particularly quick to embrace the 'new normal' of on-screen events, with Pathfinder and Adventurer honours becoming more accessible than ever, and even a successful and very popular 'E-camporee' being run by the South England Conference.

Some of the traditional barriers which used to keep us apart are being broken down. I've preached in online services which include participants from many different churches – some of them not even in this country. Distance is no longer an issue. Similarly, it's not so important whether e-events are run by a mission, conference, or the British Union – anyone can attend, and anyone can help with the programme. Collaboration is the new way of working.

Pastors are discovering new methods of evangelism, our publishing house is seeing a boom in online sales, and our Bible school is reaching new audiences.

Of course, adapting to change is not easy. Some of our older members have been hit particularly hard by the COVID changes. Without a computer at home they can't always watch a live Sabbath service. Being in a vulnerable category, they can't receive personal visits. Without access to online banking they can't always return their tithes and offerings using the new electronic methods. These people are some of the most faithful members of our church and they deserve our support.

Again, though, we've seen wonderful examples of innovation and lateral thinking. Drive-by visitation, where members are seen, spoken to and prayed with through a window. Hands-free delivery of Sabbath School lessons, newssheets, flowers and food. Telephone counselling, where newly isolated members are assured that they are not alone. A particularly important service being provided by some churches is the personal collection of tithes and offerings from members who used to give in church but are no longer able to do so.

The church as a whole is facing considerable financial challenges. In harmony with our stewardship principles this is being managed in many different ways, including taking advantage of the government funds which are being given through the Job Retention Scheme. A downside of this is that some workers, including pastors, have had to be temporarily furloughed in order to obtain the money. That scheme is now coming to an end, but, hopefully, this will coincide with the rolling out of better systems for returning tithes and giving offerings, and eventually with most churches returning to holding normal services.

In the meantime, if you are finding it difficult to return your tithe and give your local church offerings, please let your pastor or local church know. For those who are not in a vulnerable group, perhaps you could volunteer your services to help with this process.



Tithe report 2020

by Earl Ramharacksingh, BUC Treasurer

To the members of the British Union territory. The COVID-19 pandemic period has

challenged us in so many ways.

Our churches have closed. Our special time together on Sabbaths has had to be temporarily curtailed.

The financial impact has been significant. As you can see from the table on the right, the tithe across the British Union territory has fallen by £1.85million in the last six months to June 2020. Our cash reserves have also been significantly depleted.

Through it all we have continued to support evangelism where it could be done safely.

We have supported many community ministries serving the needy and vulnerable at this time.

We continue to solicit your prayers and support, as we embrace our covenant with God.

Our prayers go out to all those who are suffering and financially challenged at this time.

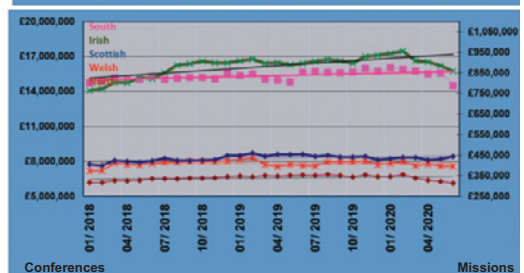
British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Tithe Report - June 2020

| This Month | 2020 | 2019 | Inc / -Dec | Variance % |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| South | £1,089,216 | £2,149,904 | -£1,060,688 | -49.3 |
| North | £463,483 | £614,708 | -£151,225 | -24.6 |
| Welsh | £27,265 | £28,562 | -£1,297 | -4.5 |
| Scottish | £46,204 | £33,391 | £12,812 | 38.4 |
| Irish | £57,181 | £84,016 | -£26,835 | -31.9 |
| Total | £1,683,348 | £2,910,582 | -£1,227,233 | -42.2% |

| Cumulative to Date | 2020 | 2019 | Inc / -Dec | Variance % |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| South | £6,516,187 | £7,736,525 | -£1,220,339 | -15.8% |
| North | £2,721,071 | £3,281,449 | -£560,378 | -17.1% |
| Welsh | £180,886 | £189,982 | -£9,096 | -4.8% |
| Scottish | £223,094 | £206,482 | £16,612 | 8.0% |
| Irish | £354,250 | £431,348 | -£77,098 | -17.9% |
| Total | £9,995,489 | £11,845,786 | -£1,850,298 | -15.6% |

| Budgets | Annual | To Date | Variance | % |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| South | £15,922,044 | £7,961,022 | -£1,444,835 | -18.1% |
| North | £6,750,000 | £3,375,000 | -£353,929 | -19.4% |
| Welsh | £426,000 | £213,000 | -£32,114 | -15.1% |
| Scottish | £427,000 | £213,500 | £9,594 | 4.5% |
| Irish | £920,000 | £460,000 | -£105,750 | -23.0% |
| Total | £24,445,044 | £12,222,522 | -£2,227,034 | -18.2% |
| BUC | £2,379,967 | £1,189,984 | -£190,434.65 | -16.0% |

British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Annualised Tithe Trends 2018 - 2020



As supplied, errors and omissions excepted

Returning tithes and giving offerings under lockdown

South England Conference

Account details

Sort code: 40-45-28/Account number: 11014153

Returning by cheque: cheques are payable to South England Conference.*

Returning by card payment: call the SEC office on **01923 232728**.

*To assign your donation to your local church, write the name of your church on the back of the cheque, and include your Gift Aid number if you're a Gift Aider.

Weekly local church text giving

70100 – £1 | 70300 – £3 | 70500 – £5 | 70575 – £10

To give £20, text 70750 as a one-off donation, NOT weekly. The donation will be added to your monthly bill or deducted from your pay-as-you-go balance.

'I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your faithfulness and generosity in supporting the church during this very difficult time. Please rest assured, the coronavirus will pass. May the Lord bless you and keep you safe.'

Emmanuel Osei, President

North England Conference

Account details

Sort code: 60-80-09/Account number: 84598816

Returning by cheque: cheques are payable to North England Conference.*

Returning by card payment: call the NEC office on **01623 361156**.

*To assign your donation to your local church, write the name of your church on the back of the cheque, and include your Gift Aid number if you're a Gift Aider.

Online donations can be made via the Conference's own website: <https://nec.adventist.uk/contact-us/donate/>. Simply follow the instructions given on each area of the page, and ensure that the North England Conference is your choice for where the donation should go.

'In seeking to fulfil the commission of Matthew 28, it is my desire that each congregation within the North England Conference should be an integral part of its community. Our congregations should be the place that our communities look to in times of storm, in times of crisis, in times of happiness and in times of celebration. Our congregations should be the place where refuge can be found, because we have demonstrated to them that all it takes to bring calm to a situation is a word from the Master, who never sleeps. Thank you for your continued faithfulness.'

Richard Jackson, President

Irish Mission

Northern Ireland account details

Sort code: 40-45-28/Account number: 60476188

Republic of Ireland account details

Sort code: 93-32-95/Account number: 14012054

IBAN: 1E74 AIBK 9332 9514 0120 54

Returning by cheque: cheques are payable to Irish Mission.*

Returning by card payment: call the Irish Mission treasury office on **+44 (0)1923 672251**.

*To assign your donation to your local church, write the name of your church on the back of the cheque, and include your Gift Aid number if you're a Gift Aider.

'This crisis has taken us by surprise, but not God; He's still in control, and, at this time, may we all continue to entrust our lives and means into His care. Thank you all for your faithfulness and support in ensuring that the Church continues to fulfil her mission and carry out her ministry of care, nurture, and love. Blessings and good health to you all.'

Dan Serb, President

Scottish Mission

Account details

Sort code: 16-33-45/Account number: 12318997

Returning by cheque: cheques are payable to Scottish Mission.*

Returning by card payment: call the Scottish Mission treasury office on **01923 672251**.

*To assign your donation to your local church, write the name of your church on the back of the cheque, and include your Gift Aid number if you're a Gift Aider.

'Thank you to all our members for making God first a way of life for all times and in all circumstances. I think for all of us this is a non-negotiable and irreducible minimum of our Christian faith. He is faithful and remains our "Jehovah Jireh" – the Lord our Provider.'

Paul Tompkins, President

Welsh Mission

Account details

Sort code: 40-45-28/Account number: 70854085

Returning by cheque: cheques are payable to Welsh Mission.*

Returning by card payment: call the Welsh Mission treasury office on **01923 672251**.

*To assign your donation to your local church, write the name of your church on the back of the cheque, and include your Gift Aid number if you're a Gift Aider.

'Often, it is in times of great anguish that we are able to see more clearly the goodness of God. Let us continue to be faithful and true, for we are confident that even though we walk through the darkest valley, God is with us; He will never leave us and never forsake us.'

Emanuel Bran, President

For returning tithes & giving offerings in the **Irish, Scottish** or **Welsh Missions**, email: abarki@adventist.uk, including the breakdown of T & O, the name of the church, and your Gift Aid number. The local budget offering will be credited into the church deposit (trust) account and later transferred to the local church bank account, upon the request of the treasurer.



enditnow — revisited

by Elder Ted N. C. Wilson,
President of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Last Sabbath (21 August) was designated by the General Conference as a day for raising awareness and advocating for the end of abusive behaviour and violence, wherever it appears (mainly towards women, but not exclusively). Pastor Ted Wilson, in his weekly video message, talked once again about the enditnow initiative.

Hello, friends. As we meet from week to week through these video messages, I hope you are blessed and encouraged in your walk with Jesus and in the mission He has given to us in reaching the world for Him.

Today we will be discussing a very difficult, yet very important, topic – abuse. Abuse is a topic that no one wants to talk about, and yet it is one that must be addressed if we are to carry out our mission of hope and healing.

Every day, thousands of innocent people around the world – many of them children – experience abuse. Abuse comes in many forms – child sexual abuse, domestic violence, elder abuse, abuse by clergy, human trafficking, rape, female genital mutilation, and many other horrific forms.

And, sadly, abuse exists everywhere – even within the Church. As a worldwide Church of caring, loving Christians, we must open our eyes to the fact that there are more people than we might imagine who are suffering deeply from the devastating effects of abuse. Jesus calls us to a ministry of hope and healing. But first we must recognise the problem.

Although violence affects everyone, women, children, and the elderly seem to bear the brunt of non-fatal physical, sexual and psychological abuse. Consider that:

- One in four adults reports having been physically abused as a child.
- One in five women reports having been sexually abused as a child.
- One in three women has been a victim of physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in her lifetime.
- One in seventeen older adults reported abuse in just one month, according to the World Health Organisation.

Results from abuse can be devastating, leaving the victim feeling worthless, depressed, anxious – even suicidal. Those who have been abused are often more

vulnerable to eating disorders, self-mutilation, substance abuse, and other destructive behaviours.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we condemn abuse in all of its forms and embrace the healing ministry of Jesus. This is part of our God-given mission.

In Isaiah 58:6 we read:
‘Is this not the fast that I have chosen:
To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens,
To let the oppressed go free,
And that you break every yoke?’ (NKJV.)

Commenting on Isaiah 58, Ellen White wrote, ‘The work specified in these words is the work God requires His people to do. It is a work of God’s own appointment. With the work of advocating the commandments of God and repairing the breach that has been made in the law of God, we are to mingle compassion for suffering humanity. We are to show supreme

love to God . . . and with this we are to manifest mercy, benevolence, and the tenderest pity for the fallen race. . . . Love revealed for suffering humanity gives significance and power to the truth’ (*Welfare Ministry*, p. 32).

Last Sabbath, 22 August, was a special day for raising awareness and advocating for the end of violence around the world. Known as ‘enditnow’, this global initiative developed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church was launched in 2009 and seeks to increase personal awareness, responsibility, and involvement in helping to stem the tide of this terrible evil. (*If you missed the initiative last Sabbath, you can find more information about this special emphasis by visiting enditnow.org.*)

It’s so important that we, as leaders and members, not only be aware of the signs of abuse, but actively take steps to prevent it from happening, listening carefully and compassionately to those who have experienced abuse, and taking action – such as taking preventive measures, reporting perpetrators to the proper authorities so the perpetrators can be held accountable.

There are many helpful resources available online, including the website below where you can find more information:
(<https://women.adventist.org/safe-church>).

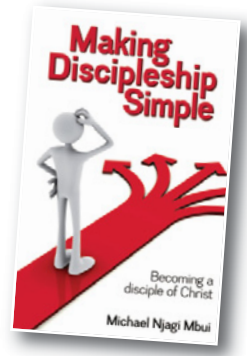
As we close, I would like to take a moment to address those who have experienced some form of violence or abuse. My sister, my brother – God knows what has happened to you, and He cares. What happened to you is not your fault. I encourage you to talk with a trusted person today. You do not need to suffer in silence. Help is available now. And, someday, God will bring about new life and complete healing. He promises in Malachi 4:2: ‘But for you who respect my name, the sun of vindication will rise with healing wings, and you will skip about like calves released from the stall’ (NET).





Making disciples is a command of Christ

by Pastor Michael Mbui



‘The Great Commission is not a request or a suggestion,’ says Pastor Michael Mbui, but ‘should always be accorded a status similar to the Great Commandments, “Love . . . God with all your heart . . .” and “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39, NIVUK).’ In this final excerpt from *Making Discipleship Simple*, we discover that sharing Christ transforms faith.

Beginning with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), God has always expected people who experience His salvation to make it known to others, and to allow God to showcase Himself through them (Isaiah 49:3). The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19, 20) was not just a command of Christ at the time of His ascension; instead, it was an integral part of His life and the lives of those who chose to follow Him. At the call of Peter and Andrew, Jesus explained to them that He wanted to make them skilful in finding other followers of Christ. ‘*“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”*’ (Matthew 4:19, NIV 1984.)

The practice of sharing Christ was integrated into the lives of His followers. The disciples had not spent a long time with Jesus before He sent them out to share Him with others. *‘When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.’* (Luke 9:1, 2, NIV; see also Matthew 10:1-5; Luke 10:1.)

Ordinary people who received healing from Christ were often commanded to go and tell their families what God had done for them (Mark 5:18-20), or made to testify before those present even when they may have wanted it to be kept secret (Luke 8:43-48). Mark confirms that Jesus chose the twelve to be with Him that He might send them to preach and to have authority over demons (Mark 3:14, 15). Being sent out as disciples was therefore part of their call.

The Great Commission was a command of the Master because it was a reflection of His life. In Luke 4:18, at the empowerment of the Spirit, the mission of Jesus is to preach the Gospel to the poor, bring freedom, and restore sight to the blind. Elsewhere, Jesus clarified His mission when He declared, ‘*. . . the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost*’ (Luke 19:10, NIV). Christ commissioned His disciples to do what He had first shown them by example. The Great Commission – ‘*go and make disciples*’ – should always be accorded a status similar to the Great Commandments, ‘*Love . . . God with all your heart . . .*’ and ‘*Love your neighbour as yourself*’ (Matthew 22:37-39, NIVUK). . . .

The Great Commission is not a request or suggestion, but a clear and unambiguous command. As disciples, we are to obey, regardless of whether we fully understand the importance of the command or not. Obedience is the highest act of worship and submission. Even without all the other reasons for sharing Christ, we are to be His witnesses because Christ Himself commanded us to witness. We must, therefore, endeavour to share Jesus with others in order to make them His disciples – because it is a command of Christ, our Master.

‘The seventy-two returned with joy . . .’ (Luke 10:17, NIV)

One of the most moving scenes on television during the 2012 Olympic Games in London was the excitement and celebration by spectators – especially those from other countries living in London – when their

athletes won gold medals and their national anthems were played. For many, this reminder of their roots led to tears of joy or silent sadness as they remembered a lost past. Nothing evoked such thrill and celebration from the Jamaicans as to see Usain Bolt win the 100-metre race. In the same way, witnessing new disciples take their place in the family of God should bring about great joy, satisfaction, and pride for the citizens of God’s Kingdom. Furthermore, it is a joy not confined to Earth: ‘*. . . there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent*’ (Luke 15:7, NIV).

No other experience reveals the authenticity of the Gospel claim as does the witness of its impact on others. As a new believer, seeing the message of the Gospel transform the lives of others affirmed my conviction. After their preaching and healing mission, the disciples of Christ understood Jesus and their newfound faith in a different light. Sharing Christ with others to make them disciples will enable us to witness the power of God, and ultimately strengthen our own faith as well. This is God’s purpose. . . .

The first tears I shed as a disciple came in the second year of my faith. After I gave Bible studies to several of my work colleagues for a period of over six months, one of the senior members of the workforce, who initially showed no interest in faith, started to attend church with me, and made the decision to be baptised a month later. It was a humbling and joyful moment in my life, to see the Gospel change someone and know that it was nothing *in* me that caused this, but the power of God working *through* me. I have had many similar experiences since then, as sharing Christ has become my way of life.

The effort to make others disciples of Christ enabled me to better understand the various components of my faith. As people asked questions and I searched the Scriptures for answers, I became more aware of the principles on which my beliefs are founded. I found the adage, ‘What you keep you lose, and what you lose you keep’ very applicable when sharing Christ. Most of my greatest insights into God’s Word came through sharing it with others, and what I failed to share was soon forgotten.

In Mark 16:17-20, God promised to confirm the preaching of His Word by His disciples with miraculous signs. Paul and Barnabas ‘*spent considerable time there [Iconium], speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders*’ (Acts 14:3, NIV). Great physical and spiritual miracles are still happening today, as sinners choosing to love righteousness experience a change in their lives when disciples share Christ with them.

Many people who have wealth, fame, and status in society do not know how to achieve true happiness, holistic health, and genuine peace. Disciples possess knowledge and understanding that the world desperately needs. Only as they share this knowledge will they begin to fully comprehend and appreciate what they have.



Welcome to Stanborough

Why would any parent choose to send their child to a private or fee-paying or independent school (choose one) when the United Kingdom has thousands of outstanding state schools that charge no school fees – that are free?

There are several reasons that parents could give; however, the best responses will come from their children. Parents are willing to make huge sacrifices to ensure that their children get a good education.

What is the response to this sacrifice? In today's edition, we look at it from the child's perspective. What has been the experience of Stanborough School pupils?

'When I first joined Stanborough School, I was nervous. However, the other students were kind and welcoming, so I quickly warmed up. The learning environment is very nurturing and loving, with the students in higher classes being great examples and giving us the opportunity to share a laugh with them.' Nicole O. (Year 8 in September 2020).

'I really like Stanborough Secondary School because it is a Christian school. To be precise, it is a Seventh-day Adventist school with a family atmosphere. It also has a friendly ethos with an emphasis on body, mind and spirit. God is at the centre of everything we do. We pray in every lesson and during assembly. The small class sizes ensure better learning and teaching, which makes you feel like you are the only student who has the teacher's full attention, even though they can be strict at times! The head teacher and the teachers are so dedicated that we did not miss school during the COVID-19 pandemic as we were having Google classes. I recommend this school to everyone.' – Daniella (Year 8 in September 2020).

'My name is Nathan and I am 13 years of age, which means I am currently in Year 8, moving to Year 9. I started attending Stanborough School in 2019 (8 January). Stanborough School has provided me with stability, not only educationally, but spiritually as well. The spiritual aspect of Stanborough allows us to focus on our spiritual lives and relationship with God. The school also offers us a good standard of education, which is taught by amazing teachers who are always willing to help with anything we need. Because of this, Stanborough has a good family aspect. Since we are a small school, we become closer to each other in many different ways. If you are on the school field, in the cafeteria, or even in the classrooms, you will never feel alone. This is the reason why I came to Stanborough. I will gladly take this time to invite you to this amazing school where you can take part in this life-changing experience, with Stanborough and me by your side. I hope to see you soon.' Nathan (Year 9 in September 2020).

'Stanborough School has teachers who work extremely hard to create a positive environment where we as students are inspired to learn. We have amazing interactive classes and our head teacher is always trying to get our opinions on how the school can improve. I look forward to having my lunch at the cafeteria every day, because on each day a different healthy meal is served. I like all the extracurricular activities that the school offers at the end of each school day. Lincoln O. (Year 10 in September 2020).

'My experience at Stanborough has been amazing, to say the least. I really enjoy the family aspect that comes as a perk of having small classes. All the teachers have a personal connection with you and make it their personal duty to make sure you achieve the best grades possible. Coming from a public school myself, I can testify that the change is not one you will regret. So, having said all this, I hope to see you on campus. God bless.' Andrew M. (Year 11 in September 2020).



Stanborough School, situated on the beautiful and serene Stanborough Park estate, provides a wonderful environment for learning. We invite applications for enrolment for September 2020. Please contact the school on info@spsch.org.

May God bless us all!



Haunted by Antioch

Part 2

by Pastor David Cox

‘From a human point of view,’ says Pastor David Cox, ‘the challenge of mission in this country and other parts of the world is greater now than it has ever been, and increases by the day. We still hear about “finishing the work”, but statistically we know that is still a dream. “Normal” is no longer fit for purpose.’

What might we learn, from this story of long ago, that could be helpful to the life and witness of the church in the twenty-first century?

No apostle, no leadership?

I remarked last time that none of the twelve apostles was at Antioch to provide pastoral oversight, training, or leadership. It’s true: Luke tells us that when persecution broke out after the death of Stephen, *‘all the believers except the apostles fled’* (Acts 8:1, NLT). The twelve apostles stayed in Jerusalem, which seems strange, because the Greek word for ‘apostle’ means ‘ambassador’, ‘one who is sent’. The believers who went to Antioch were ‘on their own’, which means that the church at Antioch was planted and led by what we would call ‘lay people’, a term that we use to distinguish ‘ordinary’ people from the experts; so it was just ordinary people who served as God’s ambassadors to Antioch!

Yes, an ordinary person can serve as an apostle! And that’s because, in the New Testament, the word for ‘laity’ simply means ‘people’; so the ‘laity of God’ are the people of God – all of them! It is hard for us to think of Peter and Paul as laymen, but that’s what they were; they were people of God. It’s even more difficult to think of the pastors and presidents who serve the church today as lay people; but that’s what they are, people of God. Why do we find this difficult? Because, sadly, we have inherited a kind of two-tier understanding of the church, consisting of a minority of paid professionals, who are called, trained and ordained for ministry, and a majority of volunteers – the church members (‘the laity’) – who assist them as far as they are willing and able to. But that’s not how it was in Antioch, and that’s not how it should be now. Happily, in many places lay people *are* taking the initiative, starting new kinds of ministries, and planting new churches, although this is still the exception rather than the rule.

So there *were* apostles in Antioch. There were also pastors, teachers and evangelists . . . and prophets too, if that gift was needed. The believers in Antioch were fully equipped for the work they were called to do. And nothing has changed, as far as spiritual gifts are concerned; the gifts of the Spirit are promised to every gathering of believers who,

together, seek to serve the Christ in whom they believe. In fact, *‘He has given each one of us a special gift according to the generosity of Christ’* (Ephesians 4:7, NLT; see also verses 11-13; 1 Corinthians 12, and so on).

Let’s be clear: the believers in Antioch were not just ‘church members’. They were ‘disciples’ (that’s the word Luke uses in Acts 11:26). A disciple is an apprentice, someone who spends enough time with a skilled practitioner (not only in the classroom, but on the job) to master a desired skill. This means that disciples are *not* simply people who agree with the teachings of the church. Disciples of Jesus are people who are committed to learning, from those of more experience, to live as Jesus lived, to teach as Jesus taught, to love as Jesus loved. A few of the disciples who went to Antioch may have been taught by the Master Himself – remember the crowds who followed Jesus? – or by the twelve or others who knew Him well. Either way, they lived what they had learned, which explains why *‘it was there at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians’* (Acts 11:26, NLT): which leads us to a second observation.

No miracles?

I said that there’s no record of any miracles that might have attracted the crowds in Antioch . . . but that’s not quite true, is it? There may not have been miracles like those associated with Jesus, Peter and Paul, but there *were* miracles at Antioch.

The obvious one was the disciples themselves; they spoke so much about Christ, and they were so like Christ in the way they cared for others, that their pagan neighbours called them ‘Christians’! Jesus once said, *‘Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples’* (John 13:35, NLT). A hundred or so years later, a North African Christian named Tertullian wrote (not specifically about Antioch) that the Christians’ deeds of love were ‘so noble’ that the pagan world confessed in astonishment, *‘See how they love one another.’* The pagan world had

never seen anything like it. It was a miracle! And it still is. Every truly loving community is a miracle, because *‘love comes from God’* (1 John 4:7, NLT). We can’t explain it – just as we can’t explain the miracle of Jesus.

It was a miraculous message which the disciples shared – the story of the God/man Jesus. His virgin birth, His public ministry, His tragic death, His resurrection, and His ascension to heaven were all undeniable miracles; the pagan world had never heard *anything* like it! And this same Jesus had promised to return soon to put right everything that was wrong with the world – a miracle to look forward to! The story of Jesus was *the story* the Christians had to tell, and it changed forever the way people saw themselves, the world around them, the future, everything – especially the way they saw God. God is good; God is love!

The story of Jesus was ‘breaking news’ when it was told in Antioch, and I’ve already suggested that a few of those who told it may have known Jesus personally; they might even have been among the 500+ disciples who saw Him after His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:6). Imagine how amazed they must have been, how infectious their excitement was. But nearly 2,000 years have passed since that time, and I often wonder if something of the glory, the awesomeness, the sense of wonder and mystery, has faded over those years. How long is it since you first heard *the story*? Does it still thrill you as it once did?

Questions for reflection

Before my third and final part of how I have been ‘haunted’ by the Antioch story, I want to invite you to reflect on these questions: is *the story* of what God has done and how He has revealed Himself through Jesus *our story*, dead centre to our thinking and everything we believe? Or do we have everything neatly sorted now, clearly defined within 28 doctrinal statements and our understanding of prophecy?

David Cox, now retired in Grantham, formerly served as Church Growth Director for the British Union Conference.



Audrey's back raising funds for ADRA

Audrey Balderstone's latest fundraising attempt has resulted in swelling ADRA-UK's depleted funds by over £8,000!

For Stanborough Park's Audrey Balderstone, the fact that her much-loved charity ADRA-UK was unable to launch its annual house-to-house appeal this year was a personal blow. With her usual methods to raise funds being blocked by 'lockdown' rules, she found a new and creative way to contribute to the charity's shortfall during its online collection in July and August.

Her aim to raise £1,000 through a sponsored challenge was rapidly

exceeded as news of her efforts spread far and wide. By mid-August her total, including Gift Aid, had reached the amazing sum of £8,059.75! This goes a good way towards meeting the church's sum of £10,000 which it usually raises for the charity's annual appeal.

With so many fundraising options closed as a result of the current health crisis, Audrey decided to defy the tyrannies of age by taking part in a demanding sponsored challenge to hold the 'plank position' for five minutes every day. 'I would normally do a number of fundraising events for ADRA, such as a garden party, clothes sale and so on, but, of course, cannot do that this year – so I challenged myself to raise £1,000 by this method,' she said at the outset.

ADRA-UK is a special cause for the church elder, grandmother of four and flower-arranger extraordinaire. 'Usually, during the annual appeal in March/April ADRA raises around £500,000. It will be interesting to see how much the digital appeal is able to generate to help the most vulnerable of our society at home and abroad,' she continued. 'ADRA-UK has always been dear to my heart because of all the work David (her late husband) and others have done for those less fortunate than ourselves through ADRA.' David was a volunteer for many years and took part in many missions – often under gunfire! – and also organised transport for the charity.

Anticipating the reaction of many doubters, Audrey says, 'A speeded up version of my five minutes is available on YouTube to prove that I actually do it!' (See link below.)

Audrey has been amazed by the final total and the generosity of her sponsors, and is grateful to them for helping her to raise funds for such a worthy cause. 'Many of the donations have been anonymous, so I haven't been able to thank them personally, but I have been grateful for every donation, large or small,' she says, adding a heartfelt, 'Thank you, everyone!'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKHNVNctlygwww.justgiving.com/fundraising/audrey-balderstone>

JUNE COOMBS



Lockdown and perfect timing?

This year we had booked a holiday in March in St Brides, West Wales. Last year, while staying in Pembrokeshire, I fell in love with a cottage perched on the rocks beside a small bay. We booked it early for this season so that we could have it from Sunday to Sunday. It transpired that our booking for this cottage was both the first and the last for this season. By the time we left the cottage after a wonderful week by the sea, lockdown had begun.

'Miriam,' said my husband Leslie, 'I don't understand why you have chosen to book this cottage so early in the year.' He repeatedly asked, 'How can we hope to have good weather for our stay?' Looking back now, the reason is obvious, for we would have had no break at all had we booked a later date. Our holiday in the beauty of nature, beside the sea, had become a miracle.

Each year our adult foster daughter joins us on holiday and also stays with us afterwards for a few days in the guest room next to our apartment in Cardiff, prior to my driving her back to the north where she lives. With lockdown arriving, suddenly travel in Wales

was limited to 5 miles. Now what could we do?

The manager suggested, 'Annette is already in the room. The guest room is closed to outsiders, so she can remain here if she wants.' This was another miracle for us.

Now, months later, she is still happily staying in the guest room. We have been able to spend the many weeks of sunshine together and take short trips to nearby mountains and the sea. Together we enjoy the Welsh Mission Zoom prayer meeting every Wednesday evening with Pastor Emanuel Bran, and join with the Ystrad Mynach members and Pastor Adriana Fodor on Zoom every Sabbath morning. Both in her room and in our apartment we enjoy watching 3ABN and the Hope Channel. Blessed with choice, along with fellow *MESSENGER* readers, we can also watch worship services from the British Union Conference, Newbold College and other places around the world on YouTube.

My testimony is that our prayers have been answered in a remarkable way. The timing was perfect. Annette needs an Adventist family to live with under Shared Lives, as she has special needs, but so far there has been no one available in the area where she is in respite care. In the meantime, this miracle has happened to allow her to remain with us for an extended period during lockdown so that she has felt secure and cared for during the pandemic.

MIRIAM WOOD

To find out more about Shared Lives, go to: <https://sharedlivesplus.org.uk/> (Ed).

Faith – and running on empty

I had planned for a long time to take the family away for a break by the sea, to Cuckmere Haven near





Hastings. We were driving late. Because I didn't want to purchase fuel during Sabbath hours, and with sunset not until past 9pm, we kept on driving. Past 10pm, one bar of petrol was all we had to take us to the nearest fuel station, but it was closed. We searched for another 2.4 miles and arrived at the garage just two minutes before it was due to close. Even though we'd made it, the attendants were in the process of locking up and leaving for the night. 'You won't get any petrol now; you'll have to stay overnight. We open at 8am,' they advised.

Turning to the Lord in prayer, we found another petrol station, but one for which we had to take a detour. It was a station with automated pumps; all that was required to operate was a debit card. I optimistically inserted my card, but my heart sank as I discovered the nozzle padlocked. I felt a knot in my chest as I turned the ignition on and the fuel light shone. I told the kids, 'Perhaps God wants us to truly exercise our faith muscles.' We were now going to drive on an 'empty' tank. And for the next 7.5 miles this is what we did, until we eventually reached a garage that was still open!

That experience made me wonder what kind of faith God wants us to have. Does He want us to be overly worried about life's problems? Isn't it He who wants the knot in the chest to be replaced with an overwhelming calm? Doesn't He want a smile to reappear, and distressed silence to erupt into songs of praise? Faith is, we realised that night, truly sweet. 'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus. The clink of the nozzle, the revving of the dispenser and the gushing of fuel never sounded so positive and relieving till that night!

With a much broader smile, we continued our journey home, but were stunned after whizzing past five petrol stations which were all still open and within a 5-mile distance from where we'd previously filled up.

I realised that if that station had been closed, we would have had five others to choose from. What a statement of God's provision and reassurance! God, You are incredible!

PS: We arrived at half past midnight with so much gratitude we ate noodles!

FLORIE BELL YANG, ELDER, FILIPINO INTERNATIONAL CHURCH

Safeguarding mental well-being during times of crisis

Part 5



Nutrition impact

In this final instalment of how to safeguard mental well-being during crisis times, we turn our attention to the impact of nutrition on our mental health.

The American Psychological Association (APA) undertook a survey on stress and eating. They found that almost 40% of adults reported overeating or consuming junk food in response to stress during the previous month. Of those people interviewed, approximately half revealed they did so weekly.¹

So why do people 'stress eat' (eat poorly when stressed) and, in particular, turn to junk food to satisfy their appetite?

Jamie Ducharme, health writer for *TIME*, answers this question in her article entitled: 'Here's why you stress eat – and how to stop doing it'.² Ducharme interviews registered dietitian Alison Knott on stress and eating behaviour, asking why we tend to look for comfort in food for both physiological and psychological reasons.

Knott explains that the hormone cortisol rises with chronic stress and can lead to increased appetite, even when you are not necessarily hungry. She adds: 'It can be true hunger if you have extended stress that is promoting this cortisol production to the point of impacting your appetite.'

So what should we be eating?

Carmen Byker Shanks, an associate professor of food, nutrition and sustainable food systems at Montana State University, offers some useful counsel on good nutrition during the COVID-19 pandemic. Indicating that people are choosing grains and canned goods, she gives this advice.

'Buy those fruits and vegetables, cut them up and put them in your freezer, because they can be used for months to come.'³ Recommending sturdy vegetables and starches, Shanks lists broccoli, Brussels sprouts and sweet potatoes, as they last longer outside the freezer.

She then gives additional advice for those who buy tinned, dried or frozen foods, highlighting the following:

- Choose those low in saturated fat, salt and added sugars.
- Look for foods with less than 5g of added sugar per serving,
- Foods with less than 200mg of salt per serving and
- Less than 1.5g of saturated fat per serving.

As we conclude this series, we have highlighted that our mental well-being affects how we think and handle stress during times of crisis. This impacts lifestyle choices, such as eating, sleeping and exercise, and their holistic effects.

'Leading a balanced life and practising good behaviours can improve your mental health so you're better equipped to handle stressful situations like the current Coronavirus outbreak.'⁴

Good health!

¹<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2013/eating/>

²<https://time.com/5347612/how-to-stop-stress-eating/>


³<https://time.com/5804130/covid-19-social-distancing-wellness/>

⁴<https://behavioralnutrition.org/maintain-wellbeing-during-health-crisis/>

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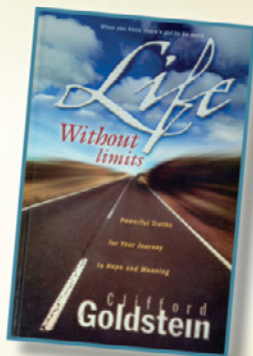


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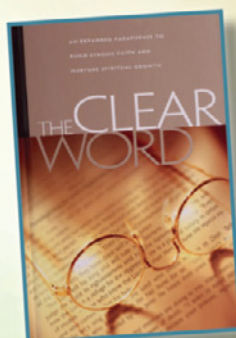
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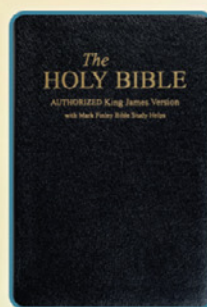
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COVID-19 vaccination: should it be compulsory or consensual?

When Dr Brighton Kavaloh recently gave an informative seminar via Zoom on the topic of mandatory vaccinations, the Zoom meeting reached the 300 maximum limit, with more wanting to join. Clearly, the subject is a matter of significant concern for many. At this point, with the COVID-19 vaccine still a long way off, the Government has yet to decide how it is to be distributed and to whom . . . some or all? On behalf of the South England Conference, Dr Kavaloh has submitted written evidence to the Government's Human Rights (Joint Committee) Inquiry, weighing up the pros and cons of mandatory vaccination in the UK.

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to address the human rights implications of the Government's response to COVID-19, particularly regarding the issue of any purported mandatory vaccination. In the face of another Coronavirus outbreak,¹ must vaccination in the UK be compulsory or consensual? This question will not go away, and the answer is not a simple one, for this issue has remained contentious. A delicate balance needs to be struck between compulsion and consent for the common good of the whole society, and an action plan will need to be taken now if it is not to be done later in haste. I will seek in this call to use evidence-based arguments drawn from international law – specifically the Siracusa Principles, the European Convention on Human Rights and the UK Human Rights Act 1998 – to provide the reasonable steps which need to be taken to ensure that interventions by the Government to address the COVID-19 pandemic are compliant with human rights.

Setting

On 3 March 2020 the UK Government published its Coronavirus action plan, setting out its four key stages: Contain; Delay; Research; and Mitigate. On 17 March it indicated that measures were needed to manage the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. It noted that the 'interventions should be evidence-based and proportionate. The aim(s) of interventions being implemented, and the science, values and judgements (human rights principles) underpinning those interventions, should be clearly communicated to the public.'² On 23 March 2020 the UK went into lockdown under the slogan, 'Stay Home – Protect the NHS – Save Lives', and on 25 March the Coronavirus Act 2020 received Royal Assent to legalise the implementation of the lockdown (*opinio juris sive necessitatis*).

COVID-19 vaccination issue emerges

As the Coronavirus surged, so did expressions of frustration, anger, resentment, anxiety and worry about an unprecedented piece of legislation that had been passed in the UK, allegedly to mandate vaccination by force. One such expression was:

'It's very troubling to think one will be forced against one's will. I don't think having this vaccination will do anyone any good, as vaccinations take years to develop; and when one is found, if that's the case, we don't know the repercussions of having it.'

A number of posts on Facebook and videos on social media³ suggested that changes had been made to the Public Health (Control of Infectious Diseases) Act 1984, which had the effect, on 27 April 2020, of making any future vaccination for Coronavirus mandatory. A section of the community took this to be true without question. The UK Government's response to the issue of mandatory vaccination was inconclusive. On 4 May 2020 at a No. 10 Downing Street press briefing, under the slogan: 'Stay Home – Protect the NHS – Save Lives', the Honourable Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, stated that no such step would be taken. He stated: 'I think the extent of the public's reaction to following the lockdown shows we will be able to achieve very high levels of vaccination without taking that step.'⁴ However, on 21 May a member of the public (Finlay from Ardrossan) asked: 'If a vaccine is developed, will it be mandatory? If not, how will you bridge the difference in opinion between those who believe it necessary and those who do not?' Hancock replied, 'The question of whether it's mandatory is not one we have addressed yet,'⁵ thus indicating a change from his previous response on compulsory vaccination. James Morris of Yahoo News noted, 'It's a contrast to comments Hancock made on 4 May, when he suggested a vaccine would not be mandatory.'⁶ At the same press briefing, Mr Hancock did not follow on from the comments of either of the Government's medical and scientific advisers, who stressed the importance of consent in such matters: particularly Professor John Newton, who stated: 'Vaccine programmes are more successful by consent.'⁷ With the public deeply divided on this matter, it was unclear how Mr Matt Hancock would handle it. Counterintuitively, the two advisers highlighted not compulsory vaccination, but vaccination by consent.

It is interesting to note that a legal expert, barrister Louise Hopper of Garden Court Chambers, in her article entitled 'Coronavirus Act 2020 – Does it Permit Mandatory Vaccination?'⁸ attempted to dispel social media concerns about this issue. She said that rumours that 'changes to the law mean that the Government has the power to force vaccines or other medication on you are wrong and unfounded'. However, she also added: 'There are multiple human rights and civil liberties implications both globally and domestically arising from the response to COVID-19 and the current crisis. Some of them are very real and concerning. Others are scaremongering and simply not true.' It is to this 'domestic' UK aspect that I now turn to address the steps required to meet COVID-19 human rights compliance.

Steps needed for UK COVID-19 pandemic human rights compliance

An essential step for the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic to meet human rights compliance is to appoint a designated legal expert in human rights. During the press briefing at No. 10 Downing Street the public has become familiar with the faces of policy makers flanked by medical and scientific advisers. I am recommending that human rights lawyers be considered as a step forward for the future. Following such a recommendation may somehow restore public confidence and counteract the speculative notions and theories seen thus far during this pandemic.

Another vital step is that the Government should fully adopt the Siracusa Principles. Although under international law the principles are non-binding, they are persuasive enough for the Government to take into consideration, for the principles have provided a good basis for any human rights-compliant public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They detail criteria firmly enshrined in international human rights law, and standards to determine the lawfulness of state measures restrictive of human rights. 'The Siracusa Principles reaffirm the obligation of states to ensure that any public health response to such an emergency be rooted in and compatible with human rights law and standards. Importantly,

the principles provide further interpretive guidance to states, proclaiming that restrictions on human rights may be justifiable only when they are:

- Provided for and carried out in accordance with the law;
- Based on scientific evidence;
- Directed towards a legitimate objective;
- Strictly necessary in a democratic society;
- The least intrusive and restrictive means available;
- Neither arbitrary nor discriminatory in application;
- Of limited duration; and
- Subject to review.⁹

The European Convention on Human Rights,¹⁰ incorporated in the UK Human Rights Act 1998¹¹ (Articles 8 to 10), ensures the need for interventions taken by the Government during the public health Coronavirus crisis to remain 'evidence-based and proportionate'. For example, a public health policy restriction can pose human rights limitations on the enjoyment of privacy and respect for family life (Article 8). 'Proportionate' means balancing the competing issues with 'evidence-based' facts: in this case, to determine whether UK COVID-19 vaccination should be mandatory or consensual. It is argued that 'coercion and intrusion into people's lives should be the minimum possible consistent with achieving the aim sought'.¹² Also, Karen May, an experienced

solicitor working for Bindmans, states, 'There are implications under the Human Rights Act 1998, with mandatory vaccination leading to potential claims under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

'Inevitably there are tensions between the right to respect for private and family life and an argument that compulsory vaccination of school children constitutes legitimate interference by a public body for the protection of public health – two apparently contradictory positions within this article.'¹³

Conclusion

The Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, in the main, should be to safeguard the health and safety of individuals and communities, while not restricting personal freedoms more than strictly necessary to fulfil public health objectives. There's no easy answer concerning whether to opt for consensual or mandatory vaccination in the UK, with public opinion deeply divided on this matter; neither has the indecisiveness by policy-makers been helpful. The direct inclusion and involvement of legal experts in human rights standards and compliance may provide a necessary step to ensure that any measures taken by the Government in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic remain compliant with human rights.

Human rights compliance can play a pivotal role when well communicated to

individuals, communities and the wider society in matters related to public health standards. I suggest and strongly recommend, on the unresolved issue of 'mandatory or consensual' UK COVID-19 vaccination, that scientific and medical professionals work together with human rights lawyers to educate the public on the pros and cons of COVID-19 vaccination in anticipation of when that time does come.

¹[news.sky.com/story/second-coronavirus-spike-this-winter-could-be-more-serious-than-the-first-top-scientists-warn-12027912](https://www.news.sky.com/story/second-coronavirus-spike-this-winter-could-be-more-serious-than-the-first-top-scientists-warn-12027912)

²www.nuffieldbioethics.org/assets/pdfs/Ethical-considerations-in-responding-to-the-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf

³www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SoPrEhkDa20EHLsYdRukCYwrz29V LZohRB3wxf1CF-Mk5mqpx8

⁴<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CJQYD5qCNk>

⁵<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WE6aDXWUy7s>

⁶James Morris, senior news reporter, Yahoo News UK, 21 May 2020

⁷<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WE6aDXWUy7s>

⁸www.gardencourtchambers.co.uk/coronavirus-legal-news-views/coronavirus-act-2020-does-it-permit-mandatory-vaccinations

⁹opiniojuris.org/2020/04/06/covid-19-human-rights-in-the-time-of-covid-19-front-and-centre/

¹⁰Alastair Mowbray PhD and Davis Harris PhD, *Cases and Materials on the European Convention on Human Rights*, Oxford University Press, 2001

¹¹Rambert de Mello (Ed.) *Human Rights Act 1998: A Practical Guide*

¹²www.nuffieldbioethics.org/assets/pdfs/Ethical-considerations-in-responding-to-the-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf

¹³www.bindmans.com/news/is-compulsory-vaccination-of-schoolchildren-a-viable-policy-option-in-the-uk

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Ballinacrow – the world in a village

Set in the idyllic Wicklow Mountains is the Ballinacrow church, not far from the source of the River Slaney and Luqnaquilla Mountain.

The Adventist message is believed to have reached Ballinacrow when a man by the name of Ted Finlay lived and worked on his farm in the Glen of Imaal. During the first part of the 1900s, a relative travelled to Canada, probably to emigrate. However, he made an interesting discovery – and shared it with Ted.

For a long time, Ted was the only person in the area who believed the way he did. It is perhaps difficult for most *MESSENGER* readers to understand how socially isolating it was to be an Adventist in twentieth-century Ireland – but it most definitely was! Eventually, Ted was able to connect with a group of Adventists in Dublin for worship and fellowship, a journey of approximately 35 miles.

At this time the Holy Spirit was working on the hearts of other people across Ireland. In time, a young man from Wexford studied Scripture and discovered the biblical principle of keeping Sabbath special. He joined the Dublin fellowship and became friends with Ted Finlay and his family.

Ted Finlay not only believed in mission, but he practised it, sharing his beliefs with the local community and farmers. Soon a group of people from the Glen and Wexford came together to have home services.

As the size of the families grew, they caught a vision for having their own church for worship and fellowship. Most members were hardworking farmers, and through their hard-earned means and generosity, today members worship in a 75-seater church, with most of the founder members present. Sadly, Ted Finlay, his wife Evelyn, and their daughter Ruth have passed away.

It was not until 1981 that the Ballinacrow church was formed. The building at that time would have been only the second church building owned by the Irish Mission in the Republic of Ireland. Since 1981 Ballinacrow church membership has grown. What was once a church of 'hardworking farmers' now reflects multicultural Ireland, and with it global Adventism – all worshipping together in one room! And yet this church is still 35 miles south of Dublin, located in heart of the Wicklow mountains. Standing on a beautiful single-track country lane, a river flowing under the road, with sheep and cattle grazing in the field nearby – if someone told you that 'up the road' was the place where 1.5 million people live in the hustle and bustle of Dublin, you could be forgiven for thinking they were experiencing a fantasy.

When Ballinacrow members meet together for worship they often share their experience of Adventism from how it was introduced to them in their country of origin. Founder and heritage members have welcomed with warm and open hearts members from Albania, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, India, Hungary, Ivory Coast, Moldova, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, the Philippines, Romania, Serbia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. At times it can be a challenge to keep the global church family united and together – that's our experience.

Perhaps most notable for Ballinacrow is that it is a church with many children and youth. Our Sabbath school room is filled with the inspiring sounds of a young church. It would also be remiss not to mention that we are also uniquely blessed to have an assortment of very talented musicians.

Our membership is starting to exceed the capacity of our existing building. By God's grace, we, the next generation, will sacrifice to find the funds needed for us to complete our building extension.

In the midst of this pandemic it would be easy to see the church in terms of just bricks and mortar. But the reality of the church is that it's made of people who faithfully, by God's grace, check in on each other and take care to see if the physical, medical and spiritual needs of our church brothers and sisters are met.

During lockdown we have continued our services online via Zoom. With our members scattered far and wide across counties, a midweek prayer meeting that was once impractical is now possible due to Zoom.

As we start once again to find our way back over the hills and vales to our idyllic country setting and resume meeting, it will appear to be very different. COVID-19 will have temporarily changed our worship landscape. Church services will be more scheduled, sanitised and in accordance with legislation. But these components haven't changed the God we worship. He hasn't altered His presence with His people, or His omnipresence (everywhere at the same time), or His omniscience (all-knowing). As we navigate the difficult times, we can rejoice in the victories, because He has been and continues to be our shelter in this time of storm.

Whether government directives change, whether we worship in small groups or worship online, God is in control. God is sovereign, and to Him be the glory and honour forever. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Please follow us at: <http://www.facebook.com/ballinacrowsdachurch>.

SHARON MURPHY



Glasgow hosts virtual international day programme

Aware of its multicultural and multinational membership, the Glasgow Community church holds an international day every summer to emphasise and celebrate its unity in diversity. This year the day fell on Sabbath 25 July. Our theme song was 'Tis almost time for the Lord to come, perfectly supporting our theme for the day – 'It is almost time for the Lord to come'. When sung by Semone and Lamona Pollard, a mother and daughter duet, hearts were stirred. Through this and the preaching of Pastor Britius Habwangabwanga, now based in Zambia, but who was in times past a Bible worker in the Scottish Mission – the

Spirit spoke! He was instrumental in planting and providing pastoral leadership for the Faifley Community church at its inception, and we were once again blessed by his ministry.

Due to the COVID-19 situation and related restrictions, our event was virtual – a first for us. Obviously, the Sabbath School department, which has been organising these events for the church over the years, had challenges to overcome in order to make such an online programme a success, technology notwithstanding. But, as God’s work will never fail, God Himself had prepared a way out.

Technical help was at hand in the form of Charles Lethbridge, a member of the Dunfermline church, who made the whole project easier than we could have imagined. Under the capable supervision of Elder Calvin Ndlovu, Glasgow’s Sabbath School Superintendent, Charles worked with Enock Bamusi, a member of the Communications and Sabbath School teams, and Elder Benjamin Bakina, to put all the material for the programme together and make it accessible online during the services. The material included the day’s Sabbath School lesson discussion, led by Elder Kelly Muvwanga, with great input from the Scottish Mission President, Pastor Paul Tompkins, who also closed the programme at the very end. This was followed by country presentations from the Caribbean, Ghana, Kenya, the Philippines, Zambia, Cameroon, the Dominican Republic, Zimbabwe and Malawi – just some of the many nationalities represented at Glasgow Church.

These were followed by Pastor Habwangabwanga’s sermon titled: ‘This one fellow: the Lord being merciful to him’. I could describe more of our special international day, but instead, because of this digital world, all that remains is for me to invite you to take a look at how our day turned out. I hope you’ll be blessed and enjoy it as much as we did – with 260 of us watching together. Follow this link for the sermon and the rest of the divine service to get a flavour of our day:

<https://youtu.be/mW665-RvMzI>.

Most importantly, we praise God for making this programme a success.

ENOCK BAMUSI, GLASGOW COMMUNICATIONS TEAM



COVID-19 and the challenge of being tactile

Because of the people we are, people bound together by a common bond ‘in Christ’, who regard each other as spiritual ‘brothers and sisters’, it is a more than natural activity for us to shake hands, embrace, and even give each other, as the apostle Paul encouraged, ‘a holy kiss’ (2 Corinthians 13:12).

When the instruction is given not to touch another person, particularly when it includes those we are close to (fellow members, relatives and friends), it is not only a strange request, but for some of us who are naturally tactile people, totally contrary to the people we are.

During this COVID-19 crisis, one of the easiest ways for the virus to spread from person to person is through touch. The activity of ‘social distancing’ (keeping our hands and hugs to ourselves) is the most loving and caring and protective action we can do for each other at this time.

While we may think that a ‘one-off’ shake of the hand or hug may cause little or no harm to the other person, we cannot risk this virus passing from one person to another. Not now, nor at any time.

Someone once said that we have much more to ‘unlearn’ than to learn. Never a truer word was spoken.

EDITOR

A NATIONAL EVENT
HOSTED BY SEC
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

CELEBRATING THE JOURNEY:
25 YEARS OF GOD LEADING WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

Women crossing over into a new era in these trying times!

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GC Women's Ministries

Raquel Arrais
GC Women's Ministries

Clair Sanchez
TED Women's Ministries

A Modern-Day Exodus Experience of Transition

Sharon Platt-McDonald
BUC Women's Ministries

Jacqueline Otokpo
SEC Women's Ministries

Beulah Plunkett
NEC Women's Ministries

Sunday 4th – Sabbath 10th
October 2020
Live Stream & Via Zoom
(details to follow)

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This is my story

by David Neal

Part 1

As we enter the autumn season, I would like to invite *MESSENGER* readers to join me on a journey. This is 'my story', an up-close-and-personal perspective on race and diversity matters within the British Union Conference. It is not meant to be an objective assessment of our history, but of a fella who grew up Adventist, and has worked for the church all his adult life. In one sense, it is very much a story about someone searching for identity. In sharing, I trust it will not only inform, but help us in understanding each other. Where else to begin than in my childhood home church?



I grew up with my brother in Oxford in the 1970s. Of the 50 church members, some were white and some were black. Friends in my age group were Adele, Barbara, Caroline, Jonathan, Lynne, Maureen, Norma, Rachel, Rosalee, and Vivienne. Some were white, some were black, and some were of mixed race. Regardless of ethnicity, our parents were mainly skilled working class, but they frequently struggled financially to put bread on the table. All but two of the group experienced comprehensive education at schools around the city and county. By Oxford definition we were 'town' and not 'gown'.

Two of my earliest Caribbean friends were Mark and Gregory. We sat together in church and visited each other's home for Sabbath lunch. By the mid-70s they had emigrated to Canada with their parents for a better life – Britain clearly was not the promised land.

Our dedicated Sabbath School teacher lovingly put the fear of God into us. A former missionary teacher to Solusi Mission (Rhodesia), and one-time Newbold preceptress, she taught with excellence. If we'd failed to learn our memory verse, our parents were quickly informed. By the next Sabbath, our memory performed better! Her husband was the church elder, a former Newbold history teacher and renowned for his interesting sermons. By Oxford definition they were 'gown'.

But, whether we were 'town' or 'gown', there was a common identity that went much deeper than race. We truly loved each other, and were there for each other. Our identity and common bond in Christ and the church was strong. Ethnic difference did not seem important. But, as I reflect, I'm distressed that I do not remember the personal racial struggles of some of my friends. Did they not share them, or was I not listening?

My brother and I attended a large monocultural village school of 1,300 pupils just north of Oxford. We were the only Adventists, and I felt alone. I longed for Sabbath at church to be with friends – the safe place. For sure, some of my friends were different: but our parents, our Sabbath School teacher, and our pastor taught us that to identify and judge another by skin colour was sinful. It was a value later reinforced by the first black SEC president, Pastor Silburn Reid, who would eloquently and frequently repeat to all, 'I am colour-blind!'

There was awareness of racial tensions within the wider South England Conference. From our Oxford perspective, there were stirrings in London and elsewhere. The *MESSENGER* informed us of the 'Pierson Package' arrangements (an attempt to resolve racial disparity in church leadership). It was a sobering Sabbath afternoon meeting in 1978 when local church members – our church family – met together to consider the merits or otherwise of a regional conference within the British Union. When the Union-wide ballot was held, the idea was rejected by an overwhelming majority.

To church leaders, along with our parents, we were deferential, with the local pastor held in high regard. A visit from a Conference official or department director was a high day! But the visit of the youth director to particularly minister to us was treasured. Each summer we'd join children and teens from across South England at the Oxwich summer camp in South Wales. For me, summer camps were heaven on earth! We played, worshipped, ate, and explored together – living under canvas. A diverse group we were, naturally learning about the experience of each other.

Local church life was at times a mix of contradictory worldviews. Fundamentalist Adventism was engrained in our DNA, providing strong faith and spirituality. At the same time, our worldview expanded as we enjoyed the company of Adventist postgraduate students from the US and Australia pursuing PhDs. Their presence helped us learn to ask questions, greatly encouraged by our own Afro-Caribbean youth leader, Don Galloway.

Don loved singing, and formed the Oxford Youth Choir, one which took us on an adventure – into London, and to the newly opened John Loughborough School. The SEC

decided to hold a Conference-wide choir competition. We practised, we sang, but win we did not! This felt like a new journey, gaining an insight for the first time into what London church life was like. As my adventures into London became more frequent, I particularly remember a day of fellowship circa 1978/1979 at the Westminster Central Hall, with Dr Calvin Rock from Oakwood College. Dr Rock preached with authority and conviction, and the Holloway Male Voice Choir lifted the roof with their singing. Of the 2,000-strong congregation, only a smattering of white members were present. As I looked around Central Hall, this mid-teen youth began to notice difference. No longer was it 'some were white and some were black'; rather, 'most were black and some were white'. My world was changing.

This story was first published in a special edition of the South England Conference Communicator magazine, where contributors share a broad look at how our church should respond to the issue of racism and how we can promote social justice and racial harmony. This significant and possibly historic edition of Communicator can be found at: <https://seccommunicator.com>.



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Diversity in the autumn semester

Our new series of Diversity Lectures will begin on
Tuesday 15 September at 7:30pm

Speaker: Dr Gifford Rhamie, Senior Lecturer in Pastoral and Biblical Studies, Newbold College
<https://vimeo.com/435713834>

Title: The Racial Pandemic of Ignorance: Black Lives Matter

The lectures will take place online via Zoom Webinar.

Participants can register at: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/3715973426927/VWV_61D1QJoITk6XHfHm1gz7w

All lectures will also be live-streamed on the Newbold College of Higher Education Facebook page, but please note that only Zoom-registered participants will be able to pose questions to the speaker.

For your diary

The 2020 Beach Lecture

Tuesday 13 October

Topic: Scripture and Violence – Christian, Jewish and Muslim perspectives

Speakers: Julia Snyder, Daniel Weiss, Omar Shaukat from the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme.

Their book on Scripture and violence will be published on 1 September.

<https://www.routledge.com/Scripture-and-Violence-1st-Edition/Snyder-Weiss/p/book/9780815362579>

Time: 19.30pm BST

The November Diversity Lecture

Tuesday 10 November

Topic: Does poverty have a colour? How the Church can restore dignity, equality and justice for all

Speaker: Amanda Mukwashi, Chief Executive, Christian Aid

<https://www.facebook.com/christianaid/videos/2285637485008170>

Time: 19.30pm GMT

Trevor Alderwick (1943-2020) d. 30 June.



Trevor passed away peacefully in Southmead Hospital, Bristol, on 30 June, after a short illness. He will be missed by the membership at Lodge Causeway and his many friends elsewhere. He will be remembered by all as a good friend and a Christian gentleman, who helped many people in his lifetime.

He was introduced to the

Adventist church as a teenager as the result of the influence of his school friend Derek Simms. Trevor found warmth and acceptance within the Adventist community in Bristol. He was particularly blessed by the ministry of Pastor Tom Fielding and his wife and family, who welcomed him into their home. He was further encouraged and befriended by the youth group – many of his associates from that time remained lifelong friends.

After some lapse of membership Trevor was welcomed back into fellowship by

Pastor Dalbert Elias due to the constant and continued support and encouragement from church members, particularly Brother Coupland and family, Brother and Sister Sutton, and Brother and Sister King. This further enriched his life with acceptance and friendship that was a lifetime joy to him. Despite suffering from acute asthma from early childhood, Trevor was always supportive to the elderly and infirm within the church and visited or telephoned them regularly, while caring for his own elderly mother.

He also served the church faithfully in a variety of roles through many years – as church clerk, deacon and Sabbath School superintendent. In later life, when confined to his home due to increasing ill health and mobility, he continued to maintain fellowship and supportive friendship with others by regular phone calls. He was also a kind and non-judgemental friend to our young people. His story causes us to reflect on the vital importance of friendship, fellowship and acceptance towards others as we serve God, both within our church family and the world at large, while we wait for our Lord's return.

RUTH OHMAN

**'Oh! Teach us to live well!
Teach us to live wisely and well!
Come back, God – how long do we have to wait? . . .
Make up for the bad times with some good times;
we've seen enough evil to last a lifetime.'**
Psalm 90:12, 13 & 15, The Message



**C.D. (Brooks) –
The man behind the message**

Author: Harold L. Lee with Benjamin Baker (2013)
ISBN 9780828027878

The repute of the first Breath of Life speaker needs little introduction, though for younger and more recent Adventists this might be necessary. He retired 25 years ago and subsequently passed to his rest in 2016. He is memorialised in many ways, and has been named among the three most influential black preachers in the Bradford Cleveland Brooks Leadership Centre at Oakwood University.

So why read his biography at this time?

For those who subscribe to the 'big man' version of history, 'C.D.' had stellar qualities, including a journey from obscurity to fame, overcoming disadvantage, racial bias and humiliation, to become a church leader with an international remit and public standing among broadcast preachers.

There are those who will find in 'C.D.' a role model to be admired and emulated – someone who lends dignity to the black cause and the best of Adventist values and their potential.

At a time when 'black lives' are at the forefront of the public agenda, the 'C.D.' story is relevant, because he has 'seen it all before'. He led a response to each of the major outrages of his time. Not through bitterness or destructive action,

but by building communities and leaders that brought pride to those who suffered.

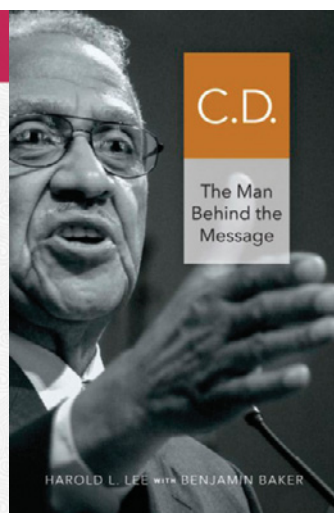
Throughout the Adventist world, he became part of 'the solution' to a church compromised with racial bias. He steered a course between austere forms of perfectionism, scholasticism, and those who would dilute belief and standards.

Charles Decatur Brooks was called to be an evangelist; he stayed the course with prophetic giftedness.

His biography describes what it took to become a leader of calibre.

VICTOR PILMOOR

C.D. (Brooks) – The man behind the message can be ordered from the LifeSource bookshop, visit: https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/?post_type=product&p=5604&preview=true.



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E-camporee and the ‘Arc of Hope’

When people celebrate the New Year they wish each other a happy year and hope that it ends well. No one prepared the world for COVID-19. Nobody told us that this year we would face a crisis. But in every crisis there is an opportunity. The Scottish and Welsh Missions would not let the Adventurers and Pathfinders have only a negative memory of 2020. Both missions saw an opportunity to collaborate and remember God’s promises to His children.

The theme ‘Arc of Hope’ was birthed from the realisation that God has always kept His promises to His children, right from Noah through to the end of time. God’s promises are true, which provides hope for the times the world is currently experiencing.

For the Pathfinder and Adventurer sponsors of both missions, including their club leaders, the plan to run an online camp was completely new. There might be a pandemic, but of higher importance was the fact that every child matters. In no way was it going to stop them from organising an event to allow children an opportunity to hear God speak to them.

Where possible, children were invited to set up indoor dens and outdoor tents to make the experience more enjoyable. The result was an overwhelming response, as children and parents from both countries (along with international friends who tuned in) heartily set up their dens and tents.

The crisis of the pandemic has resulted in the world becoming smaller, because of the use of technology, which brings the ability to draw speakers from around the world at very little cost.

Pastor Armando Miranda, the North America Division (NAD) Associate Director, kicked off the opening night by bringing the theme alive. He spoke about the ark being a symbol of hope of salvation. Pastor Clifford Herman, the South England Conference Pathfinder Director, shared a beautiful illustration of how the Japanese repair a broken glass with gold, making it the most expensive piece of equipment. The message reminded us of hope in restoration – how Jesus Christ paid the most expensive price on the cross for every child.

Pastor Jennifer Ogden, also from the NAD, expressed a message of hope in the resurrection with deep enthusiasm as she underlined that when the world says, ‘You Only Live Once’ (YOLO), Adventurers and Pathfinders have a more hopeful message of ‘You only Live Forever’ (YOLF).

Saturday night was packed with a special presentation from Chitiga Mbanje from Zimbabwe who continued with the reminder of the hope that eternal life offers.

The children also enjoyed watching themselves share their talents with their friends by way of recorded video clips, which were wonderfully put together. The ‘Missions’ Got Talent’ show, as it was named, was a ‘let-your-hair-down’ moment, much enjoyed by all.

In the closing message, Pastor Simon Siew shared beautiful stories, reminding us of the hope of Jesus’ second coming, which might happen sooner than we think.

On Sunday morning, while we shared a breakfast of pancakes and ‘rainbow-inspired’ food on our Zoom platform, we wondered how it might have felt for Noah and his family after forty days in the ark when they finally had their first breakfast on the new earth. It was a beautiful scene.

Cedrene Botha’s (aka Professor Noodlebrain) experiments and illustrations emphasised daily themes in a visual and engaging manner, while the daily health tips provided fascinating and timely fun facts on health.

To mimic the interaction we enjoy at camporees, children had fun with virtual exercise, craft and Kahoot-based quizzes.

Ultimately, we sincerely believe the motive of Pathfinding is to lead children to a friendship with Jesus. Therefore, the highlight of our first joint e-camporee, the first of its kind across the Union, were prayer requests and the decisions for Jesus Christ through the e-commitment card. It was a humbling experience, and a huge source of motivation for us, the enthusiastic club leaders.

We’d like to express our appreciation to the all presenters, technicians, parents, guardians, club leaders and both mission

presidents for their unwavering support. Special mention to the BUC Youth Ministries Director, Pastor Dejan Stojkovic, for making himself available throughout the camp.

We hope that when children remember 2020 they will not be stuck with the memories of the devastating pandemic but remember the ‘Arc of Hope’.

MTHOKOZISI NDLOVU, SCOTTISH MISSION CO-SPONSOR, PATHFINDERS AND ADVENTURERS
PHOTOS: JOY PHIRI



‘Overall the e-camporee was a fun and enjoyable experience. Hearing about an e-camp at first, we thought it would be something that would not work and wouldn’t be enjoyable enough, but it was something different and new.’ (Welsh Mission)

‘It gave us lots to do throughout these times and it ate most of our time of sitting down doing nothing. The whole structure of the camp was great; we enjoyed every programme that was on.’ (Welsh Mission)

‘We learned something new from the doctors; we enjoyed all the stories and messages from the preachers and Professor Noodlebrain, and putting the preachers in the spotlight, hearing their embarrassing stories, was fun.’ (Scottish Mission)

‘It was a fun and enjoyable experience camping at home. We wish for more sessions like these if the lockdown is to continue.’ (Scottish Mission)