

M

Messenger

Journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
in the United Kingdom and Ireland

26 November 2021 • Volume 126 • 11

The Union Team – Elected to Serve

Back row, left to right: Pastor Eglan Brooks, Pastor Kevin Johns, Dr Kirk Thomas, Pastor Sam Davies, Pastor Jacques Venter, Sharon Platt-Mcdonald, Dr Leslie Ackie, Steve Okelo and Elisabeth Sangüesa
Front row: Pastor John Surridge, Pastor Ian Sweeney, Wederly Aguiar



For more, go to **MESSENGER** Extra
MESSENGER • Inform • Educate • Inspire



Setting the BUC Session's spiritual tone

by Dr Daniel Duda



For the Ninth Quinquennial Session, which took place over Thursday 21 and Friday 22 October, the spiritual tone was set by Dr Daniel Duda, Trans-European Education Director.

Thursday morning

In his opening presentation to the session on Thursday morning, prior to any business, delegates were invited to ponder over a question: *What would God want to say to us?* 'Once upon a time, in the history of God's people,' explained Dr Duda, 'there was a period of about four hundred years when God was silent.' The people were waiting for Him to speak. Turning to Matthew 3:1-2 (NRSV), Dr Duda demonstrated the suddenness of God's intervention: *'In those days John the Baptist appeared . . . proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."'* Finally, a word from the Lord, with an invitation, *'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'* (Matthew 4:17, NRSV.)

And what is this kingdom of heaven coming near all about? 'This is the good news of God, available to all people – free, a gift of grace, and accessible to whomever you are. If you want to enter into kingdom living – to live under God's reign . . . to be grace-filled beacons of God's kingdom – the only option is to repent. Who needs to repent?' was Dr Duda's concluding rhetorical question. We can only answer, 'I do.'

Thursday evening

At the end of a busy day of church business, reports, elections and discussion, Dr Duda spoke on the theme of 'It takes two to speak the truth – one to speak it and another to hear it'. Basing his thoughts on Luke 8:18, he made the application,

'So pay attention to how you hear.' Noting Jesus' words, 'To those who listen to My teaching, more understanding will be given' (Matthew 13:12, author's paraphrase), Dr Duda observed that listening to others is vital for the dissemination of the Gospel.

Friday morning

Using the illustration of Moses' experience at the burning bush, Dr Duda concentrated his theme on the 'transforming power of holy curiosity'. 'When the bush came into vision,' he explained, 'the Bible says Moses "turned aside" – and that's what makes the story.' (Exodus 3:4.) 'And what is the message from God?' he continued. 'I want you, Moses, with all your warts and all, to experience My grace in a new way, . . . get a new perspective on who I am, and start a new type of community. Your shortcomings are no longer the truth about how you should see yourself. And, be assured, I will be with you.'

Challenging the delegates to turn the Ninth Quinquennial BUC Session from 'ordinary' to 'extraordinary', Dr Duda wondered if we continue to possess similar 'holy curiosity' as Moses, Christ's disciples, the reformers, and Adventist pioneers. 'If we do,' he believes, 'God still rewards inquisitive faith, but do we still have that hope?'

Acutely aware that session delegates on this day were meeting 177 years after the Adventist Great Disappointment, Dr Duda reminded delegates that 'a movement was born because a group of people no longer wanted to walk a path simply because it was ancient . . . but commenced a journey to discover biblical truth. God wanted them to discover again, and He is still looking for people to turn aside.'

As interesting and thought-provoking as Dr Duda's insight into Scripture always is, memorable on this day was his concluding prayer of confession and intercession:

God, we're so grateful that You have called us, and we're so painfully aware that we are what we are, that in so many ways we're inadequate; we're incompetent; worse than that, we have messed up during this quinquennium. Other people have been hurt because of our misplaced zeal.

But, Lord, far more than that, we're so grateful that You are the God who has come down to be with His people, though we are sinners. And now, God, we want to turn aside, and not only today, the last day of our session, but also for the coming days and weeks.

We ask You now to help us to set aside all our preconceived ideas, improper biases and prejudices, polluted thoughts, and all other misapprehensions that we have, and to listen to You now and to speak with You, to hear Your voice and to be in Your presence.

Help us to make good decisions, so that we experience the transforming power of holy curiosity.

*We pray this in Jesus' name.
Amen.*





David Neal, Editor

‘My name is Cleo’

How can we begin to describe the agony of the parents?



Many events have taken place over the last month which could have captured the attention of this editorial: ‘COP26’; the brutal murder of British MP, Sir David Anthony Andrew Amess; the £305m Saudi Arabian-backed takeover of Newcastle Football Club; a lobbying MP and parliamentary standards; the utter tyranny ensuing in today’s Afghanistan; and, closer to home, the Union and Mission sessions. All deserve consideration for reflection, wrestling over, and comment.

But then came the heart-stopping story of four-year-old Cleo Smith, abducted from her family tent on a campground 40 miles north of their home in a town called Carnarvon, and 800 miles north of Perth in Western Australia.

As the story broke, triggered in the minds of many was the story of Azaria Chamberlain, killed by a dingo in the late 1980s, with the media particularly unkind to the parents. On this occasion, Cleo’s parents were not ‘strange religious types’, but just ordinary working-class folk. But Mum had a new partner, creating a stepdad for Cleo, a picture which might contain a story – and the newspaper hacks smelt it. Could $2 + 2 = 5$? Ordered by their editors to ‘dig’, they tried to dish the dirt on the parents, just like the Chamberlains’ experience. In this case, the police felt compelled to search the family home. It took the Western Australia premier, Mark McGowan, to dismiss the media speculation by describing Cleo’s parents as ‘fundamentally decent, honest human beings’.¹

During the night of 15 October, Cleo wakes up her mother, Ellie, to request a drink of water and then goes back to sleep. It’s not until 6am that Ellie discovers ‘Cleo is gone’.² As the authorities conduct an intensive search around the campsite over the next couple of days, they hope to find Cleo alive and well – none the worse for wear for wandering off. But the search finds no Cleo and no clues. Surely Cleo hasn’t been abducted?

How can we begin to describe the agony of the parents? Confusion – this is not happening to us, is it? Then the possible self-blame of ‘if only’, and then anger: ‘Someone has our child – who? How dare they? Were we being watched? And then the police think we might have something to do with it? Please . . .!’

Thrust into the media spotlight, Ellie Smith and her partner Jake Gliddon make an appeal for Cleo’s safe return. The search and investigation are ramped up to take on board multiple support agencies. ‘*Detectives from Perth, Carnarvon and Geraldton were brought in, along with forensics officers. Helicopters, drones and an Australian Maritime Safety Authority jet provided aerial support. Off the coast, marine search and rescue volunteers and fisheries officers checked nearby waters. They were throwing everything they had at the search, and they weren’t ruling anything out.*’³

For 18 long days Cleo was missing. Detectives always hoped, but they also knew the possibility that the outcome might not be a happy one. Following a tip-off, the team were led to a house just two miles from the family home. Detective Sergeant Cameron asked the

little girl sitting alone, ‘*What is your name?*’ No answer. A second time he asked, ‘*What is your name?*’ No answer. A third time he asked, ‘*What is your name?*’ The little girl looked at him and said, ‘*My name is Cleo.*’ Describing that moment, Detective Cameron reflected, ‘**We had always hoped for that outcome, but we were not prepared for it. It was absolutely fantastic. . . .**’

The very well-known narrative of Luke 15 contains the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. Why does Jesus use three parables to try and essentially explain the same principle? Is it because He wants His audience to know that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all participate in the search for lost people? Who is the good, caring shepherd? It is Christ. Who helps the woman in her search for the coin? It is the Holy Spirit, serving as a source of light. And who is the father who greets the son home? None other than God the Father Himself! They are all ‘out there’, searching for the one who is lost. As They direct the operation, They call on a seemingly infinite number of angels to help them. ‘*Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*’ (Hebrews 1:14, NKJV.)

Like the team in Australia searching for Cleo, the Trinity throw *everything They have at the search*. Do you ever wonder what God makes of our circumstances, those of our family, or wider society? I like to imagine the Trinity watching the BBC 6pm news with me. What do They make of current goings-on? I can only begin to imagine Their distress.

The Bible translator and writer J. B. Phillips once imagined two angels (one senior, the other junior) talking with each other about the great controversy story while viewing the ‘visited planet’ from interstellar space. The senior angel is trying to instruct his junior on the ways of God. At one point in their conversation, the little angel enquires about what it must be like for God during this in-between time between the ascension and the Second Coming. The senior angel replies, ‘*Sometimes it is agony to watch, and sometimes it is joy unspeakable.*’

There is one quick final observation I also think deserves attention. Detective Sergeant Cameron, reflecting, said, ‘**We had always hoped for that outcome, but we were not prepared for it. It was absolutely fantastic . . .**’ I can’t help but wonder if, on matters of seeking and saving the lost in our time, we suspect that ‘the great abductor’ is so strong and so mighty, there’s nothing our God can do (you read the sentence correct – there was no typo in it!)

While we ever hope for prodigals to return home, I wonder if we are prepared for it? Because when it happens it is going to be absolutely fantastic. It’s got to happen, because all the Trinity are involved!

¹<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-59159331>

²<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-11-04/mark-mcgowan-arrives-in-carnarvon-cleo-smith/100569330>

³<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-11-04/how-wa-police-found-missing-girl-cleo-smith/100589726>

The Lord still Ruler of all

Thursday at Session – 21 October 2021

‘Be Thou My Vision, O Lord of My Heart’ – the prayerful eighth-century words of the hymn – set the tone of the Ninth Quinquennial Session of the British Union Conference (BUC), which took place during incredibly challenging times, postponed and relocated once due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

One hundred and ninety-seven delegates gathered from North and South England, Ireland and Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, to look both backwards and forwards regarding the progress of the Church’s mission in these isles.

It is always a poignant opening moment of a British Union session when delegates remember ministers, Bible workers, teachers, and our publishing house workers who went to their rest over the past quinquennium. Friends and colleagues were taken suddenly;

others after a long and protracted illness; a few, possibly, due to COVID-19.

The first significant business item was to consider the matter of department budgets for 2021-2026. At the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, when BUC tithe income was down 35%, a decision was taken at the December 2020 BUC Executive to recommend to this session that the budgets be reduced from 8 to 5, but with a view that this was not fixed. As the financial situation looked more promising, by February 2021 the BUC Executive voted to increase from 5 to 6, taking a further step at its September 2021 meeting to increase funding to support 7 department budgets.

This did not meet with the approval of the delegates, and an amendment was agreed to increase the budgets to 8.

The President’s Report – Pastor Ian Sweeney



Pastor Sweeney felt it important to provide an overview of the purpose of the British Union, particularly as, in his encounter with members, many continue to ask the question, ‘What is it for?’

‘We are here for a purpose that is driven by mission, the lens through which we view everything we do as a church, defining who we are.’

Reviewing the history of the BUC, it was noted that it was formed in 1902, and by 1903 there were two conferences and three missions, with a total of 1,160 members returning a collective tithe of £3,080 (equivalent of £384,000 today).

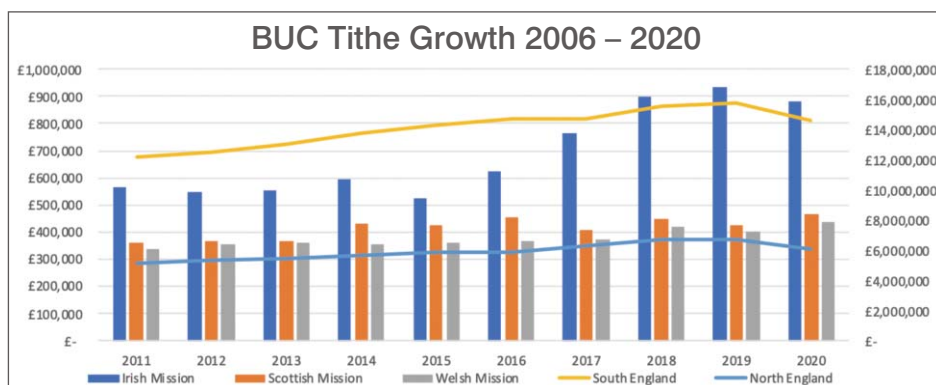
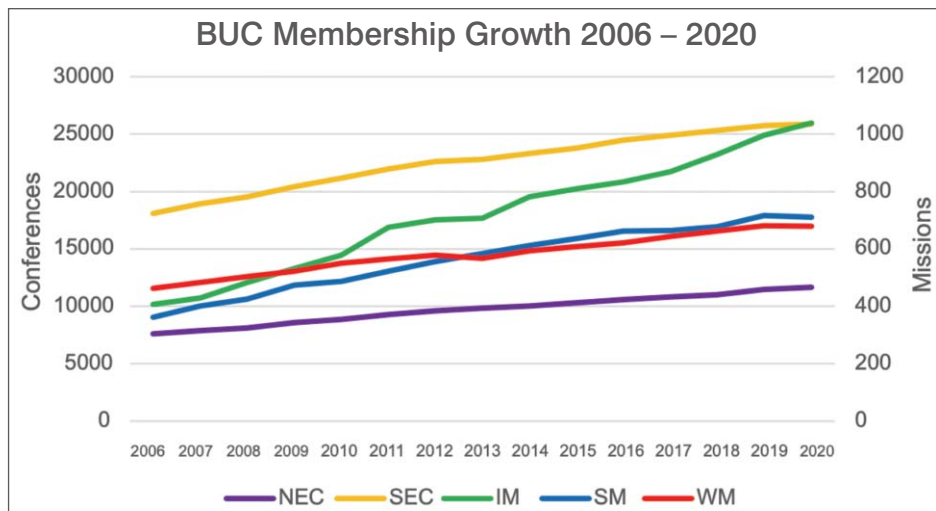
‘Unions were formed so that the Seventh-day Adventist Church might most effectively minister to the needs of varying cultures around the world. It was always about mission and understanding our role. We adapt; we apply and make Christ known in the best way possible in our territory.’

‘It’s about making disciples where we are. We share the three angels’ messages in preparation for His soon return, and our purpose is to keep focused on mission.’

During a question-and-answer session, Lawson Riviere asked how the BUC adjusted its strategy during COVID-19 to meet the needs of the local congregations. Pastor Sweeney noted three realities:

1. We were fearful of collapse and wondered if the Union would survive.
2. We worked to ensure that our actions, in consultation with the conferences and missions, would help build back our members into our community.
3. In the early days of COVID-19 the need for pastors was great. We couldn’t visit, but we needed to be a community.

When asked why we still have only two conferences and three missions, Pastor Sweeney replied that there is a plan for the Irish Mission to become a conference.



The Executive Secretary's Report – Pastor John Surridge

'Statistical tables and charts,' reported Pastor Surridge in the session report book, 'can easily be dismissed as just a sea of numbers, but it is important to



remind ourselves that every number represents a person – a mother or father, husband or wife, brother or sister – each one a valuable member of the community of the church. An increase of just one should be an occasion for great rejoicing (Luke 15:6, 7), and the loss of just one should cause us to examine carefully why the loss occurred, and whether anything can be done to prevent such losses in the future.'

From the session report book the following statistics are noted:

Over the quinquennium, net membership of the British Union Conference increased from 36,142 at the beginning of 2016 to 39,970 at the end of 2020, an increase of 3,828, or 10.59%. It would have undoubtedly been higher had COVID-19 not prevented many baptisms from taking place in 2020. This compares to a 14.15% increase in the previous quinquennium.

The number of churches has increased in line with membership by 19, from 278 at the end of the last quinquennium to 297 at the end of this. Companies, however, have seen a much more dramatic increase, from 41 to 111 in the same time period. This may be a reflection of the regularisation of many informal 'groups', which are now officially recorded as companies.

The charts as presented (in the session report book) show how these statistics are distributed across the conferences and missions of the BUC, but **special mention should be made of the Irish Mission, which had a remarkable membership increase of 28.06% over the quinquennium.**

In memory

Over the quinquennium we have lost 1,092 of our members through death (2.73% of our total current membership), with the highest number of these deaths being recorded in 2020 – possibly a reflection of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the previous quinquennium we lost 833 members through death (2.3% of our membership). The increase during this quinquennium may be a reflection of the high number of older people we have in our churches. Of those who have died during the quinquennium we pay particular tribute to our denominational workers and their spouses. As we think of those who have died, let us remember the One who came to give eternal life to all who believe in His name. Let us also remember the reason for our existence as a church: to bring the good news of salvation and eternal life to a world of dying people.

Pastor Steve Roberts wanted to know what

strategy is in place to grow the Church from the Union, in order to filter down to the conferences to motivate the pastoral team and members to grow the Church in the BUC. 'I'm a pastor and I'm part of the BUC and I feel we need to get something from the top. We need to see something coming down. We need to think global and act local.'

A question from the floor was raised concerning a continuing Human Relations matter within the BUC (also raised during a question to the BUC President). Pastor Jacques Venter (Associate Secretary), responding on behalf of the administration, recognised 'areas within our own policies that need strengthening'. Continuing, he said, 'Our current action for dealing with employment grievances is to refer the matter to an independent panel to investigate. As part of their response, they bring forward recommendations to put new and better procedures in place for the future. At this point in time these are actively under consideration.'

'My appeal to you,' concluded Pastor Surridge, 'is to walk with us, work with us, and let's see if we can make some real changes in this world.'

Treasurer's Report – Earl Ramharacksingh

The Treasurer, Earl Ramharacksingh, began by pointing out that it would be easy to headline his report by saying that 'during the last quinquennium we made appropriations of nearly £10 million. But what I want to focus on . . . is the strategy and backstory of how the Union worked to ensure continued financial viability for the Church in the UK and Ireland.' (This part of his report continues as close to verbatim as possible.)

HM Customs & Excise

During the last five years, HM Customs and Excise notified us of a pre-2016 tax liability. Their direct question to the organisation was, 'Did we wilfully avoid tax?' We engaged positively with this enquiry, explaining the role and function in particular of the pastor, which resulted in saving tens of thousands of pounds each year in ministers' tax liabilities.

Stanborough School

This report could easily have read: 'We tried, we failed and the school was closed.' But it has always been my intent to help turn around the financial challenges the school faced. In autumn 2019 a forensic audit of the school's operations was done, and we intentionally 'drilled down' into the finances of the school, so to speak, identifying those loss-making cost centres. This involved redundancies and finding other cost savings from mainly auxiliary services. In all, we identified £750,000 of cost savings at the school. I believe there still needs to be continued

support from the BUC, not least to ensure that Adventist secondary education in this union continues.

Pandemic

During the early stages of the pandemic, tithe return had fallen by 35% in the context of net cash outflows from the BUC at about £100,000 per month. Prompt and urgent action was required to ensure the very viability of the BUC.

What did we do?

- We dialogued with all treasurers in the British Isles.
- We ensured cash was available for all entities to ensure core costs of salaries, and that direct community evangelism costs could be met.
- In our schools there was much anxiety. We ensured that they received the right guidance as they navigated their way through uncharted paths.
- In a great spirit of collaboration during the pandemic, we received extraordinary support from the Trans-European Division, the Job Retention Scheme, the Seventh-day Adventist Pension Fund and a legacy totalling £1.2 million.

Extraordinary income from sale of land

One mile east of the BUC office in Garston, our charity owns a piece of land which has recently become ripe for development, due to a relaxation of planning laws by the District Council. If developed, this could accrue for the BUC a possible one-off extraordinary receipt of up to £20 million. We have been working with the respective authorities, architects and developers to ensure the best possible outcome for the church.

Motivation, mentoring & training

If there is one aspect of this work I have most enjoyed, it is being with our local church treasurers. I continue to be impressed with their dedication and skill. It is they who make our work so worthwhile. We have been able to meet (pre-COVID-19) on a number of occasions, and I have sought to stay connected during the pandemic.

God's calling

It would be easy for the work of a treasurer to be absorbed by numbers on an accounts sheet: but, in my ministry, I have sought to emphasise that God has given us talents and skill sets. . . . What are you doing for the Lord? How can you make a difference? How can you be a witness in your world? Because God has given us a skill set, we are all servant leaders for Him. I also want to remind us that the most important stakeholders in our church are the youth.

Earl concluded with an appeal: 'Whoever you are, you can share your faith with somebody.'

To read the full reports from the session, visit: <https://adventist.uk/news/article/go/2021-10-22/buc-session-administrational-reports/>

EDITOR

A reflection and appeal from the Nominating Committee chair

Friday at Session – 22 October 2021

Prior to the Nominating Committee meeting together on Friday morning to complete its work, the chair, Pastor Raafat Kamal, took time with delegates to reflect on the process.



Out of all the sessions and chairing all the nominating committees in our 14 TED units, I would say, by far, that we've had the best Nominating Committee on record in my experience. The group you voted, that have met together, have clearly been a blessing over seven Sundays. But there are some concerns about the process we have relating to the session, and there are, I believe, some lessons we have to learn. 'If we keep doing the same things over and over again, and expect different results,' Einstein once suggested, 'that is a little mad.'

I want to address, if I may, three disconnects:

1. The BUC is a 'union of conferences' and the Union is here to serve its constituencies, namely the conferences and missions. Let me also add that the BUC is a complex unit. Therefore, our prayer, our planning, our dreaming, our designing, our discussion, our deliberation, our voting, has to keep in mind that we are dealing with a complex union. It is a reality that we have a serious disconnect regarding the way we do session business.

For the past two sessions we have ventured into a new model which is protracted, which takes 6-7 months to deliver the business (this year because of COVID-19 it was 10 months): a model, we note, that the units we serve, SEC & NEC, have not adopted. As a result, we are experiencing disconnect, with rising distrust about how we function.

It's therefore clear to me that if you want to start a model of change, it's got to start with the conferences, not the Union, because once 'grass roots' members adopt the plan, they will be cheerleaders for it to work.

2. The model of doing business as a session has relied quite heavily on operational principles from the business world. While we can learn from the business world, we are not a business, but a faith organisation. We grow together with Jesus Christ as our head.

Under this current model, a distance has been created between the Nominating Committee and members/delegates that we serve when it comes to 'referring back' reports. Instead of the traditional invitation to delegates to 'meet with us in a room to share your concern', the email approach now used creates distance. It is as if the Nominating Committee has become a 'cold entity'. That 'at the door' dynamic is missing, with a loss of the personal touch. The faith organisation needs the personal touch, and it is something our organisation needs to regain.

3. Should the Nominating Committee engage with the **nominee president** regarding the team he makes? This matter arises because he is not elected until the session delegates vote – at session. This is a serious

disconnect, leaving the Nominating Committee to work in the dark. The president needs to have a say about those working in his team as someone close to the management and governance of the organisation. The Nominating Committee feel they need his input in the process.

The implications and advice

'Two- to three-day sessions are bruising – brutal, even – for the people involved, for those elected or not. We forget to think about our families who go through and wonder about the reasons for being deselected. While we know that 'your term ends when it's session time', the head does not always connect to the heart. Under the current model of conducting a protracted session, the bruising and hurt are spread over 6-7 months, and for this session 10 months. It is brutal and is very hard on our workforce where we fail in our duty of care to our church employees. A 6-7-month process can also provide opportunity for 'political games', with the 'flying rubber bullets' which result in people getting bruised.

I humbly advise that you consider appointing a standing taskforce to look at the sessions. Heavily populate it with folk from the conferences to make sure that there is synchronisation and ownership by the entities we serve. And keep evaluating the process from the grass roots up. In recent times we have learned a lot from the NEC Session. Keep the taskforce dynamic, because we cannot wait five years until things happen.

Another piece of advice: let's be careful when we design models that it's not only left to the left-brainers. Administrators tend to be left-brainers – I am one of them. They want order, they want structure, and that is wonderful. But remember, in the process of designing things, to work smoothly with processes using the head: do not lose the heart. There is sometimes a disconnect between the head and the heart. Make space for it! Many times, in my leadership, I did not read the heart issues, and many times I had to go back and apologise.

Finally, sessions should not be a circus. When we come to sessions, we should be here to give praise to God and give glory to Him; we should celebrate. Yes, there is business to deliberate, but keep that in the back of your mind.



Changes to the constitution

The bulk of Friday morning was taken up with proposed changes to the constitution. Leaders and delegates knew that this was going to be a complex session. This section of business was chaired by Pastor Audrey Andersson and presented by Pastor John Surridge.

'The purpose of our constitution is rather like that of a skeleton,' Pastor Surridge explained to delegates. 'Without it, we can't do anything to allow us to do mission, or even enable the church to function. Our constitution has both a church and a charity element.'

To help readers understand what actually happened regarding the constitution at the session, I caught up with Pastor John Surridge to explain the context.

DN: It's my understanding, Pastor Surridge, that the big picture of what took place at Session is that the whole constitution has changed. Is that correct?

JS: Yes, Pastor Neal, the whole constitution has changed. There have been literally hundreds of changes to bring our constitution into line with the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. This is the biggest change there has been to our constitution since we were first registered with the Charity Commission on 10 February 1995. The revised document has been worked on over several years, with input from the Constitution Committee, members, pastors, lawyers, and the wider Seventh-day Adventist Church, and a final version was presented to the delegates a month before this session.

DN: Noted. So at this session it was amendments to this final version that were discussed. The first amendment was in regard to a cap on the total number of delegates.

JS: Correct again – and not, I want to stress, amendments to the original constitution.

The cap on total delegates proposed in the final version was 350, but this was amended at the session to 375. As this was discussed, a number of factors were considered with a higher cap – including the costs of the session, and whether or not it benefits the democratic process. One major concern raised from the floor was the feeling by some delegates about a 'loss of voice' with numbers capped and an increasing membership.

DN: What was the second amendment about?

JS: A decision was taken to go back to the old way of working, with the meeting of the Recommendations Committee and the Nominating Committee taking place at the session, rather than before it. The change to the 'new' method was brought in in the 17 May 2009 session and

has always been viewed as something of an experiment. This was also the session which voted the cap on regular delegates of 300.

I think it is fair to say that there are pros and cons of both ways of working. It was always the intention of the 'new' method to ensure that the Nominating Committee gave due diligence, giving time for a proper consideration of possible candidates for the positions of officers and directors. However, as the chair of the Nominating Committee has explained, the unwanted side effect was that it left people in limbo – between the time when they were nominated (or not) and the session when that nomination would be ratified (or not).

DN: Ever since I have served on the BUC Executive Committee, a TED officer (or his delegated representative) has been in the room. Has his/her status changed with the third amendment brought to the session?

JS: There has been a complete change already in the wording of the final document, not the current constitution. The end result is that a week ago the TED officers were all ex officio members of the BUC Executive Committee, and therefore trustees of the charity (jointly and severally liable, and so on), but now they are not. They are simply standing invitees with a voice, but no vote.

DN: If I want to take a look at the current constitution post-session, where can I find it?

JS: The best place now to view the constitution is on my page at: <https://adventist.uk/departments/executive-secretary/>.

DN: So, in short, John, what would you say are the benefits from the new constitution?

JS: I'm very glad you asked that last question. There are three:

1. Much closer alignment with the General Conference and world church.
2. We've gone back to 'old style' sessions.
3. We now have the possibility of a 'virtual' session, should another pandemic arise.

DN: Thank you, Pastor Surridge, for informing us and explaining these details.

As the session came to an end, the new department directors for the next five years were introduced. However, and perhaps unique in the history of BUC sessions, Pastor Ian Sweeney invited delegates from the floor to share anything on their minds about their hopes for the work of the church in the UK and Ireland over the next five years. And share they did! With messages from the heart – messages they want church leaders to take to heart, not so much about what plans and strategies we adopt as about who we are. Keep a lookout for more on this through *BUC News* and *MESSENGER* over the coming weeks.



BUC support staff: Jacquie Johnson, Natalie Davidson, Lucinda Calvert, Renatela Lunac, Mary Kapon, Audrey Maxwell and Kerrine Guthrie

Nominating Committee report

The full work of the Nominating Committee for officers and departmental directors of the British Union Conference was completed and approved by delegates mid-morning Friday.

Administrative officers

Ian Sweeney
John Surridge
Wederly Aguiar
Jacques Venter

President
Executive Secretary
Treasurer
Associate Secretary

Dan Serb
Jimmy Botha
Graham Allcock

President, Irish Mission
President, Scottish Mission
President, Welsh Mission

Kevin Johns
Sam Davies
Eglan Brooks
Les Ackie
Sharon Platt-McDonald
Kirk Thomas

Teens, Youth, Adventurers and Pathfinders & Chaplaincy
Communications & Media
Ministerial, Discipleship & Continuing Education
Family, Children & Possibility Ministries
Health, Women & Community Services
Personal Ministries, Sabbath School, Evangelism & Church Growth

Referred to incoming Executive Committee:

Education
Adventist Discovery Centre
Stanborough Press Manager
Stanborough Press Editor
Missions Executive Secretary
Missions Treasurer
Stanborough Park Manager

Ministries: Men's, Prayer, Public Affairs & Religious Liberty, Singles, Stewardship, Trust Services.

Executive Committee members

Pastor Kevin Johns
Mrs Sharon Platt-McDonald
Pastor Kirk Thomas
Mr Albert Gardiner
Mrs Patricia Asamoah
Pastor Adrian Peck
Mrs Naomi Ninvalle
Mr David Billett
Mr Darren Johnson
Miss Herminia Matthieu
Pastor Mazlin Holness
Pastor Michael Walker
Mr Eleazer Paul
Pastor Pardon Chenjerai
Mr Fortune Mhlangu
Mrs Sally Ann Flemmings-Danquah
Mr Sam Walters
Mr Charles Lethbridge
Mr Krisztian Andradi
Pastor Jovan Adamovic

BUC Director
BUC Director
BUC Director
SEC Area 2
SEC Area 3
SEC Area 3
SEC Area 6a
SEC Area 6b
SEC Area 6c
SEC Area 6c
SEC Area 6c
SEC Area 8
SEC Area 8
NEC Area 3
NEC Area 3
NEC Area 4
NEC Area 5
Scottish Mission
Irish Mission
Welsh Mission



Delegate voting cards



BUC directors and administrators in listening mode ...



... as a long line of delegates queue to speak about anything that's on their minds



Pastor Ian Sweeney, BUC President



Counting the delegate voting cards



Pastors Paul Tompkins and Jimmy Botha, outgoing and incoming Scottish Mission presidents

140 years of service celebrated at Scottish Mission day of fellowship

by Pastor Jim Botha

One hundred and forty years of service were celebrated by the combined efforts of five of Scotland's own, the first set of many BUC legacy awards to follow at local church level. Pastor Paul Tompkins, Pastor Njabulo and Mthoko Ndlovu, as well as Lawrence and Semone Pollard, were honoured on Sabbath 9 October for a combination of 140 years of work in Pathfinders. Pastor Dejan Stojković, Trans-European Division Youth Ministries and Pathfinder Director, did the honours in the presence of a hybrid audience from all around Scotland and the world. Pastor Tompkins received the 40 Years British Union Legacy Award, and the other four received the 25 Years British Union Legacy Award respectively. These awards were handed out as the Scottish Mission day of fellowship drew to a close.

The Scottish Mission celebrates an annual day of fellowship, and 2021 saw the introduction of the first hybrid service, where a part of the congregation were in the same building, and the other part were either at home or saw the events in their church buildings as they were transmitted worldwide.

The theme of the day, 'I will go: moved by compassion', was well echoed by the guest speaker for the day, Pastor Ian Sweeney, President of the British Union Conference. Pastor Ian powerfully painted a picture of an attitude of care and compassion towards those who do not know Christ.

The question raised, 'Are we crying for those who are lost, or do we feel we know

more than others, and are saved, so we're happy?' was considered. Members of the local audience, as well as from the internet, made good observations. It is clear that we ought to pause for a while and consider how we feel about those who do not know Christ. The love of God in us should compel us to consider how deeply we feel about those whom we know who need to get to know Christ. No longer can we just feel happy about thinking that we are saved, and forget those who are 'lying by the roadside'.

The day of fellowship kicked off with beautiful music and singing, led by Charles Lethbridge, Lucas and Jordanna Machado. Spirit-filled songs and music were accompanied by Lynn Retallick, who enjoyed being part of the small outfit in the Dunfermline church.

The weekly Sabbath School lesson study was led by Pastor Njabulo Ndlovu, and his guests were both from the British Union – Pastors Eglan Brooks and Jacques Venter. The discussion took place in the Dunfermline church, but was attended by over 100 entries on the Zoom platform.

A full day of activities included the afternoon programme, with the investiture of 6 Master Guides who have

completed the work needed to qualify. The Scottish Mission is blessed to have these leaders in various churches, who will serve as teachers to lead young lives to Christ. These leaders are Andrew Mason, Sikhangele Ndlovu, Pastor Rory Mendez, Genevieve Zabate, Benjamin Bakina and Dr Bankole Davies-Browne. As well as sharing some of the work they have done in preparation, two of the Master Guides also demonstrated their knot-tying skills, and the audience found this exercise to be spectacular.

A full day at the Scottish Mission day of fellowship was rounded off with the recognition of years of service. What can be added? Hope can be added. With so many skills and so much expertise in the service of Christ, it is clear that, with so many aspects of life feeling challenging nowadays, the Scottish Mission feels that there is hope: and, specifically, hope in Christ. The mission is looking forward to the next day of fellowship, and it is clear that it is impossible to know what is going to happen in a year's time. We have to pray that the Lord will open the door for the mission to fulfil its work in God's vineyard.



Pastor Dejan Stojković, Pastor Njabulo Ndlovu, Semone Pollard, Andrew Mason, Sikhangele Ndlovu, Pastor Rory Mendez, Genevieve Zabate, Mthoko Ndlovu, Dr Bankole Davies-Browne, Lawrence Pollard, Pastor Paul Tompkins (Benjamin Bakina in absentia)



Pastor Paul Tompkins



Pastor Jacques Venter

Leadership change for the Scottish Mission

by Pastor Jimmy Botha

MacDonald Inchyra Hotel in Falkirk was the venue for the 11th Triennial Session of the Scottish Mission on Sunday 10 October. Up to 60 delegates from across the Mission convened in the hotel conference room, with a further three tuned in via teleconference. The main business of the morning session was to receive the administrative reports from the offices of President, Secretariat and Treasury, together with other reports presented by the departmental sponsors.

The chair of the session, Scottish Mission President Pastor Paul Tompkins, opened the proceedings, welcoming the delegation, while British Union Conference (BUC) Associate Executive Secretary and Mission Executive Secretary, Pastor Jacques Venter, dealt with the formal seating of delegates.

The President's Report was a video overview of the various activities, programmes and

initiatives carried out during the past triennium, which also reflected the teamwork and collaboration achieved among the few ministers within the Mission. Pastor Tompkins paid tribute to the members of the Mission for their faithfulness and resilience during the pandemic. Yet, despite the challenges, the Church in Scotland saw greater community engagement and outreach, membership growth and financial stability during perhaps the most uncertain period of time in its history. Concluding his report, Tompkins expressed appreciation to God for his 40 years of service to the Church. He is now ending his ministry as he takes up retirement, but remaining in Scotland. 'It's been a pleasure and a privilege to serve in pastoral ministry,' said Tompkins, 'thirty years of which have been spent in youth ministry and ten years in churches. . . . Would I do it again? Most certainly!'

Following his report, BUC



Delegates



Pastor Ian Sweeney expressed appreciation to Dawn and Paul Tompkins and Jacques Venter

President Pastor Ian Sweeney expressed appreciation for his years of service together with his wife Dawn, both having served in various entities across the church organisation within the BUC and the Trans-European Division.

The Executive Secretary's Report, presented by Pastor Jacques Venter, included a statistical analysis of the membership make-up of the Church in Scotland. Despite the challenges of a pandemic and church closure for many months, there were still 44 baptised during the three years, with 51 members transferred into the Mission. Together with an additional 12 through profession of faith and 12 through administrative adjustments, the Mission saw continued steady growth in membership.

Some of the questions posed for the Executive Secretary's Report included the need for



Charles Lethbridge



Outgoing Family Ministries sponsors, Tarzan and Priscilla Bhebhe



Scottish Mission Executive Committee members and sponsors



Glasgow elder and Scottish Mission Executive Committee member, Benjamin Bakina



Claudette Comerasamy



Pastor Jimmy Botha

statistics to see which members joining the Church are indigenous Scottish, so that an effective strategic plan can be developed to

address this need. Jacques explained that while this is something to work towards, presently there are some challenges in reporting upon baptisms and lack of detailed response on the forms that can skew the data. Other questions included information on the percentage of young people joining the Church, and whether

the statistics reveal those baptised are from outside the Church or children of members. All questions were addressed accordingly, with efforts being put in place to capture essential data to help drive missional strategy.

The Treasurer's Report was presented by Earl Ramharacksingh. He began by commending the faithfulness of the Scottish Mission members: while most entities within the BUC struggled financially, the Scottish Mission actually showed a tithe increase. Tithe over the triennium yielded a 4% increase (1.34 million). Earl also commended the Mission for providing £10,000 during the heart of lockdown to the BUC to help support its operating costs. During the lockdown none of the pastors in the Mission needed to be furloughed.

Some of the questions for the

treasurer included the concern of those transferring membership into the Mission but not reflected in tithe return. Earl expressed the desire that all members gaining from ministerial and church support should be willing to support the local church financially. There were also questions: what is the Church spending on evangelism and outreach? What support is there for those seeking their own church building?

Sponsors' Departmental Reports

With the Mission being relatively small, departmental responsibilities are covered by full-time pastors or church members.

A summary of each sponsor's report can be found within the President's Report at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdandx62HoM>

Strategic plans for new triennium

The final business session of the Scottish Mission Session dealt with the strategic plan for the next triennium, presented by Pastor Tompkins. This plan outlined the vision and mission of the Scottish Mission and encapsulated important values that formulate and underscore the work to be carried out over the next three years. The sentiments of 'Empathise, Enable and Engage' made up the basis for thought in the strategic plan.

Empathise. It is important to have an understanding of others when we help them. It is also important for leadership to have a strong understanding of those they work with in church. The church needs to know and understand the thinking and way of life of those who live within the communities the church endeavours to serve.

Enable. The leadership of the church and the church itself ultimately need to provide for those they serve, with tools and opportunity to live better lives, and coming closer to where Christ would like them to be. Pastors, sponsors, members of the Executive Committee and church leaders in local churches need to be enabled and equipped to make disciples everywhere.

Engage. The church is in the business of serving. The church has a mandate to bring the good news of the Gospel to all peoples. This includes everyone in our communities. In different areas, different church communities will do this in different ways: but it is important that they engage. This can happen when churches have empathy for those communities, and have been enabled to go ahead. In response to the presentation of the strategic plan document, a number of positive points were raised, and with many 'amens' the floor also responded. A need for a prayer sponsor was raised, and the constituency voted to allow the Executive Committee, at its first meeting, to make the work of installing a prayer sponsor for the Scottish Mission a matter of priority.

The meeting came to a close, and many comments were made as to the positive and engaging nature of the session that the Scottish Mission experienced in October 2021.

Nominating Committee partial report

The Nominating Committee, which had met prior to the Session, presented their report. The following is a partial report of departmental sponsors:

- Children's Ministries Ifeoma Victor-Igwe and Cedrene Botha
- Health and Community Services Beavon Sanderson (Community Services)
- Dr Claudette Comerasamy (Health)
- Family Ministries Pastors Rory and Ivana Mendez
- Men's Ministries Charles Lethbridge
- Pathfinder Ministries Pastor Njabulo Ndlovu and Mthokozisi Ndlovu
- Women's Ministries Margaret Mukisa
- Youth and Teens Pastor Claudiu Popescu

Referred to incoming Executive Committee: Personal Ministries/ Church Growth Communications

Also voted by delegates were 12 names for the composition of the incoming Executive Committee:

Executive Committee

- President – ex officio
- Executive Secretary – ex officio
- Treasurer – ex officio
- Beverley Anderson – Edinburgh
- Benjamin Bakina – Glasgow
- Feston Kazuwa – Musselburgh
- Dr Yona Matemba – Irvine
- Pastor Ivana Mendez – Glasgow
- Sikhangezile Ndlovu – Glasgow
- Carole Barratt-Peacock – Crieff
- Manuel Vieira – Aberdeen
- Mrs Genevieve Zabate – Dunfermline

The report was voted and accepted.

A testimony to God's faithfulness

30 October

*'Praise the LORD, all nations!
Extol him, all peoples!
For great is his steadfast love towards us,
and the faithfulness of the LORD endures for ever.
Praise the LORD!'*

(Psalm 117, ESVUK)



Volunteers of the Community Services looking after the vulnerable on the streets of Dublin

'Could this little ancient song change the world if sung?' asked Pastor Ian Sweeney (the BUC president) as he opened the Irish Mission Session with a devotional focused on the oft-overlooked song of praise, Psalm 117. Surely, 'It would change the world if its message were practised, because it is a psalm for all nations, all peoples, to come together as one – and note the word "all".' It was Pastor Sweeney's prayerful wish that, as session delegates gathered together in the Belfast church, they would 'reflect on God's love and faithfulness'. He concluded with a call to unite as one, 'as we recognise God's love and leading over the past few years, and sing as one people' the song of Psalm 117.

With 94 delegates seated, the session was opened by Pastor Jacques Venter, Executive Secretary, and the reporting covered the years 2019-2020.

President's report Pastor Dan Serb

described the Irish Mission's strategic aims, 'Establish • Empower • Engage', as 'a war-cry for God's church to take the Gospel to those who need it.' He emphasised how the Irish Mission



has been blessed over the last two years, despite the pandemic. Quoting Romans 11:36 (NKJV), 'For of Him and through Him . . . are all things,' was his way of explaining that the work of the Irish Mission 'is God's business, both successes and failures – and where there have been, it is God's way of teaching us lessons.'

Expressing gratitude for the team of ministers and sponsors with whom he works, and their adaptability during the pandemic, Pastor Serb noted how the pandemic became a catalyst for reviving existing ministries and developing new opportunities to minister. Perhaps most active was Adventist Community Services, serving the vulnerable on the streets of Dublin, as well as distributing aid in Cork and Tralee, 'with teams of dedicated volunteers on the streets, serving those who could not hide behind screens'.

Other highlights from his report included:

- **The Storehouse App.** With the onset of the pandemic, it became evident that giving would be problematic in the absence of in-person meetings. As a result, much of 2020 was spent in developing the app, under the competent care of Pam Petersen, and the product is currently available on Android phones. We are awaiting feedback from Apple to make it available on iPhones as well. When fully developed it will be much more than a giving app and will have multiple features to support Irish Mission members to grow in Christ.
- **Discover Truth** is the rebranding of an ongoing ministry which distributes literature in Dublin, and it has branched out to other towns and cities within our territory. This ministry was formally organised in 2020 by lay members of churches in Dublin, under the guidance of Pastor Christian Salcianu, and it has since grown to include volunteers from various counties within the Mission. The main aim is to engage members in spreading the Gospel and the three angels' messages in Ireland and Northern Ireland, through distributing literature and engaging in conversation with people.
- **Centre for Conflict Resolution Europe (CCRE).** At the heart of this ministry is the value that reconciliation is the heartbeat of the Gospel and God's longing for humanity¹. This value lies at the heart of the partnership between the Irish Mission and the US La Sierra-based *Centre for Conflict Resolution*. It is a partnership which began in October 2019, when 18 Irish Mission members were trained as mediators. The main goals of the CCRE are: 1) to run awareness and training programmes within local churches, 2) to provide mediation services and conflict-resolution education to the community, and 3) to facilitate mediation training across Europe and the UK; moreover, CCRE would provide certification for those trained as mediators.
- **BelievAble Talks** is a documentary series aimed at youth and secular people,

addressing the often-contentious relationship between religion and science. The main platform of this ministry is <https://www.believabletalks.com>, and the first project was the launch of the series, 'Beyond the burden of proof'. The presentations are not sermons or Bible studies, and the objective is to provide an 'open door' for further enquiry on spiritual matters.

- **A second church building in Dublin** – Finally, and after a very long journey, situated in the heart of the community, just a few weeks prior to this session on 19 October, the deal was closed for the purchase of the building. Partly funded by the Sabbath School mission offering, the new building will not only be a place of worship for the West Dublin church, but a centre for the Adventist Community Service ministry.

As well as successes, Pastor Serb also recognised some challenges, not least the completing of the legal registration for the Irish Mission: 'It has been a hard and long road.' It was also a regret that the vision to re-establish ADRA Ireland was still beyond reach.

As he concluded, he took the opportunity on behalf of the Irish Mission family to thank the outgoing treasurer, Earl Ramharacksingh, and his personal assistant, Marci Neal.

Executive Secretary (Pastor Jacques Venter)

As Pastor Venter began his report, he immediately chose to celebrate recent baptisms in the Dublin Ranelagh and Dublin Romanian churches and thank Pastors Adam Keough and Christian Salcianu for their part in this good news.

Changing tack, Pastor Venter then went on to wrestle over a matter that is not just familiar to Irish Mission members, but one common to the experience of the whole church in the UK and Ireland. 'Who ought we to be as a mission?' he asked. 'When we recognise that





The newly acquired West Dublin church



Earl Ramharacksingh, Aftab Barki and Pastor Dan Serb



Photo: Aaron Burdett

Irish Mission members have contributed £363,099 to the world field, and received appropriations (by virtue of their Mission status) of £320,000 from the British Union Conference.

Total title received in the last two years (2019-2020) is £1.82 million, which is a 9% increase over the previous two years (2017-2018). We thank God for His blessings during these challenging times.

For the last two years Gift Aid return to the churches in Northern Ireland amounted to £48,177. This much-needed extra income helps with the capital and evangelism needs in our local churches.

In the Republic of Ireland we have claimed €63,839.42 in Tax Effective Giving (TEG) claims for the years 2016 and 2017, and the claims for 2018 and 2019 are being processed.

Expenditure for the period was £1.72 million, with nearly three quarters of the budget utilised for ministers' and workers' salaries and expenses. Retreats and conventions will have an

attendee fee income to offset these costs. We recognise the impact that attending youth retreats, camporees, women's ministry events, family life envisioning weekends and days of fellowship has on the lives of our members as they fellowship and support each other on their spiritual life journeys. Unfortunately, from March 2020 we didn't have physical retreats and conventions due to COVID-19, but many of our programmes have moved to a virtual platform.

He concluded his report by identifying with the President's remarks about the purchase of the West Dublin property. 'It has been an incredible journey, looking at the many options, and places to find not only a home for our members, but a place that truly is able to serve the community. Praise the Lord for His leading.'

EDITOR

¹Derwin L. Grey, *The High Definition Leader*

the majority of membership is not Irish or Northern Irish, what are we going to do about it?' And then came the challenge: 'Are we not called to be missionaries in Ireland and Northern Ireland?'

In a response from the session floor, Pastor Christian Salcianu recognised that, for 'New Irish', 'our most effective ministry is to our own people,' but wanted to stress that he believed the most effective way forward was 'not an either/or approach, but dual'.

The membership report for this session starts at the beginning of 2016, when membership stood at 809. Based on reports received from local congregations, the reported membership at 31 December 2020 had risen to 1,038. The result is a net increase of 229, or 22.06% over five years, showing a growth of 10.9% as a result of baptisms, with a further 15.3% in members transferring in

from other places. It is important to take into account that most of 2020 included churches being closed due to COVID-19. However, it also shows that the increase in membership as a result of transfers into the Mission is still higher than the growth that is a result of baptisms.

Treasurer (Earl Ramharacksingh)

Due to the timing of the session, the outgoing treasurer, Earl Ramharacksingh, provided an opportunity for Aftab Barki (Associate Treasurer) to make the presentation to delegates.



As part of the British Union Conference,

Strategic plan 2021-2026

A summary

The theme of our last session in 2019 was *'Establish. Empower. Engage.'*¹ At this session, given the limitations of the pandemic, we have decided to relaunch the theme *'Establish. Empower. Engage.'* We will also redouble our efforts to intentionally address some of the ongoing challenges in our mission, namely:

- We face the need to experience greater interconnectedness across our mission. Some of our church communities are experiencing isolation from the rest of the Mission family.
- Some of our smaller churches/groups are struggling to function. How can we provide support?
- Can we help find solutions to resolve conflict among members? Ignoring this problem could stifle the church in its function and mission.
- Can we explore ways to reach indigenous Irish in the north and south of our territory who remain unreached?
- We want to explore ways in which we can come alongside our young people to support, encourage, ground and strengthen them in their faith.
- We need to be using up-to-date means of communicating our message through harnessing the expertise of our members skilled in this area to assist us.

Thus, we propose to address the above challenges in the following strategic ways:

1. Revitalising congregations

To revitalise the congregations on the north coast (that is, Larne, Coleraine, and Derry/Londonderry).

While over the last 20 years or more many of our congregations have grown in numbers and new churches have sprung up across the Mission, the reality is that some of our long-established congregations have had negative growth.

2. Grow new and develop current ministries

To empower our current ministries to grow and develop, while also providing support and guidance in launching new ones.

We recognise that across the Irish Mission there are a number of growing and developing ministries, such as, but not limited to:

- Discover Truth
- Adventist Community Services
- Centre for Conflict Resolution Europe
- Local centres of influence

We believe that witness and evangelism are best practised when we *bridge* services, so that our programmes complement one another. This would ensure that churches do not work in isolation, but rather network and minister in a united way across the Mission.

3. Establish a media and youth centre

To establish a media and youth centre, whereby we can empower and train young, media-savvy members to develop innovative, creative and relevant local material through which we can share the Gospel within our immediate context.

The goal is for its programmes and initiatives to have a region-wide impact and to address the needs of all ages, cultural backgrounds, and diverse evangelistic methods.

4. Establish an innovation and marketing ministry

To establish an innovation and marketing ministry comprising a think-tank of creative people across the Mission, and thus create an



Pastors Lorange Johnson and Adam Keough presenting the strategic plan

environment where new ministries can be dreamed, conceptualised and established.

It is our desire for church members to partner with the pastoral team in designing and implementing innovative ways for reaching our communities, thus making God *and* our church known in tangible and credible ways.

5. Change of status to an Irish conference

We therefore believe that we have reached the tipping point for change of organisational status, and thus our fifth strategic objective is to change our status to an Irish conference.

IRISH MISSION PASTORAL TEAM, OCTOBER 2021

¹A brief summary of the *'Establish. Empower. Engage.'* theme is found in the President's report on page 12.

Nominating Committee report

Departmental sponsors

Adventist Community Services Associate	Helena Kunova
Adventurers & Pathfinders Associate	Ionut (<i>Johnny</i>) Cioloca
Children's Ministries	Bogdan Stan
Church Growth/Evangelism/SS	Referred to the incoming IM Excom
Family Ministries	Petar Popivanov
Health Ministries	Sharon Murphy
Media & Communications Associate	Precious Madubeko
Men's Ministries	Dr Raymond Ehiemere
Prayer Ministries	Pam Petersen
Public Campus Ministries	Iain Irvine (<i>Digital Media</i>)
Stewardship	Nqabeni Hlongwane
Youth	Pastor Tony O'Rourke
	Pastor Greg Davis
	Audrey Moyo
	Pastor Jefferson Melki

Referred to incoming Executive Committee:
NI & ROI Safeguarding, Risk Manager, Trust Services, Women's Ministries.

Executive Committee

Chair	Pastor Dan Serb
Secretary	Pastor Jacques Venter
Treasurer	Wederly Aguiar
Pastor Andrew Willis	(Banbridge/Larne)
Pastor Adam Keough	(Dublin Ranelagh)
Jeason Kanagaraj	(Dublin Ranelagh)
Joe Mhondiwa	(Cork)
Telma Mendez	(Drumcondra)
Pasquina Sidu	(Kilkenny)
Joseph Donaldson	(Banbridge)
Betty O'Rourke	(Galway)
Caroline O'Brien	(Belfast)



2021 Gift Box appeal

Situation

Just before children returned to school in September, our shops were filled with parents buying school supplies for their kids, from new backpacks to pencils to notebooks to

even digital tablets. According to recent research, the average parent can spend £13-20 per child just on stationery items, not including textbooks, which are often provided free in the UK.

But what if you were a parent in rural sub-Saharan Chad? Think about the challenges that you would face when your kids return to school. Chad is the one of the poorest and hottest countries in the world with 15.5 million people living in poverty. Yet the responsibility for the purchase of teaching materials is down to the parents.

Often there are 30 children who are sharing one science textbook, and children may have just one single notebook for all subjects for an entire academic year.

Lack of adequate teaching materials and accompanying stationery contributes to the dropout rate of 16%. Children who do not complete their basic education often end up as the poorest of the poor.

How can you help?

Last year we raised £10,000 to help children

in the UK affected by the pandemic. This year our Virtual Gift Box campaign will benefit children in rural Chad. We would like to provide them with a basic school kit, a hygiene pack and a toy. What a difference this will make! We ask you to donate £10 per child on our JustGiving website. Donate as much as you can: for example, a £50 donation will benefit five children.

With our local partner, ADRA Chad, the gifts are handpicked for every group of children, making sure the gifts will fit their specific needs. By giving pens, crayons, soap, a toothbrush and, of course, a toy, please know that you have given them a reason to smile!

This year we have kept it simple: make a donation on our JustGiving page or, alternatively, send us a cheque.

How can we not respond to help children that have so little to smile about?

www.justgiving.com/campaign/giftboxesforchad2021

CATHY BOLDEAU



by Sharon Platt-McDonald

Environmental impact and cancer risk

Environmental impact on our well-being was among the concerns raised during the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26). Here's a look at the link between the environment and some cancers.

Air pollution

Cancer Research UK¹ highlight the following facts on their website, linking air pollution and cancer risk:

- Outdoor air pollution causes around 1 in 10 cases of lung cancer.
- Air pollution could damage DNA in cells, causing lung cancer.
- Tiny particles can build up in the lungs, changing the way cells replicate. This leads to DNA damage and, subsequently, cancer.

Cancer Research UK's website further states:

'Outdoor air pollution is a mixture of tiny dust-like particles and substances in the air. It can be man-made, such as fumes from vehicles or factories and smoke from burning fuels. . . . But it also includes natural sources, such as wind-blown dust.'

Environmental toxins

Lynn Ladbrook, Chief Executive of Breast Cancer UK, says,

*'Environmental factors such as exposure to toxic chemicals are also a key risk factor for certain cancers and therefore should form part of any cancer-prevention strategy.'*²

A separate article by Breast Cancer UK, titled 'Chemicals and Environment',³ states:

'There are many chemicals in your environment that can influence your risk of getting breast cancer. Some of these cause cancer by damaging your DNA – these are known as carcinogens. Others affect your hormone system and are known as endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs). These can be found in everyday

products such as cosmetics, cleaning sprays and even furniture. EDCs interfere with the normal functioning of your hormones. In particular, those that interfere with the natural hormone oestrogen may increase your breast cancer risk.'

Solutions

Breast Cancer UK share these tips for reducing indoor pollution:⁴

Natural cleaning products

Reduce commercial products:

- Liquid soap, washing soda, citric acid, white vinegar, bicarbonate of soda and lemons are safer options.

Indoor plants

A study by NASA found that some house plants clean indoor air by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen, and eliminating significant amounts of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and other chemicals from the air.

- Natural plant deodorisers and air purifiers include snake plants, Boston ferns, peace lilies and aloe plants.

Remove dust frequently

- Regular vacuum cleaning and dusting is beneficial.

Open fire cautions

- Burning treated waste wood can emit pollutants. Instead, buy good-quality dry wood or 'ready to burn' fuel.
- When purchasing a wood-burning stove, ensure it has a Defra exemption or is an 'Ecodesign Ready' stove.
- Maintain stoves and sweep chimneys regularly.

Good health!

¹<https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/causes-of-cancer/air-pollution-radon-gas-and-cancer/how-can-air-pollution-cause-cancer> ²<https://www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/news-up-to-90-of-cancers-are-triggered-by-environmental-factors/> ³<https://www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/reduce-your-risk/chemicals-and-environment/> ⁴<https://www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/how-to-reduce-exposure-to-potentially-harmful-chemicals-in-the-home/>



Earth and Soul 8

by David Wright

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD, “... for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” ¹ Jeremiah 29:11, NLT.

As this column had to go to press before the COP26 conference concluded, comments about final outcomes will appear in the December issue. By week one, however, world leaders appeared to have made some big commitments, with over 40 countries phasing out coal, another 120 countries ending deforestation, and a US/EU partnership cutting methane emissions – all described by BBC environment analyst Roger Harrabin as **‘so far, so good-ish’**.

In the meantime, two of my grandchildren were voted to be eco-warriors at their Christian primary school. Rather than joining disruptive protests, this simply means helping raise awareness about environment care at their school, and encouraging everyone to recycle and save energy by picking up litter and turning classroom lights off.

During the 1960s ecologists liked to blame

Christians for the environmental crisis. Historian Lynn White described Christianity as the **‘most anthropocentric religion in the world . . . it teaches man . . . to exploit the environment for his own ends.’**¹ Even Friends of the Earth founder, Jonathon Porritt, suggested the Church was part of the problem rather than the solution. It took ten years before Christians began to openly acknowledge they had often ignored their Creator’s instructions for planetary care and forgotten their accountability towards Earth’s inhabitants. With increasing global sensitivity to natural resource limits, ecological impact of technology, and questioning of unlimited growth, the World Council of Churches eventually held a significant conference in 1979 to focus on the unequal sharing of Earth’s resources between rich and poor countries, humanity’s ecological

interdependence, and the need for sustainability.²

It was not until 1986, however, on a World Wildlife Fund anniversary, that faith leaders from all major religions first came together to explore their attitudes and responsibilities towards the natural world.³ Echoing these early meetings, leaders of the Anglican, Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches recently called on prayers for world leaders ahead of COP26, releasing a joint statement from 40 faith leaders – including most Christian denominations – and asking the international community to raise their ambition about climate action before November. They emphasised that humanity’s problems were linked to **‘a crisis of ethical and spiritual values’**, and, as **‘caretakers of the natural environment’**, everyone has a **‘moral obligation to co-operate in its healing’**.⁴

Many denominations have subsequently created green pledges for their members, incorporating net-zero targets into church plans and energy-rating systems to monitor the carbon footprint of their buildings. Other than a recent article in Spectrum⁵ about historical Adventist perspectives on environmental matters, there appears little or no response at the time of going to press at an international level from Adventist church leaders, however. Might it be time for Adventist churches in Britain to consider what their own green manifesto would look like, and for members to consider the steps needed to reduce our own carbon footprint?

¹The Historical Roots of the Ecological Crisis’, Lynn White, 1967 ²Science, Faith and the Future’, WCC, 1979 ³Faith and Nature’, WWF, 1986 ⁴Churches Together website ⁵On the Back Burner: Adventists and Environmentalism’, David Garner, Spectrum, 3/11/21



The Stanborough Press Ltd.

Cover photo: Children of Dudley House School stand in front of Gaia, on display in St. Wulfram’s Church, Grantham. Gaia is a giant, slowly turning sculpture of Planet Earth by artist Luke Jerram and was most recently on display at COP26 in Glasgow. Photo by: Jenny Johnson, <https://dudleyhouseschool.co.uk>

The Bible says in Psalm 24: ‘The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it’ (vs. 1, NIVUK). *Everything* is a big word, and includes the concept of interconnectedness, both one with another, and with our responsibility to a higher authority for how we live. Only now, it seems, are we waking up to the consequences and ramifications that this entails, both for us living today and for our children’s generation.

Focus – working with you to turn an everyday conversation into a spiritual one.

Focus magazine – published and printed for Seventh-day Adventists in the UK and Ireland to share with friends.

01476 591700
sales@stanboroughpress.org.uk



or visit our shop online at
www.LifeSourceBookshop.co.uk



Climate change and our future

Newbold community come together for ‘The Season of Change’

by Pilira Zapita

From 18 to 25 September 2021, the Newbold community across college and church gathered together to hear messages of inspiration that surrounded the theme of the Week of Spiritual Emphasis (WOSE): Season of Change.

Anne-May Muller, Warren Gillin, Filip Milosavljević, Dejan Stojković, Julian Thompson and Danilo Puskas took turns across the week to give their unique perspectives on ‘change’ as a concept – which is something we have all universally experienced. It made for a powerful week of testimonials, with college students immersing themselves in the worship and opening items of the messages.

On the second evening of WOSE, Theology alumna Pilira Zapita took centre stage to share her take on the Season of Change. Pilira offers an overview of this semester’s WOSE theme below.

‘Newbold couldn’t have chosen a more appropriate theme for this semester’s WOSE. Not only is the whole world experiencing transition from different sources such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and social unrest, but the college itself is undergoing change, and this semester sees its first steps as a centre for mission and ministry.

‘While we all inadvertently find ourselves in this season of tectonic changes, in such periods of life we need to remind ourselves of God’s promise to be especially present with us. The Bible reveals a God who has constantly longed



NEWBOLD
COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Prepare for the lifelong call of ministry.

Our degree programmes are designed to equip you with a Christ-centred academic experience and the practical tools needed for a lifetime of ministry in its many forms.

<p>(BA Hons) Biblical and Pastoral Studies 3 years full-time September 2022</p>	<p>(Graduate Diploma) Biblical and Pastoral Studies 1 year full-time September 2022</p>
<p>(MA) Theology 1.5 years full-time January 2022</p>	<p>(PG Cert) Ministry and Mission 1 semester full-time January 2022</p>

Considering part-time study? Get in touch!

Find out more: newbold.ac.uk/courses | Contact us: info@newbold.ac.uk

As supplied, errors and omissions excepted

and promised to be and live with and among His people, a desire He expresses to individuals and which is particularly notable through the tabernacle/sanctuary.

‘The triune God exists in communion. Likewise, communion is an essential part of being human. Thus, God’s desire to be in relationship with His people is understandable and could be said to climax in Jesus’s promise to His disciples who were troubled by the news of His departure in the rich theological “Farewell Discourses” of John 14-17. Ahead of a season of change, when the intersection of God’s story with humanity is about to change gears, Jesus affirms the power of presence in a crisis. He promises His disciples, who are clueless about and unprepared for what is ahead of them, that they will not be left alone, and that His departure will be advantageous to them as it will release the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, to come and be with and in them (John 14:16, 17). Despite the multifaceted meanings of the word *Paraclete*, most scholars agree that “helper” is the best single-word translation. Jesus would leave “another helper”, one not limited to a small corner of the Roman Empire, but promised to comfort, walk alongside, abide or remain with and in us, universally, forever!

‘As we experience seasons of change or earth-shattering moments of life, embracing by faith and experientially living out this promise and assurance of God’s friendship and abiding presence through the Holy Spirit is potent enough to settle and give peace through the uncertainty and instability that change can bring. Experiencing life with the Paraclete allows us access to divine help, step-by-step guidance and counsel, even offering clarity on how God envisions our participation in His mission of healing, restoration and reconciliation of creation. Our need for the Paraclete is immense in this period of many voices which all call us in different directions! After all, when everything is stripped from us, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, all we have left is Jesus and His presence in us through the Paraclete. This is our life. It is our future.’

To view all the talks from the Week of Spiritual Emphasis, please visit: newbold.ac.uk/wose

Stanborough Secondary School – Community Service Day

Generating change and improving lives in Watford

by Kaz James, Interim Headteacher

There is a sense of belonging in Stanborough Secondary School that is noticeable from the moment you step through the gates. Students sit at the heart of everything we do, and every day we strive to make a difference in the lives of the members of the school's community and give our children the tools they need to be successful in life. Our community is diverse and welcoming, and we actively seek to integrate new families and staff into the fold, making sure everyone feels supported. We help people come together, overcome barriers, find a purpose and make the most of the place they live in.

This was evident when, on 1 October 2021, we reached out to our local community here in Watford for a Community Service Day. Members of the Stanborough Secondary School community set

aside classroom learning, homework and other aspects of daily academic life to fully dedicate themselves to serving the Watford community. With a group of more than 70 people, we worked on projects both on and off campus, and we ended up serving more than five constituent groups and organisations located throughout Watford.

Community service activities included painting fences, working at the food bank and packing bags at One Vision, a community-based charity that provides support to individuals and families in need. These activities also involved taking gifts to sick children at Watford General Hospital and collecting donations for Mencap, a UK charity for people with learning disabilities.

With so many students going to so many places in one morning, Community Service Day



ended up being a considerable operation. I believe the students' flexibility was critical to pulling it all off. The nurses at the General Hospital said, 'We want to thank our students for caring and their kindness to the people we serve, and congratulate them on their achievements.'

This day is an embodiment of our core values – courage, respect, resilience and excellence – and our school motto of 'God is the master of our school.'

Ephesians 2:10 (TLB) says, 'It is God himself who has made us what we are and given us new

lives from Christ Jesus; and long ages ago he planned that we should spend these lives in helping others.' This means we should use our talents and gifts to contribute to others throughout our lives; to be a giver, not a taker.

There are countless options for community services at Stanborough Secondary School, and we should remember that Community Service Day, where we stop our normal academic routine, provides a different kind of affirmation in what we believe in as a school.

Placing pupil well-being at the heart of Stanborough Primary School

by Tiann Madden

The elected School Council members for Stanborough Primary School 2020-2021 were determined to leave a remarkable legacy by fundraising to create a well-being room. This space has been created for all pupils and staff to use as a place to relax, unwind and recharge – physically, mentally and spiritually. The official unveiling of the well-being room was on Monday 11 October 2021. The children will be given access to the room at allocated times throughout the week.

The room has been decorated in a neutral colour scheme, with pupil-created artwork and inspirational quotes delicately interwoven into the décor, creating a calm and cosy space. Soft furnishings, soothing lighting and music enhance the space, with access to purposeful activities that further promote well-being.

Mrs Tiann Madden, Headteacher, believes that the well-being of pupils and staff continues to be a top



priority, especially during these unprecedented times. She states, 'I was enthralled by the school council's idea to create a space designed by the pupils for the pupils; a safe place where they can just relax and unwind.' Madden added, 'We were excited for this project, knowing it would make a big difference to our pupils, who have already had a preview. This initiative is already positively impacting the school.'

Well-being champions have been appointed within each year group to encourage the entire school community to develop and maintain a growth mindset and raise awareness of mental health issues in partnership with the school's well-being leader. The school believes in the importance of looking after everyone's emotional health, and hopes to become a trailblazer in this area.

Year 6 pupil and well-being champion, Lucas, said, 'Our new well-being room is calm and relaxing. If any child is sad or upset they can calm themselves down by rocking in the egg chair. I also like the mini tent and well-being games. I am looking forward to supporting my peers throughout the year.'

Diya and Aniyah (Year 3 pupils) said, 'The tent is like glamping with stars above. It makes us happy and is a great place to relax with friends.'

In March 2020 Saffy, a miniature cockapoo, became the school dog. Saffy has made an immense difference to the well-being of the school and is a much-loved asset, treasured by everyone. Mrs Madden remarks, 'Saffy brings joy to all she meets. Nobody can resist her charming personality.' Saffy has worked hard with the dog mentor training programme and has been awarded bronze and silver certificates. She is currently working towards completing the gold award.

Stanborough Primary School will be hosting an open morning on Friday 3 December from 10am until 12 noon to tour the school and its new well-being room, and to meet staff members, pupils and Saffy!

To book a slot, email info@stanboroughprimary.org.uk.

Baptism joy at Central London Church (CLC)

There was great joy as Diane Carolus gave her heart to Jesus in baptism. Diane is a young French professional who has been living and working in London for a couple of years.

Diane had been introduced to Central London Church by an Adventist friend, and she was eventually befriended by Melissa, a member of CLC. As time went by she had a number of Bible studies that continued online during the COVID-19 lockdown with Pastor Colin Stewart and his wife Patricia.

At the end of the series she decided to make her decision for baptism. Even though Diane is the only Adventist in her family, which lives in France, she decided not to delay this important decision; so on 11 September, with friends present at the church and her family watching online, and in front of a live and vibrant congregation, she was baptised and presented to CLC as its newest member. We are all so proud of Diane, and we love her.



Left to right: three elders of CLC, Diane with Patricia Stewart (who studied with her), Melissa (communication leader for CLC), Laia (recently baptised), Pastor Colin Stewart

We all wish her a great journey as we work together to hasten Christ's coming.

COMMUNICATION TEAM

Crieff celebrates the stirring of the Spirit

With summer still warm in Scotland, what could be better than ending the month of August with a baptismal service? In the Crieff church, baptism talk has been going on for a number of weeks during the summer, as two young ladies were preparing themselves for the big day. Ellen Mphande and Dasanpelle Owusu have been looking forward to this day for many weeks, and it finally arrived: and don't discount the excitement of the rest of the members for such a high occasion.

COVID-19 has put a damper on so many events and plans, so, when a church can celebrate the commitment of our young people to follow the Lord for the rest of their lives, it almost feels like an antidote to the restrictions and

limitations that the pandemic has placed everyone under: not to mention that the day was accompanied by warm, sunny weather, so that the members could enjoy, for the first time in a while, a lunch together outside under the trees after the service.

The two young ladies were supported by their families, and the baptisms were wonderful to see and be part of. The fact that we still have friends and family who give their lives to the Lord and request to be baptised is a sign that the Holy Spirit is still working in people's lives, and that miracles are still taking place all around us. Such was the feeling when a handful of young girls and boys raised their hands when asked if anyone in the congregation would like to be



Ellen and Das, and their families, together with Jimmy and Cedrene Botha

baptised soon. Crieff Church is now expecting to have another baptism in the near future.

We wish Ellen and Das all God's blessings as they continue to live for the Lord and influence others through their beautiful personalities. Crieff Church is richer for having these two young

ladies present, and is looking forward to growing the number in the near future. More work is going on in the meantime to prepare more young people for baptism, and perhaps no one will have to wait until summer before they will be able to be baptised.

PASTOR JIMMY BOTHA

Education and achievers' day at London Ghana Church

It was a bright Sabbath day on 21 August, reminiscent of the day Jesus' disciples plucked corn from the field. The day had been designated as 'Education and Achievers Day', an annual event that honours our graduates, students and those who have achieved at their workplaces.

The venue has always been our usual church premises, and this time was no exception. However, due to the recent pandemic, about 95% of our members viewed online, with just about 35 members in church. The day began with a morning devotion from eight-year-old Kwadwo Asamoah from our children's department, and this was followed by a series of hymns and gospels to grace the day.

At 10am prompt the Sabbath School discussion began, involving members of the education team, who digested the topic for the day: 'Free to Rest'. Since the day was special, there were lots of musical interludes between the end of the Sabbath School and the sermon.

The sermon for the day was delivered by Elder Richard Antwi, leader of the education department, who stressed the adverse effects



Front, left to right: Michael Kwadwo Asamoah, Kobina Tetteh, Nana Gyamfuah Darkwah, Nai Tetteh, Adwubi Apenteng, Emmanuella Asamoah and Afia Apenteng. Others are Kwao Tetteh, Emmanuel Asamoah and Frank Rutayisire. Back row: Mrs Bernice Asamoah, Elder Richard Antwi and Elder Japhet Obese-0 Amankwah

COVID-19 had had on education. The only way forward, he emphasised, was to be resilient – to have strong faith in the Lord, just like Joseph had during his woeful days of slavery and incarceration.

The afternoon programme was packed with Zoom panel discussions on educational issues, ranging from apprenticeships to higher education.

The programme ended with certificate awards and beautifully designed Kente scarves to honour our graduates of 2020/2021 whose exams were seriously affected by COVID-19.

RICHARD ANTWI

Iford Central end third quarter on a spiritual high

by Friday Okochi

Media and Communications Director, Iford Central SDA Church

For many, the challenging COVID-19 era was an elongated voyage, after many churches and businesses compulsorily closed their doors for the safety of their members and customers respectively. Yet, despite the temporary halt to all sense of normality, God is truly glorified for always having a back-up plan to ensure that His mission to spread the good news of salvation to all people and nations is fulfilled. During these challenging times of COVID-19, believers can truly say, 'To God be the glory,' for, indeed, knowledge has increased (Daniel 12:4), with all suspended church

gatherings for the first time making a switch to online services (Zoom, YouTube, Teams, and so on) to maintain regular contact with members.

Since the highly anticipated reopening of Iford Central's church doors on Sabbath 12 June 2021, members have witnessed the baptism and addition of 12 new members to the fold of God. They are Danette Hixon, Rayner Chikirah Mathurin, Ricky Cyrus Jn Pierre, Luke Manhanga, Rashima Janine Reviere (Dagenham), Yvette Murray and Nicodemus Preville in June, alongside Elmond Fletcher, Angel Osei, Kerry-Ann Campbell, Tendayi Mashingaidze



Iford Central leadership with the newly baptised

and Fitzroy Barnard in August.

While the church is now open for worship every Sabbath, Iford Central still continues to stream its services on both Zoom and YouTube for members and visitors who are either

housebound or who still remain cautious, with some feeling it's still too early to congregate.

Besides the baptisms of the 12 new members (11 of whom now congregate at Iford Central), the hosting of South England Conference President Dr Emmanuel Osei on Sabbath 31 July was another memorable highlight. For many members it was a mind-blowing experience to see both the president and his wife, Laura, not on Zoom or YouTube, but face to face! Reflecting on the great commission Jesus gave to His disciples found in Matthew 28:18-20, the SEC President reminded the church of its own mission in making disciples and building communities, with the dedication of four lockdown-born babies, alongside three pending weddings from within the Iford community, an indication of such a mission. Paul the apostle wrote in Philippians 2:4: *'Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others'* (NKJV), words which have certainly rung true during these times of COVID-19. As Iford continues to meet the needs of the membership through various outreach programmes, the evening Discovery Bible Reading sessions, led by first elder Martin Mugadza, and active participation in Sabbath School, it is the aim of the church leadership that with the additional introduction of extending small groups in Sabbath School every member will be equipped to become a disciple-maker, knowing that Jesus is soon to come to take all His faithful saints home.

Hutton Church baptism

Hutton Church held its very first baptism on 3 July 2021. Previous baptisms of our members have been done at neighbouring churches, because we do not have a baptismal pool. Pastor Opoku-Mensah broke that ritual by encouraging us to hire a spa pool, and we filled it up with warm water. It was a joyous occasion, both for the earthly and heavenly families, to welcome Brigitte Estelle Shepherd into the fold of God. It was witnessed by her biological and extended family physically and online, as others were prevented from attending due to the pandemic. Her nieces graced the occasion with a song and a poem.

We had opened our church doors a few months prior and were sticking to COVID-19 protocols. While our physical freedoms have been restricted, the Holy Spirit has not – and, indeed, has continued to draw the chosen to Christ.

VIVIAN JERE



Brigitte Estelle Shepherd

Photo quality as supplied



Arabella and Evie-May with their parents and Pastor Anthony Opoku-Mensah

Hutton Church baby dedication

Hutton Church was blessed to dedicate not one but two babies on 25 September 2021. The two babies are Arabella Peaches White, born on 20 June 2021, and Evie-May Lindsay Duque, born on 1 July 2021. The occasion was witnessed by family and friends, and we are excited that the church is growing from within. The members were tasked with helping in the upbringing of the two babies as per the African proverbial saying, 'It takes a village to bring up a child.'

VIVIAN JERE, MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT



GNR40 **EXPRESSTEST**
 GREAT NORTH RUN
 SUNDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2021



Various images of Dr Edmund Chan during his 2021 GNR; top right: Ed's little boy, Hosea, proudly giving the 'thumbs-up' to his dad's haul of medals

Newcastle doctor runs the Great North Run

Dr Edmund Chan has been running the Great North Run (GNR) half-marathon since 2002. That is some nineteen years ago. The GP, a member of the South Shields church, has amassed a lot of medals along this journey. The only time he didn't run was when he was not well, and also when he did the Master Guide training.

On 12 September 2021, Ed, as he is fondly known, set out on a 13.1 mile run, cheered on by his family (his wife Juliana and children) and friends. Ed completed the GNR half-marathon in 2 hours and 8 minutes. The father of three admits that it was slower than his other runs, because he had to stop for a few minutes to take pictures with his supportive friends and church members who cheered him en route to the finish line. He is quick to state that the running time is not important to him. As long as he completes the half-marathon, he is happy with that achievement alone. Ed quotes Philippians 3:14 as his inspiration. It says, *'I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus'* (NKJV).

Ed sets himself a training goal every year. He runs five times a week, with each run lasting 40-50 minutes. He admits that without setting himself a goal he would not have a strong motivation to train hard.

Over the years, Ed has run and raised funds for different charities, such as Prostate Cancer UK, Leukaemia UK, Stroke Association UK, Alzheimer's charities, the British Heart Foundation, Re-Vitalise, Marie Curie Hospice and Martin House Hospice, to name a few. He has also raised funds for Newcastle Church's NEWSTART programme in the past. This year he raised funds for the NSPCC.

When asked to give tips to those aspiring to run a long distance, Ed said that he develops a running schedule at least 3 months before the half-marathon. He starts by running short distances, then slowly builds up to longer distances. He states that it's important to always listen to

one's body to avoid injuries. Once one develops an injury, it takes a while to heal, and this may set one back. To avoid injuries, he says one shouldn't push oneself too hard. If one still desires to train for the half-marathon or even a full marathon of 26.2 miles, one could just run short distances and not exert oneself too much. He says that cooling down by stretching after a run is important to ensure muscles are pliable and responsive in the next run. He runs with a smile on his face and therefore advises aspiring runners to have a smile on their faces when running.

Dr Edmund Chan's family are happy and proud of his achievements, especially his little boy, Hosea, who can't wait for his dad to add another medal to the collection. With a committed dad like Ed, Hosea will not have to wait long for that to happen, as his dad plans to continue running the GNR half-marathon and raise more funds for many other charities.

LYNNE SESINYE-SAMWINGA

Global
24/7
Lifeline
day/night

Lonely, feeling down,
fearful of the future or
current events in your life?

One call can make the difference.

Call us **free** on
The **Lifeline** now!
020 3998 2118

Someone is waiting to listen to you. We won't judge you

web: www.global247lifeline.org

As supplied, errors and omissions excepted

Lionel (Ben) Roper (1923-2021)

d. 16 February.

Elder Roper was born in Jamaica on 13 October 1923, where he spent his early life. When World War II started, he left Jamaica and volunteered to serve in the RAF. He trained at Hunmanby Moor, North Yorkshire, in 1944. He was part of the second batch of West Indian volunteers.

When the war ended, he remained in the RAF, guarding prisoners of war until the summer of 1947. He then returned to Jamaica, where he married his wife Doris. They went on to have nine children.

Education was very important



to them and they encouraged their children to develop their skills in music, playing instruments and singing.

The Roper family attended the Leeds Central church and contributed greatly to church services with their musical skills. Elder Roper was a beloved father, grandfather and great-grandfather. He was a kind, quiet man, respected by all ages of the Leeds Central church family. He served in the pastoral team as church elder and taught Sabbath School classes over many years. As well as being involved in the church, Elder Roper also participated in the Leeds Jamaica Society Eulogy Project, which highlighted the contribution of the Windrush generation to the city of Leeds.

THE ROPER FAMILY

Eric George Baker (1922-2021)

d. 26 August.

Eric George Baker was born in Lowestoft to Ellen and John Baker on 28 November 1922. In this close-knit family of four sons, Eric had an especially close bond with his identical twin brother, Frank, with whom he would share many life-defining experiences. Together they were choirboys at St John's Church, and later joined the Coastguard as part of saving rescue at Lowestoft beach.

After attending Lawn Park Road School, Eric became a welder by trade, finding employment at Metal Coating Motors, an engineering and



fabrication firm. Although as a teenager he stopped attending church, Eric's life changed dramatically when he decided to be baptised after attending some meetings. As a Christian, Eric realised a whole new meaning, direction and purpose for his life. He joined the crew of a mission ship based in Lowestoft, operated by the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, giving many talks on their behalf. It is believed that Eric was the last known survivor of those who served in that role.

Eric's introduction to the Adventist Church came through the late Eunice Sampson, who felt that Eric, as a new Christian, would relate well to her husband John. Not only did both men form a lasting friendship, but it was at

We meet together again at last . . .

Over the weekend of 1-3 October, and having not retreated together since before the COVID-19 pandemic, a group of members from the West Country and further afield once again met together for their annual much-loved spiritual retreat at Hill House Christian Centre, Bridgewater. This year's speaker, Pastor David Neal, considered the theme of 'The church after COVID-19 – renewal or decline?' based on selected passages from Acts.

The informality of good conversation, Bible study, and wholesome food always make for a great retreat, but a particular feature this year was to 'catch up' – of course, in the framework of compliance with social distancing regulations. But not to be forgotten were the prayer times together, with much to be thankful for, and much to petition the Lord about: life issues, our families, our church. What is Your will, Lord?

With grateful thanks to the organisers Lyn and Ray Morris, the Hill House retreat is in its seventeenth year.

EDITOR



Left to right: Alvin & Anthea Fielding, Ann & Brian Fielding, John Overy, Brenda Sabadin, Janet Overy, Will & Angela Sharp, Sandy Edwards, Erica & David Cameron, Richard & Pam Vine, Marci & David Neal; front row: Ray & Lyn Morris

Peggy reaches 100

On 17 October 2021 Peggy Brett reached her 100th birthday and celebrated with family and friends in Welwyn Garden City, Herts. Born in Kingston-upon-Thames shortly after the end of World War I, her childhood experiences were lived during the

Great Depression. Battersea Park was 'her playground', and it cost tuppence to go to the baths. Her wedding took place during World War II. During Peggy's lifetime there have been 4 monarchs and 20 prime ministers, her favourite being Winston Churchill. Her life

spans incredible advances in technology, with 'more advance over a wide range of activities than the whole of previously recorded history'.¹ Add to that the rise of superpowers with their fears and threats, and the social revolution of the 1960s – enough turbulence to disorientate the best of us.

But it wasn't until age 95 that Peggy decided to follow Christ. For many years she knew everything there was

to know about the church through her son-in-law (the late Pastor Ron Stewart) and daughter Margaret. Visibly impressed with Margaret's Bible work, 'The Holy Spirit spoke to Mum through the kindness of others,' reflects Margaret: in the first instance by Pastor Lich Lichfield, who carried Peggy's luggage at the railway station a long time ago, but in more recent times through the kindness of Pastor Simon Martin and the loving community at the Dunstable church plant. Shortly after a church retreat at Chapel Porth, Peggy requested to be baptised. 'And of course,' says Margaret, 'the experience of my mum tells me that we never give up on people – the Lord convicts in His time, not ours.'

In these times, Peggy tries to get to worship at St Albans as often as possible. She is particularly grateful for the kindness of a special friend who makes her a cuppa between services. Long may it continue!

EDITOR

¹<https://www.britannica.com/technology/history-of-technology/The-20th-and-21st-centuries>



Peggy Brett (centre) celebrating with daughter Margaret Stewart and son Robert Bret

the church that Eric found his perfect match in Jean. They were married at Lowestoft Seventh-day Adventist Church on 26 December 1950, and their daughter Margaret was born two years later.

Eric and Jean became active members of the Maritime Museum at Sparrows Nest Park. As volunteer caretakers, they enjoyed meeting people and helping the public with research and information requests, especially on local family histories. Eric's background and knowledge of the sea and ships especially helped in this role. After thirty-three years, Eric and Jean retired, but continued to support and attend meetings. It is their Christian faith, however, that has always been central in their lives. Eric maintained active and faithful service as a member of the church in Lowestoft over many decades.

The COVID-19 lockdown unsettled Eric, distancing him from the life he knew and adding to his decline. But calm returned as he was lovingly cared for at The Coach House Residential Home, with family visits and quality support provided by the outstanding staff. Eric passed away peacefully in the early hours of the morning on 26 August 2021. He was 98 years old.

On 21 September, Eric's family gathered at Kirkley Cemetery in Lowestoft to give thanks for his extraordinary life of kindness, generosity and community service. Reflecting on Psalm 23, Pastor Mark Borrett upheld Eric's faith in the Good Shepherd. Eric's nephew, Chris, read the Mariner's Psalm, highlighting the sea – a constant theme in Eric's life. Vocalist Helen Wilkinson led the singing of 'Will your anchor hold?' – John Sampson accompanying on the accordion – and Pastor Michael Walker closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Jean and Margaret wish to express their gratitude for the outpouring of condolences from the many well-wishers – individuals, organisations, friends and carers – who have brought them much comfort in their bereavement.

For donations in memory of Eric Baker, please send to The Coach House Residential Home, Yarmouth Road, Hemsby, Great Yarmouth.

NORMA BORRETT

David Currie (1935-2021)
d. 20 September.

Alan David Conrad Currie was born in Taumarunui, North Island, New Zealand, on 1 January 1935. It was in 1956 that Pastor Currie married the love of his life, Gaya Wilton, in Christchurch, New Zealand. Together they served God in many places around the world. He began preaching at the young age of 15 and initially served as a pastor in Tasmania, Western Australia, and South New Zealand, before being appointed to serve as a lecturer in Practical Theology at Avondale College.

From 1975 to 1980 he served as the Ministerial Secretary of the British Union Conference, as well as lead evangelist. On his return to Australia he served as North New South Wales Conference President, followed by an appointment to serve as the Ministerial Secretary for the South Pacific Division. He was further called overseas to the northern hemisphere once again to serve as the Trans-European Division Ministerial Secretary from 1990 to 1995. Responsible for many evangelistic programmes across the Division, most notable was his pioneering work for the church in Albania in 1992. On his return to Australia, Pastor Currie's final appointment was to serve as the President of the Trans-Australia Union Conference.

In his retirement he continued his work for the Lord on an uninterrupted voluntary basis. He pastored churches, taught in universities, worked with 3ABN, and served in many countries, including Croatia and Thailand, where he pastored San Sai church, and raised funds to build and open the Pai church. He was the adopted grandpa and spiritual guide to the many children in the Kirsten Jade Rescue Centre, where he is sorely missed.

He passed away suddenly on 20 September.

David and Gaya had four children – Delphine, Kelvin, Adelle and Althea – and one granddaughter, Sabrina. David's love for God was supreme, and he treasured and loved Gaya and his family. He is survived by three of his five siblings: Alex Currie, Jean McDonald and Colleen Porter.



Pastor Currie will be remembered as a mighty warrior for God, for his mentoring of many younger pastors around the world, and for his compassionate love for the people of God, including some from the UK, such as Pastor Bernie Holford, who, after working as a volunteer with him in a Southampton evangelistic campaign, was inspired to study for the ministry. Pastor Michael Smart recognises Pastor Currie as being 'hugely influential in my getting to know God and being baptised. I saw him as a true Christian gentleman who lived the life of faith openly – who kept in touch over the many decades, and was still interested in all I was involved in.'

Liila Skopek, who worked with Pastor Currie as his secretary at the Trans-European Division, remembers 'the privilege of working with a sincere Christian gentleman who practised what he preached, and loved his Saviour and those around him, especially his family'.

Pastor Victor Hulbert recalls that he was particularly blessed by Pastor Currie's 1992 ministerial tour of the Middle East. 'His skills and inspiration encouraged me into public evangelism and enhanced my

Adventist leaders pause to remember church workers lost to COVID-19

Members of the General Conference Executive Committee (GCEXCOM) paused during Annual Council meetings on 8 October 2021 to remember scores of church workers and missionaries who became infected and ultimately lost their lives to COVID-19, starting in August 2020.

At the Adventist Church headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, leaders invited members attending the 2021 Annual Council in person or following the procedures online to stand for a moment of silence to reflect on the lives of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for their service.

To read more, go to: <https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story16915-adventist-leaders-pause-to-remember-church-workers-lost-to-covid-19>.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

communication skills. I am forever grateful.'

Many thousands of members who were brought to Christ through his ministry, as well as many colleagues inspired by him, will mourn the passing of a loving and lovable Christian who gave his life totally for his Lord. May the love of God comfort his family and all who await the resurrection.

To read in greater detail about the life and ministry of Pastor Currie, go to TED News: <https://ted.adventist.org/news/19-09-in-memory-of-pastor-david-currie>.

EDITORIALETHEA THOMPSON

Messenger

Volume 126 • 11 – 26 November 2021

Editor: David Neal
Editorial secretary: Sarah Jarvis
Design: David Bell
Proof reading: Andrew Puckering
Production and distribution:
Peter Oppong-Mensah

COPY FOR NO. 12 – 6 December 2021

Note to potential advertisers

It is important that those who submit adverts for display in *Messenger* ensure that they have permission (and a paid licence where required) to use any downloaded photographs or artwork that they incorporate into their adverts. It is also important that credit be given to the individual, organisation or company from which these have been obtained. For example, something like the following should appear within the advert: ©Joe Bloggs/iStockPhoto.com. Please be aware that images downloaded from Google may also be subject to permission and licensing. The Stanborough Press Ltd takes no responsibility for any downloaded images submitted to *Messenger* by contributors and reserves the right to decline adverts about which we have copyright concerns.

Permission relating to photography

Those who submit photographs of minors (persons under the age of 18) for publication must ensure that they have permission to do so from their parents, guardians or carers. We would like these submissions to be accompanied by the following statement: 'I have the permission of the parents, guardian or carer of the minors who appear in this/these photograph/s to submit them for publication in the *Messenger*.'

Copy should be sent to the Editor, *Messenger*, The Stanborough Press Limited, Alma Park, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 9SL. Tel: (01476) 591700. Fax No: (01476) 577144.

Email: Editor@stanboroughpress.org.uk

Send high-resolution pictures to:

dbell@stanboroughpress.org.uk

ABC Sales line: (01476) 591700

Mon-Thurs only, 8am-5.30pm.

www.stanboroughpress.org.uk

The Editor may alter, clarify, précis or expand articles sent to him if he thinks it necessary. Published monthly on Fridays by the British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

For general enquiries, email:

info@stanboroughpress.org.uk

Printed in the UK.

Visit the BUC website at:

www.adventist.org.uk

ISSN 0309-3654

Sunset

Sunset times are reproduced with permission from data supplied by HM Nautical Almanac Office.


	London	Card	Notf	Edin	Belf
Nov 26	3.59	4.11	3.56	3.49	4.07
Dec 3	3.54	4.06	3.51	3.42	4.01
10	3.52	4.04	3.48	3.39	3.58
17	3.52	4.04	3.48	3.38	3.58



Stanborough Press
Keeping the church
family together!

2022 DEVOTIONAL CALENDARS

NOW AVAILABLE!



God's
Wonderful
World

2022
Devotional



01476 591700

sales@stanboroughpress.org.uk

LifeSource
Christian Bookshop

or visit our shop online at
www.LifeSourceBookshop.co.uk