

January 2022

Dear members and friends,
Happy New Year! May our God, who has been faithful in the past, show Himself faithful in 2022.

George Mueller, the preacher and philanthropist, said, 'My business is, with all my might, to serve my own generation: in doing so, I will best serve the next generation, should the Lord tarry. . . .'

Today, I reflect on these words as I accept my new calling to serve the people of the British Isles and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

I am deeply humbled that the Father has called me, at this time in earth's history, to lead His people. But I also welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with you to fulfil God's mission to:

- Go into all the world,
- Preach the Gospel,
- Baptise, and
- Make disciples.

Respectfully, it would be remiss of me not to mention the recent departure of Archbishop Desmond Tutu on 26 December 2021. Among his many accolades, he was a true champion for human rights, a Nobel Prize laureate, and a major contributor to the cessation of apartheid in South Africa. But, most importantly, he was simply a humble Christian who devoted his life to equality, *reflecting Christ, valuing people, inspiring hope, changing lives, reaching one life at a time*. The world is poorer for his passing.

Often, we complicate the reason for our existence, but our mission is clear and simple, and we should focus all our efforts to fulfil it. Our message remains the same, but our methods for the delivery of the Gospel **must change**. Together, we must find new, innovative and meaningful ways to deliver our message, so that our children and young people, those who have little understanding of faith, as well as those who are mature in faith, can embrace it.

For me, Christian leadership is only effective if saturated in prayer and meaningful relationships. I desperately need your prayers. Please pray that God will 'create in me a new heart and give me a new spirit'. Pray that the Father will 'order my steps in His word'. I love the way Psalm 119:133 reads in the Message translation: 'Steady my steps with your Word of promise so nothing malign [harmful] gets the better of me.'

Pray that the vision that the British Union Conference leadership team will cast will be one that is impactful and guided by the Father. Please also pray for my family – my wife, Tina, and my three children, Melody, Jasper and Kyle. Leadership can be very challenging on family life.

And, in speaking of leadership, I thank Pastor Ian Sweeney and his loving wife, Jennifer, for his ten years of dedicated service in the BUC presidential office. He has worked through some very challenging times and difficult circumstances, but with the help of God he has steered the ship through stormy waters, the church has survived, and many areas have thrived.

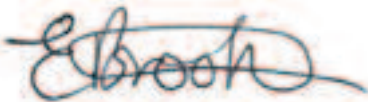
On behalf of the British Union Conference staff and trustees, I thank him for his bravery and resilience, especially in the last two years of the pandemic. We wish him well in his new role as Field Secretary for the Trans-European Division.

As we begin 2022, I want to invite each of us to take every opportunity possible to value people, inspire hope, and share the love of God, our Father, with family, friends and neighbours. Through our relationships let's live our lives as we connect with the story of a God who loves everyone so much that He sent His Son into the world.

I am aware that many members are starting 2022 with great difficulty, especially for those who have lost loved ones, individuals facing the reality of loneliness, the fatherless, the widows/widowers and the orphans. Take time to prayerfully connect with others who may be sad, lonely and anxious.

I pray that, as we begin 2022, we may reflect on how deep the Father's love is for us and share that love with those around us in meaningful ways.

Yours faithfully,



Pastor Eglan B. Brooks
President

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Pastor Eglan Brooks elected as President of the Adventist Church in the UK & Ireland

Pastor Eglan Brooks, currently Ministerial Association Director for the British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (BUC), is now elected to serve as President. He succeeds Pastor Ian Sweeney, who has been called to serve as Field Secretary in the Trans-European Division.

As the BUC Executive Committee prayed and considered the person to succeed Pastor Sweeney, members shared together the qualities they sought in the leader they were looking for: integrity, humility, commitment; a spiritual person with vision, confidence and a passion for ministry and mission.

After working and praying through a process that considered many possible candidates, on Thursday 9 December 2021, they agreed and voted Pastor Brooks to serve in the role of President to lead the Church in the UK and Ireland for the next five years.

A leader arises in the context of time and circumstance. With committee members gathered in the Stanborough Park church sanctuary, the optics of masked and socially distanced committee members widely dispersed among the pews were a vivid reminder of our time. Opening prayers yet again contained support for an individual and a family grief-stricken by the pandemic. As Sweeney noted, 'We need the Comforter. We need God's guidance and wisdom today.'

Is it possible that the Lord answered Sweeney's heartfelt plea through the election of Pastor Brooks? He is well known for his strong administrative and organisational skill, his focus on mission and personal evangelism, and his commitment to ensuring youth and children have a place in the Church. A quality that shines through is his empathy and concern for the well-being of the individual. Equally, when he sees someone wronged, he wants the injustice put right.

In his acceptance remarks to

committee members he stated, 'These are challenging times for us as a church. I reckon that we will have some difficult days ahead of us. I think that there will be some issues that need to be resolved.'

Trans-European Division (TED) President Pastor Raafat Kamal, chair of the Executive Committee for the nomination process, noted that 'one of the main purposes for the existence of the British Union Conference as enshrined in its constitution is to "proclaim the everlasting Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"'. He went on to affirm that 'Pastor Brooks has been trained and equipped by God and His servants, who called him for such a moment in history to lead the work in making God known to the 73 million people within the territory of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.'

'The election of Pastor Brooks is one I wholeheartedly welcome,' Kamal continued, 'and one in which I look forward to deepening the working partnership that exists between our largest constituency and the Trans-European Division.' Of the 88,419 TED members, British Union Conference membership is 40,233.

With the welcome came a request. 'I humbly request that our members, pastors and leaders join me in lifting Pastor Brooks and his family before the Lord Almighty to fulfil His promise as written in Isaiah 41:10 (NIV): "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."'

Training and experience

Pastor Brooks began his training for ministry at Northern Caribbean University (formerly West Indies College), completing his graduate studies with an MA in Old Testament Studies and Pastoral Administration at Newbold College in 1991.

His entry into departmental leadership came in 1998 with his

appointment as Pathfinder and Teen Ministries Director at the South England Conference (SEC). For the next five years the then rapidly growing Pathfinder movement became Eglan's life, training district and local leaders to effectively minister to children and teens. This was foundational for future leadership responsibility. It was under his tenure in 2001 that the *Pathfinder Handbook* was commissioned, still currently used by Pathfinders today.

From 2003 to 2006 Brooks returned to local church ministry in South London (Area 6B), pastoring six churches, and then the Cambridge and Harlow district.

At the 2006 British Union Conference Session he was called to serve as Personal Ministries Director. The role included responsibility for promoting evangelism, church growth, and the then BUC Life Development initiative, an evangelism and discipleship resource aimed at connecting with UK secular people.

For a decade Pastor Brooks immersed himself into the role, including an annual National Lay Bible Workers' Convention, a three-day multi-disciplinary, inter-departmental symposium for the discipline of studying and sharing Scripture together, always with the aim of reaching a friend for Christ.

As a continuing resource to support the life and witness of the church year-round, in 2011 he created the British Union Training Resource Evangelism Centre (BUTREC), which coordinated the production, sale and distribution of evangelistic resources.

Connected with BUTREC was the launch in 2012 of the annual literature distribution initiative, whereby every member in the UK and Ireland is invited to share a magazine or book with a friend. Beginning with the 'Power of 31,000', the initiative is now embedded into the church calendar, continuing to this day as the Power of 40,000. It serves as a continuing legacy to his commitment to personal witness and mission. This emphasis enhanced his skills for this new role, committed to training members for ministry, through utilising their spiritual gifts. It was an initiative that fitted well with the later General Conference 'Total Member Involvement' plan!

From 2017 onwards until his



most recent appointment, Pastor Brooks served as the Ministerial Director for the British Union. Many pastors can testify to having benefited from his pastoral visit in their home, often accompanied by his wife Tina, listening to concerns over a shared meal together. Although not every problem was solved, through his listening and empathetic ministry, the problem was halved.

On a Sabbath morning just over a week ago, Brooks was awoken early with something on his mind. He was unsettled, and, as he shared with the Executive Committee members, he was drawn to Zechariah 4:6 (NIV): 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.'

As Pastor Brooks begins his new role leading Seventh-day Adventists in the UK and Ireland, he expresses confidence 'that, in all that will happen, the Lord Himself will lead this church. I am also confident that this church can make a difference in this world.'

He has been married to Tina Brooks for 32 years, and they are the parents of Melody, Jasper and Kyle. Tina, an accomplished musician, served at one time as the musical director for the London Adventist Chorale. In a TED programme hosted by Ken Burton for Hope Channel UK, Tina talks about the role of music in her life, which can be seen at this link: <https://hopetv.org.uk/programmes/episode/ml/music-in-my-life/tina-brooks/>

EDITOR

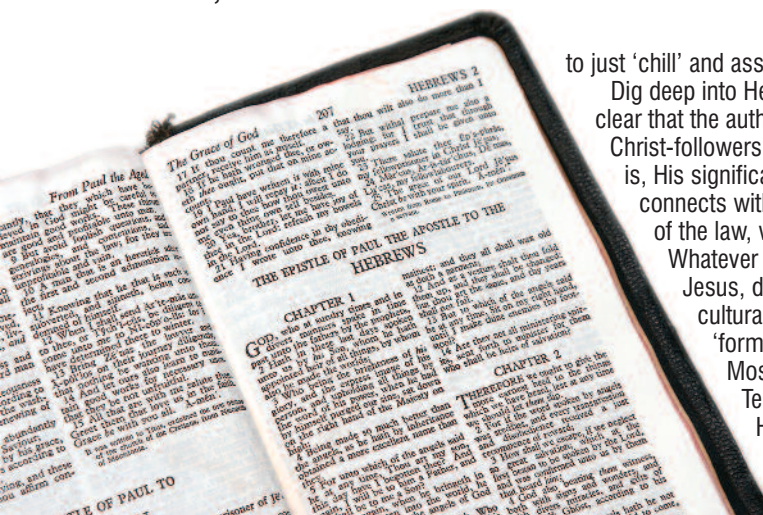
An earlier version of this report first appeared in *BUC News*, 10 December 2021.



David Neal, Editor

The future is . . . Jesus!

‘Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus’



to just ‘chill’ and assimilate.

Dig deep into Hebrews and it becomes clear that the author is trying to help Christ-followers understand who Jesus is, His significance, and how He connects with their old-world order of the law, writings and prophets.

Whatever they understand about Jesus, deeply rooted in their cultural and spiritual DNA is a ‘former’ way of thinking.

- Moses or Christ?
- Temple or Person?
- High priest or Jesus High Priest?
- Old worship ritual or new way of worship?

As we have often shared together, the challenge of personal growth is not to ‘learn’, but to ‘unlearn’. While Hebrews contains doctrinal teaching, the heart of the sermon is really ‘a word of consolation’ with advice to ‘listen patiently to what I have said . . .’ (Hebrews 13:22, ERV). The message could not be clearer. Jesus is superior! Superior to the old revelation, to angels, to Moses, to Joshua, and even to the high priest! Why?

‘[Because] in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed as heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.’ (Hebrews 1:2, 3, NIV.)

As we read these familiar words again, pause for a moment to try and imagine how the AD 60 listener reacts. ‘Is it true?’ someone asks. ‘Is Jesus worth it?’ asks another. ‘Jesus is superior to Moses? Really?’ That’s why the author has to put Jesus at the very centre with absolute and uncompromising conviction:

You see Jesus – you see God – you have access to God – He understands you.

The message those listeners heard is one I am convinced we need today. Whoever this heaven-sent author is, he knows exactly how to help:

‘First, as a matter of the utmost importance, he has turned their eyes not to themselves, hoping for sufficient inward strength, nor to the agonising troubles, nor to their persecuting

contemporaries, but to Christ. No believer can cope with adversity unless Christ fills his/her horizons, sharpens his/her priorities and dominates his/her experience.’³

Hebrews 4:15, 16, NIV:
‘For we do not have a high priest who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.’

How can that verse not turn our grey into gold? I can only invite you to take time out and consider three questions about it. 1. What does it say about God? 2. What does it say about me? And 3. What must I do?

It was soon to be Mary’s fourth birthday. Knowing every birthday to be very special for their young Mary, her parents carefully chose a present that would bring the most joy – a doll.

When the day arrived, the excited four-year-old jumped up and down with excitement: ‘Can I have my present yet?’ At last the moment arrives when Mary sees her present. Wrapped in the brightest rainbow-coloured paper imaginable, the words ‘Happy birthday’ are scrawled all over it.

Dad is excited too, taking photo after photo of Mary from every angle as she unwraps the present. As the doll is removed from the box, Mary’s face beams with joy. She gives Mum and Dad big hugs and repeats, ‘Thank you’ many times; but, after a few minutes of playing with the doll, something strange happens. Placing the doll on a chair, she turns to the wrapping paper and plays with it for a very long time, screwing it up into a ball, and throwing it across the room. ‘Let’s play catch, Mummy! Let’s play catch, Daddy!’ she shouts.

Mum and Dad, quite confused, ask, ‘Don’t you like your doll, Mary?’

‘Oh, yes, Mummy,’ she says, but continues to play with the wrapping.

And, for the Adventist community of faith, what constitutes ‘the wrapping paper’? Could it be some beliefs we hold dear? The health message, the end times, the remnant and its mission, church organisation, lifestyle matters . . . is it possible that in our humanity we ‘start playing with the wrapping paper instead of the true present’? And the unintended consequence is that we lose sight of Jesus. Sobering! Hebrews calls us to stop playing around with the wrapping paper and receive the gift! Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, who is past, present and future (Hebrews 12:2).

We need Jesus.
 End-time people need Jesus:
 because He is the future!

My spirit soars! During the first three months of 2022 Seventh-day Adventists around the globe are studying Hebrews together. I love Hebrews! I love the purpose and enthusiasm of its author for Jesus. I love his conviction about who Jesus is, how He is supreme – the One providing unlimited free access as a gift into the presence of God! I need the warning not to ‘fall back’, but to keep my eyes fixed on Him! I need the counsel to keep going when life chucks its unpredictable rubbish at me. Reading Hebrews does nothing less than turn my grey into gold!

I am mystified about the author. Is it Paul? I would love it to be Paul, and it almost feels Pauline, and this is a transcribed spoken sermon influenced by Paul, ‘but who wrote the Epistle God only knows certainly,’ cautioned Origen in the second century.¹ One commentator suggests it couldn’t be Paul, because his letters are full of unfinished sentences, a result of his over-excitement in the way he communicates. I know that feeling! The sentences in Hebrews are complete.

The letter is written to a ‘group of first-century Christians who were in danger of “giving up”, living between AD 60 and 65’.² Jewish Christians, in particular, were targets. Persecuted they were – publicly ridiculed, physically assaulted, burgled, and thrown into prison because of their absolute trust in Christ. But there were also others whose commitment to Christ had waned.

And that’s why this letter was so critical. Faced with persecution, wouldn’t it be a no-brainer for the Jew to stick with Abraham and Moses as the safer option? For the Gentile convert, it was such a struggle to live ‘the Kingdom’ surrounded by a culture so diametrically opposite; so much easier

¹Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, Inter-varsity Press ²Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews*, p. 13 ³Ibid.



End Time People

Being ready is more important than knowing the time of the end.

To start off the new year, I want to introduce you to a newly published book by the Stanborough Press that I passionately believe in, because its contents have the potential to take us as the people of God from where we are to where He wants us to be. The author, Dr Bryan Ball, writes with the enthusiasm of an evangelist and an unshakeable conviction in the continuing trustworthiness of Scripture, drawing on Peter's ancient letters to speak again today. But he also writes as a pastor. And, if I know anything about the role of a pastor, it is to feed the people of God with the Word of God, and to shield the people of God from error. This book accomplishes both.

As I scanned the chapter headings, I thought, *My life needs to be embedded in the Word. I want to be Spirit-led. To be compassionate and distinctive for the sake of Christ is surely non-negotiable?* And then I stopped and reflected on an uncomfortable truth: isn't this how we all should be? If we are longing for a genuine and lasting Spirit-led revival among the people of God, this book will help us realise that journey.

For the next three editions of *MESSENGER*, we will be providing excerpts from the first chapter.

EDITOR

This book has been written to bring some necessary balance to what, in the writer's opinion, has often been an unbalanced emphasis on last-day events. It is also an attempt to understand what it means to live in the time of the end, particularly as Peter understood it. There is, of course, nothing wrong with wanting to understand Bible prophecy and what it says about the last days. In fact, it is necessary to do so. Sadly, it is one of the characteristics of much of contemporary Christianity that it says little if anything about the great prophecies of the Bible and the last days. The result is an anaemic and largely impotent church which seems irrelevant in the secular world to which it is supposed to witness. The Adventist emphasis on biblical prophecy has brought understanding and new meaning to the lives of untold thousands across the world. I have preached on last-day events myself – but not always, as I have since come to realise, with the balance necessary to a full and healthy understanding of what it means to live in the last days and what it means to be ready for

the Lord's return. It is easy enough to forget that Jesus said to His disciples, 'Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect' (Matthew 24:44). Being ready is more important than knowing the time of the end.

The American historian Perry Miller, in his book *Errand into the Wilderness*, illustrates what can happen to individuals and to society itself when there are unbalanced beliefs about future events. Between the years 1755 and 1758 there was a growing conviction that Halley's comet was on a collision course with Earth and that the end of the world was at hand. Churches began to fill; people began to pray and read their Bibles. As the time drew near, religious fervour intensified. But 1758 came and went, and the comet did not arrive as predicted. Miller describes the result when people realised that Halley's comet had let them off:

'Great numbers went together to the Taverns and broke up whole Hogsheads for joy. . . . They Drank, they Whored, they Swore, they Lied, they Cheated, they

Plunder'd, they Gam'd, they Quarrell'd, they Murder'd. In short, the World went on in the Old Channel.'

Miller draws a very significant lesson from this fiasco: 'People cannot be scared into virtue.' There was no inner moral or spiritual imperative to require a virtuous life. It is a lesson that many in more recent times have been slow to learn. Mere knowledge of events, real or conjectured, present or future or, for that matter, past, cannot of itself result in changed lives.

As its title indicates, this book seeks to correct this imbalance. An understanding of End Time events must be accompanied by the recognition that such knowledge is only useful if it leads to authentic End Time people. Understanding and lifestyle are, in true Christian experience, inseparably related. The purpose of this book is to explain how and why, particularly in Peter's epistles, this connection is deemed necessary and experientially possible. It will, I believe, be an enlightening and enjoyable experience. But, before we come to the text itself, two underlying questions must first be answered. Can Peter's belief that he was writing in the last days to people who lived in the first century be substantiated? And, if so, is it also valid to claim that what he wrote then is equally relevant to the Church today?

The remainder of this chapter attempts to answer these two questions. The chapters which follow fill in the details and paint a picture of the kind of people Peter believes End Time people should be. It should be noted that throughout this book the terms 'last days', 'end time', and 'time of the end' are used synonymously unless otherwise stated.

There cannot be any question that Peter's epistles were written to early Christian believers in the conviction that both writer and readers were living in the last days. The first epistle begins with a reminder that believers are kept by the power of God as they wait for their salvation, to be revealed 'in the last time' (1 Peter 1:5). The New English Bible and the Good News Bible translate this phrase, 'at the end of time'. This anticipated salvation is now 'ready to be revealed'. Its time has come. It is urgent for us to be ready. In verse 20 of this same chapter Peter writes specifically of 'these last times', which the New English Bible translates as 'this last period of time' and the New Revised Standard Version as 'at the end of the ages'.

Peter's belief that he is writing about the last days and to people living in those days is



put beyond all doubt when he declares unambiguously, 'The end of all things is at hand' (1 Peter 4:7). Writing in the *Tyndale New Testament Commentary*, Wayne Grudem explains the meaning of this text as it relates to God's plan of redemption and the salvation that is now 'ready to be revealed'. In the long sequence of events leading up to the coming of the Saviour, beginning with Creation and the Fall, and ending in the return of Christ at the last day, Grudem states:

'The end of all things is at hand means that all the major events in God's plan of redemption have occurred, and now all things are ready for Christ to return and rule. The great "last act", the church age, had been continuing for about thirty years by the time Peter wrote. Thus the curtain could fall at any time, ushering in the return of Christ and the end of the age. All things are ready: the end of all things (the goal to which all these events have been leading) is at hand.' Even a cursory reading of Peter's first epistle conveys the fact that he is convinced that he and all those to whom he was writing were living at the end of time. They were literally End Time people.


It is necessary to pause here and note carefully that Peter's emphasis on the last days is in harmony with other New Testament statements which state that the early Christian church mid-way through the first century AD was living at the end of time. In the epistle to the Romans, Paul reminds them, in words similar to those Peter uses, 'Now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand' (Romans 13:11, 12). Paul writes to the Corinthians about things that occurred in Old Testament times 'to warn us who live at the end of the age' (1 Corinthians 10:11, NLT). The author of Hebrews begins his epistle by saying that God 'has in these last days spoken to us by His Son' (Hebrews 1:1, 2). John, writing nearer the end of the first century, puts it even more dramatically: 'It is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour' (1 John 2:18). Christians at this time believed that a great enemy of God and the Church, known as the Antichrist, would appear before Christ's return. His appearance was proof that this was indeed the 'last hour', the last of the last days. Peter is in good company when he writes to End Time people about those days.

Some have questioned how the writers of the New Testament can so consistently refer

to their days as the last days when now, two millennia later, Christians still read the same things and apply them to the twenty-first century. It is a good question, and there is a good answer. It is directly related to the salvation Peter says is ready to be revealed in the last days, and to how we understand the word 'salvation' and the term 'last days'. Does salvation mean only what happened at Calvary; a synonym, perhaps, for redemption?

It is a question that will be answered in the next excerpt from End Time People, which will be published in the February edition of MESSENGER. But if you can't wait until then, copies are available for purchase from the Stanborough Press for £6.50 + £2.05 postage and packing.

Unless otherwise stated, all texts are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.



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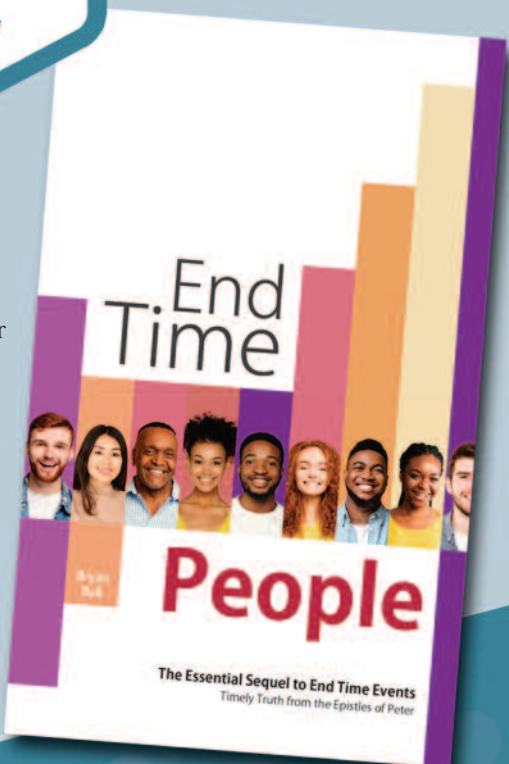
End Time People

What do End Time people look like? What do they believe? In whom do they trust? And what is the source of their hope?

Dr Bryan Ball, evangelist, author and minister of the Gospel with many decades of experience, answers all these questions and more by taking us on a journey through the letters of the apostle Peter, a church leader dedicated to caring for his flock.


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If only . . . Rebuilding trust, restoring values, regaining ground

by Pastor George Kumi – NEC President

In her book, *Holiness in Hidden Places*, Joni Eareckson Tada states, ‘If only we could open our spiritual eyes and see the grain we’re planting, growing and reaping along the way.’¹ As I read this statement over again, I am reminded of the *parable of the sower*.

According to Scripture, the good ground on which the grain fell represents those who hear God’s teaching with good, honest hearts and obey it and patiently produce good fruit.² If only all the grain had fallen on good ground, the harvest would have been rich and overflowing. If only . . .

Too often we look back with regrets. *If only* is often accompanied with a shaking head, an aching heart and tears that flow in abundance. We also look at the condition of our church in many areas, and we too think, *If only we had done things differently – what would the landscape look like today?*

I believe that we, as a church, are here for a purpose: and, in order to fulfil this purpose, we need to be attuned to the workings and leading of the Spirit of God. This calls for intense soul searching, both individually and corporately. We need to be open to our Father God, who offers to ‘put a new way of thinking’ inside us. He says, ‘I will take away your stubborn heart of stone and give you an obedient heart. I will put my spirit in you and I will see to it that you follow my laws. . . .’³

As President of the NEC, I and my team of administrators and directors, along with the board of trustees, are committed to rebuilding trust, restoring values and regaining ground within our territory. There is a need for much reflection, more time spent in prayer than in the board room, but also a time for us to be open for God to create in us hearts that are like rich soil; hearts that are open to meaningful dialogue and Godly conflict resolution; hearts that produce such amazing fruit that the values of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control continually bloom; hearts that are passionate to pursue our God-given purpose to share the Gospel with everyone we meet in new and meaningful ways.

‘We need a new heart. And it is patient and persevering prayer on our part that allows the Father to give it to us.’⁴

As we look to the future of the North England Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in these last days, it’s time for us to persevere in prayer for the work in our field. Let us put aside ingrained wrong habits so that the Word of the God might not ‘fall by the wayside’. Let us remove the rocks of doubt, misgivings and cynicism. Let’s weed

the garden of our minds so that the Word isn’t choked by materialism. But let our hearts be softened and opened to Jehovah, who wants to plant the grains and seeds of love there, so that the people around may be transformed by our life and witness.

¹Joni Eareckson Tada, *Holiness in Hidden Places* (J Countryman: Nashville, Tennessee, 1999), p. 16

²Matthew 13:23

³Ezekiel 36:26, GNB

⁴Luigi Gioia, *Say it to God* (Bloomsbury: London & New York, 2017), p. 125



‘Total Well-being’ is our focus

by Pastor Emmanuel Osei – SEC President

2021 will probably go down in our lifetime as a very difficult, challenging and painful year. We experienced lockdown, our churches were closed, we witnessed many businesses fold, and many members lost their jobs. Worst of all, we laid many of our loved ones to rest, primarily because of underlying health issues aggravated by COVID-19.

Despite all of our challenges, I am proud of the achievement of our church members. Members embraced our theme – ‘Making Disciples: Building Communities’. Each church selected an area of ministry, such as providing clothes or food banks, cooking and providing food parcels, shopping for the vulnerable and so on. It was encouraging to share with the entire membership each week the ministry in which members from the different areas were engaged. I recall seeing pictures of many community members queueing up outside a particular church to receive their groceries and literature. The testimonies were exciting and inspiring.

Closing the year by prayerfully considering our plans for the year 2022, we decided to go to Hay’s Wood Retreat Centre, as directors, for an envisioning session. We sought the Lord in prayer, putting aside all our preconceived plans, and asked Him to reveal His will for 2022. The Lord impressed us to focus on ‘Total Well-being’. The primary purpose was to promote and empower our members to have better mental, physical, spiritual and social well-being and health.

Sadly, we have had to live through a pandemic where people have lost loved ones; many have lost jobs; marriages have broken down; there have been conflicts in the home due to the restrictions of the lockdown; young people have been disappointed and adversely affected due to the interruption in their education; domestic abuse has risen; some have been driven to suicide; people’s mental health has been affected. We felt God wanted us to address these painful issues that our communities were facing.

We were led to plan a summer health extravaganza where we would invite the community to join us in a fun day. We aim to

have activities for the children, live music and several booths where health professionals will be addressing vital areas of our well-being. To be expected, each of the 7 areas will have different local and community needs, and we intend to ascertain those needs and minister to them. We may have, for example, a mental health booth, where we will make available literature on stress, depression and anxiety and have a professional make a short presentation on the subject. We will then direct those interested to where they can get further help. We may have a spiritual health booth, where we will minister to those who visit and then again signpost them to one of our churches for nurturing. We will also invite other local organisations to partner with us in this health extravaganza for the benefit of the community.

Finally, other areas within the SEC territory will select dates where similar outreach events can be replicated. As we impact communities and form new contacts, it is our hope to make disciples and build communities.



The Lord is our Refuge, Strength and Guide

by Pastor Jimmy Botha – Scottish Mission President

They said that 2020 was a year to forget, but then 2021 came and did not disappoint either. I am not of the view that we should forget these years. On the contrary, there is much to remember of them. Many of us have seen the working of the Lord in our lives, homes, neighbourhoods and places of work, and in our churches. It is true that most of our churches don’t look the same as in the pre-pandemic times. Our numbers have decreased for the physical gatherings in some congregations and increased for online activity in many places. In 2021, I saw further innovations by our pastoral team, adding to the vast amount done in 2020, and I also saw as much adaptation in the efforts of our members.

The times we live in have shaped creative ministries. This paradigm shift that exploded in March 2020 continues to drive new thinking. I believe this trend and the so-called out-of-the-box leadership will shape much of what happens in the next few years. One of the latest initiatives we have undertaken in Scotland is a pioneering partnership with ADRA, twinned with five Southern African countries. This venture, the *Africa Scotland Action Project* (ASAP), is set to allow all our members to participate in the improvement of our communities by offsetting our carbon footprint in our various locations. This would not only improve the air quality, but also enhance our overall quality of life, as we remain the stewards of God’s creation until His return, which we eagerly await. Other well-established areas of our church’s

programmes, such as food hubs, will continue to support our communities in the new year.

As Seventh-day Adventist churches within the Scottish Mission we look towards and prepare for the challenges of 2022, being determined to bring the Gospel to the people of Scotland. We know we can stand on the building blocks of the previous two years, and on the faith we have accumulated through these tough times. We know that the Lord is our refuge, strength and guide. We have faith that, whatever happens, He will remain with us and carry us through.

I would like to thank the pastoral team in Scotland for their commitment, hard work and care. Equally, I also thank the members of the church in Scotland for their generosity and care towards one another and the members of their communities.



Revived, empowered disciplers

by Pastor Graham Allcock –
Welsh Mission President

The Welsh Mission, under the leadership of Pastor Emanuel Bran, adopted the GROW strategy at the beginning of 2021.

Members were encouraged to prepare, plant, cultivate, harvest and preserve.

Friendships in the community were grown and strengthened in various ways. The Port Talbot church became a much-appreciated hub for food distribution, well supported by local supermarkets, and this continues. Free literature and chatting to people, using a market stall as a focal point, was something the members of Newtown Church found effective. Others gave Bible studies to friends and work colleagues.

Despite the challenges of social distancing and church closures, harvests were seen in baptisms in Haverfordwest and Cardiff. A record was set for the Welsh Mission with the baptism of 18 individuals in Cardiff. Many had waited several months for this day. Others, reflecting on the sobering reality of COVID-19 deaths among family and friends, took Bible studies and decided to follow Christ. It was wonderful to witness several couples go into the baptismal pool together.

A change in leadership has not diminished the desire to grow God's kingdom in Wales. I would like to see our pastors and members commit to becoming 'Revived, Empowered Disciplers'. Nearly 120 years ago, an amazing revival took place in Wales as the Holy Spirit responded to the heartfelt prayers of some young people. We, too, can be revived and empowered as we immerse ourselves in the study of God's Word, prayer, and living in a way that bears testimony to our profession of being Christ-followers. Let us purpose in our hearts to love one another as Jesus loves us, because this is how we are recognised as His disciples. (John 13:35.) Let us come together

in unity as the early disciples did in the upper room, setting aside differences and the desire for self-exaltation.

In September, the Welsh Mission recognised the call to ministry for Pastors Jeremy Johnson, Louis Amakye and Adriana Fodor. Pastor Adriana, as the Personal Ministries Sponsor for Wales, continues to provide training and equipping through the School of Evangelism. Offered on a Zoom platform, members have the opportunity of receiving excellent training, assisting them in becoming 'Revived, Empowered Disciplers'.

Life may not return to 'normal' any time soon, but our individual and corporate commission from Jesus remains the same – 'Go . . . and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you' (Matthew 28:19, 20, NKJV).

Will you take His mission to heart in 2022? May the Holy Spirit empower each one of us to proclaim the good news of the Gospel in the communities in which we live and worship.



Established, empowered, engaged

by Pastor Dan Serb – Irish
Mission President

'Another year has passed and we're still here!' These were the words of one of the people I was talking to the other day – he'd lost loved ones to the coronavirus and had written to me as a last resort before making a decision of whether to continue attending church or not. Time seems to be indifferent to our pain, loss, and disappointment. Like an unstoppable deluge, it moves on and often washes away dreams, peace, relationships, and sometimes anchors. However, even though the route of life's journey may not always be of our choice (for who would have chosen the tragedies that have befallen some of us this year?), the destination is still within our power to choose. God knows the end He has in mind for you (John 3:16). Are you still anchored in the belief of life eternal in the presence of the almighty God? Viruses, old age, and accidents hurt and kill this body, but our destiny can remain secure in Jesus' love and care. I hope that your anchor holds strong, that certainty is defined by a relationship with Divinity rather than arguments, and that trust sinks deep into the mysteries of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection. In the Irish Mission we seek to remain *established* in Christ (1 Thessalonians 3:13), *empowered* by His Spirit (Acts 1:8), and *engaged* in mission and ministry to a world in need of certitude (Revelation 14:6). To this end, we have laid before us a strategy on how to stay anchored. At the 6 October session, the delegates of the Irish Mission

voted the following strategic objectives for the coming quinquennium (compiled and presented by the Irish Mission pastoral team):

Strategic objective no. 1 – revitalising congregations. As part of the natural life cycle of congregations, membership can be growing numerically, or it can be in decline. While over the last 20 years or more many of our congregations have grown in number and new churches have sprung up across the Mission, the reality is that some of our long-established congregations have had negative growth: thus the need to invest time and resources in revitalising churches or territories which were once thriving.

Our second strategic objective is to empower our current ministries to grow and develop while also providing support and guidance in launching new ones. We will seek to do this by encouraging the vast pool of talent and resources within the Irish Mission churches to be Gospel partners. Moreover, we believe that witness and evangelism are best practised when we bridge services so that our programmes complement one another. This will ensure that churches do not work in isolation, but rather network and minister in a united way across the Mission.

Our third strategic objective – we live in a world where media plays a large part in a constantly changing society. Our desire is to minister to the world through cutting-edge, relevant, and innovative media which touches lives and local needs. To this end, our third strategic objective is 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.

Our fourth strategic objective is to establish an innovation and marketing ministry comprising a think-tank of creative people across the Mission and thus create an environment where new ministries can be dreamed, conceptualised, and established.

Finally, we 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.**

*'And I am sure of this,
that he who began a good work
in you will bring it to completion
at the day of Jesus Christ'*
Philippians 1:6 (ESV).

The delegates speak

Friday 22 October may seem a long way back – the final day of the British Union Conference Session. It was not just the final day, but the final hour, and all the business was complete. The then newly re-elected president, Pastor Ian Sweeney, invited departmental directors onto the stage for a listening exercise. The purpose was to invite any delegate to share ‘something the Lord has laid on your heart’. It was quite a first for a conference or union session, because time usually runs out, or the set agenda provides little opportunity for spontaneous input. But on this occasion the delegates spoke.

Shelley Prince (SEC)

I want to invite the new leadership to be more transparent in how they lead, so that they will bring more people on board with their agenda. I also want to mention that our ministers need continual prayer, and we should not have to have special days for prayer for them. When we are impressed, pray.

Pastor Laszlo Liebhart (SEC)

My number-one concern for the future of our church relates to our mission. Can we give greater focus and attention to how we can share the Good News with those around us? Also, I think we need greater training and education on the system we use in selecting and electing people. At this point many do not fully understand the process.



Shelley Prince calls for greater transparency from leaders



Pastor Anthony Fuller – ‘I challenge you to be relevant...’



Pastor Jude Jeanville – ‘I would like to see the church reflect what true inclusiveness is.’

Emmanuel Babfeni (NEC)

My suggestion is about prison ministry. ‘I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ There is nothing on the BUC website about this ministry.

Matthew 24:14 says that the Gospel is to be taken to the whole world. Those in prison are part of this world. I hope that every church

will consider having a prison ministry and I charge the incoming BUC executive to make this their mission.

Annelle Smith (SEC)

What is the BUC doing strategically with local and regional councils and the UK Government in terms of who we are, what we stand for, and how we can help, making it easier for the



Pastor Laszlo Liebhart called for a greater attention to be given to sharing the Good News



The newly elected leadership team are invited to carefully consider the requests

local church to work and connect?

Pastor Anthony Fuller (SEC)

Congratulations to the new BUC team. The BUC membership currently stands at 40,000, showing a trend of new members from 2016 of 1,000 per year. For each 25,000 members only a few are doing the work. I challenge you to be relevant: stores are closing, Amazon is growing. More relevant strategies, please.

Pastor Jude Jeanville (SEC)

Congratulations. I would like to see the church reflect what true inclusiveness is. Prejudice against women is longstanding, and a bias

against women because of their gender. I would not like the church to be accused in law of misogyny. I understand that Ellen White believed women to be fit for ministry and should be paid from tithe funds. May God bless you as a team as you seek to ensure more females are in office.

Abigail Wright-Stevenson (SEC)

Please note that at this session there is a poor representation of young people. In future I would like to see at least two young people from each church at our sessions (at whatever level) to educate and train them for leadership.

Lawson Riviere (SEC)

Put people first, not policy, not procedures or organisation! And let what you do align with what you say!

Jacob Hunter (SEC)

I find my morale affected by the leadership we elect. I want to remind us that any board (Executive Committee) is answerable to the church membership. The pastor works with the board. Eliminate bullying.

Andrew Lawrence (SEC)

I thank God for what has taken place at this session. No matter what hardships come your way, always keep your eyes on Christ. No matter how dark this world gets, God's light shines. I encourage everyone to keep praying.

Pastor Sam Mgui

Conflict seems to be a huge burden in our church, and a reason for members leaving. Can the incoming administration create some internal conflict-resolution mechanisms? These need to be established, because the human cost is great.

Ifoema Victor-Igwe (SM)

In Scotland there are no Adventist schools. We need a school to help us in our mission.

Once time was up, the session was brought to a close with the singing of the song, 'Side by side we stand', and Pastor Emmanuel Osei gave the benediction.

**British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Tithe Report - November 2021**

This Month	2021	2020	Inc / -Dec	Variance %
South	£1,202,955	£1,356,889	-£153,933	-11.3
North	£618,069	£559,216	£58,853	10.5
Welsh	£32,442	£39,614	-£7,173	-18.1
Scottish	£35,787	£35,023	£764	2.2
Irish	£83,837	£70,225	£13,611	19.4
Total	£1,973,090	£2,060,967	-£87,878	-4.3%

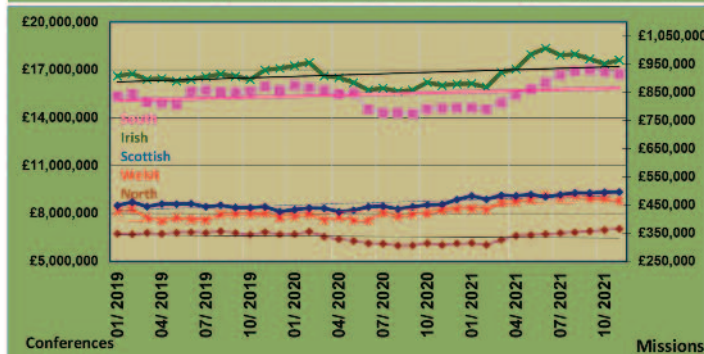
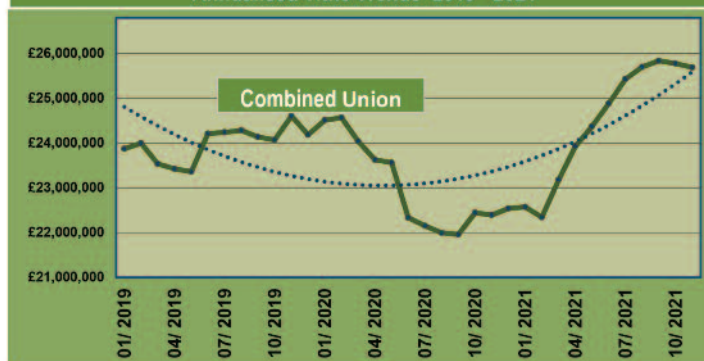
Cumulative to Date

South	£14,896,319	£12,798,464	£2,097,855	16.4%
North	£6,320,048	£5,408,224	£911,824	16.9%
Welsh	£418,278	£389,177	£29,100	7.5%
Scottish	£432,890	£405,282	£27,608	6.8%
Irish	£847,330	£762,072	£85,258	11.2%
Total	£22,914,865	£19,763,219	£3,151,646	15.9%

Budgets

	Annual	To Date	Variance	%
South	£13,867,190	£12,711,591	£2,184,729	17.2%
North	£6,349,204	£5,820,104	£499,945	8.6%
Welsh	£444,000	£407,000	£11,278	2.8%
Scottish	£450,000	£412,500	£20,390	4.9%
Irish	£834,000	£764,500	£82,830	10.8%
Total	£21,944,394	£20,115,695	£2,799,171	13.9%
BUC	£2,302,558	£2,110,678	£180,808.35	8.6%

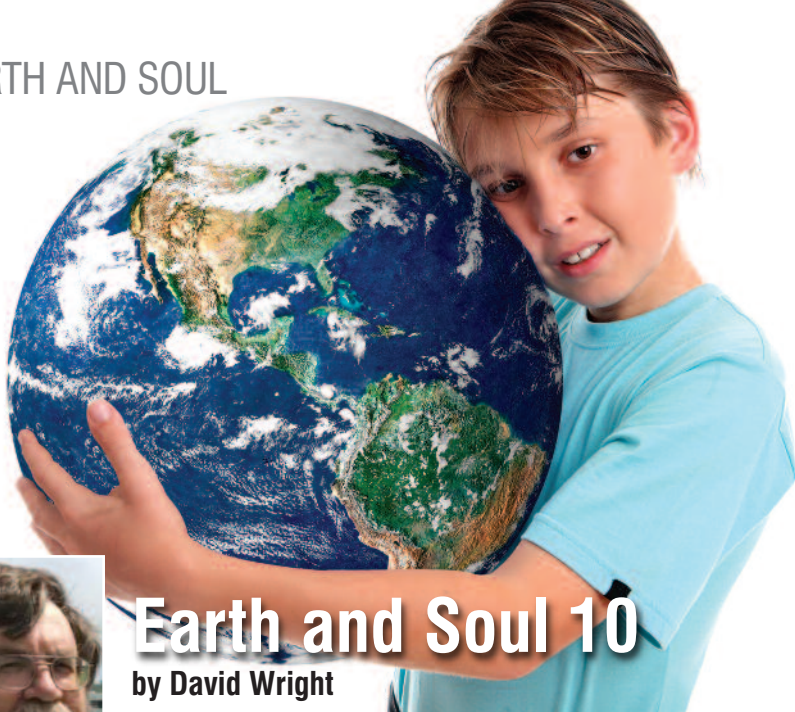
**British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Annualised Tithe Trends 2019 - 2021**



As we near the end of the year, it is encouraging to note that tithe returns have continued along the strong trajectory established as the year has progressed. Tithe returns reflect a 15.9% increase for January to November 2021 (£22,914,865) compared to the same months of the prior year, 2020 (£19,763,219). Even against budget, tithe returns are 8.6% above the original projections for 2021, demonstrating the continued faithfulness and devotion of our membership.

May His love and peace continue to comfort and guide each person as we head into a new year.

'It's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years.' – Abraham Lincoln.



Earth and Soul 10

by David Wright

'God intends our work to be an expression of our worship, and our care of the creation to reflect our love for the Creator.' John Stott

The Bible tells us, **'The earth is the LORD's¹ and 'the earth he has given to the children of man.'**² In other words, the earth belongs to God by creation, and to us by delegation. These two assertions complement rather than contradict each other – or, as Desmond Tutu once put it, **'The first law of our being is that we are set in a delicate network of interdependence with our fellow human beings and with the rest of God's creation.'**³

Surprisingly, there are more Bible texts about God being the Creator than about God being our Redeemer.⁴ Yet, even though Adventists set aside one day every week in

recognition that God created the earth, we still seem complacent about taking care of it. Why are we not the staunchest defenders of God's creation? Of all the myriads of biblical texts advocating our God-given responsibility to care for the environment, Revelation 11:18 is the starkest, telling us clearly how God regards those of us that harm the **'heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them'**.⁵

Creation care was not added to the fundamental beliefs of the SDA Church until the 1980s. **'We are stewards of this world and should do everything to maintain life on all levels by keeping the ecological balance intact. From this perspective Christian**

stewards are responsible not only for their own possessions but for the world around them.' The writer, Arthur Bietz, provided insights into Adventist understanding of humanity's relationship to nature when he wrote: **'To believe in God as the Creator is to root creation in love as revealed in Jesus. Jesus shows us that the purpose of creation is love. The purpose of the creation truth is not to provide an argument, but to point to a relationship of love with God.'**⁶ Perhaps this explains why Adventists have long put emphasis on looking to nature as God's other revelation about Himself: creation – nature, the environment – being second only to the Bible. A strong case can therefore be made that the Adventist view of creation care and stewardship is a ready-made bridge usable to connect with others – a valuable common ground for sharing the Gospel.⁷

'Going green' and trying to implement greener practices wherever possible is not about being trendy, but about being true to our belief in God the Creator and helping others to understand the crimson story of the cross.⁸ While exploring the biblical basis for civic and ecological activism and reviewing Ellen White's concerns about political alignment, historian David Trim concluded that involvement in environmental issues and encouraging solutions, especially where they protect the poor and vulnerable, should be paramount for all Adventists.⁹

¹Psalms 24:1, ESVUK

²Psalms 115:16, ESVUK

³Desmond Tutu, 'Dignity', 21 October 2010

⁴Lynden Williams, *Spectrum*, 2018

⁵Exodus 20:11, KJV

⁶Arthur Bietz, *Review and Herald*, 3 August 1961

⁷Sigve Tonstad, *Spectrum*, 2009

⁸Bill Knott, *Adventist Review*, 7 April 2009

⁹David Trim, *Spectrum*, 2009



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This issue of *Focus* sees a group of new and aspiring writers share their life stories which led to a deeper faith in Christ. As their story combines with His story, they share both joys and challenges with life's ups and downs – stories that could prompt friends to consider Christ. Order your copies today to share: 'It only takes a spark to get a fire going . . . !'

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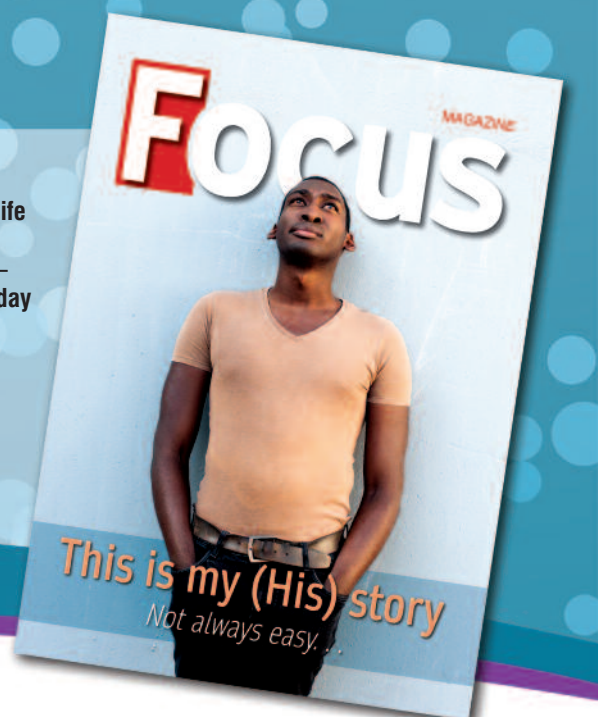
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by Sharon Platt-McDonald

'Be in health'

What was your health like in 2021? Were there aspects of your physical, emotional, spiritual or relational well-being that were less than ideal?

Third John 2 (NKJV) states: *'Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers'* – an empowering affirmation to embrace as we commit our well-being to God throughout 2022.

The evidence

Inspired writings on health by E. G. White correlate with current research on good well-being outcomes when positive lifestyle actions are considered. Here are some examples:

Mental and physical well-being connection

'Diet and mind' is a compelling chapter in the book *Mind, Character and Personality* (vol. 2), where E. G. White states: *'The health of the mind is to a large degree dependent upon the health of the body, and the health of the body is dependent upon the way in which the living machinery is treated.'*¹

Writing on physical and mental health in their July 2021 publication, the Mental Health Foundation wrote: 'Our mental health and physical health are interconnected . . . physical health problems significantly increase our risk of developing mental health problems, and vice versa.'²

Spirituality and mental well-being

In the chapter titled 'Mind and Spiritual Health' from the book *Mind,*

Character and Personality (vol. 2), E. G. White writes: *'A person whose mind is quiet and satisfied in God is in the pathway to health.'*³ That's good news in these challenging and uncertain times.

A similar conclusion was found from research by the Mental Health Foundation in their 2006 publication, 'The Impact of Spirituality on Mental Health':

*'Service users and survivors as well as those in various faith communities are also adding their voices to the evidence base and identifying the ways in which spirituality can contribute to mental health and well-being, mental illness and recovery.'*⁴

Optimal healthy living tips

In July 2020, the Mayo Clinic published an article titled: '7 tips to live a happier life' for enhancing healthier and more productive living:

- Eat nourishing food.
- Sleep 7-8 hours a night.
- Keep company with good people.
- Avoid news overdose.
- Get regular exercise.
- Do something meaningful each day.
- Think good thoughts for others.

Good health as you action these tips!

¹'Diet and Mind', *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 387

²Physical health and mental health', Mental Health Foundation

³'Mind & Spiritual Health', *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 407

⁴mentalhealth.org.uk

⁵'7 tips to live a happier life', Mayo Clinic Health System

HOUSE HOST REQUIRED

X-Ceed Transition is a faith-based organisation created to support our Christian ex-offender clients back into the community. To assist in the transition, we are actively seeking House Hosts to manage the transitional homes.

- Are you looking for an opportunity to minister a biblical lifestyle while working?
 - Do you want to live in the countryside, or become a Supporting Lodgings Provider?
 - Do you have a passion, or experience working with ex-offenders, or the vulnerable?
- Then, we need you!

X-Ceed Transition

Helping ex-offenders begin again

Contact Sharon on 07956 128 434

Adventurers are special!

'I am special and I have a special message', was the theme for the Exeter Adventurers' investiture on Sabbath 20 November. The Adventurers involved with the club were Dorcas and Solomon Akinola, David Gangan, Mutsa and Mufaro Gwelo and Tosia Zaniewski. Pam Catchpole, the Area Pathfinder Director, was the guest speaker. The text chosen for the day was 1 Peter 2:9, and it was read in a variety of languages by children and adults. Pam shared with the Adventurers that they were all chosen to do something special for God. An Adventurer is someone who gets out of their comfort zone to go and do something that presents new opportunities and experiences. Adventurers also inspire others, and should take time to explore their world and meet others. God is calling them to go and do! They can be a light in the darkness as part of Jesus' team.

It was also good that two children, David Gangan and Mufaro Gwelo, gave short, thoughtful talks, which were confidently delivered. They reminded us that we are sons and daughters of God and have value to Him. God loves us all the same, whatever our culture.

The Adventurer leader, Chiedza Maisiri-Gwelo, was delighted to see all the children taking part, including the Pathfinders under the leadership of Rose Mogeni. Jesse and Phoebe Mogeni, Daniela Gangan and Julia Kasprovicz contributed readings and poems, and Sabrina Donciu sang a solo. We are thankful to Rose Mogeni, who supported all the groups, enabling them to attend a camporee, a rally day, and the Pathfinder Bible Experience. It was also through her ministry that the Exeter Pathfinders recently earned an honour



Back row, left to right: Pastor Caleb Akinola, Pam Catchpole, Pastor Weiers Coetser; middle row: Jesse Mogeni, Daniela Gangan, Sabrina Donciu, Phoebe Mogeni, Julia Kasprovicz, Chiedza Maisiri-Gwelo; front row: Rose Mogeni, Dorcas Akinola, Solomon Akinola, David Gangan, Mufaro Gwelo, Lola Kasprovicz and Mutsa Gwelo

with the Plymouth group in 'Drill and Marching'.

Three children completed the Sunbeam course and are now working on the Builder's course – and recognition was given for the help and support provided by parents. During the pandemic, it has been difficult to meet as a club – only outdoors!

Chiedza hopes that parents will continue to support their children at home and that God will sustain the club. Pastor Weiers Coetser was thankful to the leaders, children and parents for all their hard work.

STELLA JEFFERY

Holloway Pathfinder Drum Corps lead Islington Remembrance Parade – 14 November 2021



Holloway Pathfinder Drum Corps show commitment to Christ to onlookers

Sunday 14 November 2021 marked the annual Remembrance Sunday celebrated throughout England, and, as in previous years, the Islington Remembrance Parade and Ceremony also took place. Ably led by the Holloway Pathfinder Drum Corps with Councillor Alex

Silcott as drum major, the band played a medley of original beats as they marched through Islington streets from Highbury Corner to Islington Angel, where the ceremony was held.

There were three flag bearers from the

Holloway Pathfinder club: Saffron Palmer carrying the Union Jack, D'yana Buffong with the Adventurer flag, and Zachariah Samuels bearing the Pathfinder flag. Many well-known organisations such as the Army, the Royal Navy, the Marines, Scouts, Brownies, Cubs, Cadets, Metropolitan Police, London Fire Brigade, and St John Ambulance were also represented. Also in attendance were local political and religious leaders.

Following the two minutes of silence to remember fallen soldiers, tributes were made and wreaths laid. Flags or 'standards' were lowered to remember fallen soldiers, and the ceremony ended with the singing of the national anthem.

The Holloway Pathfinder Drum Corps then led the parade through the streets of Islington back to Islington Town Hall to the applause and expressions of appreciation from members of the public, who lined both sides of the streets. As the march drew to a close, two young brothers, who were fascinated by the sight of the drum corps, took pictures with us. It was a huge success and a privilege for our Pathfinders to show our commitment to Christ to onlookers, while at the same time paying our respects to those who gave their lives defending the freedoms we hold so dear.

EMEKA NWOKOYE



Aaron Masih emerges from the pool with a thumbs-up

Truth is stranger than it used to be

‘The loss of truth is absolutely fundamental. Everything flows from that. You reach a point where we are today as Nietzsche predicted, denying that anything can be affirmed as absolutely true. The only way to tackle a society that has jettisoned absolute truth is to tell the whole story and tell it with confidence . . . for if there is no truth we are just adrift in a shoreless ocean.’

(The Independent, 23 January 1995)

Baptism at Langley Church

Aaron Michael Masih was baptised on the afternoon of 21 August 2021. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, Aaron’s parents decided to hold the baptism ceremony at the home of Aaron’s grandfather, Pastor Dalbir Masih.

Conducting the immersion together were Pastor Masih and Aaron’s uncle in the presence of the immediate family bubble. The first elder and pastor of the Langley church also witnessed the event.

We are delighted that Aaron has made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as his Saviour and declare his faith publicly. As ever, there was not only joy for the entire Masih family, but Heaven also rejoiced! Please remember Aaron in your prayers as he continues to build his relationship with our Saviour.

ALFRED MASIH



Left to right: Elder Edsel Pagunsan, Elder Jojo Camanzo, Gelandar Lee (Borj) Estoya, Breendyl Camanzo, Jericho Melo, Adrienne Jan (AJ) Plokhotnikov, Keane Zhyre Pagunsan, Gelandar Lexie Estoya, Isabelle Megan Melo, Jaeshtyn Camanzo, Asseate Johnson and Pastor Micah Campbell

Wednesbury baptism

It was a high day on 20 November for Wednesbury Church as we witnessed nine people declare their commitment to the Lord.

After a difficult 18 months of restricted face-to-face worship services and prolonged Zoom programmes, it was a heaven-sent boost to learn that **Gelandar Lee (Borj) Estoya, Gelandar Lexie Estoya, Isabelle Megan Melo, Jericho Melo, Breendyl Camanzo, Jaeshtyn Camanzo, Adrienne Jan (AJ) Plokhotnikov** and **Keane Zhyre Pagunsan** wanted to go against the grain and pressures of society and be baptised – all young people. In addition, **Asseate Johnson** also

became a church member through profession of faith and received the right hand of fellowship.

In his sermon, ‘Mirror, signal, manoeuvre’, Pastor Micah Campbell appealed to all to choose Jesus, resulting in four more young people showing their desire for further Bible studies and future baptism.

What a blessing to know that the Spirit of the Lord can still convict and convert young people, despite the pressures of the world to distract them away from the truth. May the Lord bless these new members as they begin their walk with the Lord and join the church in preparing and ministering for His return, and may it be the intention of all to say, ‘Where the Lord leads I will go!’

PASTOR MICAH CAMPBELL



by Bert Smit

We drive deep into the hinterland of upper Burkina Faso in an old Land Cruiser. I wonder if the track we follow classifies as a road at all. . . . The car scrapes through narrow passages, climbs steep hills and drops into hidden valleys. We are on our way to one of the most remote communities around, going deep into Tuareg territory.

We pass an area where small boys are making bricks from mud that are drying in the heat of the sun. We reach the village of Adjoudje, one of the communities where ADRA is working to help people adapt to climate change. Hotter weather and less rain have affected everything here: very little grows, animals barely survive, and life is extremely difficult.

I visited here in 2012 – ten years ago! Because climate change is forever, we provided training on how to adapt – how to save water, efficient cooking stoves, tools to work the land – and demonstrated how to grow drought-resistant crops and techniques to revitalise the soil.

Ibrahim, our local manager, told me that the local villagers were very surprised when ADRA came and started teaching the villagers how to deal with climate change: not just once, but for a period of over two years! They also wondered why an organisation like ADRA, from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, was doing this. ‘Are you doing this to convert us to your church?’

As a faith-based agency, ADRA is often

asked this question. ‘Why are you helping us?’

‘We do good simply because it is the good and right thing to do.’

Why do ADRA and Seventh-day Adventist Christians do good? Does ADRA relieve the suffering from a disaster, flood, drought or cyclone in order to evangelise? Do we, as Adventist Christians, mow our neighbours’ lawns or weed their gardens to convert them? Do we run community hubs to build the profile of a church?

The Bible says that disciples of Jesus are created to do good works (Ephesians 2:10). Jesus was very clear about doing good. The goodness of the sun and rain are given to everyone (Matthew 5:45). We should do good secretly – not expecting any recognition (Matthew 6:2, 3). The sheep in the parable of the judgement did not realise that their good deeds to others were considered by God as good deeds to God (Matthew 25:38, 39). So, we do good simply because it is the good and right thing to do.

We do know, however, that doing good opens the heart of an individual for a spiritual journey. When ADRA helped the people of Adjoudje they did not just accept what we did. They asked us, ‘Why are you doing this?’ And this question always gives us the opportunity to witness about our caring faith and our motivation. Jesus did much good – whether people accepted His message and life or not.

As Jesus’ disciples we will do good to everyone. This year our ADRA theme is ‘Do Good’. Please do good where you are, and



help raise funds for ADRA to continue to do good in our projects and around the world.

Based on <https://record.adventistchurch.com/2019/10/03/why-christians-do-good/>

2022 ADRA Appeal launch: 26 March – 17 April



'I Will Go: Sent to Share' Area 6C Week of Prayer

by **Darell J. Philip**

Area 6C Communications Coordinator

'I Will Go: Sent to Share' was the message throughout the Area 6C Week of Prayer held at the London Ghana church from 7 to 13 November 2021. The week of prayer readings focused on the three angels' messages found in Revelation 14:6-12, with special emphasis on the third angel's message. The messages remind people to worship the true God of Heaven, while also identifying the end-time saints as *'those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus'* (Revelation 14:12, NKJV).

Hosted by Area 6C's largest church – London Ghana, with a membership of over 700 – the week of prayer was also beamed live to homes via YouTube, Zoom and the newly launched Area 6C website (<https://www.area6c.org.uk/>).

Every evening a video message from each of the Area 6C Ministry coordinators was shared, with highlights of plans for the upcoming year, as well as the progress made during the current year in making disciples and building communities. In coordination with the Area 6C Coordinator, Pastor Anthony Opoku-Mensah, and Area 6C Prayer Ministries Coordinator, Elder Alex Dhlakama, Area 6C pastors and Prayer Ministry leaders together shared the presentation of the Word. Testimonies of praise and thanksgiving were a particular highlight.

The week of prayer culminated in a special day of fellowship on Sabbath 13 November with members from the 25 Area 6C churches in attendance, either personally or virtually. As members from various cultures, ages and backgrounds came together in one voice to give praises to the Lord, there was a celebratory feel. In the keynote message of the week, London Ghana's pastor, Ebenezer Jones-Lartey, reminded the congregations of their time-sensitive calling for Christ. Rousing applause and praise were given as a visitor indicated his desire to be baptised and his intention to bring along his wife and children that they might serve the Lord together.

East London School of Music (ELSOM) Director, Fiona D. Pacquette, hosted an evening concert with support from the Hampstead Choral Society Chamber Orchestra, alongside the London Ghana Choir and the incomparable voice of Chikezie Chike-Michael. Many felt the quality of the singing to be a foretaste of the glorious praise and worship to take place at the triumphant return of Christ! As the week of prayer came to an end, Pastor Anthony Opoku-Mensah



Pastor Ebenezer Jones-Lartey



Alex Dhlakama



Fiona D. Pacquette



Anthony Opoku-Mensah

charged Area 6C members to 'go MAD' in their communities. 'You heard me right,' he smiled, 'I encourage you all to go MAD in your communities, meaning you are called to "Make A Difference" as you share with others the love of Jesus and the promise of His imminent return to take all His faithful children home.'

GAC-UK virtual day of fellowship 2021

The biannual gathering of the Ghanaian Adventist Congregations in the UK (GAC-UK), made up of 18 organised churches and two church plants, was halted by the devastating effects of COVID-19. However, on 6 November 2021 the first ever virtual GAC-UK day of fellowship was held under the theme 'Rebuilding and Reconnecting'.

Speaking at the event as the guest of honour, Dr Emmanuel Osei, SEC President, praised God for the numerical growth and financial contributions of the Ghanaian congregations within the SEC. However, he warned of the threat of secularisation of the next generation and advised that all efforts should be made to train them up to stay in the Lord. For his part, Pr George Kumi, NEC President, prayed the Lord's blessing on the group and challenged them to continue to make evangelism their priority. Finally, Hon. Paapa Owusu-Ankomah, Ghana High Commissioner to the UK, raised the concern of increased gang and knife crime among Ghanaian young people and requested that the Adventist Church work with the High Commission to address this problem.

Delivering the sermon, Pr Lewis Quaye, GAC-UK Chair,

acknowledged that relationships have been under strain because of COVID-19, but admonished members to close ranks.

'It is now time to forgive each other and forge together with one purpose, since the plan of salvation is all about reconnecting and rebuilding relationships. We therefore need to forge this vision in our homes and Christian lives,' said Pr Quaye.

The children were also blessed with a sermon titled 'Jump, Jimmy, Jump!' by Mrs Charity Boakye. She encouraged the children always to connect with God by listening to His voice through daily prayer and study of their Bible and Sabbath school lessons.

The youth preacher was Pr Bright Agyemang-Baah, a graduate of Oakwood College, who shared his message titled 'Jesus receives sinners'. He encouraged everyone not to let their sins become a barrier between them and God, because Jesus always welcomes sinners and transforms them.

The worshippers were blessed with a musical concert in the afternoon, while the sacrificial efforts of some past members were recognised with certificates of appreciation.

JAPHETH OBESE-AMANKWAH



From left to right: Co-ordinator Elisabeth Carnell with Steve Holden and Pastor Solon Kyriacou sort gifts received



John and Esme Sutton and Sofija Cowen dividing gifts by gender and age

Bikers' Run 2021

After a break owing to COVID-19, once again the Annual Bikers' Run, organised by the Nottingham Triumph Owners MCC, came back to Grantham.

This year there were 247 bikers who had brought with them 670 gifts of toys, books and games for all ages.

The bikers were welcomed by Councillors Linda and Ray Wootton and our own pastor, Solon Kyriacou.

The bikers make two journeys to Grantham each year, bringing Easter goodies for distribution to deserving causes, and, for Christmas, toys for the various groups in the town. This year 20 organisations received gifts to bring some happiness to the children.

As before, the Grantham church played its part, under the guidance of Elisabeth Carnell, the church's coordinator.

After being collected from the Meres Leisure Centre, where they had been received from the bikers, volunteers from the church were on hand to transport the toys in bin liners to the church, where they were divided into gender and age groups by 13 volunteers, ready for collection by the representatives of the various charities.

Elisabeth said this year's collection and distribution went very smoothly, with stories being told of how happy the children will be after passing through some very difficult times during the past months.

MIKE COWEN

A strong leadership

The members of Leicester Central were happy to witness, both in person and virtually, the ordination of their very own Pastor Michael Baker on 27 November 2021.

During his short term at Leicester Central he has worked hard with his leadership team to steer through the challenges of the past two years.

Together they have baptised 28 new members, and worked with and supported the department heads and church members. They have also collected, prepared and distributed food parcels for the local community, and emergency aid for St Vincent & the Grenadines. During the pandemic they led the way in transitioning the church to and from online worship.

Hebrews 13:7 says: 'Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith' (ESVUK).

As we draw to the end of another two-year term of service, we want to remember our leaders and say thank you for the hard work of these God-fearing servants.

MAXINE CHAMBERS



Pastor and Mrs Michael and Vinette Baker supported by Leicester Central leaders, on their left: Jeremy Lowe, Tawanda Eshwart, Maxwell Williams – and to their right: Bona Matturi, and Vincent Halliday

December well-being webinars

‘Confronting Our Own Dark Thoughts and Experiences’

Harmonising the injunction to be ‘always cheerful’ with the urge to ‘lament’

The idea that a follower of Christ ‘has dark thoughts’ is ‘not something we like to consider’, began Pastor Ian Sweeney (TED Field Secretary) in the Tuesday 7 December well-being webinar, ‘Confronting Our Own Dark Thoughts and Experiences’. But, for Pastor Sweeney, ‘It is a necessary matter for the growing Christian to consider, because Christ Himself said that *‘for every careless word that people speak, they will give an account of it on the day of judgment’* (Matthew 12:36, NASB).

‘So why do we have them?’ Pastor Sweeney asked. ‘Because we are human’ – a reality the apostle James recognised about the ancient prophets when he said, *‘Elijah was a man with a nature like ours’* (James 5:17,

NKJV). The prophet Jeremiah’s thoughts were at times far from godly: *‘Don’t forgive their crimes and blot out their sins. Let them die before you. Deal with them in your anger’* (Jeremiah 18:23, NLT).

‘We also have them,’ suggested Pastor Sweeney, ‘because life is dark,’ perhaps as a result of an unjust situation, or a bad personal experience. Who in their humanity does not want revenge, as Jeremiah did, when the wicked prosper? (Jeremiah 12:1, 2.) Are we to go into denial about what we see because of an inherited faith mindset which commands ‘our hearts to be always cheerful’? ‘Not so,’ because the hymns of the Bible, the Psalms, provide ample evidence of the need at times to lament. Is it also possible, continued

Sweeney, quoting Walter Brueggeman, that our ‘always cheerful’ conditioning can possibly result in ‘numb denial and deception that does not want to acknowledge the disorientation of life’?

If it is a reality that we have dark thoughts, should we ever share them with another human? To Pastor Sweeney, the matter is not clear-cut. On the one hand, they are matters which God alone should hear. On the other hand, are there times when it is appropriate to share in the context of lament? ‘There are no easy answers,’ concluded Pastor Sweeney, ‘but, when it comes down to it, God has to be the answer as we confront our dark thoughts.’

EDITOR

December well-being webinars

‘Balancing Emotions in an Unbalanced World’

Raising the ratio from 2:1 to 3:1

The second December well-being webinar, ‘Balancing Emotions in an Unbalanced World’, presented by Karen Holford (Family and Children’s Director), took place on Wednesday 8 December, and in one sense was an expansion of the matter raised in Pastor Sweeney’s webinar. Beginning by asking, ‘What are emotions?’ Holford used the apostle Paul in a Philippi jail as the biblical foundation to explain the matter. How is it that Paul in jail, having suffered a terrible beating and his feet in stocks, overflows with joy? Defining emotions as ‘our natural response to living in a world that has chaos and pain, as well as beauty, love and joy’,¹ Holford cited research which found that ‘most people have a 2:1 ratio of positive to negative emotions’, but ‘we usually have much better emotional

health when the ratio is at least 3:1.’²

Negative emotions appear in many forms – anger, contempt, disgust, embarrassment, fear, frustration, guilt, sadness, shame and stress.

The 10 most positive emotions are awe and wonder, fun, feeling valued, hope, gratitude, interest, inspiration, joy, and love.

What is the answer, then, to staying emotionally balanced? ‘It’s a matter of perspective,’ says Holford. ‘We can focus on the dark and gloomy areas of life, or we can look at the bigger picture and notice the beauty, light, and joy around us.’

It’s the ‘bigger picture’ that returns us to Paul in jail, whose perspective was grounded in prayer.

‘Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying,



pray. . . Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It’s wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the centre of your life’ (Philippians 4:6, 7, The Message, adapted).

‘The message of Paul in Philippians 4,’ says Holford, ‘is to focus on the positive and believe the best.’ That’s helpful counsel in today’s world of chaos and pain.

To watch the webinar and find practical ways to help increase positive emotions, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5ecwvdiuN4>.

EDITOR

¹‘Positivity’ by Barbara Fredrickson, health psychologist²See www.positivityratio.com

An earnest appeal to engage with our spiritual identity

General Conference Secretary, Pastor Erton C. Köhler calls Adventist leaders to face challenges and recommit to mission

A quote attributed to John Wesley is always on my mind, as it reminds me that ‘what one generation tolerates, the next one will embrace.’ I also remember a statement from Ellen White in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, page 262, when she wrote that ‘we must walk in the light which shines upon us, otherwise that light will become darkness.’

I believe that we were called to be the voice of God, and not our culture’s echo. But the voice of culture is becoming stronger among us, especially in social media, where influencers are often more relevant than spiritual leaders. They become more relevant not because they know about religion or spiritual life, but because they have communication skills and know how to deal with social media and people’s needs.

Reflecting on our beliefs

We need to take time to think about what we believe and how to share what we believe. Both aspects are very important. Sometimes we talk about the needs of young people or the new generations, making the point that we need to create ways to communicate with them and present the relevance of our message. **But now, especially during the pandemic, the challenge to communicate the truth positively, clearly, and relevantly is not only something for new generations. It is a challenge for every generation.**

Here I share one of my concerns. We need to find ways to reconnect with many of our church members and help them understand the beauty of Bible truth and God’s Word’s relevance for our time; and help them to be protected from what Eugene Peterson describes as the ‘new contemporary trinity’ that tries to replace the Trinity of God, namely, ‘my holy feelings, my holy desires, and my holy needs’.

Working with the church front lines

All of us together, especially as union and division leaders, need to take these concerns into our hands. We need to spend time praying, thinking about it, evaluating, studying, discussing, and strategising to change the current situation. If we limit ourselves to congratulate the GC for the discussions and entertaining presentations put together, or if we, on the other hand, just criticise and request more initiatives in a specific area, next to nothing will change.

Budgets, buildings, and bodies

Often, as leaders, we are very concerned

about the management of the church and very involved in the church’s business. We discuss plans and strategies to help the church move forwards. We are glad about our finances, new facilities, institutions, new projects, and programmes. Little by little, it all ends up being an end in itself.

Some experts identify this as the new ‘3 Bs’ of modern church business.

The three Bs are Budgets, Buildings, and Bodies. We start measuring our progress by our finances, our assets, and our membership growth. All of these things are important, and we need them to keep our organisation going; but they are not the essence of our church. Our church is based on its message and mission; all the rest is dependent on them.

We can’t let ourselves be consumed by these three Bs. If we don’t spend time discussing our beliefs, our theology, and our spiritual challenges – if we don’t find ways to modify some trends – we may end up thriving in our business but lacking in our identity. We may end up being a strong organisation but a weak church.

Church or corporation?

I recently read an article which shared the views of three leaders from some of the most outstanding evangelical theological seminaries in the US. According to their assessment, Christian denominations are facing a vast spiritual problem. Christian leaders have embraced the strategies of the business world and weakened their essence as a spiritual family.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is facing similar challenges. Just like major corporations, our meetings dedicate a significant amount of time to technical purposes. Sometimes, by the end of our sessions, we have forgotten it was a meeting of God’s remnant church. We just got our business done and now feel satisfied with it. It’s time to be more deliberate in praying about it and discussing these matters as we take practical decisions involving time, our best human and financial resources, and other possibilities.

So, please, take this matter into your hands. As church members, pray about it and discuss it with your pastor, church committee, and the local church. As representatives of church institutions, take it into your hands and assess how the institution can be more aligned to the message than the market.

We are not in a business. We are on a mission. The only business we carry is just a tool to help us fulfil our mission: so let’s go

back to the essence of our role as a remnant church.

When top leaders of an Adventist institution delegate the spiritual aspects of that institution to others, creating positions for others to take care of it, promote it, or defend this idea within the organisation, those spiritual aspects have stopped being a priority for the institution.

Setting priorities

Priorities are essential and depend on the top leader. The person in that position can certainly be surrounded by other colleagues in a supporting role; but priorities are the responsibility of the leader.

How can we renew our pulpits with more solid biblical messages? How can we use our communication resources to speak a language that can reach people’s hearts? Local pastors expect to see this kind of initiative from their leaders. Leaders project a strong influence.

When pastors see that leaders do not just invite other people to talk about these issues but are very dynamic when discussing other projects, strategies, and investments, they soon identify the church’s priority. And pastors thus begin, step by step, to move their ministry in that direction. When top leaders speak up, take time, and show interest in discussing the spiritual and theological challenges we are facing, something starts to happen.

A way forward

I am appealing to division leaders, take the spiritual challenges we are facing seriously. Enlist the church to pray and claim the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, take this discussion into your hands and start working on real solutions for your region. You have good theologians who can help you. We have colleagues here at the GC that can be very helpful in supporting you. Please, spend time discussing these matters in your committees.

Keep your focus on the growth of the church, but don’t forget that our identity is the basis for the real fulfilment of our mission. Denominations that lost their identity stopped growing.

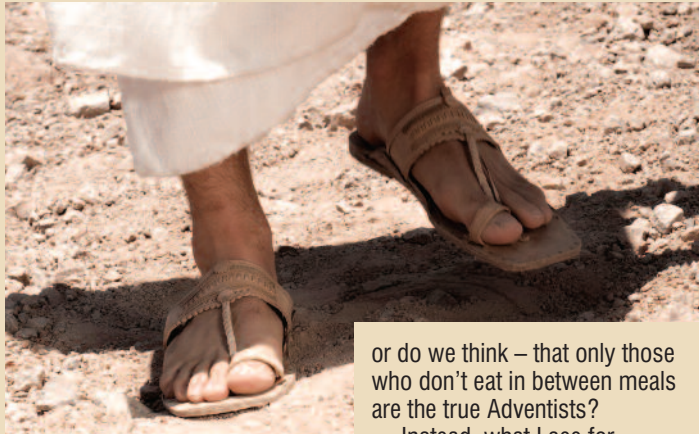
We need to remain faithful to the Word of God and our essence, as a people called to live and share the biblical message at the very end of time. We must always keep in mind that we are called to fill not only our churches, but also heaven – and, as we read in Jude 3, to ‘contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints’ (NKJV).

This is a condensed version of an article that appeared on the Adventist News Network, 12 October, the transcript of a presentation at the General Conference Annual Council: <https://adventist.news/news/an-earnest-appeal-to-engage-with-our-spiritual-identity>

The future of Adventism is Jesus

Everything else is pointless and a dead-end street.

by Shawn Brace, for Rocky Mountain Conference *Mountain Views*



or do we think – that only those who don't eat in between meals are the true Adventists?

Instead, what I see for Adventism, what I see for its future, is a faith defined by one thing and one thing only: Jesus.

Going back to the future

The tension I describe above is nothing new, of course. Long ago, Ellen White saw this vision for Adventism when she encountered and rejoiced over the preaching of two young preachers, Alonzo T. Jones and Ellet J. Waggoner. Culminating in the denomination's 1888 General Conference session in Minneapolis, these two young men brought the Gospel to a dry and thirsty faith.

'As a people,' Ellen White recounted two years after Minneapolis, 'we have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain.' Many ministers, whom she referred to as 'unconverted men', were so zealous about the church's recapturing of the seventh-day Sabbath teaching, as well its emphasis on other issues like diet and healthy living, that they had left out 'Christ and His matchless love'.¹ They instead presented 'argumentative discourses'. But they needed 'to have their eyes directed' to Christ's 'divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family' because 'many had lost sight of Jesus'.

Jones and Waggoner brought exactly what the church was missing: Jesus, in all His beauty and love. When Ellen White heard them preach in Minneapolis, her whole heart leaped for joy, and

'every fiber of my heart said, Amen,' she recounted. She called their presentations a 'most precious message' that God 'in His great mercy' had sent. It was 'the message that God commanded to be given to the world' so that 'the world should no longer say, Seventh-day Adventists talk the law, the law, but do not preach or believe Christ'. What's more, the message they proclaimed, according to White, was 'the light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory'.

But it was not to be. The old guard, believing they were protecting Adventism and the 'old landmarks', violently pushed back against this 'new light' that Jones and Waggoner brought. The tragic irony is that the old guard thought they were just protecting the 'old landmarks' – that is, they thought they were protecting true Adventism – when, according to Ellen White, 'they knew not what the old landmarks were'.

The upshot of the whole Minneapolis episode was a great turning away from Jesus. 'By exciting that opposition,' Ellen White later lamented, 'Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. . . . The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world.'

And we've been reaping the results ever since.

Reimagining Adventism

When I look at the Adventism of the future, I see Jesus. I see a church that has fully embraced Him and fully embraced His Gospel. He is our only hope. Our future success won't come because we've figured out the right evangelistic or missional formula; it won't be the result of having nicer buildings or recapturing some sort of 'historic Adventism'. It will happen because we've gone all-in on Jesus.

This is not to create a false dichotomy or diminish the importance of missional innovation (of which I'm a big fan). When we go all-in on Jesus – truly go all-in on Jesus – creativity and innovation naturally follow in His train.

Neither does it mean that Jesus stands over against Adventist theology and doctrine. Embracing Jesus does not come despite Adventist theology but results from a proper understanding of it.

Indeed, I'm not speaking of a vague and vacuous notion of Jesus. I'm talking about a full-orbed expression of Jesus that has definition and substance. I'm talking about a Jesus who literally experienced hell because He deemed our eternal existence more important than His own; a Jesus who died to prove that we are worthy and valuable; a Jesus who gives us rest, including a weekly reminder of it, so we can be liberated from our guilt, shame, fear, and constant hustling; a Jesus who looks at us with love, rather than condemnation; a Jesus who gives us principles by which to live, so we can experience optimal human flourishing; a Jesus who will one day finally vanquish all evil so we can live forever in peace and safety; a Jesus who has even put His reputation on the line, willingly being marred and maligned, believing that His love will ultimately win out and His character be proven right.

That's the Jesus I'm talking about.

And there is nothing or no one more beautiful. And there is nothing more worthy of our contemplation, nothing else around which we should organise our faith. If Adventism is to be about something, let it be Jesus. Everything else is pointless and a dead-end street.

Can Adventism get there in the future? I hope and trust and believe we can, and we will. And I am committed to labouring to that end – through pen, voice, and, most importantly, action.

¹See Ellen G. White, *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), 560.

Shawn Brace is a pastor and author in Bangor, Maine. The original version of this commentary was posted in the Fall 2021 issue of the Rocky Mountain Conference Mountain Views. Sourced for MESSENGER by Adventist Review online.

A few years ago, when we were visioning to replant our church, one particular gentleman asked if he could meet with me privately to express some concerns about our direction. Over the course of our visit, he described what was troubling him, pointing to a few proposals we'd made about our reformatted worship gathering.

In particular, he was bothered by our rhythmic guitar playing, which was apparently a little too sensual for his scruples, as well as our proposal to serve refreshments at the beginning of the service. ('After all,' he said, 'Adventists don't eat in between meals.') It all left him exasperated. 'Is this even an Adventist church?' he wondered, incredulously.

I want to make it clear: I know this man loves Jesus and was just trying to stay true to his conscience. I don't want to make light of that – or him – at all. He is sincere and honest. But it left me concluding that we have two diverging visions of Adventism.

It's not that I yearn for an Adventism characterised by snack eating and guitar playing, as though that is the height of denominational achievement. Perhaps snack eating and guitar playing are issues that need to be curbed. But the point is this: I'm not sure I want to be a part of an Adventism where these issues are the litmus test of a person or church's fidelity to the denomination's core principles and identity. Truly, do we want –

Hyland House School's 'Windrush Nativity'

Hyland House School finished the autumn term (and the year) with an extravaganza of a Christmas production titled 'Windrush Nativity'. The programme, which was a collaboration of teachers, pupils and parents, provided an alternative nativity, with Mary and Joseph coming to England from the Caribbean on the *Empire Windrush*.

Backdrop pictures of the Caribbean, background music, such as 'London is the place for me' by Lord Kitchener, and

Afro-Caribbean radio broadcasts – all helped to build the atmosphere. Parents and visitors, dressed as *Windrush* immigrants, roared with laughter at the true-to-life presentation of children acting out a Caribbean school scene and of 'new arrivals' at Coldharbour Lane, Brixton, London, discussing their London experiences. Parents provided authentic accents as radio presenters, and the audience participated wholeheartedly during the scene of a worship service at Coldharbour Lane,

singing 'Emmanuel', 'Joyful, joyful', 'Send down the rain', 'Standing on the solid rock', 'A little more oil in my lamp' and 'Press along, saints'. It was a spectacular event enjoyed by

those present in person and via Zoom. All praise to God for sending His Son to save us and giving us the true reason for the Christmas season.

J. LEMONIUS, HYLAND HOUSE SCHOOL



At Hyland House School we empower young minds to have a strong trust in God, to have great self-belief and to develop Christian characteristics. Once we sow seeds of empowerment, we nurture our children so that they thrive and blossom. The Lord has blessed our children, because they take the school values with them when they graduate to their next stage of learning. Our children are 'achieving excellence'. We have many success stories. You are welcome to come and experience the Hyland House School blessing.

Places are available for children to start January 2022 onwards. We encourage you to call the school to learn more or to arrange a visit.

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Sparks to Light a Fire – January

Pastor Paul Smith, a retired pastor who worked in the South England Conference, shares some thoughts in the first instalment of his devotional book, *Sparks to Light a Fire*.

'My times are in your hands.' Psalm 31:15, NIVUK

The days ahead are unknown. We cannot read the future, but we know the One who reads tomorrow as easily as He is aware of yesterday. We used to say, 'Today is the tomorrow we worried about yesterday.' In

God's hands there is security, poise, purpose and peace. My moments are all in His care. The Good News Bible translates the verse: 'I am always in your care.'

When I look back on my life, I am amazed



at God's love. At every stage and every change He has been close to me, even when I was not conscious of His presence. There have been times when finances have been stretched to the limit, but somehow, somewhere, there has always been sufficient.

It was 1 January 1909 when the first payments were made to senior citizens in Great Britain. All people over the age of 70 would be given five shillings a week. Today, I'm in that category but very pleased that the payments have considerably increased since that date. He has promised to meet each need. The Revised English Bible says: 'My fortunes are in Thy hand.'

God has the nations in His hands. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome have come and gone. He still guides and directs the affairs of kingdoms and countries. 'Amidst the strife and tumult of nations, He that sitteth above the cherubim still guides the affairs of this earth.' Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 536.

In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (LXX) the word 'times' is *kleros*. It means 'a lot, an inheritance or a portion of land'. I like to think that David is suggesting that the events and experiences of this life are gradually preparing us for a much better home that God is making ready for us.

My times are in His constant care,
My life belongs to Him.
Each day I fight in this warfare,
By the grace of Elohim.

If you enjoyed this reading, why not order the full book at lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/sparks-to-light-a-fire/?

At a glance . . .

- **More than 31,000 Venezuelans in Brazil are being helped by ADRA**, writes Iris Argueta for the *Adventist Review*. 260,000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants have felt compelled to leave their own country because of the volatile political and economic conditions currently prevailing there. To respond to the growing need, ADRA launched the ANA Project (Food and Non-Food Actions for Venezuelan Migrants in Brazil), distributing more than 63,000 food vouchers, 52,000 certificates to buy hygiene products, and 16,000 coupons for household goods and kitchen utensils. This is the love of Christ in action!
- **Ellen White has had a street named after her in the city of Florence, Italy**, according to Lina Ferrara in the *EUD Newsletter*. The naming ceremony took place on Friday 10 December, and came as a result of the strong similarity between the old name of the street (Viuzzo del Pergolino) and another street in the city (Via del Pergolino), and the fact that several Adventist institutions face the street. Councillor Martini says Ellen White 'was a great woman who fought for the good and the rights of people through helping with health, education, and the growth of new generations', while President Paris said, 'Ellen White paved the way for what it means to work together. This way of doing mission is important to us.'
- **The Church of England's crisis is about more than money**, argues Paul Hackwood in the *Church Times*. 'Behind financial problems lie existential questions about purpose and vision.' Leaders have

responded to the Church of England's decline in church attendance by centralising leadership, transferring some responsibilities away from the local parish, but along with cultural changes have come 'chronically low levels of morale and self-confidence'. We need to pray for our fellow Christians, that they will come to appreciate the distinctive truths that we recognise in Scripture and be filled with the life-giving Spirit of Christ.

- **Trevor Wright has been named the new CEO of Loma Linda University Health Hospitals**, replacing Kerry Heinrich, who will now be the new chief executive officer of Adventist Health. Ansel Oliver of Loma Linda University Health and the *Adventist Review* write that Wright has served for nearly seven years as chief operating officer of the hospitals, with operational oversight of six hospitals. Before that, he was senior vice president of Loma Linda University Health and administrator of Loma Linda University Medical Centre. Richard H. Hart, president of Loma Linda University Health, writes that the institution 'will benefit greatly from his mission-driven leadership as we continue growing in the many ways we serve our community and deliver health care in our region.'

'At a glance . . .' provides a roundup of news in a regular column for MESSENGER, keeping our readers informed of events in other Christian denominations in the UK and Ireland, as well as the wider Adventist Church across the globe.

ANDREW PUCKERING



Are outposts still relevant? (Part 2)

by Pastor Nathan Stickland

In part 1, I pondered about the advice Ellen White gave about reaching the urban centres for Christ – from the position of living in the country for the sake of health and family. In this ‘pondering’, I wrestle with the reality that our major administrative and education centres, while originally purchased in a rural area, are now surrounded by urban sprawl. Does this have an impact on our mission?

Ellen White does not stop at homes being out of town. She instructs, even insists, that our institutions should be ‘away from the centres of population’ (Letter 26, 1907). Following a fire in December 1902 which burned down the Review and Herald Publishing Association building, Ellen White urged in a letter, ‘I hope that our brethren will heed the lesson that God is trying to teach them, and that they will not rebuild the publishing house in Battle Creek. God means that we shall not locate in the cities; for there are very stormy times before us.’ (Letter 2, 1903.)

Another printing press, Pacific Press, started by James White in 1874, grew and benefited from a large donation following a camp meeting appeal in California. The press started life in Oakland, on the opposite side of the bay to San Francisco, on Ellen White’s instruction that ‘somewhere in Oakland is the place to locate the paper’. The press thrived, but later priority was given to commercial work at the delay of church publications. By the twentieth century Ellen White instructed that the Oakland site had become too developed and should relocate to a more rural place. Helped by the town leaders, in 1904 the Press moved to a 5-acre site in Mountain View, about 45 miles south towards San Jose (and 7 miles from Apple Park, corporate headquarters of Apple Inc.). Worker families moved there too, and the real estate increased in price. Following a warning from Ellen White about relying on commercial work, an earthquake in April and a building fire in July 1906, all commercial work at the press ceased. The Pacific Press did move again in 1984-5 to Nampa, Idaho, partly due to high housing costs in the Mountain View area.¹

In reference to the Pacific Press relocation in 1904, Ellen White wrote, ‘Some have wondered why our office of publication should be moved from Oakland to Mountain View. God has been calling upon His people to leave the cities. The youth who are connected with our institutions should not be exposed to the temptations and the corruption to be found in the large cities. Mountain View has seemed to be a favourable location for the printing office.’ (Manuscript 148, 1905.)

So where am I going with my pondering? With urban design increasingly looking to include green spaces, partly in recognition of health benefits we’ve known about for a long time – and we would include spiritual benefits too – could that shift our thinking about the cities?

After all, are not ‘cities (still) filled with temptation’? ‘We should plan our work in such a way as to keep our young people as far as possible from this contamination. The cities are to be worked from outposts. Said the messenger of God, “Shall not the cities be warned? Yes; not by God’s people living in them, but by their visiting them, to warn them of what is coming upon the earth.”’ (Letter 182, 1902.)

Outposts! Living lives intentionally to reach people in built-up areas, but from a place of retreat. This isn’t about running to the hills in the last days; it’s about a lifestyle which is more conducive to physical and spiritual health. Not just us as families, but being ready to relocate again when urban spread overtakes us; homes and institutions.

Institutions closer to home than in California also cause me to ponder. In 1902 the British Union Conference (BUC) was established, and Stanborough Park was purchased – a 55-acre rural site in 1907. Here the BUC office has been located on the park ever since, and over the years Granose health food factory, primary, secondary, and tertiary education centres, and Stanborough Press, before a fire in 1964 led to



its relocation to Grantham. Stanborough College, educating all kinds of church workers and literature evangelists, was relocated to Newbold Revel (Warwickshire), and then Newbold College (Berkshire).

Newbold Revel was purchased in 1931, but this 300-acre estate was taken over by the RAF during the Second World War, and, while it eventually reverted back to the church, it was sold on in 1945, facilitating the purchase of the current site of Newbold College of Higher Education in rural Binfield near Bracknell. Over time, both the Stanborough Park and the Newbold College campus have reduced in acreage, now squeezed by urban development (mainly housing). And with housing comes cosmopolitan temptation. While studying at Newbold College (1994-1999), I drove a group of girls to Pizza Hut in Bracknell. I remember thinking they were not going to eat pizza dressed like they were, and, after dropping them off and doing a lap of the car park, I noticed they had walked past Pizza Hut and were waiting in line at the entrance to the night club.

Sadly, having lived on Stanborough Park for three years while attending the secondary school, I have seen the numbers of day and boarding students drop by over a third, and I have seen attendance at Newbold College dwindle, though our union membership has risen more than threefold in the same time. Maybe the value of Adventist education by our members is another thing to ponder on sometime!

Historic maps show these ‘outposts’ we once acquired as rural or at least suburban: but, unlike Pacific Press, we never relocated as urban spread overtook us. Even farming, orchards, agriculture and horticulture have long since stopped at these sites.

And on this my pondering hangs: if town councillors and urban planners are catching on to the health benefits of urban greening, and if Ellen White instructed people and institutions to be located as outposts to live and work from in our mission to reach people for Christ, why are we not following the instruction?

Could it be that our falling student numbers at all levels of Adventist education, our loss of a food factory – and I have not yet mentioned our healthcare centres like the Sanitarium on Stanborough Park and our nursing homes – could it be that the waning of these institutions has anything to do with what we have not been doing, though Ellen White proposed it, that we should be located away from the cities?

‘The instruction is still being given. Move out of the cities. Establish your sanitariums, your schools, and offices away from the centres of population.’ (Letter 26, 1907.) Was the fire at the BUC office on 16 November 2008² a reminder unperceived? Wherever you live, take time to reap the benefits of nature, watch out for encroaching evil around you, and be an outpost, even if you are just metres away from your mission field – but ask God, ‘Am I where You want me to be?’

¹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Press_Publishing_Association

²<https://www.adventistreview.org/archive-2213>



Pastor Dick Barron – preaching under the tent at the North London Evangelistic campaign, October 1982.

Pastor Richard Barron: the youth's friend

Pastor Richard Barron passed away on 12 December 2021, at the age of 90. For 60 years he dedicated his life to serving God in multiple capacities.

While Pastor Barron held many positions within the church throughout his life, including conference president, departmental director, ministerial director for the Bermuda

Conference, and pastor and evangelist, he had a special place in his heart for the youth of the world.

'Dick [Richard] was a team player who dedicated his life to youth work,' Pastor Baraka Muganda said. 'He believed in the youth! He loved the Lord and wanted to inspire young people and youth leaders to love Him as he did.'

Tributes from former UK youth directors

As a young youth director in the 1980s, Dick Barron was very much the face and voice of General Conference Senior Youth Ministries. He visited the UK frequently for camp meetings, and I remember sitting in the meeting taking notes, as he was an inspiring speaker.

One sermon, entitled 'A Question of Loyalty', really made an impression and I used this as source material for my own sermons. In fact, I recently came across my notes again and was impressed to preach this sermon in December 2021, giving full credit to the originator. I was quite unaware that Dick was not well, and, checking the dates, I believe this was a day before he passed away. When I heard the news of his passing I remember thinking that this was a very fitting personal tribute to a giant in youth ministry.

PASTOR PAUL TOMPKINS

In my eyes, there is none like Richard Barron, or 'Dick', as we all knew him. The Newbold experience at a week of prayer tops my memories. Paraphrasing, it went like this.

He said that he had been given instructions from the administration that he was not to make an appeal. They wanted his sermon details, which he gave them. However, he said that he woke up that morning, and the Lord told him to change the sermon. I can't imagine how the administration felt! He preached a great sermon and made an appeal. Students and faculties from all over Salisbury Hall came up to the platform in response to the Holy Spirit's appeal through him. What a man!

He has been my mentor for years, because I emulated his style of preaching from the first time I heard him preach at Highbury Fields in North London: his style of walking about, his humour and his down-to-earth language. These are just a few of my fond memories of one great preacher, whom I will always remember with deep respect. Even though I am now retired, I still try to emulate his preaching style. Sleep well, my friend, until the great gettin'-up morning.

PASTOR DES BOLDEAU

I first encountered Dick Barron under the big tent in North London. His preaching was electrifying. It was 'all roads lead to North London' under the big tent – buses, minibuses, cars and public transport. Dick was humorous, dynamic and also very personable, but above all Christ-focused. He had a way of making you feel as though you were the only person in the room.

He was larger than life and had a wonderful, magnetic personality. It was what every young person needs – to be made to feel special! Pastor Barron had that gift. I recall meeting him on a couple of occasions in line with my work as a youth leader: 'How you doing, buddy?' accompanied with a big laugh and a bear hug with those massive arms and height. Pastor Dick Barron – youth director extraordinaire. We look forward to the great gettin'-up morning. Until then, Pastor!

PASTOR SAM DAVIS

Pastor Barron focused his evangelism on the youth through many ministries. For decades he was a part of the Youth Department of the General Conference; he was the first African American elected to the Youth Ministries Department for the Seventh-day Adventist World Church; and he led or organised service projects both within divisions and spanning across divisions. He was involved in Devotions for Youth, inner-city and urban youth ministry, Week of Prayer, youth ministry on both Adventist and non-Adventist campuses, and Youth in Evangelism.

And retirement did not stop Pastor Barron. Even after withdrawal from his normal work, he continued to speak and preach to youth at gatherings across the globe. According to a short biography of Pastor Barron, he continued with such vigour even after retirement because, 'with the imminent return of Christ upon us, it is best to be used up proclaiming the good news of God's loving power to the lost, rather than sit idly by and watch the parade of unrepentant sinners on the death march to Christ-less graves.'

Even while Pastor Barron spent months away from home taking the Word to others, he never forgot his wife and his own youth, his three daughters. Caryl-Marie Barron, his daughter, has many fond memories of her father. 'He was a great family man. . . . He had a great sense of humour. He taught us how to knit.' Pastor Barron bought the girls their first tent, and then made them sleep in it in the backyard for a bonding time.

'He could cook, but breakfast only,' Caryl-Marie continued. 'He could make you plate-sized pancakes any time of the day.'

Pastor Barron had a rare ability to balance his demanding schedule with home life, Caryl-Marie said. As a child, she had a difficult time with her father's long periods of absence, and her mother finally discovered that she needed regular contact with him – not just letter-writing. She needed to hear his voice.

'He would call me from the middle of someone's ocean,' Caryl-Marie said. 'After that, I would straighten up and get through the next eight weeks.'

Pastor Gary Blanchard, Youth

Director at the General Conference, said of Pastor Barron, 'He was a very straightforward and kind person. His words were often filled with "grace and truth" like that of Christ.'

Pastor Barron is survived by his three daughters, Teresa Ann Barron Pinkney, Shelley Renee Barron, and Caryl-Marie Barron; his sisters, Carol Barron and Joahn Barron Frazier; four grandchildren; and ten great-grandchildren.

KELLY SANDEL
ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

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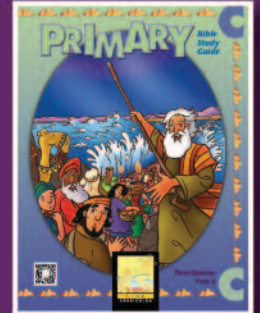
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Feb	4	4.55	5.08	4.55	4.53	5.08
	11	5.08	5.21	5.08	5.08	5.23
	18	5.21	5.33	5.22	5.23	5.37
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