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Messenger

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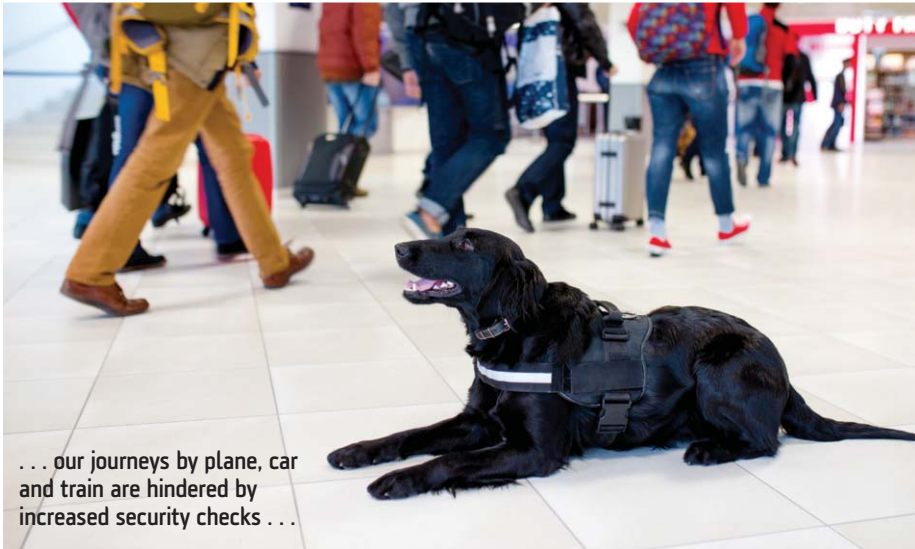
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Season's Greetings



Joy to the world!

by Pastor Eglan Brooks, President of the British Union Conference



... our journeys by plane, car and train are hindered by increased security checks ...

The news media pumps out sadness day after day. Our emotions are bombarded with images of war, forecasts of imminent economic crises and reports of humanitarian disasters. Our sensibilities are overshadowed by the politics that dominate major events, and our journeys by plane, car and train are hindered by increased security checks, staffing strikes and overzealous environmental campaigners. This is most keenly felt during the festive season. Indeed, as I write this article, our NHS is in crisis, with vital services being cancelled and a looming nursing strike.

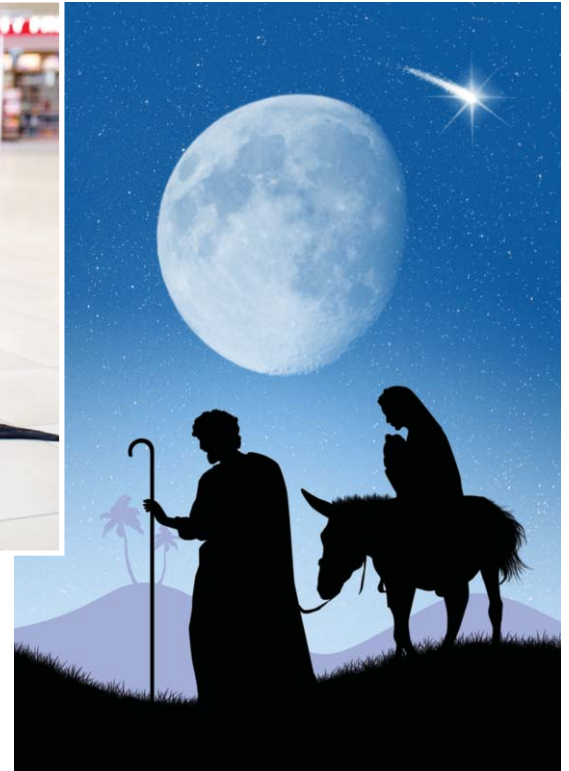
Nevertheless, despite the challenges of the hour, we have a reason to be joyful as Seventh-day Adventist Christians. At this time of the year, while millions are preparing to 'deck the halls', we have an opportunity to celebrate three events: the coming of our Saviour to the earth in the form of a baby, His sacrifice on Calvary that secured our salvation, and His soon return. The story of redemption is one that needs celebration. Imagine, 'This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life' (John 3:16, MSG). I'm in awe of a God that 'hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love' (Ephesians 1:4, KJV).

And Jesus was obedient to the will of His

Father and 'did not cling to his prerogatives as God's equal, but stripped himself of all privilege by consenting to be a slave by nature and being born as mortal man. And, having become man, he humbled himself by living a life of utter obedience, even to the extent of dying, and the death he died was the death of a common criminal' (Philippians 2:6-8, PHILLIPS).

We live in a society where we all know and enjoy our rights. Many of us enjoy the privileges that are made available to us – an upgrade from economy to business or first class on a flight, the end-of-year bonus at work. Would we be willing to forgo such privileges, flight upgrades or our work bonus for someone who dislikes us or has slandered our name?

Jesus Christ freely gave up His rights and the privilege of being 'equal with God'. His virgin birth was surrounded by scandal, and it is likely that this scandal accompanied Him throughout His childhood and teenage years. His parents travelled 90 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem; and, while His mother, Mary, rode on a donkey, his earthly father, Joseph, likely made the week-long journey on foot through 'rough terrain, rocky hillsides, [and] desert valleys'.¹ Jesus was born in a barn, with no midwife or medical professionals present. Shortly after His birth, He became a refugee because of a ruler's paranoia:



'Behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him' (Matthew 2:13, KJV).

God loved the world so much that He allowed His Son to suffer these hardships for our sake.

While that thought should humble us and make us more grateful, it should also give us a deep and lasting sense of joy. God did all that to save us – to save you and to save me.

Wow! Wow! Wow!

So, instead of succumbing to the sadness of our day, this festive season I invite you to join me in singing of the joy that was given to us in Jesus.

*Joy to the world; the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing.*

¹<https://www.travelujah.com/stories/in-the-footsteps-of-mary-and-joseph-the-nativity-trail>



From the editor . . .

Julian Thompson,
Editor



Dear Reader,

While some within Christian circles suggested that the pandemic might foster a greater interest in matters of faith, the 2021 Census conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) instead reported that, for the first time, the number of people in the UK identifying as Christian has fallen below 50% of the population. If, having gone through a time of great distress, fewer people than before perceive Christianity as a path for seeking deeper meaning and purpose in life, then, my friends, the crisis we are facing is an existential one. It raises the question of whether the answers we provide address the questions that people today are asking. By comparison, the same survey reports an increase in the number of those who describe themselves as having no faith, and a slight increase in the population identifying with some other world religions.

Given the time of year, I can't help but recall another census conducted more than two thousand years ago. Unlike the 2021 ONS Survey, its purpose was not to 'provide information that the Government needs to develop policies, plan and run public services, and allocate funding', but to register people for taxation by the Roman authorities. As a result of that census, Joseph was required to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem along with his fiancée, Mary (Luke 2:1-7). There, Mary gave birth to Jesus as it was 'written by the prophet', Matthew tells us (Matthew 2:5, NKJV). Now, it may be a small detail to note, but it's interesting that, in the Nativity, Joseph's journey to his place of birth was inspired by bureaucratic action. I wonder, is it possible that in 2022/23 a similarly benign government census could inspire us into prophetic movement today? After all, if ever the message of 'peace and goodwill' to humankind (see Luke 2:14) was needed, it's now.



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From the desk of the SEC President

by Dr Emmanuel Osei
President, South England
Conference



As we come to the end of a very challenging year, we pause to express our appreciation to the Lord for seeing us through. In retrospect, the Lord has been very good to us. We have come out of a pandemic and lockdown; we have witnessed Russia invade Ukraine and the outbreak of war. Many lives have been lost as a result. Many have had to flee their homes to neighbouring countries for refuge. Families have been separated. This year, we have lost our beloved Queen Elizabeth II, who has ruled our nation for the past seventy years. Today, we have a king ruling over the UK, King Charles III. We have also witnessed three prime ministers governing our nation this year.

As a church, the Lord has blessed the South England Conference. Our membership continues to grow numerically, and I want to express my appreciation to all our members who faithfully contribute financially to the conference through tithe and offerings. Our members have also caught our vision and are participating in the mission as we **Make Disciples and Build Communities**.

I want to personally thank all our cleaners, support staff, volunteers, pastors, Bible workers, departmental directors, Executive Committee members and administrators for their dedicated service to God and loyalty to the South England Conference.

As we look forward with eager anticipation to what the Lord will do in 2023, I do hope you will make space to share some quality time with your loved ones. In so doing, let me encourage you to share a meal or do some acts of kindness for those who are least fortunate. Better still, why not offer some time to assist in the Advent Shelter and support the homeless over the Christmas period? This programme runs from 22 December to 2 January.

We will be sharing our vision for 2023 with the entire membership on 8 January 2023 at our Evangelism Expo at Newbold College of Higher Education. Our programme begins at 10am and concludes at 4pm.

I wish you compliments of the season and every blessing in the new year.

Year-end message for Scotland and beyond

by Pastor Jimmy Botha,
President of the Scottish Mission



As we approach the end of 2022, at a time when we have no pandemic, no mass working from home or such 'new experiences', it is not hard to count 2022 as a strange year. It's a strange year because we are feeling the remnants of the pandemic, and, no doubt, it caused many of the problems we are facing now. It is well articulated by Pastor David Neal and Vanesa Pizzuto when they say:

'It is not difficult to list the multiple global crises: political, economic, environmental, social, spiritual, and not forgetting personal challenges. But the world of 2022 was preceded by the world of 2020 and 2021,

which experienced the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to the *Collins Dictionary* adding a new word, 'permacrisis', defined as 'an extended period of instability and insecurity, especially one resulting from a series of catastrophic events' (<https://ted.adventist.org/news/when-i-needed-a-neighbour-were-you-there/>).

I have no doubt that if you are reading this, you have also had a conversation or two about how you are going to make it through the next few months, coping with the high energy prices, fuel that keeps costing us so much, and food that is the most expensive we have ever known it.

Perhaps you may even have thought about where we stand in the greater context of history, because of all these issues we are facing. Perhaps you have never thought of the problems we are facing as a permacrisis.

In my devotion recently, slowing down the pace of the day, I had a strong impression that the Lord wanted me to have another look at the present crisis. In Mark chapter 9, Jesus makes a statement to three of the disciples: 'Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power' (verse 1, NRSV).

Then the transfiguration takes place, and the disciples see Elijah and Moses. Some discussion happens, and Elijah and Moses disappear again. Then they come down from the mountain, and Jesus orders them 'to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean' (verses 9, 10, NRSV).

The disciples had no knowledge, according to this part of Scripture, of what it meant that there would be a rising from the dead. We know that they would have witnessed a few resurrections, and, ultimately, would see the risen Jesus. Imagine the crisis in their minds. Perhaps with such strange events happening around them, they might have thought, like us, *We have never seen it like this! We keep seeing new records, new behaviour, new crises*.

Playing down none of the crises you may face at this moment, I would like to share with you that, even as the disciples made themselves scarce when the pressure came, especially on the night before the crucifixion, and on the day of it, Jesus never changed His mind about them. He always loved them, for they were His brothers. He didn't offer them a safe place to hide from Roman soldiers, but He never changed His view of them.

The church in Scotland is limited in resources, financial and otherwise, but we have also never changed our view about who our members are: generous, hardworking, resilient believers in Jesus and His soon return. And such commitment is what drives us, and what makes me realise that it is such an immense privilege to serve you, members

of our church. We as pastors and leaders of the church have a responsibility and privilege to serve our members in every way we can, especially during a permacrisis. We pray for you regularly. Today, I pray that you will experience the peace of God, which surpasses all the challenges you may face at this moment. If your family is mourning the loss of a loved one, we pray for you and ask for God's presence with you. We also ask for God's blessing on each of our members, no matter what their crisis may be at this time.

As we enter the last few days of 2022, I pray that you may experience love and peace; and, if you see family and friends, that your togetherness may be filled with love and peace. I wish you a very blessed Christmas period, and a much better-looking new year when 2023 comes around.



A Christmas poem

by Dennis Johnson

The first ones to see Jesus were humble,
not a king, a prince or a priest;
He was seen by hard-working shepherds,
maybe society's least.

Not born to those who were wealthy,
with money and a full table,
He came to earth available to all;
His very first home was a stable.

The news was told to those shepherds:
God's gift lies where cattle feed.
Like so many gifts that are given today,
not wanted, yet something all of us need.

Those shepherds saw angels in glory,
heard singing, saw Jesus and then
went back to their job as shepherds and
were not mentioned in Scripture again;

Yet, whenever the old tale is told,
they are always part of the story,
For there on those hills,
among shepherds and sheep,
they saw angels tell of God's glory.

'It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas!' The true reason for the season

by Pastor George Kumi, President of the North England Conference



For millions, Christmas is a time for increased revelry, overeating, and excessive spending sprees that begin with Black Friday and Cyber Monday. We know that Christmas is on the horizon when, as early as late September/early October, the shelves become filled with orchestrated seasonal gifts.

Christmas has been described as the 'silly season' due to the gross overindulgence in food, drink, gifts, and television. In November and December, many spend their money without thought and then regret it when credit card purchases have to be paid back in January. Unfortunately for some, this spend-spend-spend-regret pattern seems to be on a lifetime loop.

Nevertheless, while the season's commercialisation is often decried, have you noticed that a spirit of camaraderie is often in the air? 'Good morning' is heard more frequently, even among those who would ordinarily be described as reserved. People are more pleasant when communicating with each other. Cards and gifts are exchanged with friends near and far. At Christmas time, there is a different 'feeling in the air'.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we do not believe that Jesus was born on Christmas Day . . . but we do know that He was born, and the season gives us an opportunity to celebrate His coming to earth.

So how do we do this?

We are given some directives in the Spirit of Prophecy: for example, 'Christmas is coming. May you all have wisdom to make it a precious season. Let the older church members unite, heart and soul, with their children in their innocent amusement and recreation, in devising ways and means to show true respect to Jesus by bringing to Him gifts and offerings.'¹

While some choose to ignore Christmas, believing it adds little value to the development of our faith, it's interesting to note that here we are encouraged to do the following:

Make it a precious season;
Create intergenerational activities;
Bring gifts and offerings to God.

Just imagine what blessings we would receive from the Christmas season if we heeded this advice. Our hearts and minds would be drawn to God, who sent His Son Jesus into the world. Barriers would be broken between the old and the young, and the church would grow financially.

Over this Christmas season, I know that many of the churches in the North England Conference will be conducting community outreach programmes in their various localities. I salute these acts of compassion that help society's most vulnerable people. On behalf of the North England Conference, I would like to offer my heartfelt appreciation to you for your faithfulness.

Christmas is a time when we remember that 'Immanuel' means 'God with us' (Matthew 1:23). The God that was 'with us' 2,000 years ago is the same God who is 'with us' today, and is the same God who enters into the hearts and minds of those who are willing to accept Him.

So, it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas; but, this year, let's make it a truly meaningful Christmas by focusing on the Lord Jesus Christ, His first coming to earth, and His soon second coming when He will take us to live with Him forever.

¹<https://ellenwhite.org/faq/75>



Christmas grace

by Pastor Jerry Smith



'This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: his mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" ' (Matthew 1:18-21, NIVUK).

Miracles, such as the birth of Jesus, give us hope; they help us to know that there is something larger than ourselves, and that Someone is watching over the chaos of our lives. They also show us that God keeps His promises, fulfils ancient prophecies, and demonstrates His faithfulness. Back in the day – well, up until about 40 or 50 years ago – the story of Jesus' birth was seen as somewhat scandalous, because it involved a young lady who had become pregnant out of wedlock; and, adding to the scandal, the child was not even her betrothed's!

The story also describes how God communicates with human beings; in this particular instance, He is shown to speak to

us in dreams and guide us in our decision-making processes. While some see this story as a quaint tale at best, and others see it as a superstitious myth, I as a believer think that there is much more here to explore. Consider the following:

'When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus' (Matthew 1:24, 25, NIVUK).

This section of the story should be given greater attention than it often receives. Notice that Joseph, a man who had lost face and been utterly humiliated before his community, does something unexpected: he chooses to keep Mary as his betrothed! He takes the dream seriously.

Motivated by what he understood to be a word from God, He choked down the bitter pill that would become his life because he believed that that was what God had asked him to do.

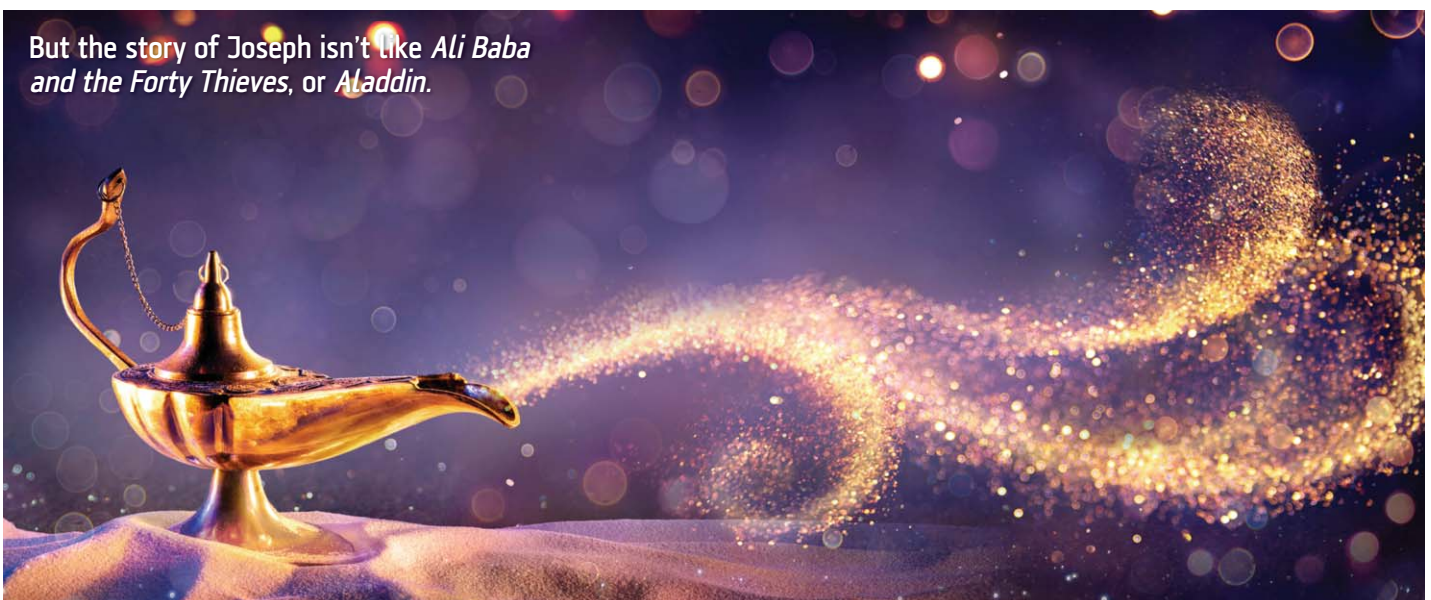
I highlight this because, all too often, critics of the Bible claim that this story is not realistic, that it is full of superstitious claptrap. But the story of Joseph isn't like *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* or *Aladdin* or [insert almost any Disney movie here], where the main character's choices lead them to treasure untold, or to fame and glory. Being the

stepfather of the Son of God did not result in Joseph becoming rich or famous; it did not lead to him sitting on a throne, or even a local council! Instead, in his case, it has led mostly to obscurity and perhaps even social exclusion. Aside from this story, there is hardly anything else written about him in the Bible.

Joseph obeyed and did what God asked, with no real earthly reward being touted for all to see. He merely did what he did because it was the right thing to do. He believed that God's Word was real and to be trusted.

In my opinion, this dynamic is a crucial part of the true miracle of Christmas, where a human being overcomes his selfish and pride-filled tendencies and chooses to trust the will of God even when what is ahead of him doesn't look like a winning hand. Joseph exemplifies this; and, in so doing, the adopted father of Jesus foreshadows the power of indwelling grace that his adopted Son would one day exemplify for us in a place called the Garden of Gethsemane, when He took on a burden that He did not have to take on. But, because of His trust in His Father's graciousness, He accepted the lot that God chose for Him in that moment. Grace made both Jesus and Joseph overcomers.

Grace, unmerited favour, is the kind of gift wise people still seek after today.



But the story of Joseph isn't like *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, or *Aladdin*.



A 'fan-tastic' church?

by Pastor Curtis Samuel



While this is the time of year when Christmas trees, presents, and mince pies tend to be at the forefront of people's thinking, this Advent season is slightly different as, unusually, we find ourselves in the middle of a football World Cup.

Those of us living in the UK will know immediately when a football tournament is upon us, as, on TV, Facebook and every media outlet, we start to hear the all-too-familiar refrain, 'It's coming home, it's coming home, it's coming . . . football's coming home!' Some people love it and think it is a bit of fun; others find it annoying and somewhat arrogant. However, as a fan favourite, the 1996 song will likely continue to be played regardless of its critics, regardless of how good England's chances of lifting the trophy actually are!

Every four years, people from all over the world descend on one country, bringing with them their national colours, energy and vibrancy, which they use to cheer their team on to victory. Even though (and let's be honest here!) the football on the pitch can be boring at times, whenever the camera pans to them in the crowd, the supporters give it their all: dancing, full of colour, dressed up in various amusing outfits, singing, playing musical instruments, even if their team is losing.

Of course, many a tear is shed when teams eventually exit the tournament; but, more often than not, the supporters of the losing side will

stay and clap for their countrymen, proud to have been a part of supporting them on their journey. Indeed, for whichever team wins and gets to see its national captain lift the Jules Rimet trophy (not seen in these parts since 1966), players and coaching staff enjoy the spoils of national parades, coach tours and perhaps even an extra bank holiday.

As was seen in their absence during the pandemic, fans bring so much energy and character to football games; they are the life source of the game. Their support makes a difference and can even supply teams with the confidence and team energy to go on and score another goal. What is so striking among fans at the World Cup is that there is often such an incredible sense of unity here. Even if people have disagreements, when they are in the stands together, those differences are put aside in pursuit of the higher goal of supporting their team.

I have often wondered whether we, as Christians, could learn a thing or two from football fans. What if we could disciple others or support our fellow members like football fans do? What if we were the biggest cheerleaders for our fellow brothers and sisters? What if we, as Christians, were known for being the biggest supporters of those in our places of work and education and in our homes?

In Romans 12:10 we are told to 'be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves' (NIV). What if we,

like fans, supported our brothers and sisters even when they messed up and were right there alongside them to lift them up when they fall? Proverbs 17:17 says, 'A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity' (KJV). What if those who were grieving could find in us a source of support and a comforting presence? In Galatians 6:2 Paul says, 'Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ' (NIV). What if we were a group of people who celebrated the success of others, and who, when people are tired and ready to give up, are a source from which they can find the strength to go on?

You see, this is how Christ is with us. He is our biggest supporter. He strives with us and bears with us. He will pick us up when we are down and celebrate with us when we succeed. Is not discipleship about loving those we support fiercely and consistently, even though they may not get it right all the time? Isn't that how Christ loves us?

We can look at the football fans at the World Cup and roll our eyes, thinking that they are over the top, have spent too much money and shouldn't care so much about players who don't know them personally. And, of course, there are a minority of football

fans who behave in distasteful and less than savoury ways, both in and out of the stadium. But there is something pure about fans who turn up to watch their team and will keep cheering, singing, supporting, and loving their team no matter what.

In John 15:12, Jesus tells us, 'My command is this: love each other as I have loved you' (NIV). By loving those around us, we are fulfilling this command. We are being like Him and creating healthier churches and communities where love reigns. Indeed, we will 'speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love' (Ephesians 4:15, 16, NLT).

The World Cup in Qatar will have many talking points. Is it coming home? As of the time of writing, I don't know. But what I do know is that it is the fans who keep the team going and lift up those who find themselves on the field of play. As 2023 dawns on us, perhaps we can take a leaf out of their book and become the biggest supporters for our members, loved ones and those around us. What beautiful communities we would have if everyone were supporting, cheerleading, and loving everyone else! Our churches would be filled with people who feel valued and loved. You could even call it a 'fan-tastic' church.



Conscience and Justice Council Convention on Prophetic Justice

by Pastor Dee Edwards

The seventh convention of the Conscience and Justice Council (CJC) took place in Glendale, California on 22-25 September 2022. As it is not often that there is a convention that focuses solely on the issue of social justice, if at all, I was intrigued to find out what the convention was all about, and what I would gain from attending. This article can only give a brief snapshot of the four-day convention, so by necessity I will leave some presentations out. However, before I go on to give an overview impression of the convention, it would be useful to start by explaining what the Conscience and Justice Council is all about.

Background

The CJC is a network that was established in the North American Division (NAD) in 2016. The inspiration to set up the council was birthed when Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) directors from various conferences across the NAD gathered at Oakwood University and observed that the focus of their ministries was too narrow and limited. They recognised that, though public affairs were an essential part of their ministry, they were often absent from their remit. Public affairs involve an outward-looking approach to building and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders, such as political and governmental agencies and businesses, as well as local communities. Yet the focus of PARL ministries had been limited to observing religious liberty as it relates to legal instruments, and most specifically the right to observe Sabbaths. Consequently, the ministry had been denuded of any evangelistic or missional impact. Thus, the vision to address this shortcoming was created, to set up a network such that PARL ministry could be a valuable and powerful asset to the Adventist Church. In the short time since CJC was established, they have developed numerous initiatives to revitalise public affairs and religious liberty, including:

- Developing and publishing resources on social justice,
- Promoting Sabbath School lessons on social justice,
- Organising community projects,
- Raising awareness of PARL issues,
- Organising voter drives to encourage community members to vote, and
- Organising annual conventions on social justice.

The convention is an important part of the CJC's strategy to develop its public affairs by enabling church members and allies to come together to deepen their theological understanding of social justice, and to gain practical insights into ways they can be better advocates as a church and as individuals. Consequently, the rest of this article will focus on the convention and what was gained from attending.

Prophetic justice

The theme of the convention was on prophetic justice. As Adventists, we have often seen ourselves as the third Elijah with a prophetic mission; so understanding what prophetic justice is seemed very apt. Indeed, the first question we were asked to consider was, 'What does it mean to have prophetic justice?' This question was posed by Yvonne Figueroa, Executive Director of LA Voice, before introducing us to an empowerment model to create prophetic action. The model involved first listening to community stories, then reimagining the future to create needed change. This then enabled the organisation to take prophetic action. The final step involved reflecting on the impact of the action before beginning the cycle again. This was pertinent, as often we don't listen to the community before we come up with strategies to help our local communities. Or, instead, we carry out surveys and wonder why the needs indicated on the survey do not correspond with actual take-up. Instead, to have any real impact, we need to hear those community stories that express felt needs to know how to respond. To accomplish that, we need to develop relationships with the community. For example, we might tell the community that they need Jesus, or dietary change, yet the most urgent and challenging situation the

community is experiencing is violence, and their desperate need to be safe. Or perhaps they need mentors for their children. However, we never get to this level of understanding until we listen to their stories. It is only at this point that the Holy Spirit can inspire us with the needed answers. This was a powerful talk!

'The model minority'

Afterwards, Nancy Yap, Executive Director of the Centre for Asian Americans United for Self-Empowerment, spoke about the unrealistic expectations that were placed on Asian Americans. They are seen as a 'model minority', but this often works against them. In reality, Asian Americans are an extremely diverse group with diverse needs, which are often minimised and overlooked due to this monolithic stereotype of being the model minority, not needing any support. That was something I had not considered before; and, though I was aware that the academic and career outcomes vary widely for young people from the various Asian communities in Britain, I hadn't given much thought to how this stereotyping played itself out negatively in the lives of Asian minorities. This was definitely food for thought.

Environmental justice

After these presentations, there were a variety of workshops on offer. I chose to go to the workshop on environmental justice. This was such a powerful workshop by Gregory Hoenes, Director from the West Region, Southern California Conference. I learnt how environmental exploitation and ruin were closely linked to racial injustice; also that, increasingly, those involved in environmental justice are realising that, to heal the earth, black and brown peoples need to be liberated. That is, racial injustice needs to end if we are to save the planet, and therefore justice is in everyone's interests. Often, it is black and brown people who are the ones bearing the brunt of the environmental crisis, not just in the global South, but also in developed countries. It was also disturbing to hear how, in the United States of America, black communities had been deliberately targeted by having toxic waste dumped near their homes, damaging the health of people in those communities. Gregory described it this way: 'The white and wealthy do not care how polluted water affects black and poor people.'

This was a reference to the Flint water crisis¹ and the unconscionable wrongdoing that took place there. He also gave a sombre reminder that the Adventist Church developed in a nation where settler colonialism resulted in the mass genocide of the indigenous people and mass slavery of African Americans took place, and that much of that culture was still present within the church, hampering our mission.

The Adventist prophetic role

The second workshop I attended was by Zack Plantak, a professor at Loma Linda University's School of Religion, who spoke on the Adventist prophetic role. This workshop spoke mightily to the need for the church to be realigned with our unique mission as the advent movement. To do so, we need to understand more fully what it means to be part of a prophetic movement. Zack cogently spoke to the fact that true prophets are deeply concerned with justice. Therefore, for the church to truly embrace its prophetic mantle and to inhabit its calling to be the third Elijah, the church also needs to be deeply concerned about justice issues and be prepared to speak truth to power, just as Elijah and John the Baptist did in their era. They were both unafraid to confront the abuse of power they witnessed in their time. How much does the church truly live up to this role? Unfortunately, we have often fallen short. However, by deepening our awareness of our past, we increase our ability to reimagine our future and create prophetic change.

Worrying trends in global politics

On Sabbath, Bettina Krause, the editor of *Liberty Magazine*, alerted us to the worrying tendency across the globe of national leaders using religion to justify the persecution of other religious and/or ethnic groups, coupled with the refusal or resistance to assist those who have been persecuted. Though the world had previously said 'Never again!' in the aftermath of the Holocaust, it seems that we are walking a perilous path back in that direction. This was followed by the worship service, where Pastor Lola Johnston gave a

potent sermon, demanding that we see what is often in plain view. She asked the pertinent question, 'What do you see?' Often, the need is right before us, but somehow we are often looking in another direction. This rousing sermon was a call to action.

Prophetic action in addressing the problem of homelessness

After lunch, we made our way over to central Los Angeles to explore the community. We visited Bridge Housing, which had a radical, fresh approach to tackling the problem of homelessness. LA has a profound homelessness problem, exacerbated by the fact that the city is a magnet to those seeking a fresh start and those avoiding the harsh winter conditions further north. That is, it is difficult to survive homelessness in cities like New York, for example. As a result, the council decided that they needed to do something radically different to respond to the problem. They decided to convert a dog park into a housing project. This decision overcame the problem of trying to procure land for the build, which would have been extremely costly and time-consuming to purchase.

This project consists of a huge building, split into male and female dormitories, housing approximately 100 residents. Each person had a space the size of a double bed, roughly 6ft by 4ft, with 5ft-high walls separating each space to give a degree of privacy. The entrance to the little cubicle was covered by a blanket, and inside was a single bed and a small cupboard. The most important aspect of the project were the dedicated workers who were there to ensure safety and security, and to work with each client to get them back into employment and permanently rehoused. This also included remedial help for those struggling with their mental and emotional health. It was sad to hear that there were even residents in the centre who were holding down jobs, but still couldn't afford accommodation. However, it was encouraging to hear that the project is already making a difference, enabling clients to come off the street permanently. This was

an inspiring visit and an example of prophetic action, for change had been created in a situation that was previously thought to be hopeless.

Empowering black women

The last day of the convention came quickly. In the morning we had the learning labs, which were practical sessions on various topics. I chose to go to the workshop on women's empowerment, run by Pastor Lola Johnston, PhD. There I learnt that medical science is now recognising that the higher rates of mortality suffered by African American women are not simply due to diet, or lack of exercise, but had more to do with the emotional trauma caused by living in a racist and sexist society. The myth of strong black women was just that – a myth. However, there are ways that black women can protect themselves – firstly, by:

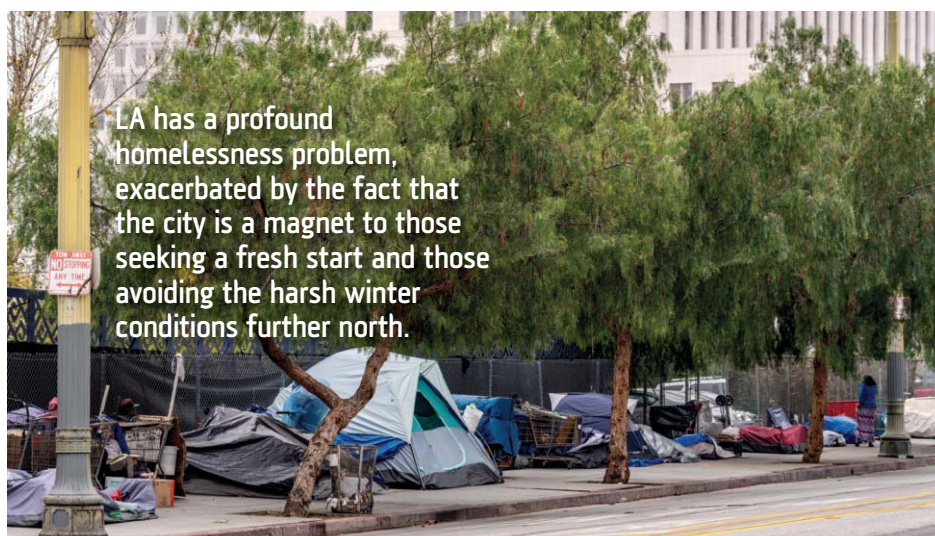
- Acknowledging that they are only human, so they don't fall prey to the stereotype of the strong black woman who does not need any support;
- Not overloading herself with other people's burdens while ignoring her own;
- Understanding the impact of intersectionality in her life, and that having to cope with racism and sexism simultaneously does take a toll.

Black women can minimise the impact by understanding the micro-aggressions that they encounter in their daily life and having a language in which to describe their experience, enabling them to use that knowledge to find support and community. This workshop brought the convention to a satisfying close.

Final impressions

The conclusion I came to, in attending the convention, was that I was so glad I decided to satisfy my curiosity and attend the event. It was refreshingly different, thought-provoking and inspiring. I liked the fact that there were a variety of topics, which were delivered in different ways, including a site visit. I gained so much insight and knowledge in attending the convention, and thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to network with other like-minded people. I do plan to return to the convention next year, which will take place in Washington DC. I would recommend this event to those who are interested in social justice and PARL ministries. I came away convinced that the Conscience and Justice Council is a Holy Spirit-inspired initiative to enable the church to be ready for the latter rain. I will continue to watch the development and progress of the Council with interest.

¹The Flint water crisis is the scandal of how the drinking water of the city of Flint was contaminated with lead and possibly *Legionella* bacteria. This occurred in 2014 during a budget crisis. Flint changed its water source from the treated and therefore safe drinking water from the Detroit Water and Sewage Department to the Flint River. This exposed more than a hundred thousand residents to unpotable water that was not fit for drinking. This meant that between 6,000 and 12,000 children were drinking water with unacceptably high levels of lead, leading to long-term health consequences including dementia and other cognitive difficulties. A number of residents died of legionnaires' disease.



LA has a profound homelessness problem, exacerbated by the fact that the city is a magnet to those seeking a fresh start and those avoiding the harsh winter conditions further north.



C OVID-19 brought with it physical suffering, along with the virus being labelled possibly the most traumatic event we are likely to face as a generation.

Many psychologists report that this has led to deep emotional scars and mental health challenges, which has led to many who attended church feeling spiritually distressed. Friends have been lost; family members have been buried in quickly arranged ceremonies. Significant people in our lives have departed, no longer around to offer a word of encouragement.

No matter how much we try to downplay it, to 'tough it out', our world has been rocked and our belief systems have been shaken, leaving some feeling lost.

Well-being experts say this can take place whether or not people are religious. Churches need to make sure that everyone is feeling loved and encouraged and receiving good spiritual care. The incontrovertible fact is that people in spiritual distress sometimes no longer believe the world is a safe place, and this can be daunting. They might lose hope and have a difficult time finding meaning and purpose in what has happened.

2022 church attendance survey

Paradoxically, COVID-19 has also given many people quiet introspective time – time to reflect – and many people may not have liked the life image staring back at them in the mirror. It should therefore come as no surprise that a recent 2022 survey, carried out by the Barna Group, reports a worrying concern that many Christians have stopped physically attending church.

In some, attendance is struggling to get back to 40%.

Barna is a private, non-partisan organisation located in Ventura, California. It has a good reputation, and has been

conducting and analysing primary research to understand cultural Christian trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours since 1984. The 2022 results are startling. Only one in three practising Christians are still attending their pre-COVID-19 church – there has been a major shift.

Recent data shows that those who identify as Christian agree strongly that faith is very important in their lives.

- They attended church at least monthly prior to COVID-19.
- During COVID-19 more than half (53%) say they have streamed their regular church services online within the past four weeks.
- During COVID-19, 34% percent admit to streaming a different church service online other than their own, essentially 'church hopping' digitally. This has become a major feature.
- Finally, about 13% of practising Christians confirm they have done neither of these things during COVID-19.

Church switching

The key problem faced by many pastors is Christians who stream the same church they attended before COVID-19. The survey reveals that this core group are significantly more likely to have switched churches. This group have moved across to a church which meets their needs and worship style. This presents a huge challenge in wooing these members back into mainstream church functionality.

This juxtaposition is further complicated by the fact that exactly half of the practising Christian millennials (Christians 'born between the early 1980s and the late 1990s') say they have not attended church within the past four weeks. The percentage of Generation X and Boomers (anyone born from 1965 to 1980, and anyone born from 1946 to 1964, respectively) who have stopped attending online services is 35% for Gen X, and 26% for Boomers. This is lower than among their younger counterparts, but still shows the impact of COVID-19.

Emotional strain

Interestingly, the survey revealed that, within the cohort of practising Christians who have lessened or completely stopped digital worship, there is an increase in emotional burdens and inability to cope with this. Respondents who have stopped attending church during COVID-19 are also less likely than their peers to agree with the statement: 'I am not anxious about my life, as I have an inner peace from God.'

Practising Christians who have stopped attending church in recent weeks are more likely than all other practising Christians to say they feel bored 'all of the time' (17% vs. 6%) or that they have felt 'insecure' for at least some of each day (11% vs. 7%).

So how do we address this complex issue of physical church attendance within the Adventist Church? In all fairness, we have no primary Adventist data upon which we can rely. However, we cannot ignore the Barna

One in three practising Christians have stopped attending church post-COVID-19 – will they return?



by Dr Paul Thompson*

data; the results are compelling. What is also clear is that in some churches physical attendance has dropped. It is clear that pastors are concerned as they begin to address church attendance from the pulpit. But is this enough? Is it too little too late? Or is there something else required – a more strategic approach to address this complex issue?

Here are six suggested reasons why people may not be coming back to church:

- **COVID-19 hesitancy**
According to the WHO (World Health Organisation) statistics, the first recorded cases of COVID-19 in the UK came in March 2020. In the UK, 24 million people contracted the virus, resulting in 211,000 people dying. As of 10 November 2022, there were 24,155 cases in the UK, a daily average of 3,451. Some churchgoers are concerned about a possible resurgence of the disease, particularly those who have health issues or those from an ethnic minority background, whom COVID-19 has particularly impacted and who are more likely at the onset to have had near-death experiences because of the virus.
- **Lethargy**
This is defined as the quality or state of being drowsy and dull, listless and unenergetic, or indifferent and lazy, apathetic, sluggish or inactive. The impact of COVID-19 has led to less exercise, a break in routine, and many Christians have become well-adjusted to 'breakfast in bed' worship. It will take some time to break this habit.
- **Ambivalent attachment**
Another reason some churchgoers will not return is that even prior to COVID-19 they were only loosely attached to the church and its members. Not everyone who attends church has a vibrant relationship with the church community. Church can be cliquy, exclusive, confined to a small group. This can be challenging for new members or members who have relocated.
- **Church switching**
A fourth reason some churchgoers will not return is that they have started attending a different church (or none at all). There has been some migration over the last two years, with some members having

switched churches because they moved out of the area.

- **No value added**
Churches do not add value to their lives. The Barna survey noted that 'non-value-adding' refers to activities within a church that do not directly contribute to satisfying members' requirements. It may be helpful to think of these as activities that church attendees would not be happy to pay for.
- **No Jesus**
One of the reasons why it's tricky to apply *no-value-added* consumer analogies to ministry is because consumerism makes the customer king, not Christ. Consumerism prioritises a customer's needs and wants. A typical consumer rarely wants the Cross, even though that's what they really need.

What can be done

There are probably more reasons why churchgoers will not return to church after COVID-19. This article has only scratched the surface.

In my opinion, what unites all the reasons is that these people, who were once faithful members, are now missing and are in need of a compelling motive to return to church. Something has gone wrong, which a sermon alone cannot fix.

A compelling motive is what moves people to unlearn their 'no church' habit and change. It's what keeps people attached to church. It's the value that churchgoing adds to their lives. Many may be too hurt, feel let down, or be afraid. A lot has happened in the last two years – loss, divorce, marriages, separation, deterioration in health or mental health, anxieties, financial problems, weight gain. People feel fragile, and many who used to be churchgoers are feeling vulnerable. Perhaps they cannot face the critical eye or unsaid words of spiritual, physical and mental judgement passed upon them which going back to church brings. Maybe they would rather stay away, and the longer they stay away, the harder it is to return.

Compelling motives

Compelling motives to return to church are not merely messages of losing your soul; however, they are experiential. When no one from church was there for you when you

buried your dead; when no one called you for weeks upon weeks to check in with you and offer a word of encouragement; when no one offered to help you shop online because you struggled with technology, it's hard to reconcile this with the love you were convinced existed in church fellowship, which you now label as superficial.

When Hebrews 10:25 (NIV) exhorts us about 'not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another', it's tempting to think that quoting the verse is sufficient to move people to return to church. It is not. It's not because it has not been the real experience of churchgoers and may well explain why they have stayed away.

Help them fall in love with church again

What we say about churchgoing must align with people's experience of churchgoing. If we love them, this should have shone out during COVID-19, with phone calls, text messages, and other means of showing that we care. When people contracted COVID-19 and woke up alone and afraid, they should have been able to call us. When they lost loved ones, they should have known that we grieve with them, and that as fellow church members we were on their side, praying. The startling thing about the survey is that many people did not hear from the church; they felt alone, abandoned and isolated.

When we accept that we have failed to deliver the lived experience of love that Christ had for His church; when we are able to admit that we fell short and got some things wrong about the way in which COVID-19 was handled – people will begin to heal and return after the pandemic. If we do not, they will not return. We have a lot of work to do; and, now that you have read this article, pick up the phone, send a text, and reach out to someone. Do it today, while there is still time!

If you are affected by anything in this article today, please contact your local pastor/pastoral team or a trusted friend who can pray with you.

*Dr Paul Thompson is an entrepreneur and is currently undertaking research at the University of Oxford. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Credit Management and a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of British Management. He is also an ordained elder at Reading Central Seventh-day Adventist Church.



Prepared or unprepared

by Elder Dorothy Harvey, Willesden SDA Church

‘When I arrived as the pastor of the Willesden Seventh-day Adventist Church I was welcomed by one of the most kind, faithful and loving people you would ever meet – Elder Dorothy Harvey. She produced a list of the members, and under her guidance, mentorship and companionship over three years we succeeded in visiting all the members of that very large congregation. Community members and shut-in members were also visited. Elder Dorothy is evangelism through and through. She is one in whose heart burns a fire for the saving of souls. She just has a passion for the physical, educational, emotional, social and spiritual well-being of people. This article came out of that love to help people prepare for the second coming of Christ.’

Dr Kirk Thomas



For over a week, the media had bombarded our homes with the news of the coming Arctic weather. Even the head of one branch of the Environmental Department that was responsible for spreading grit on the roads was interviewed. He assured the travelling public that they were fully prepared to meet the threatening icy conditions. The authorities had got caught out the year before, so they had left nothing to chance this time. They showed images of snowploughs and gritters primed for action and the tonnes of salt they had at the ready.

Then it happened. On Monday night (26 January 2004) the temperature began to fall. It went below freezing in Scotland and the North of England, while remaining just above freezing in the South, but that was short-lived. By Tuesday night, the South had begun to experience the beginning of the promised Arctic conditions. On Wednesday morning, motorists were advised to take extra blankets and flasks with hot drinks just in case they got stuck in the snow that was on its way.

But, despite all the warnings, some were unprepared. Around five o'clock on Wednesday evening, the heavens seemed to have opened, and, within a few minutes, London and its suburbs were covered entirely with snow. As a result, the airports closed, driving conditions deteriorated – a journey that used to take ten minutes by car stretched into hours – and pedestrians fared no better as they slipped and slid while making their way home.

Things were decidedly worse in my area on Thursday morning due to the overnight snow that had been flattened by the vehicles and frozen into solid ice. The main roads were like ice rinks, and the pavements were no better. Traffic was reduced to a crawl as motorists struggled to avoid skidding into each other. Not one gritter could be seen anywhere, and the strategically placed salt containers were already empty. It was plain to see that the relevant authorities in my locality had ignored the repeated warnings and had once more been caught unprepared.

As I turned the events of those few days over and over in my mind, I couldn't help but reflect on how the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ has been proclaimed for the past two thousand years and that He will be coming back to earth one day . . . yet many have not taken the matter seriously. Some have even scoffed at the very idea of a judgement – that day when all the inhabitants of this entire planet

shall stand before God to give an account of the deeds they've done, whether they be good or bad (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Instead, they are saying, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation' (2 Peter 3:4, KJV).

Some say they believe in the second advent of our Lord and Saviour, but that it will take place far in the future, a million years from now, and has nothing to do with the present – so they say that they intend to have a good time in the meanwhile, because life is to be enjoyed. They are taking no heed of the warning Jesus gave in Matthew 24:42-44, that we should always be in a state of expectation lest He come and find us unprepared.

Before the crucifixion, Christ said that He would return 'in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory' (Matthew 24:30, KJV). No more would He be an itinerant preacher with no fixed abode or a non-conformist troublemaker, as the religious authorities of His day preferred to think of Him. At that time, He will be Lord of lords, and King of kings, the One before whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is indeed Lord (Philippians 2:10, 11). He will gather all nations before Him and 'separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats'. The sheep will be placed on His right hand, while the goats will be placed on the left (Matthew 25:32, 33, KJV).

The exciting thing about Jesus' return is that He is coming back for His people. In John 14:3, He told the disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them and would return to take them home to live with Him. And the good news is that this assurance was given to believers of all ages, right down to the end of time. They will be gathered from every nation, language and people group on earth. God is not partial. He loves us all. Therefore, His greatest desire is that we all accept the gift of salvation by grace that He offers us and turn to Him and live (Ezekiel 33:11).

So let us heed the proclamation that Jesus is coming again. It should not be regarded as an event that will happen many years in the future, but as one that will occur very soon indeed. With that in mind, let us order our lives by following His word so that when He comes, instead of being unprepared, we will be ready to meet Him.



by Sharon Platt-McDonald, Director for Health, Adventist Community Services & Women's Ministries

Winter wellness tips – part 2



In part 1 of 'Winter wellness', we examined the impact of regular exercise, good nutrition, adequate hydration, vitamin D supplementation and maintaining good skin care. For more information on practical tips relating to these aspects of well-being, visit the following website: <https://onbetterliving.com/winter-wellness-tips/>.

We continue our winter wellness tips in this issue by looking at ways to boost immunity – but first let's explore some of the reasons why people are more susceptible to colds and flu during the winter months. An article from Harvard Medical School (Harvard Health Publishing)¹ notes the following: *'There are two reasons why winter is "cold and flu season". In the winter, people spend more time indoors, in closer contact with other people who can pass on their germs. Also, the influenza virus stays airborne longer when air is cold and less humid.'*

Boosting immunity with lifestyle

In an online article by VeryWell Health, titled: '6 Ways to Boost Your Immune System Naturally',² author Cathy Wong examines diet, exercise, and sleep impact.

Diet

Exploring dietary factors, Wong explains: *'Following a diet rich in antioxidants is essential to supporting your immune system. Abundant in many fruits and vegetables, antioxidants combat free radicals – chemical byproducts known to damage DNA and suppress the immune system.'*

Highlighting one key food, she advises to choose healthy fats like omega-3 fatty acids, found in flaxseed, over saturated fats, found in meat and dairy. Explaining the benefits of omega-3 fatty acids, she states: *'It may help increase your body's production of compounds involved in regulating immunity.'*

She further advises: *'For an additional immune boost, try adding garlic (shown to possess virus-fighting and bacteria-killing properties)³ and ginger (a natural anti-inflammatory) to your meals on a regular basis.'*

A list of foods thought to support the immune system can be viewed at: <https://www.verywellhealth.com/types-of-foods-to-boost-your-immune-system-89020>.

Exercise

While identifying why moderate-intensity exercise confers several benefits to the immune system, Wong highlights current research undertaken to look at immunity impact with a regular exercise

programme: *'A 2019 study shows that moderate exercise mobilises immune system cells, helping the body defend itself against pathogens and cancer cell growth. Those who regularly engage in this type of exercise have fewer illnesses and less systemic inflammation. Exercise may also protect the immune system from the effects of ageing.'*⁴

Sleep

Research continues to recommend sleep as a key lifestyle factor that needs to be encouraged more as a healthy habit vital in the prevention of sickness. Spotlighting the importance of getting eight full hours of sleep each night, Wong highlights research identifying why regular good sleep helps regulate immune function.⁵

*'A study of more than 22,000 people found that those who slept less than six hours per night or who had a sleep disorder were more likely to have colds and other respiratory infections.'*⁶

Stress

The University of Maryland Medical System posted an article on its website voicing the question, 'How does stress affect the immune system?'⁷ In answering the question, they state: *'Chronic stress can produce higher-than-normal levels of the hormone cortisol. This can hamper the body's anti-inflammatory response and cause continual infections, according to recent immunology research studies.'*

Herbal boosts

Herbalist Betzy Bancroft⁸ has some suggestions for natural remedies that can help with some of the common cold and flu symptoms. She suggests the following, highlighting their use:

- **Echinacea** – may help support the immune system to fight colds.
- **Elderberry** – may be helpful for seasonal flus.
- **Elderflower** – can induce sweating, which may help reduce fever.
- **Eucalyptus** – has antibacterial and expectorant properties, and may loosen congestion for easier breathing.
- **Golden seal** – may help with bacterial infections.
- **Ginger** – may help ease congestion and warm the body. Its anti-inflammatory properties work as a sore throat remedy.
- **Liquorice** – may have immune-boosting and throat-soothing properties. (Avoid if hypertensive.)
- **Sage** – may help to ease sore throats and dry up mucus in sinuses.
- **Slippery elm** – a sore-throat soother high in 'mucilage', a substance that coats the throat and helps relieve coughs.
- **Thyme** – contains antibacterial compounds.

It is advisable that you speak with your doctor/health professional or pharmacist before trying any new remedies (including herbs), especially if your symptoms are severe. This is particularly important if you are on medication or if you have a chronic health condition.

The Mayo Clinic, in its article titled 'How to Maintain a Healthy Immune System', shares a video at the following website: <https://newsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/discussion/mayo-clinic-minute-how-to-maintain-a-healthy-immune-system/>.

Good health!

¹<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/how-to-boost-your-immune-system>

²<https://www.verywellhealth.com/ways-to-boost-your-immune-system-naturally-89283>

³<https://www.hindawi.com/journals/jir/2015/401630/>

⁴<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2095254618301005?via%3Dihub>

⁵<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1087079211000566?via%3Dihub>

⁶<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2513447>

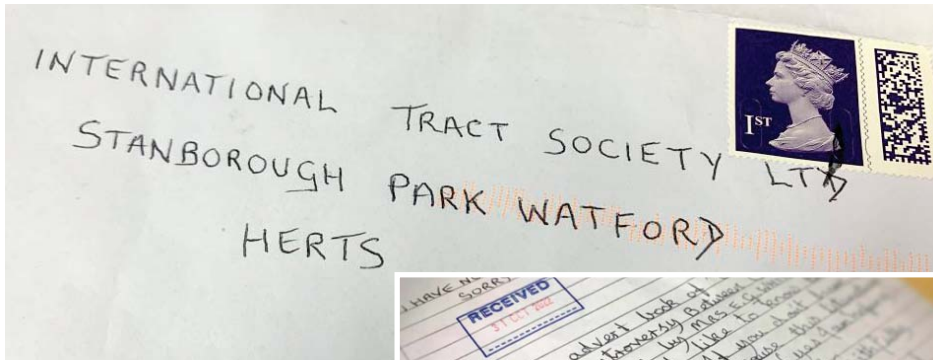
⁷<https://health.umms.org/2020/11/10/stress-immune-system/>

⁸Sadly, the magazine Betzy Bancroft wrote in, *Whole Living*, is no longer available to view online.

The longest gap? 100 years from advert to request

by Pastor Christian Salcianu

Letter demonstrates the enduring power of the printed page – bearing fruit after 100 years!



At the ADC our daily correspondence ranges from enquiries about courses, and prayer requests such as 'please pray for my daughter; she is battling with cancer', to private letters and donations. Now, this one that we are talking about is absolutely special for three amazing reasons.

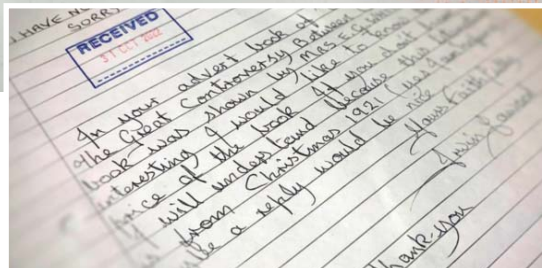
First of all, the letter reached us even though it was not addressed to us!

The address on the letter contained no street and no postcode! Stanborough Park has been in Watford (UK) for many years. The Seventh-day Adventist Church purchased the property sometime back in 1907. So, for many in Watford, Stanborough Park is by default associated with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, which, in addition to having a well-known local congregation and community centre, also has a publishing house of the same name (The Stanborough Press Ltd.), two local schools, and the headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the British Isles (UK and Ireland).

Now, that's all well and good, but what does that have to do with the 'International Tract Society'? Well, it turns out that the Stanborough Press started in 1884 under the name – you guessed it – International Tract Society. After World War 1, it changed its name to the Stanborough Press and later moved to Grantham . . . so any letter addressed to the International Tract Society is addressed to The Stanborough Press Ltd., established more than a century ago!

When the postman delivered the letter to Stanborough Park, it was thought that the best-placed entity to open it was the Adventist Discovery Centre. The letter read like this:

In your advert in the book Our Paradise Home, the Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan book was shown, by Mrs



*E. G. White. It looks interesting. I would like to know the price of the book. If you don't have it I will understand, because this literature is from Christmas 1921. (Yes, I am hoping.) Maybe a reply would be nice. Thank you.
Yours faithfully, x*

The second amazing feature of this letter is that it described a book entitled *Our Paradise Home*. While the title didn't immediately ring any bells for the current ADC team, one senior administrator remembered it, and we were able to find it on eBay. The book was even translated into Welsh.

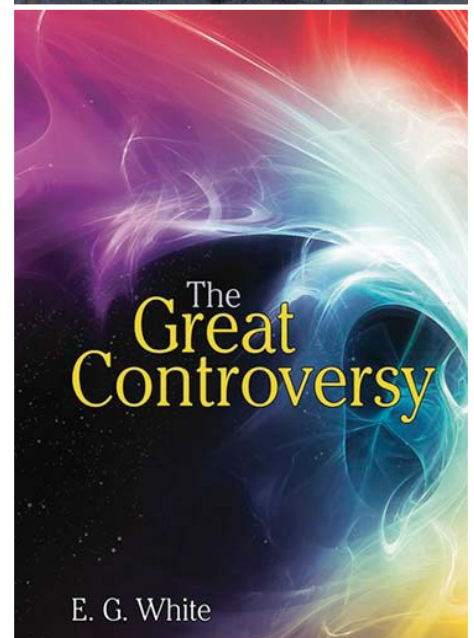
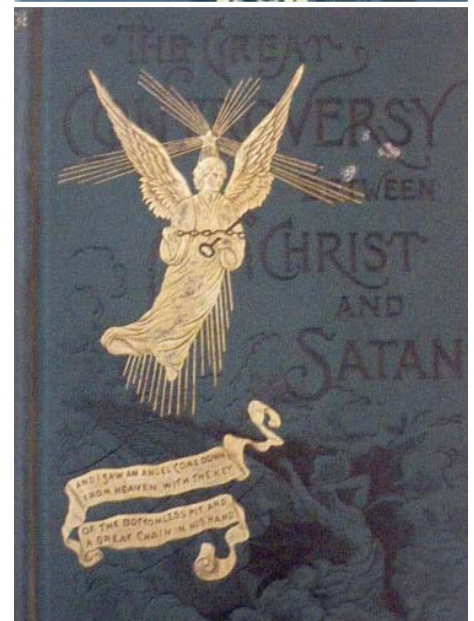
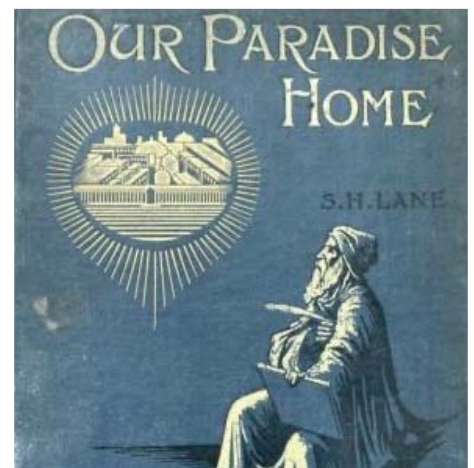
The third amazing feature is that the requested book, *The Great Controversy*, is still in print. We offer our ADC students interested in our prophecy courses the latest edition.

We see a miracle here. One couldn't better match the 1921 ad from the *International Tract Society*, which has since turned into a thriving publishing house (The Stanborough Press Ltd.)!

As the Bible says:

'So is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it' (Isaiah 55:11, NIV).

In response to the letter, we replied as follows: 'We are happy to enclose a copy of *The Great Controversy*, free of charge, and we trust that you will find it as interesting as you anticipate.'



Moreover, we let the sender know that we have additional resources available and sent him our flyer* giving details of our courses, as well as the first lesson of our *Discover course*. The letter ended with the assurance that he could let us know if there is any way we may be of further assistance.

This is the power of Adventist literature.

*<https://adventistdiscoverycentre.org/new-adc-flyers/>

‘For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given:
and the government shall
be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor,
The mighty God,
The everlasting Father,
The Prince of Peace.’

Isaiah 9:6 (KJV)





Irish Mission Day of Fellowship 2022

by Pam Peterson

The Fairways Hotel in Dundalk, Ireland was alive and buzzing with anticipation as children made their way to the Sabbath School rooms and the adults settled in the main conference hall. As a result of the pandemic it had been a long time since we had all been able to gather together as a mission. Everyone could sense that today, 29 October 2022, was going to be a special day, and we were not disappointed. Pastor Gideon led a lively panel that discussed the Sabbath School lesson; as always, there is never enough time to discuss everything, and the hall erupted with laughter when one of the panellists, with a twinkle in his eye, suggested that he had so much to say that perhaps next year he ought to be permitted to take the lesson on his own! As Sabbath School drew to a close, the Celestial Melodies choir, which had been gathering by the side of the platform, took to the stage and sang a beautiful rendition of 'Midnight Cry'. The music on the day was wonderful; and, in addition to the song services led by Pastors Ben Pontanar and Lorance Johnson, the Dublin Romanian Choir and the Ranelagh Choir also graced the morning services with their singing.

One of the highlights of the day was the Mission's focus given by Irish Mission President Pastor Dan Serb. He highlighted the amazing work going on in the Irish Mission, which includes the development of a Mission centre, the establishment of Hope Media Ireland, and a partnership with the Voice of Prophecy. 'Everything we do, we do under God's blessings and under the banner of "establish, empower, and engage",' he reminded attendees. 'Establish', 'empower' and 'engage' are the three tenets that shape the Irish Mission's strategic focus. Afterwards, the Mission workers were invited



to the stage for a prayer of dedication led by BUC President Pastor Eglan Brooks, who took the time to recognise the hard work of the Mission's ministers, especially during COVID-19; and, in the spirit of the recent pastors' appreciation day, he encouraged the membership to recognise and appreciate them.

Pastor Brooks was not alone: we were blessed to have his wife Tina Brooks with us, as well as a number of other workers from the British Union Conference, including the BUC Treasurer, Wederly Aguiar; BUC Associate Treasurer, Aftab Barclay, who was recently designated as Treasurer for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ireland; and Messenger Editor, Pastor Julian Thompson. Newbold College Principal Dr Steve Currow was also in attendance, and he noted the wonderful contribution of Irish Mission students to Newbold's Year in Mission programme. As part of the proceedings the Mission thanked the BUC Associate Executive Secretary, Pastor Jacques Venter, who also served as the Executive Secretary for the Mission until the recent appointment of Pastor

Adam Keough to the role.

The sermon was delivered by TED Mission Director Dr Anthony Wagensmith and centred on faithfulness, the theme for the day. Delving deep into the parable of the workers in Matthew 20:1-16, he noted three characteristics: (1) they came when they were called, (2) they did what they were told, and (3) they went where they were sent. His afternoon presentation was similarly insightful as he challenged the Mission members not to 'go for formulas', but to 'go for God', noting that what we pass on to others is not our method, but our example of deep faith. When concluding, Pastor Anthony shared: 'True faithfulness, though, is not about who we are, but about who God is. It's not about what you have done, but about what God has done (through Jesus). Because there is One, a perfect One . . . who came when He was called . . . did what He was told . . . went where He was sent (to the cross) . . . Jesus exchanged His faithfulness for our unfaithfulness.' This is a picture of God's extravagant grace. Salvation is salvation, no matter who you are. The day closed with a concert. Our hearts were full and our spirits fed. It was a wonderful day! God is good!



Lifting people out of poverty in Nepal

by Bert Smit, ADRA-UK CEO

We visited the poorest of the poorest families. We held the baby. We chatted with the children. We spoke to the women. We talked to the men. We observed their cows. We discussed football. We talked about food. We felt at home, but knew it was up to us to help them change their lives!

In November, we officially launched our new Jersey Overseas Aid (JOA) co-financed project in the Terai region of Nepal. I had flown in on my first major trip since the pandemic, reluctantly embracing the new reality of 'living with COVID-19' and travelling on full flights passing through packed airports. It all went well.

This was the project launch, meaning that we had just started to put the framework in place to start the work. We met for three days with the new team of workers that will implement the project in the lowlands of Nepal. Working with our local partners, IRDC and Forward, I had requested access to smallholder dairy farmers that were typical of the type of farmers we will help in the next four years. On two occasions, we went out to meet a sample of dairy farmers – most with just two cows, and some with a handful.

On one occasion, we visited a model farmer, a wheelchair-bound smallholder, who ran a good setup. Still, his cows looked meagre, and the fodder provided seemed inadequate. Three of his six cows provided milk – the other three had stopped giving milk altogether. His bull had provided four cows and eight bulls – a challenge in a Hindu country where cows (and bulls) are considered sacred and cannot be slaughtered.

All the farmers we visited faced similar situations. Some were down to their last cow or bison. Having only protein-poor fodder leads to poor milk production, resulting in little income for the families.

The women-led milk cooperative I visited had been run successfully before the pandemic, with more than 600 female farmers providing milk. Now, they could barely make ends meet, with just 34 farmers contributing. In Nepal, false rumours spread during the pandemic that

drinking milk could spread COVID-19, contributing to a massive drop in sales.

And yet, wherever we travelled, we saw cattle on the roads and in the towns. Many smallholder farmers had given up caring for their cattle because they had stopped giving milk or were of the wrong gender.

ADRA's project will set out to reduce the number of cows and increase milk production by training farmers to provide better fodder and planned procreation. This will allow subsistence farmers to earn an income to lift their families out of poverty and reduce environmental pollution.

No matter how poor the people appeared, from the lowest caste to district governors, they were all looking forward to ADRA going to help change the lives of smallholder farmers in the Terai. And so we will!



Family life and evangelism come together for a powerful BEAMS experience

by Divinia Reynolds

What does family life have to do with evangelism? The answer is: everything! The matter of reaching out to God's lost children in this world and a burden for 'whole families' to be saved permeated this year's BEAMS (British Union Evangelism and Mission Summit). The event took place from 18 to 20 November at the Leonardo hotel in Hinckley Island, Leicester. Welcoming more than 200 delegates and those tuning in online, the host, Pastor Dr Kirk Thomas (BUC Evangelism Director) highlighted the situation that, with everything taking place today, 'the family is in crisis'. So, under the theme of 'Save the Family', he introduced a smorgasbord of high-quality, practical presentations through which light on reaching the family and the community blended in a powerful way. Here are some highlights from this 'memorable and important'¹ weekend.

Event co-host, Pastor Dr Leslie Ackie (BUC Family Life Director) gave the opening plenary: 'Our First Mission Field: Nurturing Family and Spirituality'. Family worship has been declining in the church, so, like a number of presenters, Pastor Ackie championed it, saying it should be 'brief' and 'full of life'.² Our children's salvation is of the highest importance,³ but 'we cannot raise children above the level of our spirituality' (see Deuteronomy 6:4-7). He made a direct link between children's perceptions of God and how their parents treat them, but said parents don't need to be 'perfect', just 'good enough'. 'We do our best.' God will come in, 'make up the difference and reveal Himself . . . in good time'.

In a plenary entitled 'Saving the Family Is Hard Work', the main speaker, Pastor Roger Hernandez (Southern Union Conference Ministerial and Evangelism Director), explored three 'Ws' about the family: having a family is 'work' and 'worry', but it's 'worth it'. He pointed out that every Bible hero we admire had 'drama in their family', prompting delegates to respond with the word 'drama!' as he named several. He said not to try and change family members to be 'in our image', but rather to 'develop the image of God' in them. With typical humour, Pastor Roger expressed amazement at discovering male testosterone levels aren't impacted by washing up!

'The majority culture can be reached,' Pastor Dr Jeff Couzins declared in his Sabbath

morning presentation on studying the Bible with them. This included descendants of migrants who tend to assimilate the culture and leave the church. He shared the saying: 'If we teach and preach, but do not reach, then it is just empty speech.'⁴ Like missionaries abroad, we should research culture so that our evangelistic efforts can be adapted to meet people's needs, and so that, in a society with a 'supermarket choice of beliefs', we can demonstrate the Bible's relevance. Based on the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:3-8), Pastor Jeff highlighted the need to prepare the ground so that the Holy Word of God can 'sprout and grow into spiritual life' and relationships that build 'a credible bridge to sharing faith'.

Proceedings continued with a plenary by Pastor Stephen Apola (General Conference Associate Publishing Director) entitled, 'Literature Work in the End Time Movement: Does Literature Ministry Still Have a Role in Today's Digital Society?' He said we are 'an end-time prophetic movement' in a 'unique' place and time, with a unique ministry. 'The world knows . . . something is about to happen' but they 'don't know what it is', so apocalyptic films are constant hits, and people search on Google for answers about last-day events, health, or what happens after death. Our church's niche is true teachings on these things. Literature isn't subject to the censorship taking place online, so we should use it to share the three angels' messages and 'prepare a people to meet God' (see Amos 4:12).

Next, delegates explored the theme, 'We Are Family' with a medical doctor, Annette Kenningham. In interaction, they associated positive family experiences with 'love', 'security', and feelings of being 'happy', 'valued' and 'accepted'. Dr Annette described the family as 'God's foundation' for how we relate to the world, and Jesus' definition of true family as 'those who do God's will' (see Mark 3:31-35); so there are 'thousands of precious members of His family' for us to meet. She shared the work of 'the Community Food and Well-being Hub', a charity she co-founded that reaches out with food, energy, opportunities to develop skills, and emotional support. 'There are such treasures out there. . . . Open the doors and see what God will bring.'

Pastor Kirk then launched the Valentin Buliga Award for Excellence in Media

Leadership, which was received by this year's team and will be given each year in recognition of invaluable media work behind the scenes. The award was named after a faithful South England Conference Media volunteer who, sadly, had passed away.

The message during Divine Worship was 'When Mission Gets In the Way of Marriage'. Pastor Roger used 'spiders' as metaphors for 'agreements' we make with lies, describing abuse, addiction, infidelity, murder and abandonment as 'deadly venom' for families. Other types of venom were overwhelming negativity and criticism, so he suggested sharing six positive comments for each criticism, remarking on how this could change church and family life. He cited Moses' example in Exodus to show us not to judge our lives by our worst moments. 'Take your eyes off your mess and put (them) on your Master.' 'Hope is venom for spiders.' 'Hope is what Adventism needs to give the world.'

Later that afternoon, Pastor Roger's wife, Kathy Hernandez (Southern Union Conference Ministerial and Evangelism Department Coordinator), spoke on 'Purpose, Plan and Parenting'. 'God knows every single intricate thing about us, and yet He loves us,' she said. We are created 'to do good works prepared in advance' (see Ephesians 2:10). 'Every experience' in our lives, good or bad, is 'part of a bigger picture . . . God has for us'. She spoke of the 'joy' of serving, and said that some struggles young people face may be alleviated by serving those in need. Try something new in 2023, Kathy urged, even if you are afraid, because 'it might be . . . the thing that ends up bringing you the most joy.'

In his presentation on Sunday morning, entitled 'Raising the Full-Throttle Child', Pastor Dr Eric Bates (Carolina Conference Family Ministries Director) shared information also applicable to understanding these individuals in our lives. He described them as driven, emotionally intense, bold, ambitious, argumentative individuals who push limits, challenging the status quo. Then he reflected on Jesus' example of bringing His 'full-throttle' disciples Peter, James and John (the 'Sons of Thunder') close to Himself, even on the Mount of Transfiguration. They could be used remarkably by God, so Pastor Eric encouraged us that 'in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary' (see Galatians 6:9).

Afterwards, delegates watched a plenary onscreen together by Dr Willie and Elaine Oliver, Family Ministries Directors of the General Conference, who had pre-recorded the session at the Church's headquarters in Maryland. They too reflected on Moses' final appeal that the people of Israel teach their children at every opportunity, and that, despite our 'competing commitments', we need to schedule family worship as a priority. Children are confronted with 'hostile' views daily, so we need to 'cover' them with God's love, which will generate stronger, healthier, more loving families and churches that preach the Gospel 'with power'.

A feast of seminars for small groups

began on Sabbath afternoon:

- 'Conversations with the Majority Population that Lead to Bible Study' by Pastor Jeff;
- 'Discipling Teens for Christ in the Midst of Secular Culture' by Pastor Eric and his wife, Anne Marie Bates (also Carolina Conference Family Ministries Director);
- 'How to Conduct Effective Family Evangelism' by the North England Conference Family Ministries and Stewardship Director, Pastor John Francis, and his wife Delivon;
- 'Mission-Minded Adventism' by Pastor Gabriel Perea and his wife Jessica;
- Three on literature evangelism and God guiding people with an innate desire to understand our times towards books that have been placed in their homes, by Pastor Stephen;
- And a seminar with a biblical perspective addressing damaging misconceptions about marital intimacy, by Pastor Roger and Kathy.

For Frederica Reid (North England Conference Prayer Sponsor), prayer is breath to the body of Christ, bringing us life so we can carry out our work in the world. With this conviction, she and her team provided an inspiring setting with resources such as a prayer tree, a prayer wall, an anonymous prayer box, a scroll, and steadily disappearing cards to facilitate encounters with God. Likewise, stunning solos by Pretha Garnett-Radlein and the ministry of the praise team led by Christina Quionquion were, as usual, used by God to uplift the minds of the congregation in authentic worship. Delegates had the opportunity to respond with 'Praise, Prayer, Consecration and Commitment', testimonies, poetry and song. 'We have been revived!' Claudius Munangati of Milton Keynes Church remarked, and delegates testified that the experience had impacted them with deep personal transformation.

To add to their special bags of complimentary resources, delegates were seen busily getting equipped in the Rotunda area at exhibits by the Adventist Discovery Centre, the Stanborough Press, and author Sharon Platt-McDonald.

Over at the children's 'Wow Club', led by the Samuel family, Yvonne Cummins and Pauline Hutchinson, the way God used Queen Esther to deliver her people was an inspiration to approach God in prayer for the salvation of our families. Adults appreciated the children's 'Team Architect' presentation, in which they explained that, like the newspaper towers they had built, our families are imperfect. God is the solid, sturdy foundation, and the family structure becomes strong as we build it on God's word. Ten-year-old Amy's verdict was that the 'Wow Club' was 'really fun!'

The youth section – facilitated by author, speaker and mentor Clarence Jackson, together with Secretary to the BUC President Kerrine Guthrie – enjoyed a programme tailor-made for the 30 young people in attendance, based on real-life concerns identified during



Young people

intentional dialogue. Subjects included music, gangs, drugs, and the desire they all had of getting closer to God. Clarence's belief was that a 'stake in decision making' leads to commitment, as was evident in young people's responses. Ricardo said he especially enjoyed the session that addressed the existence of demons, how to protect ourselves, and how to make wise decisions. The experience also gave Leona a new perspective, inspired Daniel to reflect more on the choices he makes, showed Amalia to 'pray about everything', and taught Alicia to face her fears.

Young people were the focus of Pastor Roger's closing message. Based on the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), it was not without some characteristic parting salvos. 'Seventy percent of our young people are leaving. At what point does this become something we don't tolerate any more?' He called us to consider how we treat those who are spiritually 'far off' and 'what level of lostness' was acceptable around us, leaving us with hope that 'you have no idea what effect your prayers have, because when we work, we work, but when we pray, God works.'

The redemptive nature of the family, just as it should be, was on display throughout. Joshua and Abraham Sohail participated in a special item in Urdu by the London Asian Adventist Church. These young men would have been baptised during BEAMS if it were not for a problem with the hotel pool; so we shared a happy moment knowing they were becoming members of God's family. It was a blessing to have a seeking (non-Adventist) friend among us, too. The beauty of welcoming hearts was demonstrated again by Pauline: prompted by the theme, she recounted the surprising moment her dad returned to the church and family folds after 24 years away!



Wow Club



Dr Willie Oliver and Elaine



Testimonies



Delegates

As Frederica observed, the message that welcoming local church congregations was the way forward came through loud and clear. God had certainly used BEAMS 2022 to energise and motivate us with a vision of evangelism as building family with those 'far off' and 'nearby'.

¹Pastor Hernandez's observations ²Ellen White, *Education* (1903), p. 186 ³Ellen White, *Child Guidance* (1954), p. 478 ⁴Paul Brantley, *Strategic Planning for Mission-Driven Excellence* (2021), p. 7

‘Flirting with love’ – Scottish youth hold authentic conversations at Misson youth retreat

by Mercy Cheron,
Edinburgh Adventist Community Church

We all want to see God, and Jesus tells us that we need purity to make it possible: ‘Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God’ (Matthew 5:8, KJV). Be pure = see God. Simple equation, right? Well, in reality it is very hard to be pure, especially in today’s overly sexualised society.

The 2022 Scottish Mission youth retreat, held on 18 November 2022 at the Compass Christian Retreat Centre in Spittal of Glenshee, availed a safe space for young people to have authentic conversations around pertinent issues regarding sexual purity. We delved deep into topics that are rarely discussed in church circles: fornication, pornography, masturbation, and homosexuality. We learnt practical ways to be sexually pure in our youth all through to marriage. Christ was presented to us as a loving Saviour who does not condemn sinners (not even the sexually immoral), but seeks to set us free from sin/sexual immorality. Praise the Lord that there is hope for young people struggling with addictions! We read from Matthew 5:27-30 and were encouraged to cut things off (no, not our genitals, but anything that would cause lust in our hearts and lead us to act on that lust). Sexual sin is the one battle we have not been called to fight, but to flee (1 Corinthians 6:18).

The equation for sexual purity in our generation may therefore look something like this: *cut things off (pray for victory + install porn blocker on devices + change social media settings to hide sensitive content + audit media consumption to limit exposure to sex + break off a relationship where physical boundaries are not respected) = be pure = see God.*

As is the custom at youth retreats and gatherings, we also learnt about courtship and marriage. However, this time it was through an interesting analysis of a Bible book that is rarely used as a reference. We explored and drew lessons from the first four chapters of the book Song of Solomon (interesting, right?). It was funny, but it was important for Pastor Perea to emphasise that good hygiene is an important aspect of the art of attraction. As part of the worship experience we also got to sing, share, and pray together. Throughout the retreat we got to play a lot of fun games, and others also had the opportunity to participate in team-building activities.

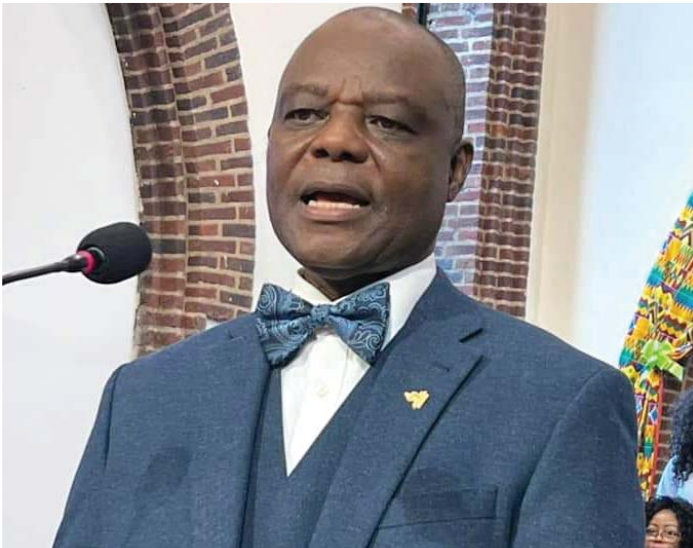
Adding onto the rich spiritual food was a rich feast of physical food prepared by master chef OyNish, with help from Nelson and Adowa. Words are not enough to express the delightful culinary experience we had – we could only taste and see. Over meals, we got to chat about our perspectives on different things and became fast friends. It was great to share rooms and be able to continue the heart-to-heart conversations with our roommates.

The retreat was situated in a scenic part of Scotland, near Spittal of Glenshee, far away from the bustle of the city, in a serene place surrounded by beautiful trees, hills, and rivers – several of us had such lovely walks! It was honestly a refreshing and blessed weekend!

I know that I speak for all the young people who attended when I say, ‘We are eternally grateful to Pastor Gabriel Perea and his wife Jessica for being vulnerable with us and speaking candidly on these issues. Much appreciation to Pastor Claudiu, as well as Lucas and Jordana, for coordinating the retreat.’



Picture quality as supplied



London Ghana bids farewell to Pastor Ebenezer Jones-Lartey

Nearly 40 years ago, when he left a football career in Sierra Leone and headed to England to pursue a new career in ministry, little did Pastor Ebenezer Jones-Lartey realise time would fly away in the blink of an eye. Time, they say, flies!

A pastoral ministry that has spanned over 30 years was brought to a graceful conclusion on 29 October 2022 at the London Ghana Seventh-day Adventist church, where Pastor Jones-Lartey has been the senior minister since 2019. During his time in active ministry, Pastor Jones-Lartey pastored numerous churches, including Plumstead, New Addington, Peckham and Brixton. He also served as the London Area Chair, the SEC Ministerial Secretary, and an Executive Committee member.

During his last sermon at London Ghana, Pastor Jones-Lartey reminded the congregation of God's love for humanity and His desire to save us. He emphasised that it will be more difficult to be lost, because God has made provision for everyone to be saved, and admonished everyone to take advantage of this great provision.

Messages affirming the ministry of Pastor Jones-Lartey and his family were shared by the SEC President, Dr Emmanuel Osei; the BUC Ministerial Secretary, Pastor Sam Ouadjo; Area 6c Coordinator, Pastor Joojo Bonnie; and SEC AMR/Sabbath School Director, Pastor Fergus Owusu-Boateng. During his three-year stay at London Ghana, Pastor Jones-Lartey oversaw the organisation of a new church – Prince Emmanuel SDA – at Edgware, and a branch Sabbath school at Southend.

Members from the three churches showed their appreciation with gifts and thanked Pastor Jones-Lartey for his visionary leadership. In concluding the retirement service, the elders of the church prayed for a fruitful retirement for the Jones-Lartey family.

Well done, Pastor! We wish you and your family a very relaxing and fulfilling retirement, even as you continue in the Master's service.

JAPHETH O-AMANKWAH

Camp Hill baptism

Lee Ruddin and Rowel 'Roy' Jeffrey were baptised at Camp Hill Church on 8 October 2022.

Lee had been attending Camp Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church for some time with his friend Edith, and baptism has been on his lips for a while. He has been undertaking Bible studies, and felt he was ready at this time to join the faith.

Roy had been attending Camp Hill occasionally for some time. After a recent moving sermon and altar call, he informed the elders that he wished to become committed through baptism as a permanent member of this central Birmingham church.

Pastor Emanuel Bran preached a short message, which he started by thanking the musicians, the communications team, and Pastor Cyril Sweeney, the lead pastor for the church. Pastor Bran's words of encouragement centred around Luke 15 – the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son – and served well to highlight how the Saviour is moved when we as individuals make a commitment to connect to Him and stay within the protection of His love.

Prior to the baptism, both men faced the congregation of 200 or so and gave their vows with conviction, leaving no doubt about their love for Christ.

Brother Ruddin's favourite text, 1 Peter 1:3-5, was read by his friend Edith, and his favourite hymn, 'I surrender all', was sung by all as he descended into the water.

The second baptism was for Brother Jeffrey. He has recently been attending Camp Hill Church, and expressed that he had become keen to be baptised during a recent local campaign. This helped him seal his decision to become baptised and serve as a member of Camp Hill Church. He did not want to waste any time or delay in joining God's church. His favourite text, Psalm 121, was read by Elder Rigwamba, and his favourite song, 'Jesus paid it all', was sung by the congregation as he too was baptised.

Pastor Sweeney raised a prayer to God. He prayed that some fifty individuals who had recently expressed an interest in baptism would follow the call of the Holy Spirit and seal their commitment by requesting support towards baptism. This large number of individuals had been among those who had attended various recent programmes, including youth events. They had each been followed up by the then Bible worker, Brother Craig Gooden.

The elders, church clerks and congregation were delighted to receive the two new members and look forward to engaging them in Spirit-filled personal development and witnessing for Christ.

DR J. HALLIDAY-BELL





Back row, left to right: Pastor Florin Orășanu, Stella Jeffery, Pastor Ian Lorek, Phoebe Mogeni and Pastor Caleb Akinola. Front row, left to right: Allen Belarmino, Daniela Gangan, Evelina Costin and Victoria Gangan.

Physical harvest to spiritual harvest

Exeter Church celebrated their harvest festival on 22 October with a praise service of hymns and readings organised by Stella Jeffery. Musical items from Sabrina Donciu and Cor and Kaye van der Wijngaard enhanced the worship. There was a colourful display of food and foliage, reminding us of the literal and the spiritual harvests. The non-perishable food was donated to St Petrock’s, a local charity which supports homeless people. Fruit and vegetables were given to members and contacts who cannot attend church at the moment.

For Pastor Florin Orășanu, the following Sabbath was the crown of his work this year when he saw a spiritual harvest. Before he became the minister of the church at the beginning of the year, he had already started studying with some teenagers on Zoom. For nearly a year he went through the main doctrines of the church with this group, and four of them decided to be baptised. He was thrilled to officiate at the baptism of Allen Belarmino, Phoebe Mogeni, Daniela Gangan, Evelina Costin (from Plymouth Church) and Victoria Gangan on 29 October. Victoria Gangan, Daniela’s aunt, had been seriously ill in intensive care while in her native country of Moldova. She was so thankful to God for her recovery that she made the decision to be baptised.

Pastor Florin spoke of God’s unconditional love for people, and that He is always there for us. He emphasised that now the young people, having chosen to follow Jesus, are disciples and have a work to do in discipling others by using their spiritual gifts and talents. We were made aware of some of those talents when Evelina played a flute solo, with Pastor Florin accompanying; Daniela recited a poem; and Phoebe sang a solo. The church was full downstairs and upstairs, where people could watch the service on a monitor. People had come from near and far to witness the baptisms, including a few school friends. After the service, a fellowship lunch was enjoyed by all who came to celebrate the spiritual harvest.

STELLA JEFFERY

Swindon baptism

Sabbath 23 July was a high day for the church family in Swindon, as four lives were committed to the Lord in baptism. The baptisms were held in the beautiful River Churn in Gloucestershire. Friends and family gathered by the riverside, singing praises to God for His goodness in leading the candidates to make a decision for Jesus.

Pastor Shepley, assisted by Pastor Gligorov, led the candidates –



From left to right: Abigail MacDonald, Shaznay Mwell, Shaznay’s mother and David Holmes

David, Luke, Abigail and Shaznay – into the water, and they were baptised. We thank God for His leading in their lives, and pray they will stay faithful in their walk with Him.

PETER YESUDIAN



From left to right: Pastor S. Gligorov, Luke Yesudian and Pastor James Shepley

Preston baptism

It was cold outside, but there was a distinctive warmth within the walls of the Grimshaw St Community Centre as Preston Seventh-day Adventist Church, along with heaven and all the angels, welcomed two more soldiers into God’s army on 15 October 2022.

The support shown to Jude Edwards and Mary Linsey from the church was warming to the heart, and the fact that many of their friends and family had travelled to support them on their new journey with God was even more so. May this support continue as Jude and Mary embark on their new, Spirit-filled journey with Jesus.

PRESTON SDA CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT



Brother Jude Akwei



Sister Mary Linsey

Denise Duffield Winch (1937-2022)
d. 3 October.



It was with deep sadness that the Winch family said goodbye to their much-loved mother, Denise Winch, in a funeral service held in the Crieff church on Friday 4 November 2022, conducted by Pastor Njaj Njabulo.

Denise became an Adventist when she and her mother attended evangelistic meetings run by Pastor Kenneth Lacy at the Camp Hill church in 1958. She enthusiastically gave her heart to God, and Denise and her mother were baptised. Also assisting with running the campaigns was a Newbold graduate fresh out of college, Eric Winch. They fell in love, and soon married at the same church. In the early years of marriage, Eric and Denise had five children: Lorraine, Diana, Paul, Valerie and Helen, now with their own families.

After leaving school, Denise trained in secretarial work and soon found employment. Then, after marriage and the many house moves pastors were required to make, she put all her energy into being a mother and housewife until all the children were attending school, after which she returned to office employment.

In 1970, Eric left the ministry and the family moved to Scotland, where he went into teacher training; so in 1986, when he was invited to

become the headteacher at Dudley House, they moved back to England, and Denise worked for the church school as secretary and administrator. She thoroughly enjoyed her job there until she and Eric retired in 1990.

On retirement, Denise and Eric returned to Crieff in Scotland to live, attend church and be near the many friends they had made when they previously attended the Glasgow church. Denise loved the Lord. She loved the church, and rarely missed a Sabbath service until her final days, when health problems prevented her. Her faith remained steadfast throughout her life, and she died looking forward to Jesus' second coming. She will be missed.

LORRAINE GLINTON

Barbara Lawrence (1962-2022)
d. 13 November.



It is with deep sadness that we announce the sudden and unexpected passing of Barbara Lawrence on Sunday 13 November 2022. Barbara was the wife of the South England Conference (SEC) Family Ministries Director, Dr Augustus Lawrence, and mother to Nathanael. She was a 'mover and a shaker' in both her personal and professional life and her ministry. She was a superb organiser, a diligent and committed worker, and her 'can do' attitude was evident in all her undertakings.

Barbara co-led Mums in Action,

a voluntary organisation that supported those in need in her community. She ran several projects through this initiative, including several summer schools with over 100 children, the yearly 'Picnic in the Park' at Stanborough Park, with thousands in attendance, and worship-based projects for children and young people. Her passion for children developing their talents was aptly demonstrated when she co-created KidzPraise, which ran for nearly ten years in venues as big as the Watford Colosseum and the Rock Tower (Islington). Barbara was also a registered foster carer. Over the years, she opened her home and heart to care for scores of children from various backgrounds. A savvy businesswoman, she devoted much of her professional life to working with children and families as a family group conference co-ordinator and mediator. Her desire to see children thrive also extended to their families, especially those of faith. This also included the Mothers' Prayer Conference, and then, added to that, the Fathers' Prayer Conference, a yearly event that assisted families with prayer support for their children.

Women's equality and issues that concerned mature women were prominent in Barbara's mind. *Women Unwrapped*, a Facebook TV show, and *Ladies' Lounge*, a radio show for women broadcast on Adventist Radio London, were dear to her heart – not only because she was delivering quality content to her audiences, but because she was working with her co-hosts, who were like sisters to her.

Her talents for business and her love of people came together in Hope Charity. The charity was best known for the 'pink shop on St Albans Road' that sold pre-loved clothes and quality used furniture and provided training and support for some of Watford's most vulnerable people. The pandemic transformed many of these initiatives, including the 'pink shop' closure. But, despite the upheaval of COVID-19, *Ladies' Lounge* and the Hope Charity continued.

In December 2020, after the last KidzPraise held at the Holloway Adventist church, Barbara contracted COVID-19 and was hospitalised in the ICU. God spared her life, but her recovery took longer than anticipated. However, she returned to work, organised the SEC's Health Extravaganza held earlier this year, and planned a beautiful thanksgiving service

at the end of October to celebrate her 60th birthday.

Barbara was a committed wife, a devoted mother, and a loyal friend. She loved life, but she loved her God more than anyone else. Barbara believed that 'I know Him [and I am personally acquainted with Him] whom I have believed [with absolute trust and confidence in Him and the truth of His deity], and I am persuaded [beyond any doubt] that He is able to guard that which I have entrusted to Him until that day [when I stand before Him]' (2 Timothy 1:12, AMP).

CATHERINE ANTHONY BOLDEAU

Messenger

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Mabel Thompson's impressive milestone

Shrewsbury Church recently celebrated the birthday of one of their faithful members who had reached a very impressive milestone of 103 years of age.



Up until a few weeks before her 103rd birthday, Mabel Thompson had not missed attending her beloved weekly Sabbath service at Shrewsbury Church with her daughter Iris. Her dedication and commitment to serving God and her regular church attendance are a testimony of how God has rewarded Mabel with thirty-three years beyond the biblical 'threescore and ten'.

Her birthday was celebrated by all the church members and visits from Elder Peter and Beryl Baylis; her pastor, Jeremy Johnson; and the Welsh Mission Women's Ministries leader, Samantha Fessal. On that day Mabel was in very good spirits, smiling and joking with all, surrounded by flowers and best wishes from friends and loved ones.

Sadly, Mabel passed away just two weeks after her 103rd birthday. She rests in peace, awaiting the first resurrection at our Lord's return. She will be greatly missed at Shrewsbury Church.

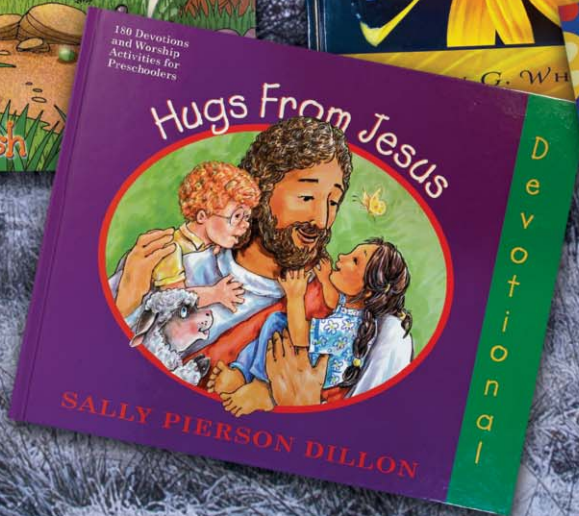
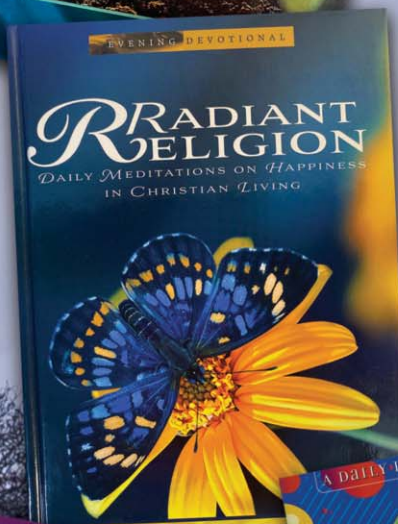
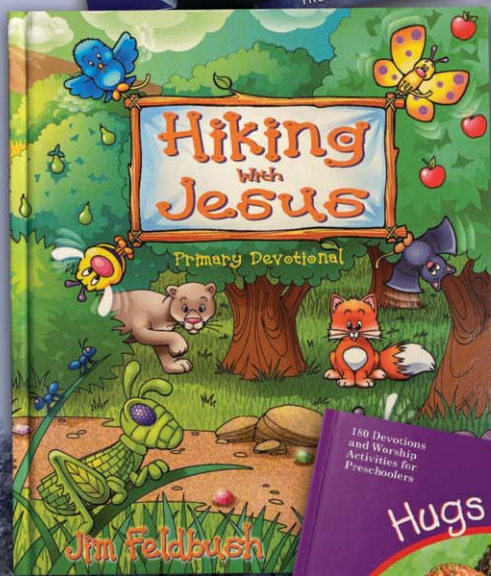
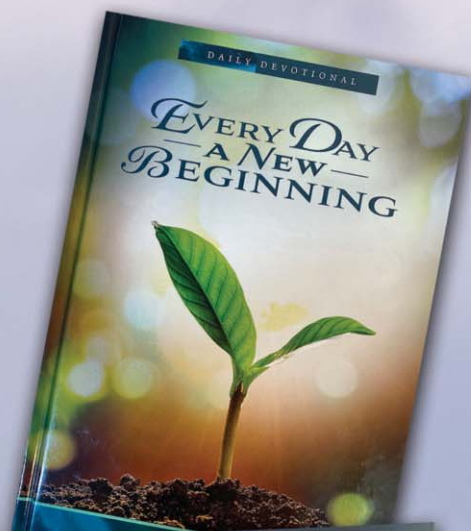
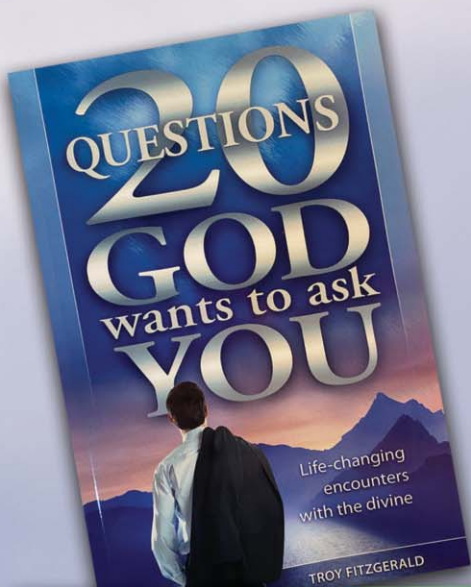
PASTOR JEREMY JOHNSON

Sunset

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

	London	Card	Nott	Edin	Belf
Dec 30	4.00	4.12	3.56	3.47	4.06
Jan 6	4.08	4.20	4.05	3.56	4.15
13	4.17	4.30	4.15	4.07	4.26
20	4.29	4.41	4.26	4.20	4.38
27	4.41	4.53	4.39	4.35	4.52

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