

Messenger

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

Reflecting Hope
Recognising His voice
Cliff – a personal reflection
Has anybody here
seen my friend John?
BUC & Stanborough Primary
School health partnership
How safe is your working space?

24 March 2023 • Volume 128 • 3

+ Waco thirty years on

The art of creation

Creativity is at the heart of the biblical story and ours



Strategic Priority (3) – Resources

Aim:

- To identify legacy-building opportunities to create relevant resources for our stakeholders and the wider community.

Objectives:

- Review and evaluate the viability and relevance of all current resources,
- Set up a resource-creation team to develop new resources in consultation with the departments and institutions,
- Create specialised resources for key milestones.



The art of creation

by Pastor Eglan Brooks,
President of the British Union Conference

“God has filled him with his power and given him skill, ability, and understanding for every kind of artistic work, for planning skilful designs . . .”
(Exodus 35:31, 32, GNB).

Creativity is at the heart of the biblical story and ours. Indeed, God’s creation of air, water, sunlight and vegetation – resources needed by birds, fish, animals and humans – is an important part of the creation story.

Current resources
In the British Union Conference (BUC), we provide and produce an array of creative resources. The **Stanborough Press** offers a variety of books to inform, educate and inspire, alongside media, gifts, and vegetarian food; this is in addition to the monthly *MESSENGER*, our official journal; the **Sabbath School quarterlies**; and *FOCUS*. We also have *BUC News* produced by our

Communication Department, and our regularly updated website. **BUC Media** curates audiovisual content, and the **Evangelism Department**, through the **BUC Resource Centre**, provides various training materials, as do our **Health** and **Women’s Ministries departments**. The **Ministerial Association** facilitates online training for pastors and local church leaders through BUTREC, and our **Pathfinders** and **Adventurers** are supported with their own online BUC store. In addition, the **Adventist Discovery Centre** provides Bible studies and inspirational articles for those searching for God.

A new resource
Reflecting Hope is a new website to support the Christ for Europe initiative in our territory. For more information, please go to www.reflectinghope.org.uk.

Review and evaluation
We have started to review our resources, and over the next few years we will evaluate their effectiveness. We need to remove duplication where it exists, streamline our resources, ensure that content and visuals are kept up to date, and take the lead in producing contextualised resources fit for twenty-first-century consumption.

Resource creation
Our approach to resource creation will be threefold:

- We must build on the intellectual assets that we already have. Our forebears laboured long and hard to document their intellectual assets, and sometimes we shamefully abandon them in favour of that which is untested.
- We are encouraging all departments and institutions to set up advisory teams to help guide their work. These strategic teams of industry professionals and passionate individuals will enhance the work being done in our field, particularly in the areas such as safeguarding, education, communication and HR, which are invaluable to our growth and effective management.
- We live in a changing world, and need cutting-edge resources and technologies to assist us in spreading our message of hope and progressing our drive for resources that have a wider appeal.

Legacy resources
Impact is created by strategic planning and long-term goals. We need to create resources that enable us to revisit our history and help us not to ‘forget the way the Lord has led us in the past’.

Editorial

by Julian Thompson,
Editor

Dear reader,
This year is the 30th anniversary of the 1993 tragedy in Waco, Texas: an event that saw many, including former members of the Adventist Church here in the British Isles, lose their lives. The events on and leading up to Waco will forever remain a painful memory, especially for those who knew people who died personally. Through theological, historical, and personal reflections, we are reminded of the importance of knowing the voice of Jesus for ourselves and experiencing the depth of joy that comes with salvation. We are reminded that God is love, and that whenever we are presented with an image of Him that is not love, we would do well to wonder whether God is being presented at all.



We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. One of the often-underappreciated aspects of *MESSENGER* is that, with its records going back some 120 years, it archives the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United Kingdom and Ireland. While preparing this edition, our assistant editor, Andrew Puckering, observed that readers might be interested in articles written in the 2 April and 7 May 1993 editions of *MESSENGER* by the then-*MESSENGER* editor, Dr David Marshall, and the then-BUC president, Pastor Cecil Perry. They can be accessed via the General Conference archives and/or by following the QR codes embedded here.



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Anchored

by Catherine Anthony Boldeau

'We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.' – Hebrews 6:19 (NIV)



REFLECTING hope



In the maritime world, anchors are vital. Their purpose is to moor in place a shipping vessel, large or small. This ensures that the vessel stays in place, despite stormy or inclement weather, as the anchor is heavy, connected to the seabed by a fluke that digs into it.

As Bible-believing Christians, our hope is in a soon-coming King, Jesus Christ. This belief focuses our attention away from our present challenges and on the future glories of living with Christ. It assists in grounding our faith in the Word of God. We read the Bible not out of duty, but as a guidebook for living, as a map to teach us about the future. It is a communication tool by which God speaks to us.

From Genesis to Revelation, God's love for the world is told through stories, historical data, poems, prose, prophetic utterings, warnings, letters, and inspiration. We have hope of everlasting life because 'this is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son. . . . And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed' (John 3:16, MSG).

Seventh-day Adventists are a people of hope, which keeps them

secure and firm in their faith.

'We have an anchor that keeps the soul Steadfast and sure while the billows roll; Fastened to the Rock which cannot move, Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.'

We are anchored.

www.reflectinghope.org

REFLECTINGHOPE.ORG

On 22 February, the British Union Conference (BUC) formally launched its *Reflecting Hope* initiative (see: www.reflectinghope.org). In the January edition of *MESSENGER*, the BUC President, Pastor Eglan Brooks, introduced the programme to the membership: 'At the General Conference

(GC) Autumn Council the British Union Conference was presented with the wonderful opportunity to be involved in an evangelistic initiative called 'Christ for Europe'. This initiative will be run throughout the Trans-European Division (TED) and Inter-European Division (EUD), and is spearheaded by the GC, Adventist World Radio (AWR) and Total Member Involvement (TMI).

'*Reflecting Hope* is the BUC's response to this initiative. This was voted by the Executive Committee in early December as a three-year programme. It is an intentional, innovative, and impactful evangelistic project to connect the contemporary "European" mindset with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. *Reflecting Hope* will be launched as a pilot this year – 2023 – in several regions across the territory of the BUC, and during 2024/2025 we will endeavour to roll out the full programme to all church congregations.'



Has anybody here seen my friend John?

by Pastor Eglan Brooks,
President of the British Union Conference

students trying to get their heads around the complexities of New Testament Greek and Biblical Hebrew. It was John who gave me my orientation to the WIC campus, Mandeville and Jamaica. He taught me how to look after the students around me, and we regularly used our money to ensure that some of the less fortunate students in the dormitory had something to eat (sorry, Dean Nembhard, it was us who were constantly cooking in the dormitory!) John demonstrated for me, the staff, and the students the guiding Christ-like love of a believer, something I have so often seen demonstrated among our members here in the British Union Conference.

In December 1987, I left the comfort of what was familiar to me and took a journey to West Indies College (WIC), now known as Northern Caribbean University, to begin my ministerial training. I truly believed that I was following the call of God; and, while I didn't know what to expect when I got there, I was convinced that it would be an experience that would change me irrevocably. I wanted to be clay in the Potter's hands.

West Indies College

The Dean of the Boy's Dormitory welcomed me graciously and introduced me to my roommates: Alrick, Steve, and John. Alrick and Steve were two Jamaican students matriculating from high school, and it was their first year at WIC. The other roommate was a young man called John. He was at Newbold College, now known as Newbold College of Higher Education (NCHE), but had decided to take a year out and study at WIC. We shared the same bunk bed: I was on the top bunk, and he was on the bottom.

John was a humble, balanced Christian, a natural-born leader. He looked after me, just as he looked after everyone else in the dormitory. John was like the older brother that would guard, guide and protect you. He was a generous and kind individual who loved teaching other students. He had a photographic memory, and our room was the default tutor group room for many



Elliott, George Bennett, Abedowalo Davis, Yvette Fagan, Doris Fagan, Sandra Hardial, Zilla Henry, Vanessa Henry, Philip Henry, Paulina Henry, Stephan Henry, Livingston Malcolm, Diane Martin, Bernadette Monbelly, Rosemary Morrison, Melissa Morrison, Theresa Nobrega and Cliff Sellors, all of whom were members from the UK, lost their lives in the tragedy of Waco.

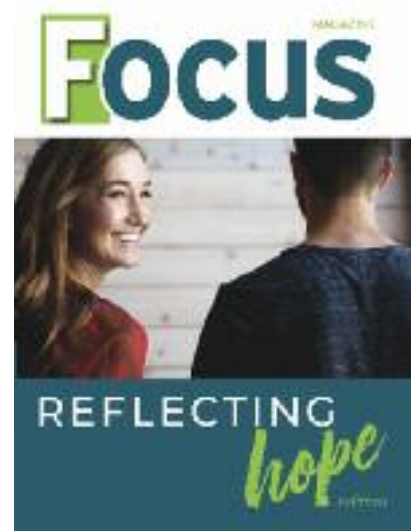
Remembering

Now, thirty years on, the memories of this tragic moment evoke difficult emotions in me that I thought I had processed a long time ago . . . feelings of pain, grief, loss, anger, and guilt. But there is something about grief wherein you keep finding remnants of it in the most unexpected moments, places, and situations.

What can we say to the many who are still hurting? What can we say to those who have endured heart-breaking loss? What do we say to comfort those still nursing pieces of brokenness?

While the truth is that we cannot understand what you went through or what you're going through now, we want you to know that we are truly and deeply sorry for your loss. We love those who were lost to you and us in the tragedy called Waco. Thirty years on, we continue to hurt as we remember not only those who died, but their families left behind and the many lives that were torn apart by devastating loss. We will never forget your loved ones, and we will continue to keep you all in our prayers.

On 19 April 1993 my friend John-Mark McBean, Diana Henry, Winston Blake, Susan Benta, Beverly





Cliff – a personal reflection

by Pastor David Neal,
TED Communication & Media Director

message, the perilous condition of the world, end-time events and the very soon return of Christ. He was questioning why some of the theology staff seemed to be teaching a 'new theology' of salvation, one that emphasised the love, grace and mercy of God; this was in stark contrast to how he understood things. In his opinion it was judgement time, a time when our actions, both personal and corporate, would demonstrate whether or not we were ready for Christ's soon return.

I need to note that in my conversations with him I did not pick

to it? If I didn't get that sorted, the slippery slope of perfectionism (see the article by Dr Steve Currow) awaited. As absurd as it now sounds, at one point on this journey, I began to feel incredible guilt about consuming dairy milk, and wondered whether such behaviour could negatively impact my acceptance with God! Yes, really! It was not until after reading a book titled *Is Salvation Really Free?* by Ted Vick² that I came to the conclusion that there is absolutely nothing I can ever do to gain favour with God. 'God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take



When Cliff arrived at Newbold in 1985, I was two thirds of the way through my pastoral training. What I immediately remember of Cliff is that he was a quiet, friendly, gentle young English person with a warm East Midlands accent who wanted to do something good for God – Indeed, this was his reason for attending Newbold.

Before he became an Adventist, Cliff had been a professional footballer. Whatever the nature of his previous lifestyle, it was clear that his new life involved rigid spiritual discipline. He was very enthusiastic about the writings of Ellen White, and his peculiar reading of her seemed to provide just the framework he felt he needed.

In the few conversations I had with him in the college cafeteria, it wasn't long before he would express disappointment about the college environment. He wondered why we played five-a-side football in the college gym when Ellen White (in his opinion) condemned competitive sports. He suggested that some of the teachers were not as fervent as he was about proclaiming the Adventist

up even the slightest hint of anger in his concerns. Rather, the tone was one of disappointment, as if the college and mainstream Adventism had let him down.

Cliff was not the only one on campus during the 1980s who challenged the theological perspective of the lecturers. He was one of about ten to fifteen (possibly more) vocal students who, at the time, were on a mission to reform the college of its so-called 'new theology' leanings; this dynamic reflected a similar turbulence within the wider British Union Conference (BUC) at the time, as various self-appointed reformers of Adventism – from the US and Australia in particular – determined that the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United Kingdom and Ireland required cleansing.

I should have made Cliff a friend, but I couldn't and I didn't.¹ Back then, I was at a critical juncture in my faith development: I was on a search to discover the nature of salvation, and for me there was just one question that needed to be settled: is salvation the gift of God, through faith, or do my own works contribute

credit for this; it is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8, NLT).

My conclusion was in distinct contrast to Cliff's worldview of perfectionism – one I was moving away from without regret. At the time I wasn't looking for an austere counter-cultural experience such as the one Cliff was offering, nor did I want my faith experience to be one of existential angst where I would have to continually look over my shoulder and wonder whether God was angry with me or not. I would love to think that if I had attempted to develop a friendship with Cliff then I could have convinced him of the liberating power, joy, and freedom of the Gospel; however, I can't help but wonder if, at the time, he was in a position to hear such good news, or whether he would have dismissed it as 'new theology'.

¹Others did make huge efforts to befriend Cliff and help him on his spiritual journey. A Newbold lecturer at the time, Albert Waite, records his experience with Cliff in *Spectrum* magazine: <https://spectrummagazine.org/article/2018/03/14/british-connection>. In addition, Tihomir Kukolja talks about his friendship with Cliff in his online blog, and the many extensive conversations they had with each other at Newbold, and the atmosphere on campus in 1988: <https://kukolja.wordpress.com/2018/04/16/the-truth-that-will-blow-your-mind/>.

²This book is still available to read on Kindle.



Recognising His voice

by Pastor Ian Sweeney, TED Field Secretary

In 1990, I was serving as an intern pastor in the Manchester district of churches. One Friday, I received a call notifying me that a number of our young people were going to attend a Bible study that evening, and I decided to go along. I arrived at the home at 7pm, where there were some twenty young people sat with Bibles open and eyes aglow. I recognised everyone in the room except for one person, a laid-back American who introduced himself as Steve (Schneider): he was the one who'd be leading the Bible study and politely welcomed me with a 'good to see you, Pastor'. Apart from the young people, there was someone else there whom I had not seen for at least a year. John had been a fellow Theology student at Newbold College, but I had lost contact with him when he dropped off the radar after leaving Newbold.

I did not know Steve, but to my shame my first reaction was rather childish and filled with jealousy. I remember thinking to myself, *When I lead Bible study or prayer meetings, I never attract this many young people! What's the deal with Steve?* As Steve led the Bible study, I was impressed with his memory and ability to recite numerous Bible texts without having to read them. Steve had charisma and spoke with confidence and authority. Those present were engaged and appeared to hang on his every word.

As I listened, I prayed for discernment; my mind was working overtime as I tried to figure out the direction of Steve's Bible study. After

two and a half hours, I had had enough. My mind was tired and could not process any more, so I politely made my excuses and left. I later learnt that the Bible study had continued into the early hours of the Sabbath morning. My spirit was troubled – something about the experience wasn't quite right; and, while I could not put my finger on exactly what it was, or identify any glaringly obvious errors, I was nevertheless left with the sense that something wasn't adding up.

In the days that followed, some of the young people challenged me: 'Pastor, where's the error in what Steve's saying?' To my embarrassment, I had no definitive answer. In the Bible study, Steve moved from text to text, book to book, Old Testament to New Testament, back and forth. He referred to prophecies from the book of Jeremiah; and, still maintaining my reservations, I remember being troubled enough to read the entire book of Jeremiah twice in two sittings. While Steve had a strange way of interpreting the prophecies, in those early days, I was not aware of how dangerous these interpretations would be. On the Wednesday following the two-and-a-half-hour Bible study, I received a phone call from John. 'Ian,' he said, 'I have been searching for the truth all my life, and now at last I've found it. You need to examine what Steve is teaching and come and join us.' Now, I want to be very clear, because it's important that what I am about to say must not be brushed off as dramatic effect; but that night John pleaded for my soul. I could hear the tears in his voice when I responded, 'I'm not joining you; something isn't right about all of this.' That was the last conversation I had with John.

I will never forget the comments made by at least four of the older members in the Manchester district following a series of meetings and discussions on Steve's Bible studies. Speaking in soft Jamaican patois, they said, 'Pastor, that is not the voice of Jesus!' I heard what they said, but at first I did not understand. They had not heard Steve's Bible studies first-hand; neither had they proffered any sound hermeneutical principles for interpreting the classical prophecies of Jeremiah that could combat Steve's teaching. As one who had studied theology on a technical level, I was unsatisfied with the simplicity of their conclusion, and felt I needed more. At the time, I did not realise that God was using them to deliver an important teaching to me and all who heard them.

It was in the aftermath of the devastating fire of 19 April 1993, and a death toll that at the time was reported as potentially being as high as 85 people,¹ that my thoughts were taken back to those elderly members and their statement: 'Pastor, that is not the voice of Jesus!' The Lord reminded me of a song that the youth choir in Leicester had rehearsed and sung: 'My sheep know My voice'. This was a song composed by Herbert Buffum (1879-1939). Buffum found inspiration for this hymn in the words of Jesus, some two thousand years before, who said: "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27, NIV). Only now do I understand the wise words of the older saints. When you have come close to Christ every day through prayer, Bible study and a heart open and receptive to Him, you will recognise the voice of Jesus!

¹See 'Final Waco Death Toll', *The Independent*, 30 April 1993: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/final-waco-death-toll-2320247.html>.

Continuities and discontinuities: Waco thirty years on

Dr Steve Currow, Principal of Newbold College of Higher Education

The devastating loss of life, especially that of children, in the siege of the Branch Davidians at Waco on 19 April 1993 was tragic. As highlighted in the media coverage of the event and the subsequent trials and inquiries, the alleged failure of the authorities in the way they responded and managed the case was astonishing. However, what's even more astonishing to me is that people followed David Koresh in the first place.

Continuities

As various authors have demonstrated,¹ there can be no denial that there are points of connection between Koresh's Branch Davidians and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Koresh himself had been a Seventh-day Adventist for a couple of years prior to joining the Branch Davidians.² The Branch Davidians trace their roots to the teachings of Victor Houteff. Houteff's teachings were rejected by both his local Seventh-day Adventist church in Los Angeles (1930)³ and the corporate church (1934).⁴ Despite being disfellowshipped (a process by which a person is removed from membership of the Adventist Church), Houteff continued to claim that he was a Seventh-day Adventist; and, through his publication, *The Shepherd's Rod*, and other means, pursued a mission to call for reform in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Indeed, Houteff only formalised the name *The Shepherd's Rod Seventh-day*

Adventists to enable his pacifist followers to avoid conscription during World War II.⁵

Not only do the Branch Davidians recognise Ellen White, considered a prophet by Seventh-day Adventists, as one of their Seven Shepherds⁶ and reference her writings extensively, but the Branch Davidians also share presuppositions with Seventh-day Adventists regarding, for example, an emphasis on the end of time, the emergence of latter-day prophets, and the concept of 'present truth'. In addition, Branch Davidians' beliefs and practices are still evident to a greater or lesser degree in some groups on the edges of Seventh-day Adventism; and, in the spirit of Houteff's mission to reform, Branch Davidians continue to recruit primarily from the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁷ Even after the Manchester Inquest into the deaths of Britons during the Waco siege, while the church was still in horror and shock, a Branch Davidian was found to be recruiting disaffected



members at the 1997 South England Conference camp meeting.⁸

Historical background

In a journey spanning over 60 years, and involving several leadership crises, Houteff's *Shepherd's Rod* morphed into David Koresh's Branch Davidians, a group that today's Seventh-day Adventists do not recognise and one that is not part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Theologically, one of the ways in which **Victor Houteff** diverged from the Seventh-day Adventist Church was through his literal interpretation of the characteristics and identity of the 144,000 of Revelation chapter 7. He linked his interpretation with both **perfectionism** – an unbiblical teaching stemming largely from the work of M. L. Andreason that

suggests believers need to attain a state of sinlessness before Christ's return – and, over time, a literal return of Jesus to the newly emerging nation of Israel. In 1935 Victor moved from Los Angeles, CA to Waco, TX, anticipating a move to Palestine with the 144,000 within a year or so.⁹ After his unexpected death, **Florence Houteff**, Victor's much younger second wife, assumed the leadership. Along with her leaders, she predicted that Jesus would return on 22 April 1959, and called all their followers to Mt Carmel, the name of the property in Waco, TX, for the Passover, prior to relocating to Israel as and when revealed by the Holy Spirit. When Jesus didn't return at the specified time, the Shepherd's Rod splintered into a number of groups.¹⁰ In 1962, Florence herself renounced the teachings and closed the church.¹¹

During this tumultuous period after the death of Victor, **Benjamin Roden**, a convert from Judaism, assumed the leadership of the group and became the lawful owner of the property. The links with Judaism and the nation of Israel grew. He established a vegetarian village in Israel (1958) and settlers' rights (1960) for his followers.¹² More emphasis was placed on the seven festivals of the sanctuary.¹³ Just prior to the death of Benjamin in 1978, **Lois Roden** claimed that she had received revelation that the Holy Spirit was female and subsequently commenced her publication *SHEkinah*, edited by a long-term follower, Perry Jones.¹⁴ Hence, she also assumed the leadership, and, using a legal injunction, excluded her son, **George Roden**, from leadership, as she did not think he was fit to be the next prophet.¹⁵ With the emergence of feminist theology in other Christian circles, Lois's emphasis on the Holy Spirit as female propelled her onto the wider stage at a number of Christian conferences. After being asked to leave the Tyler Seventh-day Adventist church, **Vernon Howell** (who later changed his name to **David Koresh**) arrived at Mt Carmel in 1981.¹⁶ He was well received as a carpenter, and after a few months he went to California to pursue a career in the music industry. He was unsuccessful, and on his return in

1983 he impressed Lois Roden, who endorsed him as the next prophet and called her followers to come to Mt Carmel and hear him speak.¹⁷ At this time, he was intimately involved with Lois Roden, so that the child of the prophet would be the Chosen One.¹⁸ George claimed that the relationship had commenced with rape, and reported Howell to the authorities.¹⁹ The relationship ended early in 1984 on the day when Howell married Rachel Jones, the 14-year-old daughter of Perry and Mary Bell Jones – long-time followers of The Shepherd's Rod (in Texas, at this point in time, girls aged 14 were legally able to marry with parental permission).

At every opportunity, George continued to challenge Howell in a tussle over leadership. After a fire at their press building, George, on the basis of alleged eyewitness testimony, accused Howell of setting it.²⁰ As a result, the group split, with some following George, but the majority following Howell. Howell had to leave the Mt Carmel property. The ultimate showdown between George and Howell occurred when George challenged Vernon as to who could resurrect Anna Hughes, a believer who had died at Mt Carmel some twenty years earlier. Howell, with seven followers, entered the Mt Carmel property and, while allegedly trying to gain evidence that George had interfered with the corpse, was involved in a shoot-out that left George injured. This resulted in a court case where Howell's accomplices were acquitted and Howell's case ended in a mistrial.²¹ George Roden was sent to jail for contempt of court and for disregarding his mother's earlier legal injunction excluding him from leadership. Howell returned to Mt Carmel and paid the back taxes to establish himself there.²²

Howell visited Israel; Australia (with Clive Doyle, a long-term follower of the Branch Davidians); Hawaii; and the UK, recruiting followers.²³ The first significant recruit was Marc Breault (1986), who subsequently recruited Steve Schneider (1986), an active church member in the Diamond Head Adventist Church, Hawaii.²⁴

Schneider visited the UK (1988, 1990) and based much of his

recruitment activity around Newbold College. His focus was on Koresh's self-belief in his ability to unlock and explain the seventh seal spoken of in Revelation 8:1 – something only the Lamb of God could do. He was remembered for using the phrase, 'the truth that will blow your mind'. Koresh's visit in 1988 and 1989 followed up the interests Schneider had made. At Newbold they were successful in influencing Livingstone Fagan, John McBean and Cliff Sellors. Fagan was most influential in the Nottingham area, McBean in the Manchester area, and Cliff Sellors and others in the London area.²⁵ Followers were encouraged to go to Mt Carmel for the Jewish festivals and the summers. A number also moved there with their families. Some family members were successful in encouraging their relatives to leave Mt Carmel and return.

In August 1989, Howell released an audio tape titled 'New Light'. This tape reported his claim that God had told him to procreate with all the women in the group to establish the 'House of David'. He also claimed that God had told him to start building an 'army for God' to prepare for the end of days and the salvation of his followers.²⁶ At this point some of the Branch Davidians, such as Marc Breault, left the group and warned others, including the authorities, of a number of issues on the compound, including polygamy, sexual relationships with underage girls, and child abuse.²⁷ Later, a courier delivering a broken package became aware of probable infringements of the Firearms Act and reported this to the authorities.²⁸ In 1993, these developments led to the raid on 28 February and the start of the siege by federal agents that, after 51 days, culminated in a fire and the discovery of 75 bodies, 25 of which were children. It is also noted that the *Waco Tribune-Herald* published articles on the 'Sinful Messiah' on Saturday 27 February, detailing the illegal activities at Mt Carmel and noting that 'the law watches, but has done little'.²⁹

Subsequent to the end of the siege, the dispute over the title of the property continued, with George Roden's divorced wife, Amo, claiming ownership. Clive Doyle and other



Mount Carmel Centre

©Lorie Shaull

Divergence in beliefs and practices

From Seventh-day Adventists	To Koresh's Branch Davidians
responding to a God of love	fearing a God of authority
the God who became man as the Sinless Messiah and died unjustly at the hands of Roman authorities aged 33	the Sinful Messiah, where a man claimed to be God and was prepared to orchestrate his death at age 33 by combating the government authorities
having an assurance of salvation	striving in ascetic sacrifice
Jesus ministering in the heavenly sanctuary	continuing the festivals of the Old Testament sanctuary services
expecting a global second coming of Jesus, which every eye will see	a literal second coming in Jerusalem (or Texas) with David Koresh leading the resurrected
God's end-time actions to destroy evil	human actions, including fighting on God's behalf in the end-time battle
pacifists/non-combatants	armed militia
students of God's revealed word in context	followers of 'new light', where Scripture is used selectively to justify beliefs
an established prophet	overemphasising the writings of the prophet and seeking a new prophet
testing the prophets by their fruits	justifying intentional aberrant behaviour – including child sexual abuse, illegally dealing in guns – because the Bible is filled with sinners
an accountable organisation	organisations and their representatives being a sign of Babylon
a remnant with a message to the whole world	a remnant of a remnant where the only mission is to reform the remnant
monogamy	polygamy (including under-age 'wives')
health reformers	consumers of alcohol, tobacco and junk foods

'But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.'

(Isaiah 40:31, NIV)

followers remained on the site and built a chapel.³⁰ As of 2006, some of their followers were still expecting David Koresh to return to this earth, despite him not returning in December 1996 or late August 1999 as they had calculated.³¹

Discontinuities

Having identified some of the primary points of contact between Koresh's Branch Davidians and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the development of the movement from Victor Houteff to Vernon Howell (David Koresh), I will now proceed to outline those elements that might appropriately be described as major points of discontinuity. The graphic above summarises a range of theological developments that emerged. These changes demonstrate a tremendous shift in belief and practice, arising from someone who claimed authority directly from God. The focus moves from a rational study of Scripture to following the sensational ramblings of a charismatic leader whose word 'was gospel'.³²

The onus is on each one of us to ensure that we are diligent students of the Bible, and, like the Bereans, test teachings by the Scriptures so that we can be sure of what we

believe (Acts 17:10, 11). We need to have confidence in the sufficiency of the ministry of Jesus and the resultant assurance of salvation (Romans 8:1). We need to live authentically, with our actions being congruent with our beliefs. We need to teach people to swim in any context, rather than damming the ocean and living as a recluse.³³ Jesus' commission remains: 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you' (John 20:21, NRSV).

¹Cari Hoyt Haus and Madlyn Lewis Hamblin, *In the Wake of Waco: Why Were Adventists Among the Victims?* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1993), pp. 141-158; Kenneth G. C. Newport, *The Branch Davidians of Waco: The History and Beliefs of an Apocalyptic Sect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco?* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995) pp. 43-51
²Albert A. C. Waite, 'From Seventh-day Adventism to David Koresh: the British Connection', *AUSS*, vol. 38, no. 1, spring 2000, p. 112
³William Claiborne and Jim McGee, 'The Making of David Koresh', *Spectrum*, vol. 23, no. 1, May 1993, p. 18
⁴Tabor and Gallagher, p. 35
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¹⁸Tabor and Gallagher, p. 41
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²¹Waite, p. 116
²²https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Koresh
²³Wessinger, pp. 1, 2
²⁴Joel Sandfur and Charles Liu, 'Apocalypse at Diamond Head: Remembering Waco', *Spectrum*, vol. 30, no.1, May 1993, p. 30
²⁵Albert A. C. Waite and Laura Osei, 'The British Connection', *Spectrum*, vol. 23, no. 1, spring 1993, pp. 36-38
²⁶Ashley Fantz, 'Who was David Koresh?' <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/US/04/14/waco.koresh/index.html> (accessed 26 February 2023)
²⁷Waite, p. 119
²⁸Peter Van Saint, 'I've kept my story secret for the last 25 years – I didn't want to take this to my grave', *CBS 48 Hours*: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/waco-texas-siege-i-have-been-blame/> (accessed 11 January 2023)
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³⁰Newport, p. 178
³¹Newport, p. 329
³²Haus and Hamblin, p. 95
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Jesus makes a blind man to see!

²²Jesus and his followers came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch the man. ²³So Jesus held the blind man's hand and led him out of the village. Then he spit on the man's eyes. He laid his hands on him and asked, "Can you see now?" ²⁴The man looked up and said, "Yes, I see people. They look like trees walking around." ²⁵Again Jesus laid his hands on the man's eyes, and the man opened them wide. His eyes were healed, and he was able to see everything clearly.

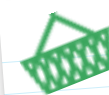
Mark 8:22-25

Taken from *Colouring books for kids: The story of Jesus*. To purchase your copy, follow this link: <https://lifeforcebookshop.co.uk/product/colouring-books-for-kids-story-of-jesus/>

Baked Banana, Cinnamon & Raisin Pancakes

These pancakes are so quick and easy to make. They can also be made the night before and gently heated when you are ready to eat them. Try out different toppings and add the fruit or sauce of your choice. My favourite toppings are blueberries and maple syrup or chopped mango, pineapple and banana.

- 1 Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F or gas mark 4).
- 2 Line a large baking tray with baking paper or grease-proof paper.
- 3 Combine the **oat flour**, **wholemeal flour**, **baking powder**, **cinnamon** and **salt**.
- 4 Stir well.
- 5 Add **banana** to the **dry ingredients**.
- 6 Add the **almond milk** and raisins.
- 7 Stir well.
- 8 Place $\frac{1}{4}$ of the mixture onto the baking tray to form 4 pancakes.
- 9 Bake for about 12-15 minutes.
- 10 Allow to cool slightly and serve topped with fruit or a sauce of your choice.



Shopping list

- Oats – 1 cup (finely ground into a flour-type mixture by blending for about 30 seconds)
- Spelt or wholegrain flour – $\frac{1}{4}$ cup
- Baking powder – $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp
- Cinnamon – $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp
- Salt – $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp
- Banana – 1 large ripe, finely mashed
- Almond milk – $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups
- Raisins – $\frac{1}{4}$ cup



This recipe is taken from the book, *Cooking with Kids*, by Kirly-Sue. To purchase your copy, follow this link: <https://lifeforcebookshop.co.uk/product/cooking-with-kids-paperback/>



Environmental health – part 3

Safe working space

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

This article looks at evidence-based ways to protect your work environment to safeguard well-being.

How safe is your working space? In this issue, we highlight some of the hazards negatively impacting our work spaces, and explore evidence-based solutions to enhance our working environment. First, let's begin with a workplace case study.

Case study

When Brian's company decided to take on more employees, they did not factor in the impact it would have on the working space. Subsequently, when Brian had to give up his office for a more senior manager to use, he was asked to work in a multipurpose room which housed a large photocopier in close proximity to his desk. Due to the huge volume of photocopying that was undertaken, and poor ventilation in the room, Brian complained to his manager that the fumes emitted from the photocopier were making him feel unwell.

Complaining of headaches, eye irritation and increased asthma flare-ups, he went to see his doctor, who diagnosed sick building syndrome. The doctor indicated that prolonged exposure to the photocopier in a room with very poor ventilation was probably the cause of his symptoms.

Photocopier cautions

A Wellness Health at Work article shares evidence of adverse reaction to photocopier overexposure: 'Photocopiers create ozone through their "corona wires" that apply a charge to the paper so the ink will cling to it. As ozone is highly reactive, any adverse health effects will be found essentially at the sites of initial contact – the respiratory tract (nose, throat and airways), the lungs, and at higher concentrations the eyes. . . . If exposed to ozone, one could experience headaches, eye and breathing irritations.'¹

In addition, Office Machine Specialists caution: 'Photocopiers release ozone into the atmosphere, which is the primary explanation why you should not sit at work next to a copier.'²

Lung impact from environmental toxins

The British Lung Foundation (Asthma & Lung UK) identified what they call 'asthmagens', which are substances that can lead to the development of asthma. Listing the common workplace pollutants, they highlight the following which employees may be exposed to at higher levels than at home: certain vehicle spray paints, dust from flour, wood dust, metal working fluids and cleaning agents (<https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/indoor-air-pollution/indoor-air-pollution-at-work>).

Workplace toxins and sickness

Assessing the impact of workplace toxins, research continues to present an alarming picture in relation to their impact on employee well-being and scale of sickness absence. In an online article (March 2022) by Eco MENA, captioned 'Are toxic chemicals harming me at work?' author Salman Zafar states the following: 'Toxins found at work are poisoning us and ending lives on a global scale. A 2018 United Nations report stated that 'one worker dies at least every 30 seconds from exposure to toxic industrial chemicals, pesticides, dust, radiation, and other hazardous substances.' In addition,



workplace-related diseases, such as lung cancer linked to inhaling carcinogens on the job, 'account for around 86% of all premature death'.³

There is much guidance in relation to keeping the work environment healthy. A government agency, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), in its outline of healthy working spaces, lists the following as key aspects to consider:

- Good ventilation – a supply of fresh, clean air drawn from outside or a ventilation system
- A 'reasonable working temperature' so it's comfortable to work (usually at least 16°C, or 13°C for strenuous work, unless other laws require lower temperatures – see: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/index.htm>)
- Lighting suitable for the work being carried out
- Enough room space and suitable workstations and seating
- A clean workplace with appropriate waste containers

For more information on an optimum working environment visit: <https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/health-and-safety/working-environment/>.

Good health!

¹<https://www.healthxchange.sg/wellness/health-work/office-photocopiers-health-hazards>
²<https://omscopiers.com/is-sitting-next-to-a-photocopier-bad-for-you/>
³<https://www.ecomena.org/are-toxic-chemicals-harming-me-at-work/>

52 weeks of doing good
 ADRA's work around the world

by Bert Smit, *CEO, ADRA-UK*

ADRA-UK, as part of the worldwide ADRA network, works 52 weeks of the year, supporting the world's most vulnerable people.



Emergencies

By the time you read this article, the Turkey/Syria earthquakes and subsequent devastating aftershocks will no longer be headlines. But the lives of those injured and those millions that are homeless and displaced will take years to be rebuilt.

Thanks to your support, ADRA-UK has raised over £100,000 to support the work on the ground in these two countries.

Miriam Watt, from Australia, has worked for ADRA Syria since 2014. In a recent interview with Australian broadcaster SBS News, she reflected on how this disaster has devastated the region and impacted ADRA Syria's humanitarian work.

When asked about the needs of survivors amid the deepening crisis and the lack of aid, Miriam commented that some of the people are so shocked by the devastation that they are unable to respond, while others need everything – food, mattresses, blankets – anything that can help their families get through the days ahead.

March 15 2023 will mark the 12-year anniversary of the start of the civil conflict in Syria. The impact of the conflict is hampering the efforts to get aid to those much-needed areas in the country where the situation is already so challenging for millions. Miriam states that there are critical shortages of fuel, and harsh winter conditions. Buildings are completely flattened. The earthquake struck just after 4am in the morning while people were still at home. Whole families have passed away. In some instances, parents rescued their children only for them to perish. Their children are being cared for by relatives or neighbours.

Miriam has lived in the country for the past nine years and has seen many changes. However, this current earthquake has escalated the challenges of conflict. There are shortages of basic services and supplies. People are struggling to put food on their tables and support their families.

'The country was moving towards recovery,' she says. 'ADRA Syria was moving its resources into livelihoods to support families to rebuild their lives. But this earthquake has set us back to providing basic distribution for those in need.'

Development

At the beginning of August last year, ADRA-UK started the Enhanced Rural AI (Terai) Project for Smallholder Dairy Farms in Nepal.

The aim of the project is to strengthen the resilience and improve the income of smallholder farmers in the

Rupendehi and Kapilvastu districts through the development of dairy production systems. This will enable the farmers to increase their income and enhance their livelihoods.

I recently had the privilege of visiting the project in Nepal with our Programmes team and Chief Finance Officer. As with my other trips, I was truly humbled by the faithfulness of you, our members. Each donation enables us to help some of the world's most vulnerable people. Your donation, however big or small, helps us to respond to funding calls from selected institutional and government funders with matched funds.

On behalf of ADRA-UK, we would like to thank you for supporting us both in emergencies and with development.

To make a donation, visit the ADRA-UK homepage at www.adra.org.uk/ and click

the 'Donate Now!' button at the top of the screen – alternatively, you can also make a donation directly to ADRA-UK by clicking on the following link: <https://app.donorfy.com/donate/C4311R6V76/donate>.

HOW TO DONATE

Our donations page is currently active: follow the link on the left. You can also scan this QR code, which will take you to the donations page.



Taking action on mental well-being: BUC Director Sharon Platt-McDonald speaks to BBC Three Counties Radio

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



February 2 2023 was 'Time to Talk Day', a day when the nation was encouraged to talk about mental well-being and take action to change the negative attitudes and stigmas surrounding poor mental health.

The BUC Director for Health, Sharon Platt-McDonald, was invited to BBC Three Counties Radio on Sunday 5 February to talk about mental well-being and her work with community groups. Currently working with the One Vision charity, she is part of a team who will be delivering an initiative titled 'Community Connectors'. Speaking with BBC Three Counties Radio show host Edward Aduo, she outlined the scope of One Vision's Community Connectors Project. Sharon explained the following aspects:

- Community Connectors are members of diverse communities who understand the barriers, stigmas and cultural sensitivities of each of these communities, and know what help is available.
- They will signpost friends, family members, colleagues, and neighbours towards the support available in their communities.
- Community Connectors will have access to, and good relations with, these diverse communities, and will be very effective at integrating with their local communities – providing a bridge between local people and services and building community capacity and social capital.
- They will develop promotional and marketing materials in key languages.

So, what action can we take, individually, to positively impact our mental health potential? Here are some aspects to consider as outlined by Sharon in her radio interview:

Mental health and cultural implications

Assessing the impact of culture on mental well-being, expression of individuals' mental health and their perception of their own psychological wellness, *Psychology Today* published an article on their website, titled: 'The Role of Culture in Mental Health' (25 March 2021). It states: 'When it comes to mental health, the culture of the society that surrounds us influences our attitudes about seeking help, the type of support we need, and whether or not we decide to seek help at all. Cultural norms can account for minor differences in how people communicate their symptoms [and] major omissions of which symptoms they report.'¹

Mental health and nutrition

In their analysis of the impact of nutrition on mental well-being, the UK's Mental Health Foundation states: 'One of the most obvious yet under-recognised factors for mental health is **nutrition**. What we eat and drink affects how we feel, think and behave. . . . The Foundation's message is not that nutrition is a silver bullet for mental health problems, but it does have a part to play in **prevention**, treatment and **recovery**.'²

Mental health and exercise impact

Numerous studies continue to highlight the importance of physical activity on aspects of well-being such as enhanced cognition, brain regeneration, maintaining mental well-being, and helping to combat mild depression (<http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/exercise-depression>).

Its efficacy in boosting our mood is also well researched. Regular exercise causes fewer stress hormones (such as cortisol) to be released, and stimulates the release of chemicals called endorphins (happy hormones), which lifts our mood. In highlighting exercise as a mood enhancer, Dr Michael Otto of Boston University says: 'The link between exercise and mood is pretty strong.' Giving its specific benefits, Otto states: 'Usually within five minutes after moderate exercise you get a mood-enhancement effect.'⁴

Mental health and faith

Nurturing your faith has been found to be a protective factor in mental well-being. On their website (<https://www.rethink.org>), Rethink Mental Illness posted an article headed: 'Spirituality, religion and mental illness'. They state: 'Spirituality and religion *can be helpful to manage stressful life events and improve your mental health*.'⁵

The BUC Health Ministries Department has published a *Mental Wellness Handbook for Churches*. Please contact the department if you would like to purchase a copy. You can call the BUC office on 01923 672251 to speak with our Health Ministries personnel.

We pray for God's favour as He directs our ministry in addressing the diverse issues that impact all our communities.

¹<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/becoming-resilient/202103/the-role-culture-in-mental-health> ²<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/blogs/nutrition-and-mental-health-obvious-yet-under-recognised> ³<https://www.nutritionist-resource.org.uk/articles/nutrition-and-mental-health.html> ⁴<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2011/12/exercise> ⁵<https://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/living-with-mental-illness/wellbeing-physical-health/spirituality-religion-and-mental-illness/>

BUC and Stanborough Primary School health partnership

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

Friday 10 February saw the inaugural launch of the Well-being and Mental Health Partnership between the BUC Health Ministries Department and Stanborough Primary School. This initiative is an augmentation of the BUC Health Ministries Child Health Strategy, along with the school's Well-being Curriculum, that will enable a robust source of support on health and mental well-being for the school. It entails the development of a strategic health focus that encompasses seven areas of well-being: namely, spiritual, mental, physical, emotional, relational, social and environmental health.

The launch took place at Stanborough Primary School and was attended by pupils, teachers, parents and invited guests. In attendance were Dean Russell, MP for Watford, who gave a brief address; the school chaplain, Pastor Ray Patrick, who presented the opening prayer; and a school governor, Enoch Kanagaraj, who delivered the closing prayer. The occasion was a celebratory one, marking various milestones and areas of achievement.

Presentations delivered by the headteacher, Mrs Tiann Madden; well-being lead, Ms Rebecca Dean-Roberts; and well-being consultant, Sharon Platt-McDonald, focused on goals that were achieved in the following areas: school health; therapeutic school dog; well-being champions; and well-being consultant.

Following the presentations, certificates and special badges were awarded to each well-being champion. Presenting these to each individual were Dean Russell MP and a BUC director, Sharon Platt-McDonald. Official photos were then taken. The event concluded with a



projective look at the 'next step' by the headteacher, Mrs Madden, and closing remarks from the safeguarding and inclusion lead, Mrs Nicky Adewole.

Afterwards, refreshments were served and attendees enjoyed a special cake marking the launch event. The well-being champions also demonstrated some of the skills they had learnt, including exercises for physical fitness, arts and crafts, the reading corner, and a writers' session. Guests were invited to peruse the well-being resources on display and visit the well-being room, highlighting the well-being champions and their work.

Reflecting on the partnership launch, the headteacher, Tiann Madden, shared:

'Stanborough Primary School was thrilled to work with the BUC Health Department to shine a light on well-being and mental health within our school community. Friday was a magnificent opportunity for us to showcase what the school has achieved to date, from the creation of a well-being room, the choosing of a school therapy dog, and the appointment of a well-being consultant and well-being champions to a planned redesign of our playground to improve our physicality, and a refurbished kitchen to improve our eating choices. . . . We are excited to be the driving force in this area, and remain committed and dedicated to improving our school community's well-being and mental health. Research has shown that a coordinated and evidence-informed approach to mental health in schools leads to improved pupil well-being and enhanced learning and outcomes for all. Ultimately, we want our pupils to be in an environment which enables them to thrive and succeed in all areas of their lives.'

We solicit your prayers as we develop this initiative to enhance the holistic aspects of school life and pupil well-being.

Sutton Coldfield warms hearts digitally!

Sutton Coldfield, a town often described as 'cold', was warmed on Sabbath 28 January by the messages brought by Pastor Gideon Pelser (AWR) and Elder Michael Gorkov (ASI), who shared a bright vision. The focus of their messages was on using digital media on social networking sites for outreach. The call came for the participation of each lay member in reaching out to those in their sphere of influence with a simple message, inviting them to join a platform where they are offered prayer services in their city. These interests would be funnelled through to an app that allows interested people to interact with church members who send them prayer messages to encourage them on their spiritual journey. Training on the app was expertly delivered.

To execute this digital evangelism pilot scheme, a group of nine volunteers within the church advertised the app within the city and via awr.org/pray4brum. Those interests who seek prayer and desire to know more will be provided with pre-recorded voice messages that will take them through a series of Bible studies. After four months,



the church will also hold a series of studies that is personalised to the needs of the community.

Since the launch, responses have already started coming through. Sutton Coldfield Church was carefully selected by Dr Patrick Herbert (Area 5 Ministerial Field Secretary of the North England Conference) due to its willingness and availability to participate in this initiative. Dr Herbert expressed his gratitude for Pastor Obi Iheoma and the Sutton Coldfield church for their receptiveness towards trialling this method of digital evangelism.

RUTH CHITATE



Girls' Discipleship Camp

Manchester Southern Asia Seventh-day Adventist Church (MSAC) launched its discipleship programme earlier this year. Since then, the church has continued to actively embrace and engage in discipling the young people. One key initiative undertaken was the Girls' Discipleship Camp, which was held from 8 to 11 September 2022 at the Aberdaron Adventist campsite. The theme chosen for the camp was 'Relationships – Family, Friends, Foes and Affection'.

Twenty-four young girls from MSAC attended the camp. The camp activities included carefully chosen sessions about the biblical perspective of women, as well as many practical topics, including peer pressure, social media, nutrition and exercise, and courtship. The sessions were interactive, and included fun activities such as nature walks, hikes,

beach trips and indoor and outdoor games.

It was a special and enriching experience where new friendships and support systems were formed among the girls and accompanying adults. Those who supported the camp had a spiritually uplifting and encouraging experience, learnt from the experiences of the young girls, and reaffirmed their commitment to continue to disciple the young ones in the church. The church is looking forward to many more such events in the future.

SHEELA VEPURI & SUSHMA MORAPUDI

Sip & Paint for Willesden teens

Teens from Willesden Church kicked off their 2023 social calendar with a 'Sip & Paint' event on Saturday 4 February.

Pauline Hutchinson, along with the Teens Department team, pulled

this activity together specifically to get to know the young people and give them a creative, social time with each other.

'I suggested this activity as I took part in a similar type of event at work,' shared Pauline. 'I discussed it with the team and they believed it would be a great idea for our first official meeting with the teens – something completely different! It was a great way of fellowshiping with each other, because who doesn't love eating, drinking and painting?'

The charity Son Of A King (SOAK), which supports men's mental health, donated the canvases and easels for the evening, helping to bring all the details together perfectly for the painting session.

The twelve teens that attended enjoyed the evening so much that the event has been established as a regular feature throughout the year.

WILLEDEN COMMUNICATION DEPT



'Know your worth' – Area 1 Youth Day (SEC)

Autumn had arrived, but that didn't stop us from meeting at beautiful Chapel Porth for our Area 1 Youth Day in mid-October. We had a fantastic time when speakers Steven George (Theology graduate), Taryll Viviers (SEC Student Ministries lead) and Tara McCormac (mental health nurse) shared on the topic, 'Know your worth'.

The hall was set up with comfy furniture in a circle for a warm, inviting atmosphere. Worship is always one of the highlights of our gatherings, with contemporary songs such as 'Breathe', 'Who You say I am' and 'My lighthouse' mixed with classics like 'Come Thou fount'.

Steven focused on building bridges and pointing out that outsiders become insiders around the table with Jesus. Taryll pointed out that we should focus on our God-given purpose, not on what others say our potential is. Tara shared her experience with mental health difficulties, and opened our eyes to the facts and stigmas of poor mental health.

Pastor Steven Hulbert noted, 'It was beautiful to see everyone coming together across Cornwall and Devon and beyond and having quality fellowship in the presence of God.' Everyone had a great time and can't wait to meet up again.

JENNIE HALL



Area 1 youth enjoying worship

Lifeline 2 – SEC Youth Day of Fellowship

Hundreds of youth and young adults gathered at the Rock Tower in Tufnell Park on Sabbath 31 December 2022 for the last SEC youth day of fellowship for the year.

The event started well, with icebreakers from Isaac Fletcher asking us to reflect on the past year and look forward to 2023. He challenged us to reach someone who doesn't know Christ; to not take anything for granted; to spend quality time with friends and family; and to say no to something in order to pursue Christ with vigour. These should be our goals for 2023. Isaac set the premise for the whole event, which was titled 'Lifeline 2' and looked at reflection, thankfulness and hope for 2023.

Pastor Anthony Fuller reminded us that God looks at the heart. We can get distracted by feelings, and sometimes we can't trust them, but we must remind ourselves that God's presence is enough. *He is enough.* With our hearts in tune with God, we can see the beauty in everything. He never promised a trouble-free life, but every situation, every storm, can

inspire and encourage us and others. Our personal testimony may be exactly what the people around us need to hear.

After a time of reflection, followed by praise, we moved on to a time of prayer and anointing. Everyone broke up into small groups of five or so and prayed together. The whole church was filled with the hum of shared prayer . . . it was a powerful and beautiful experience. Then came a time of anointing. Pastors Fuller, Johns and Brooks, along with Elders Acquah, Adams, Brooks and Campbell, led out in the anointing service. Queues of young people lined up to be anointed and prayed over.

Throughout the service, the praise team intertwined the segments with powerful music and vocals. Each component was accompanied by song, linking the service effortlessly

from point to point. Some songs, such as 'Everlasting God', had everyone up on their feet as they sang along. Other songs, such as 'Great is Thy faithfulness', gave time for contemplation and reflection, homing in on the powerful lyrics.

At the end of the day, Pastor Anthony made an appeal, emphasising that change starts with us. Many young people are leaving church because they often sadly feel that the church environment is not the place where they can realise and develop their calling. Everyone is filled with creativity and talent, and we aren't embracing and encouraging each other enough.

May we be more mindful of those around us throughout 2023: let us encourage one another with love and understanding so that we can do better and be the church God has called us to be.

JENNIE HALL



Stanborough Park Church Toy Service brings Christmas cheer

The generosity of members and friends enabled Stanborough Park Church to hold its Annual Toy Service again on 10 December 2022, providing toys and games for children experiencing severe hardship in Watford. It was the 61st such event since the Toy Service's founding by the late Alf Kelly MBE, dubbed 'Watford's Father Christmas' by the *Watford Observer* many years ago. Today it's run by his daughter, Pat Walton, who runs the church's Welfare Service.

Most of the toys had been arranged at the front of the church by Audrey Balderstone and her team, but during the service even more were placed in waiting sacks by the congregation's children. Advertising had begun early, and the response was phenomenal, as more toys were donated than ever before. It was also lovely to see the church almost full to capacity again after the disruption caused by COVID-19, and there were 256 viewings of the service on the church website, and more through the church's YouTube channel.

Attending the service according to long-standing tradition was the Elected Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor, himself a practising Christian, who regards the service as a highlight of his year. The young people played an active part, as the Youth Orchestra accompanied congregational singing and played when the children brought their gifts to the front. Other musical items were provided by hand bell and hand chime ensembles, and songs were provided by Lydia Simplicio's young choir and Sang Bin Jung's junior choir. Pastor Audrey Andersson, well-known to Stanborough members, delivered the sermon.

One person looking through the donated toys after the service was Tim Whittaker from the Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Partnership. He has been coming every year for some time, and explained that his charity caters for 100 families, with 80% of them having two children or more. Many of them are struggling to cope, he said, especially those with no access to public funding. The aim is to give them a little something 'just to keep them going'. Although his charity receives toys from two other local churches at Christmas, 'the lion's share', he says, comes from Stanborough Park Church.

Also to be found sifting through the gifts were two family support workers from local schools, both of whom asserted that the toys they took away would make an 'incredible' difference to the

families they dealt with and would bring 'smiles to children's faces' this Christmas. One of them, who works with a North Watford school, is a regular caller at the church's Welfare Centre and described organiser Mrs Walton as 'a wonderful human being who is always available and a pleasure to work with'.

JUNE COOMBS

A Christmas market with a twist, and a gospel choir sings in Home Bargains!

It was 11 December 2022 when Tamworth Church held its first ever Christmas market. The idea was the brainchild of Denise Walker, who suggested the church could put on a Christmas market with a twist for the Tamworth community. Church members were asked to donate their new and nearly new unloved items, and the church decided that all the proceeds from the market sales would be given to the charity Tamworth Street Angels, which helps to provide a safe presence in the Tamworth town centre on weekend nights.

The twist was that those who came to the market were asked to pay a small entry fee of £2 and were given four tokens. They were then able to select four items each in exchange for the tokens. Not only that, but there was also a wrapping station, where shoppers were able to have their gifts wrapped for them, ready to go! However, this was not the only event that took place!

On 18 December, Tamworth Community Gospel Choir performed in two local branches of Home Bargains, raising further funds for Tamworth Street Angels. The audience in both venues really appreciated the performances, and the choir was booked to return in 2023. TCGC were grateful for the opportunity given them to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ through song this Christmas season.

A grand total of £300 was raised from both events; and, on behalf of the church, Denise Walker presented a cheque for this amount to Carolyn and Glyn, representatives from Tamworth Street Angels, who are part of the Christian Nightlife Initiative (CNI). Carolyn and Glyn expressed their gratitude for the donation and informed us that the money would go towards security, support, and shelter for the Tamworth community.

We are thankful that we could be a part of the great and important work they are doing.

PAULINE NEWTON, COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT



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DATE	VENUE	TIME
1 April	Wimbledon Church	(after Sabbath)
1 April	Ilford	(after Sabbath)
16 April	Stratford Church	10am-2pm
28 April - 3 May	BUC Ministerial Council, Leonardo Hotel, Hinckley Island	
14 May	Northampton Central	10am-2pm

Messenger

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Left to right: Muziwandiswe Ndebele, Iman Walker, Michelle Chirambo, Michael Chirambo and Pastor Obi Iheoma

Aston-Newtown baptism

It was a glorious day at Aston-Newtown Seventh-day Adventist Church on 4 February 2023 when four young people gave their lives to Christ in baptism. While it was cold outside and the pool lukewarm, the baptismal candidates were so fired up by the Holy Spirit that nothing could deter them. It was a fitting atmosphere to crown months of Bible study with Pastor Obi Iheoma. The candidates were Michelle and Michael, Muziwandiswe (Wandi) and Iman. The candidates were clad in their Pathfinder uniforms, and received the highest honour – a baptism pin. The church was full as relatives and friends travelled from every corner of the UK to witness this grand occasion. Some family members joined via Zoom from as far as Zimbabwe (where Wandi's grandmother was seen ululating as her grandson was buried in the watery grave) and Malawi (where siblings Michael and Michelle's family come from). Tears of joy could be seen streaming down the cheeks of one of the Aston-Newtown church matriarchs, Sister Walker, whose granddaughter Iman was baptised.

This baptism was special in that it emphasised the vision of the church that nobody can be said to be too young to dedicate their life to God. It highlighted the idea that baptism marks the beginning of a closer walk with Christ. As such, the church department leaders were reminded of their duty to provide programmes designed to nurture and keep these new church members grounded in their Christian walk.

FELIX NDEBELE, ASTON-NEWTOWN PATHFINDER CLUB DIRECTOR



Left to right: Pastors Itamar James and Vaughn Thorpe, Denneese Thorpe, Caleb Thorpe, Leah Marshall, Kiana Collins, Ryan Peynado, Naomi Bala, Pastor Steve McKenzie

Walthamstow baptism

Sabbath 18 February 2023 was a truly momentous day at Walthamstow Church when over 1,000 online viewers and 300 people in person witnessed the baptism of five precious individuals. In our church, this was by far the largest gathering of people in recent memory. The candidates were Naomi Bala, Kiana Collins, Caleb Thorpe (son of our resident minister, Pastor Vaughn Thorpe), and cousins Ryan Peynado and Leah Marshall (who also celebrated her birthday).

We were blessed to see family, school friends, church friends, visitors and members from other churches. Every area of the church was full, both inside and outside.

There was rapturous applause as each candidate was immersed.

We were also blessed to have Pastor Harrison Mburani in attendance, whose wife Esther preached in the morning on outreach. Also in attendance were Pastor Steve McKenzie; Pastor Itamar James from Jamaica, who gave a powerful sermon in the afternoon; and Pastor Vaughn Thorpe, who was joined in the baptism pool by Pastor McKenzie.

Following the wonderful service, guests were invited to a grand feast provided by the hospitality team in our church hall. Singing continued within the church, with praise teams from various churches combining to form an impromptu praise and worship gala, with music provided by Brooks and Co. The presence of the Holy Spirit was felt throughout the evening, and many of our visitors fed back that they had been blessed by the occasion.

We ask that you continue to pray for our newly baptised members in their walk and journey with our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

To watch the service, please visit our YouTube channel: <https://youtube.com/@WalthamstowSDAChurch>.

ANDY PEYNADO AND RAY MARSHALL



Left to right: Divine, Emmanuel, Siphos, Diane and Angel

Welling on a high!

Sabbath 3 December 2022 was a special day in Welling Seventh-day Adventist Church, which experienced both a communion service and a baptism on the same day.

At 3.30pm melodious singing could be heard in the church hall, letting people know that the baptism was about to begin. First in the pool was Angel, whose selected text, John 3:16, was read by her 10-year-old sister, Blessing. This was followed by a special hymn: 'I will sing of Jesus' love'.

Next in the pool was Arlene's friend, Diane, who chose Philippians 4:13 for her key text. The spirit of the text was encapsulated in the harmonious singing of 'I can't give up now' by Arlene's daughters.

Siphosenkosi (Siphos) was up next; Pastor Ray, his teacher, was waiting in the pool for him. His text, Psalm 1, was read by his 9-year-old sister, Abigail, who also prayed for him.

Siphos' baptism was followed by that of two brothers, Emmanuel and Divine, who entered the pool together. Emmanuel chose Isaiah 40:28-31, which was read by his sister, Favour; and Divine chose John 3:16, which was read by his father, Brother Henry. The songs 'I enter the Holy of Holies' and 'Because He lives' were sung by their mother, Sister Rose, and their sister, Precious. They were baptised by Pastor Habib and Pastor Ray.

This was truly a memorable day for Welling Church: we were born, born, born again; thank God, we were born again!

LESLIAN ELLIS, COMMUNICATION TEAM

Helena Mabel Thompson (1919-2022) d. 29 October.

The last surviving charter member of both the Birmingham Central church and the Erdington church peacefully died on 29 October 2022, aged 103.



Helena Mabel Thompson was born in New Mills, Derbyshire to Joseph and Elizabeth Cutler in 1919. She attended Ledbury School before moving to Camp Hill School for Girls, gaining a scholarship for teacher training – but, because of the impending war, she never took it up. She took a position as an office clerk at Sappcote Building Company, ensuring that, in spite of the war, there were enough building materials available, especially sand for the sandbags.

In 1941 she attended a St John Ambulance first aid class, only to find it was a men-only night! However, she was warmly welcomed, especially by her future husband, Bernard.

In 1942 Mabel attended campaign meetings in Birmingham Town Hall given by Pastor Murdock. In May 1943 she was baptised and became one of the charter members of Birmingham Central Seventh-day Adventist Church. Later she moved to Erdington Church, becoming a charter member there too.

On 22 May 1945 she and Bernard were married at Handsworth Church in Nineveh

Road. This was the first wedding held in that church. As bride and groom left the church, a St John Ambulance guard of honour saluted them with a corridor of raised splints.

As well as raising a family of two children, Vernon and Iris, she was an active church member helping in all departments, including Sabbath School, young people, music, flowers, jumble sales and collections for ADRA.

Her interests included walking her dogs, gardening and sightseeing around Britain.

In October 2019 she celebrated her centenary with many friends and family. Mabel died peacefully on 29 October 2022 in the company of her daughter, Iris, and her two beloved pet dogs. The cremation service was led by Pastor Jeremy Johnson of Shrewsbury Church, and the moving eulogy was given by Clifford Lewis. Everyone, both family and friends, thanks God for her full and active long life, and gives condolences, especially to her daughter and full-time carer, Iris.

VERNON THOMPSON

Beryl Avril Hall (née Williams) 1931-2022

When Beryl's breath of life returned to God, who had sustained her with it for 91 years, the world had one fewer caring, loving soul to help Him watch over folks.

Her mission was to be hospitable;



Miracle baby Elizabeth named and dedicated!

Baby Elizabeth Tammy OlorunJedalo is a miracle baby. We had stopped having babies seven years ago – but then she came. The discovery that my wife, Esther, was pregnant came after thirteen weeks' gestation.

She had thought at the beginning that it was indigestion! Honestly, it was a mixed feeling for us, but our older children, Dorcas and Solomon, saw it differently. There was jubilation!

Finally, Elizabeth came, two days before the passing of Queen Elizabeth. The Queen was not on our minds when our baby was named Elizabeth, although, admittedly, I am a royalist!

On the eighth day our baby was officially named – with a little bit of African-Nigerian colouration! Friends, church members, work colleagues and well-wishers were in attendance in their beautiful attire. The occasion was accompanied by local Nigerian music, food, and drinks. Pastor Ayodeji Adesina of Blessed Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church, Dartford was the officiating minister. One of the names given was 'OlorunJedalo', meaning 'God is greater than men'. Elizabeth was dedicated on Sabbath 24 September 2022 at Exeter Seventh-day Adventist Church by Pastor Florin Orasanu. Praise the Lord!

PASTOR CALEB AKINOLA



greeting visitors, learning their names, and taking many of them home for lunch over the years.

After attending Newbold Missionary College, Beryl was secretary to Pastor H. T. Johnson in the SEC. She was a member of Plymouth Church for more than 60 years, and served in multiple capacities, most notably as its meticulous church clerk for over 40 of them.

Beryl was totally devoted to and greatly loved by her family, Dennis Hall, husband for 55 years, and children Carol, Graham and Ray, along with their families, including six granddaughters and four great-grandchildren.

She died peacefully at home with family members close by, ready to be woken from this well-earned, quiet rest, when Jesus calls her name.

CAROL HALL

Messenger

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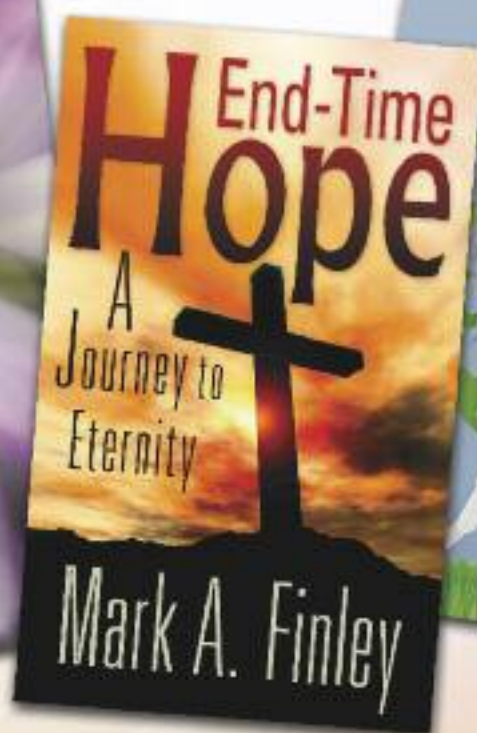
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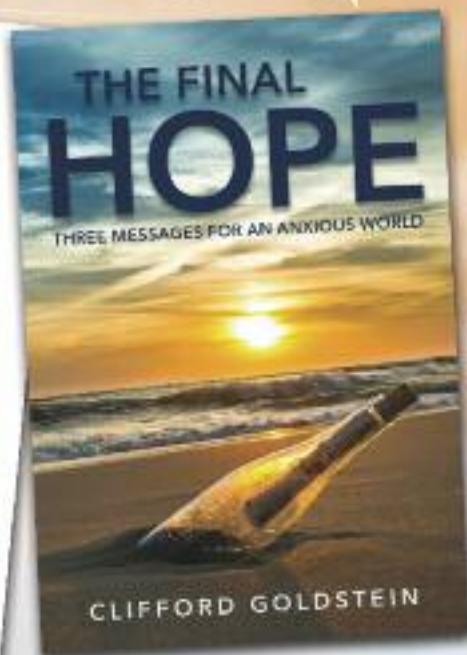
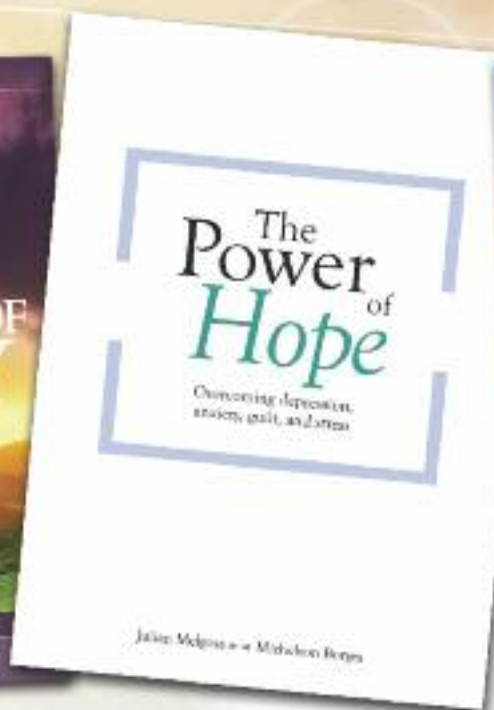
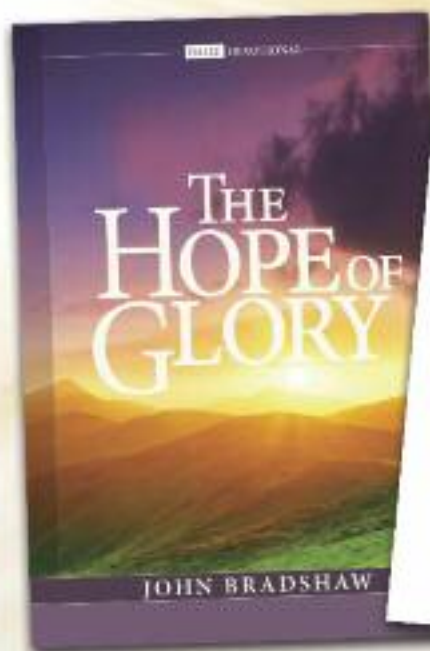
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Apr 7	7.43	7.56	7.50	8.03	8.11
14	7.55	8.07	8.02	8.17	8.25
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