

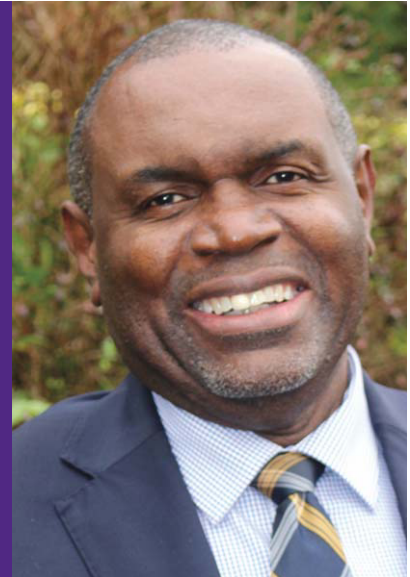
Strategic Priority (2) – Asset Management

Aim:

- Manage all our assets with robust governance, informed decision-making, openness, and transparency.

Objectives:

- Restructure the Seventh-day Adventist Association (SDAA) and Seventh-day Adventist Trust Services (SDAT).
- Set up an investment advisory team.
- Support each department and institution to take responsibility and be accountable for all its assets, however small.



Not just a church

by Pastor Eglan Brooks,

President of the British Union Conference

‘Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. What is the first thing you will do? Won’t you sit down and figure out how much it will cost and if you have enough money to pay for it? Otherwise, you will start building the tower, but not be able to finish. Then everyone who sees what is happening will laugh at you. They will say, “You started building, but could not finish the job.”’

(Luke 14:28-30, CEV)

It was an ‘Aha!’ moment when we met at the British Union Conference (BUC) Executive Committee (ExCom) in May of 2022 as we began to look at the church with a view to formulate the BUC Strategic Plan. The BUC residential ExCom provided a credible opportunity for me to bring to the attention of the committee my understanding of where we are as a group of Christ believers, and to share with them the groundwork to unveil the

growing priorities for the new BUC Strategic Plan.

If only you could have been a fly on the wall! You would have seen the expression on the faces of some of the committee members when the reality hit them: **we are not just a church . . . we are a charity and we are a business.** Yes, you heard me right. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the British Union Conference is a church, a charity, and a corporate business.

As a group of believers, we have in our care 41,000-plus precious members from divergent multicultural backgrounds, over 300 churches, and 115 companies that we know of; we employ more than 425 people, including 215 ministers; we must provide an adequate pension for 400 retirees; unnumbered volunteers faithfully support the weekly management of our church services with diverse skills and abilities; we have approximately eleven registered companies in our portfolio; and we have houses dotted around the British Union Conference (BUC) territory, just to name a few of our assets.

As a denomination, we are entrusted with a spiritual obligation to undertake biblical governance of our members. This includes matters such as ensuring that our members understand the responsibility of being stewards of the spiritual proclamation of a message of hope, the capacity to create an environment for the spiritual growth of our members, and an opportunity to encourage our 41,000-plus members to be stewards of the character of Christ. As a charity, we have an obligation to the public to ensure we comply with reasonable charitable governance of the organisation. Meeting best practice and ensuring our long-term survival as both a charity and a corporate organisation, we have a legal obligation to comply with government legislation in the management and safeguarding of our business.

While we have the daunting task of providing spiritual care and nurture of our members, we must comply with charity regulations and adhere to changing government legislation. We must revisit the management of our assets that sit under the umbrella of SDAA, and must strengthen the capacity of SDAT, and we just might need to restructure, develop the BUC property portfolio, and employ property investors. We need to get investment guidance to ensure our survival; we need a documented risk log and a ‘lessons learned’ log based on past decisions. Why have we lost some schools? How can we ensure our schools do not follow the sound of the ‘pied piper’ and march themselves along a similar path of destruction? We must explore the viability of a retirement home, or at least consider providing care for our ailing members.

These changes to the organisation should not come simply from creative officers and a snazzy ExCom. These forays must come through setting up new advisory committees in key departments with skilled members who are at the forefront of their field, and a census or survey that provides evidence to guide the decisions we will need to make.