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North England Conference Session

'I'm not a politician;
I'm a pastor.

I call for a contrite spirit
to help bring healing.

Let's not forget who we are:
we are Adventists . . .

looking forward to the
Master's return.'

*Pastor George Kumi,
newly elected president, North England
Conference*

See pages 4, 5, 6 & 7 for session news



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What price an education?

by Pastor Ian Sweeney,
President, British Union Conference



With the return of pupils to school following the summer holidays, I now find my 18-mile commute to work taking much longer than during the school holidays. I confess a minor annoyance – more congested roads! However, the price of education is worthy of our consideration, even

if our schooldays and children are of an age far past.

On 8 May 2021 a car bomb was detonated outside a school in Kabul, Afghanistan. Eighty-five people were killed and over 150 injured, the casualties predominantly being female students. Girls and boys at the high school

studied in three shifts, and the 8 May attack targeted the second shift, which was for female students.

One of the survivors, named Fatima, was understandably traumatised, having lost classmates in the explosion. Just weeks after, she would hug and pray with other survivors as they returned to school. A local NGO and the Ministry of Public Health ran psychotherapy classes to help the girls with their trauma.¹ Fatima's resolve to continue her education was strong, even with the potential threat of further attacks.

In 2020 the humanitarian arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), launched an initiative: **'Every child. Everywhere. In school.'**² However, when first launched, I did wonder what business ADRA has with education and schooling. But I quickly understood the important relationship.

Worldwide there are 131 million girls out of school. Girls are 1.5 times more likely than boys to be excluded from primary school. That means that 15 million girls of primary school age will never have the opportunity to learn to read and write in primary school, compared to about 10 million boys.

Girls who are out of school are more vulnerable to early marriage, teen pregnancy, child labour, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking. An uneducated woman is less empowered to make decisions about her body and her life, and is at higher risk of maternal complications and death, while her children are more likely to be malnourished and die in infancy.³

Long before these tragic events in Afghanistan, Ellen White wrote regarding the importance of education: 'Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator – individuality, power to think and to do.' (*Education*, p.17.)

Later, she wrote: **'True education does not ignore the value of scientific knowledge or literary acquirements; but above information it values power; above power, goodness; above intellectual acquirements, character. The world does not so much need men [and women] of great intellect as of noble character. It needs [people] in whom ability is controlled by steadfast principle.'** (*Education*, p. 225.)

I do not know what has happened to Fatima since American and UK forces left Afghanistan, but her story is one that has given me a greater appreciation of the cost of education, and Adventist education too.

It is my prayer and hope that we would all grasp a greater appreciation of education and its role in shaping character and preparing us for God's service in our world.

As Solomon wrote, *'How much better to get wisdom than gold, to get insight rather than silver!'* (Proverbs 16:16, NIVUK.)

COVID-19 mobile vaccination unit

Pfizer vaccinations

Location: Central London SDA Church, Crawford Place, London W1H 5JE
26 October 2021, 10am to 5pm
Age: From 16 years old
Free
Walk in or book below



<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/167587485681>



Many continue to be understandably wary of taking a vaccine for protection from COVID-19. Adventist theologian Dr Jiří Moskala, for the General Conference Health Ministries Department, considers whether it is biblically appropriate to seek immunisation.

Vaccination: A biblical and theological reflection

'There is no biblical command, "Be vaccinated!" or "Don't be vaccinated!" Therefore one needs to reason whether to be or not to be vaccinated.'

To read more, visit: <https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story16732-vaccination-a-biblical-and-theological-reflection>

¹<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/afghan-schoolgirl-determined-return-school-after-deadly-blast-2021-06-07/> ²<https://inschool.adra.org/> ³<https://inschool.adra.org/>



David Neal, Editor

'Come and have breakfast'



Aberdaron beach at sunrise

'O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity
Interpreted by love!

Very early one Sabbath morning before dawn a few weeks ago in late August, I went for a walk from one end to the other along Aberdaron's beach on the Llŷn Peninsula, North Wales. With no one about but for a few seagulls, I was alone. With a calm, peaceful sea, the sound of the gentle waves lapping on the shoreline, and the dramatic contours of the breath-taking natural landscape in the distance, the scene was a perfect symbol of Sabbath rest. It wasn't difficult for my imagination to take me back to that ancient Galilean shoreline when the resurrected Jesus appeared to His disciples, as recorded in John 21.

Seven of the disciples had been out fishing together all night long. Whether to earn some income for their own uncertain future, or simply to be in a safe place, given all that had happened, a night on the water it was to be. That night *'they caught nothing'* (John 21:3, ESV). Come daybreak, Jesus was waiting on the shoreline with a *'charcoal fire in place'* and *'with fish laid out on it, and bread'*. As the boat came into shore with the disciples, He asked them if they had any fish. *'No,'* they replied, not knowing who was asking the question. *'Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some'* (John 21:6, ESV). They did, and caught 153 large fish in all.

But it's the next part of the story that captures my imagination – Jesus inviting them to breakfast. Somewhere on the beach, not far from where the laden boat ground to a halt in the sand and stones, sits the small fire Jesus had started earlier. Hold that picture for a moment as we take a look at a disciple whose

place around the fire could be called into question.

'Shaky Simon', as I like to describe him, came from up north. He was as far removed from the refined and cultured southern Jerusalem folk as you could get. This blunt, impetuous northerner 'said it as it is', 'wore his heart on his sleeve', and, as some would say, saw no reason to attach brain to mouth before speaking.

Originally from Bethsaida on the western coast of the Sea of Galilee, his father is thought to have died while still young. Simon reflected his people – independent-minded, poorly educated, an out-and-out Galilean with his peculiar, harsh dialect. And yet, as a disciple he was a central part of the group.

With his brother Andrew, Jesus called him to leave the fishing industry to become *'fishers of men'* (Matthew 4:18-22). There is something about Jesus which compels him to leave his family and follow 'The Master'. Daily life was full of teachings, healings and scrapes with religious authorities, and yet the words and compassion of The Master stirred something inside him as never before. Jesus 'got to him', as they say. Who was this person who brought life to the dross of the religion he knew? Previously he'd been burned out on religion that only ever seemed to tell him what to do to be 'very good', or else there would be trouble – far too controlling for his Galilean, free-thinking world. He was also burned out on being ruled by Rome – taxes, taxes and more taxes! *Could this Jesus person create a revolution?* he wondered. *Home rule for Galilee – now there's an idea! I wonder who might make a good governor?*

Moving on quickly to the final few hours of Christ's life, Jesus shares with His disciples the immediate future. Bold as brass, shaky Simon decides this is nonsense, and declares this to be a *'this shall never happen to you'* moment (see Matthew 16:21-23) with a bold promise: *'Lord, I am ready to go with you both*

to prison and to death' (Luke 22:33, ESV). Not for the first time, Simon is rebuked, this time with a prediction. . . .

'I do not know what you mean,' shaky Simon said to the servant girl: *'I do not know the man.'* And the bystanders also challenged him, *'Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you.'* At this point I can imagine Peter completely stressed out, red-faced, but fearing for his own life as he swore with an oath, *'I do not know the man!'* (Matthew 26:69-75, ESV.)

Exactly as Jesus predicted – the shame, oh, the shame! It is one thing to be a real betrayer called Judas, but to be Simon the hypocrite! From insider to outsider, from the promise of future hope to loss and failure, Simon is traumatised to the core. I imagine him at Calvary, not with the family, but standing afar off, shaken and finished – it's over.

You know the story – for me, the most beautiful words in Scripture. *'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter . . .'* (Mark 16:6, 7, ESV). In those two words, 'and Peter', lie the heart of the Gospel. Imagine Peter hearing he'd been singled out by name to know that 'The Master' is risen indeed. . . . Hallelujah! No longer is he shaky Simon, but rock-solid Peter: ransomed; healed; restored; forgiven!

A short while later, the disciples are around the fire, having breakfast with Jesus. All I can see is the kindness of Jesus, who manages to have that difficult conversation with Peter, but who sees his potential far beyond anything Peter can imagine.

If you have ever been burned out on religion; if you have ever made a mess of your personal life; if you have ever even messed up in church life, which I know I have from time to time . . . in breakfast on the beach I see an invitation. I see the invitation to rest in Him.

Extending God’s kingdom to every community

63rd Session of the North England Conference

New administrative leadership

by Pastors Richard Daly and David Neal

On Wednesday 8 September, 270 delegates met together at the Jury’s Inn, Hinckley, Leicestershire, to conduct the business of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the North England Conference (NEC), to look back over the past, and to plan and trust in God for the future. The delegates represent a 10,000-strong membership who meet in 137 congregations from as far south as Worcester in the English Midlands to Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the north-east of England.

With the session chaired by Pastor Geoffrey Mbwana (General Conference Vice-President), and supported by Todd McFarland (Associate General Counsel of the General Conference) as the parliamentarian, Pastor Richard Jackson (NEC President) and Pastor Alan Hush (NEC Executive Secretary) officially opened the proceedings.

With the Nominating Committee working in the background, their first report was presented to the main delegation on Thursday. It was for the role of President, and the name put forward was Pastor George Kumi, NEC Ministerial Director. After a secret ballot, Pastor Kumi was declared the new president of the NEC.

After being introduced by BUC President Pastor Ian Sweeney, Pastor Kumi responded by thanking his friend and colleague Pastor

Richard Jackson and his wife Angela for their faithful and dedicated service to the church as president during the past five years. Pastor Kumi went on to say, ‘I’m not a politician; I’m a pastor. I call for a contrite spirit to help bring healing. Let’s not forget who we are: we are Adventists . . . looking forward to the Master’s return.’

After further sessional deliberations, the

Nominating Committee then returned to the main delegation that evening for another partial report. It was for the role of Executive Secretary. The name presented, voted and accepted was Pastor Emanuel Bran (Welsh Mission President and former minister within the NEC). He was welcomed and introduced by Pastor Sweeney, who also gave a vote of thanks for outgoing secretary Pastor Alan Hush.

On Friday morning the name of Michael Agyei-Asare (Payments/Payroll Accountant from the South England Conference) was put forward by the nominating committee for the role of Treasurer. This was voted and accepted by the delegation.

We congratulate the new incoming officers and give sincere appreciation to the outgoing president, Pastor Richard Jackson, and executive secretary, Pastor Alan Hush, for their hard work and dedication to the cause of the Church.



Left to right: the new NEC leadership team, Pastor Emanuel Bran (Executive Secretary), Pastor George Kumi (President), Michael Agyei-Asare (Treasurer)

Nominating Committee partial report

By late Friday afternoon the delegates approved a partial report of the Nominating Committee, electing to office departmental directors for the next quadrennium.

(0.5) refers to budget being half-time.

Ministerial Association Director
 Youth Director
 Personal Ministries/Evangelism Director
 Pathfinder Director
 Family Life Director (0.5)
 Sabbath School Director (0.5)
 Women’s Ministries Director (0.5)
 Children’s Ministries Director (0.5)
 Stewardship Director (0.5)
 Health Director (0.5)

Pastor Michael Simpson
 Pastor Micah Campbell
 Pastor Adam Ramdin
 Pastor Ikwise Mwasumbi
 Pastor John Francis
 Pastor Gina Miller
 Beulah Plunkett
 Pastor Patricia Douglas
 Pastor John Francis
 Dr Beatrice Kastrati

Referred to incoming executive committee:

Communications Director (0.5)
 Community Services Director (0.5)
 Teens Sponsor
 Men’s Ministries Sponsor
 Music Sponsor
 Adventist Muslim Relations Sponsor
 Prayer Sponsor

Also voted by delegates were 17 names for the composition of the incoming executive committee:

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. President | Pastor George Kumi |
| 2. Executive Secretary | Pastor Emanuel Bran |
| 3. Treasurer | Michael Agyei-Asare |
| 4. Area 1 | Lana Ashby |
| 5. Area 2 | Dr Livingstone Chishimba |
| 6. Area 2 | Professor Andrew Baildam |
| 7. Area 3 | Shepherd Sibanda |
| 8. Area 3 | Dr Irma Askey |
| 9. Area 4 | Professor Ivan Browne |
| 10. Area 4 | Grace Charles |
| 11. Area 4 | Pastor Jonathan Holder |
| 12. Area 5 | Pastor Obi Iheoma |
| 13. Area 5 | Dr Leon Ferguson |
| 14. Area 5 | Glenda Augustine |
| 15. Area 5 | Pauline Samuels |
| 16. Area 5 | Richard Russell |
| 17. Conference Church | Joseph Philpott (Licensed Minister) |

The territory is administratively divided up into five areas. It is the usual intent of the committee to ensure pro-rata representation from each area, in addition to the skill set of each individual member. A listing of which churches comprise a particular area may be found on pages 24 & 25 of the Session book.



Session spiritual tone set by Dr Daniel Duda

Session time is immersed in the business of the church when the past is reviewed, leadership

is held to account, and a picture of the future emerges. But the primary business of the church is spiritual – not a mere afterthought. Leading up to the session, the expectation of many delegates was for a ‘turbulent time’, as witnessed during the pre-session NEC town hall meetings in the months prior to the session via Zoom. It was the job of Dr Daniel Duda (Field Secretary and Education Director for the Trans-European Division) to be the session pastor.

What approach would Dr Duda take? Was there a word from the Lord that could speak to the experience of the last five years and would help give a context ‘to reflect on all we have done’, as Pastor Jackson called for in his presidential report? We give just a few take-aways from the morning devotionals.

Wednesday

From his opening words the session pastor set the tone. ‘Without the healing touch of the Holy Spirit, [our work] is like trying to climb Mount Everest without a ladder.’ Exploring the relationship between the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus (Matthew 3:1, 2), the core question delegates were invited to reflect on

was, ‘Have you heard John preach?’

‘John says, “Repent,” ’ explained Dr Duda, noting that John was probably seen as a ‘fanatic with a broken record . . . you don’t need to take people like that too seriously.’ Actually the contrary was true, suggested Dr Duda, because in the crowd listening to John was Jesus, and if it was a message Jesus heard and responded to, then it was John’s message – a blunt message, a moment of truth from a prophet, that ‘all need to repent, without exception’ – and it applies to those claiming to be a part of God’s remnant church. Why so? Because in our humanity we create a façade: ‘the heaven of what we want as opposed to the hell of what we do’.

‘Have you heard John preach?’ concluded Dr Duda, poignantly asking that question again. Could it be that we must ‘repent for the hurt and mess we have created’? But he added a further question: ‘Is repentance for you, or for someone else?’

Thursday

On Thursday, the session pastor reminded delegates of God’s call to each one of us to be followers of Christ. Highlighting the importance of the mission of the Church, and using the example of Peter’s conversion and the commission given to him by Christ to feed His sheep, Dr Duda laid the foundations of

where the Church ought to be focusing: ‘The best days of the NEC are still to come, so long as we do not neglect the mission of the Church.’

Friday

‘I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength’ (Rev. 3:8, NIV).

Explaining the words of Revelation 3, ‘The door John describes was deliberately opened by God, and it still stands here today – open! As we begin this last day of the session,’ continued Pastor Duda, ‘we don’t need to keep rehearsing the last five years, but are invited to look forward.’

‘What will be the future of the North England Conference? What will be the future of your local church? What do you think God wants for us together as a community of believers in the NEC?’

Dr Duda went on to explain how the language and context of Revelation 3:8 indicates the door to be ‘a divinely opened door . . . a door intentionally, thoughtfully, purposefully, and deliberately opened by God Himself in front of us’. It is a ‘symbolic’ door, ‘of boundless opportunities, of unlimited chances to do something worthwhile, of grand openings into new and unknown adventures of significant living’.

Leaving delegates with a challenge, not just for the day, but for the next quadrennium, Dr Duda concluded, ‘What are we going to do with the opportunities Jesus continues to give us? Imagine if 11,000 members of the North England Conference go through an open door . . . the world can be a different place.’

EDITOR AND RICHARD DALY

Maintenance of the NEC constitution

by Pastor Richard Daly

A major portion of the business on the second day of session (Thursday) was focused on changes to the constitution.

British Union Conference (BUC) Executive Secretary Pastor John Surridge led out in this area of discussion. Pastor Surridge highlighted that the Constitution Committee’s job is to maintain the constitution and keep it up to date, and specifically with the model constitution coming from the General Conference.

Proposals included:

- To set the upper limit for the total number of delegates at a session to 350. **VOTED**
- To include all three BUC executive officers as full members of the NEC Executive Committee.

At present all three officers sit on the NEC Executive Committee with no voting rights. Questions of autonomy of the NEC governing its own policies as well as concerns of conflict on voting and conflict of interest were expressed by several delegates who took to the floor with questions. After a long period of discussion and debate the proposal was **VOTED DOWN**.

The third area for discussion was to record that a vote to approve the new NEC constitution will be subject to:

- Approval by the Charity Commission of the changes to the clauses

relating to the charitable objects, benefits to charity trustees (NEC Executive Committee) and what happens on the dissolution of the NEC, and/or

- A ruling by the Charity Commission that their approval is not required for any of those changes listed above.

Several concerns were raised around the wording, statements and phrases, and clarification was called for. Some delegates felt there was a significant change of the language between the current and new constitution. Others felt there was not afforded sufficient time to go through all the ramifications of the new constitution.

For these reasons there was a call for a subsidiary motion to postpone discussion for further deliberation and presentation at a special sessional meeting for final decision in the future. **This was seconded, and the delegates voted in favour of it.**

Subsequent to the lengthy discussion on constitutional reform, the departmental reports continued.



The session parliamentarian, Todd McFarland (left) and chair, Pastor Geoffrey Mbwana (right)



Earl Ramharacksingh further explaining his report to delegates after his presentation

NEC officers report to delegates Wednesday at Session

by Pastor David Neal

The first significant item on the session agenda was a proposal from the Executive Committee to reduce the departmental budgets from 8.5 to 7.5. 'The reason for this,' said Pastor Jackson, 'is to deal with the reality of our finances. The Lord has blessed us, and we have seen a positive turnaround in our finances, but we are not there yet.' He went on to explain that the Conference is 'guided by denominational policy to return to 100% of both liquidity and working capital, in order to be compliant with the Working Policy of the General Conference'. One of the measures to help recover the financial position is 'by reducing our overheads and finding ways to deliver our ministry differently – hence the proposed reduction in the departmental budget'.

Delegates in response were quick to question the decision based on its implications. Particular concern was raised about the reduction of Pathfinders and Children's Ministries into one budget. As the current Children's Ministries Director, Pastor Patricia Douglas, pointed out, 'I would like to see the Conference be proactive in investing in our children.' 'I agree,' said Grace Charles; 'Children have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.' The other major concern was about the loss of the Sabbath School budget. When it came to a vote, delegates voted to reject the reduction to 7.5 departmental budgets, and to keep in place the 8.5.

President's report

Supported by a video presentation, Pastor

Richard Jackson described the current quinquennium as being 'a time of adversity, challenge, change and growth'. Referring to COVID-19, he described the 'last 18 months' as having 'almost eclipsed life before March 2020'. 'In addition,' he continued, 'for six years we have been dealing with employee relations matters. But much work has been done by this administration, working together with you as members, from 2016 until now. I encourage you to reflect on all we have done.'

Pastor Jackson then went on to explain how the administration has been 'working to resolve financial attrition' in numerous ways, including:

- Making training events cost-effective
- Stopping overnight accommodation at hotels, instead using NEC-owned Ravenhurst Street Birmingham apartments
- Investing in churches and technology as centres for training and meetings
- Finding multiple revenue streams from the BUC, TED and GC, including receipt of a three-year grant of \$900,000 to support Hope FM radio and a new media centre (expected to be open by October)
- Developing the NEC app for Android and Apple phones, providing a convenient way to return tithe and donate offerings and many useful ministry features

A major achievement of the administration pertained to Harper Bell School. 'When we began our term of office, Harper Bell School was in the hands of the local authority,' said Pastor Jackson. 'This administration sought to get this school back. Our prayer team

prayed and we went to work! This school has been returned to us, owned and run by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.'

As he concluded his report Pastor Jackson commented, 'What cannot be overlooked is that any one achievement cannot be attributed to any one staff member, but to each member of the NEC church family. During this pandemic, I want to give a big thank-you for the staying power of ministers who had to be furloughed. Even though financial liquidity and working capital have been weak, no workers have been made redundant. Likewise, we just want to express our thanks to the elders for holding the fort. We are all enjoying the success in finding ourselves in a better place.'

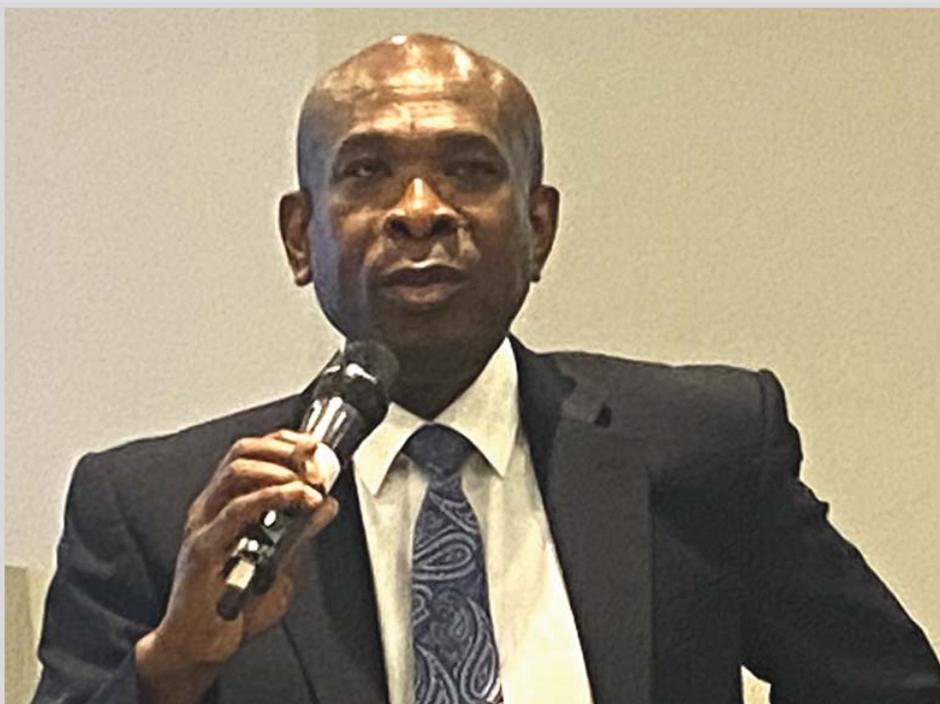
It is custom for the President's report to be accepted and voted on without a time for questions from delegates, as it is regarded as an overview of all that has taken place by the administration and directors. However, in the interest of openness and transparency, time was given for Pastor Jackson to answer questions from delegates. The main thread of the questions concerned the role of area co-ordinators, the organisation of line managers, the legal cases, and the purchase of the land at Aberdaron.

Executive Secretary's report

Pastor Alan Hush, Executive Secretary, enthusiastically began his report by reporting an increase of 10 congregations over the session term, with a total of 100 churches, six companies, 29 church plants and two branch Sabbath schools.

The membership as of 31 December 2015 was 10,312, and by 31 December 2019 it had grown to 11,467 – an increase of 1,155. With 229 baptisms per year, this gives an 11.83% increase on the 2015 membership. 'Of particular joy,' noted Pastor Hush, '2019 saw a turbo-charged year of baptisms.' It was noted that a number of transfers into the NEC were also processed.

Pastor Hush then went on to encourage



Pastor Richard Jackson



Pastor Alan Hush

Picture quality as supplied

churches/church boards to update their membership records in the interest of accuracy, recognising that churches can be reluctant to do this because they want more delegates at session. Because of this reality many names are registered as members but no longer attend. The church needs to be honest in relation to 'missing members'.

Most of the limited time given to the Secretariat report was devoted to questions from delegates. Maureen Kerr from Northampton wanted to know why lists from the NEC church clerk's department are returned incorrect to the local church clerk, when the local church has been through the process of updating the local membership records. In reply, Pastor Hush apologised for the human error, and explained that ACMS (the membership record system which now

devolves administration of the local membership list to the local church clerk) would resolve that matter.

As the question time came to an end, Pastor Hush thanked his support staff and concluded by saying, 'I have found it at times tough, humbling, and rewarding.'

Treasurer's report

It is clear from reading the Treasurer's report contained in the session report booklet that the Treasurer is buoyant about the Lord's leading in the finances of the NEC over the past four years. Currently serving as the interim treasurer, Earl Ramharacksingh reported that 'God has blessed us as a people, and we have reciprocated with our faithfulness in returning tithes for 2016-2020 of £31,772,807. We can see He has also

blessed us with a £4.1 million increase (15%) over the previous quadrennium.

But it was also clear as he stood up in front of delegates that he had a mission to explain, not least in relation to an earlier decision to reduce the number of departmental budgets that was subsequently rejected by the delegates. So he asked a question:

Where are we financially today?

To answer his question he referred delegates to the balance sheet, 'because,' as he explained, 'it is the balance sheet that gives you a real sense of the health of our organisation' – what we have (assets), and what we have to pay (liabilities and funds).

'Be assured,' Earl continued, 'we have more work to do in partnership with the Lord on this matter. I am already encouraged by what I see happening so far in 2021. By July 2021, tithe to date received by the NEC is £3.89 million, a 20% increase on 2020 and 5% up on budgeted – even in a pandemic year, God has blessed us tremendously. The benefits of the Gift Aid system to the church were outlined, followed by a summary of the main aspects of how tithe funds are used, namely: ministers' and other workers' salaries, evangelism, departmental support for local churches, and operations of the NEC office.

As for the previous reports, time was given for questions – for example, one from Victor Sibanda from Newcastle, who asked, 'Where's the money coming from for the ongoing court cases?' Earl Ramharacksingh explained that there are two aspects to the payments: 1. to ministers – payments which will be made to the ministers from tithe funds; 2. legal costs – which will be paid for from non-tithe funds such as Gift Aid.

Victor Sibanda then raised a further question, a recurring question which continued to puzzle many delegates. 'If the NEC is now experiencing significant tithe increases, can you explain why the budget needs to be cut and constrained?'

In reply, Earl agreed that, 'While tithe had decreased during the pandemic period, by the end of 2020 the NEC had returned to 90% of 2019 levels. Looking at our working capital and liquidity, we need £1.5 million to return to a 100% liquidity, and £1.7 million for working capital to meet denominational prudent reserves policies.' With a note of caution, he concluded, 'It may not even be achievable over the next quadrennium, but it is the NEC trustees' responsibility to implement strategies to regain our financial position to ensure continued financial viability and sustainability.'

Many further reports to the delegates were presented throughout the session from Wednesday to Friday, which space does not permit us to report here. However, the complete NEC Session Report Book, including the minutes of the previous session, can be read in PDF format at this link: https://adventist.uk/fileadmin/shared-data/gallery/2020/NEC/63th_NEC_Session_Ebook2021.pdf



Great things God has done

by Angela Sharp

My introduction to the Seventh-day Adventist Church

As a child I grew up with parents and grandparents owning and running a bakery and shop in Maidenhead, Berkshire. Occasionally, we attended St Mark's Church, a small Anglican church in the grounds of St Mark's Hospital, a few hundred yards away from where we lived.

One day an elderly lady came into the shop to buy some wholemeal flour. She explained to my mother that she liked to bake her own bread. (This was back in the early 1950s.) They chatted for a while, and the lady invited my parents and me to visit her. This we did and we met her retired husband, Pastor Robert Whiteside – our first introduction to Seventh-day Adventists. For a number of years on alternate Thursday evenings we would spend a couple of hours in their home, discussing everyday

topics, having a drink and homemade cake, and then Pastor Whiteside would read a portion of Scripture and offer a prayer before we left, leaving us with a magazine such as *Good News* or *Signs of the Times* to take away with us. After Pastor and Mrs Whiteside moved away from Maidenhead they went to live in Welwyn Garden City to be near their daughter. We visited them there, probably two or three times a year, until they moved to The Dell rest home in Suffolk.

Part two of my story begins when I was 14 years old. For some reason I had a detention at school. I have no idea what I did wrong, but my punishment was to clean the classroom. I was not amused; why should I do the cleaner's work? However, I picked up off the floor a filthy piece of card. On closer inspection I found it was a Voice

of Prophecy tract. (We now refer to it as the Adventist Discovery Centre.) It was an invitation to study Bible lessons, but it was the address that caught my eye – Stanborough Park. This was the church Pastor and Mrs Whiteside had told us about. I dusted off the card, filled it in and sent it off for the youth lessons. Over the next several years my mother and I did just about every course available.

At the same time as this I was teaching in the Church of England Sunday School, until one day the lesson was all about why bishops and suchlike wore certain clothes for different services. I thought, 'I really don't believe in this; how can I teach it to young children?' So I told the vicar I was not continuing. I told him I had been learning about another church that taught Bible truths.

A few evenings later the vicar was at my parents' home, telling them to keep me away from this devil-worshipping church. He was kindly shown the door. It so happened that I had just requested for an Adventist pastor to call – a tick box on the VOP card. Pastor John Lewis called, we chatted, and he invited me to the Slough church where he was the minister. The following Sabbath he picked me up, and I attended church in Slough. I was now 20 years old.

But all was not good. In those days I worked on Saturdays in my father's cake shop in Windsor. He was furious with me. How could I do this to him – let him down on the busiest day of the week? We argued, and in a rage he told me to do what I liked, but as long as I lived under his roof he didn't want any of those church people in his house. I continued going to church and in 1969 I was baptised. My mother was very proud of me; she was still studying, and one day told my father she wanted to be baptised too. Well, that really did it, because she too worked in the shop all the week, including Saturdays. 'My whole family doesn't care about me at all,' Dad said. 'You know I can't manage without you.' A short time after this my mother hurt her back – she was bed-bound for six weeks, and he had to do without her help. When the doctor said she was well enough to get up and walk, it was about the time of her birthday, so I asked Dad if we could have a party for Mum. He agreed, on the condition I arranged everything. I asked if I could invite whoever I liked; again he agreed, so I invited some Slough church members whom my mum had met, plus a few other friends. It was such a success, my father said it was the best party we had ever had. Shortly after this my mum was baptised. My dad was almost 80 when he joined the church.

Don't give up on people – it took me 17 years, my mum 18 years and my dad 50 years from first hearing about Seventh-day Adventists to making our decision.

Before I close, I would just like to return to one of those early visits to Pastor and Mrs Whiteside when I was about

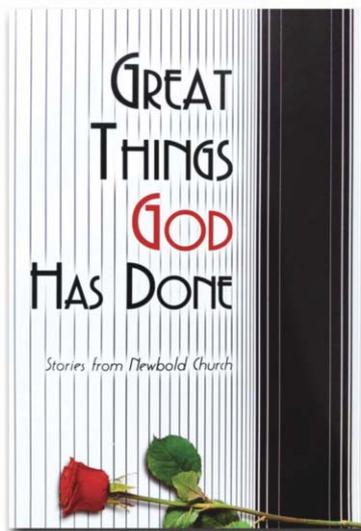
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Retirement reflections

by Humphrey Walters, London Area 6A

Like a number of colleagues, I entered the ministry around the time many pastors were still using such teaching aids as flannel boards, black light, overhead projectors, and film strips for delivering religious instruction. That's right: the good old days (when we ignored each other with books, instead of smartphones!). After forty-one years, when 'time' was finally called on my denominational service, video projectors, PDF bulletins and brochures, and Zoom meetings, along with virtual attendance at overseas church events, had all become as ordinary as vanilla ice cream. One of these days, in the kingdom, I'll give you the whole nine yards on my experience. For now, please accept this heavily condensed version.

Sensing God's call to pastoral ministry back in the mid-seventies, it was upon encouragement from Pastor David West (my minister at the time, Ilford Church) that, in the autumn of 1976, I enrolled at Newbold College for ministerial training.¹ Pastor Ken Gammon was the SEC president who employed me in January 1980, whereupon I commenced my internship with Pastor Cecil Perry at the Brixton and Battersea churches. I married my darling wife, Ava, the following year, and was subsequently ordained at an SEC camp meeting in October

11 years old. They asked me what I wanted to do when I grew up. I answered, 'Well, I would either like to be a missionary and go to Africa,' – at this I could see delight on their faces – and then I continued, 'or I would like to be an actress.' Their smiles changed to looks of concern. Today I would like to tell you that my dreams came true on both accounts – maybe in slightly different ways. No, I never did go to Africa, but for my first job on leaving school I worked in a private boarding school – part-time in the kindergarten with 3-4-year-olds. At other times I assisted the matron with the

young boarders, some as young as 4. Many of these boarders were children of doctors, dentists, scientists and ambassadors – mostly from the African continent, all sent to Britain for their education.

I eventually began working at Newbold School and stayed in Foundation 1 (then called Pre-school) for 26 years. I feel that helping children from all different backgrounds to gain a richer knowledge of their Friend Jesus fulfilled my missionary dreams.

'And the actress part?' you ask.

In my late teenage years I joined a Christian amateur

dramatic group in Maidenhead, where, with Christians from a variety of denominations, I performed plays in churches, nursing homes and the Maidenhead Town Hall. In addition, I have been teaching speech and drama for 50 years – for the first 15 years preparing children for examinations with the Associated Board of Royal Schools of Music, then over 30 years with LAMDA (the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art). I think both 'performing' in the classroom with young children and teaching the value of verse and prose to young people have helped me fulfil

1984. Back then, as some of you will recall, marriage was (unofficially) considered a prerequisite for ordination.

Without Ava's big-hearted and unsparing support, I wouldn't have been able to fulfil my calling. She has never been anything less than one hundred percent in her devotion to the cause. A career woman in her own right, she was a solicitor for nearly forty years, up to the time of her recent retirement, operating her own legal practice for most of that time. Nonetheless, our four children were always front and centre of her life. She embodies all that's meant by friendship evangelism, and in all the places we served she distinguished herself by being foremost among those fruitfully involved in various outreach ministries. She enjoys gardening, playing Scrabble, and going for walks (especially in green, leafy areas and country parks). She's also a wonderful cook and puts the 'oooo' in food! I'm always having to fight to keep my weight in check. She therefore has a lot to answer for!

Ava and I love the Lord and His church. Across the years, we've been blessed to be able to work alongside an innumerable host of some of the finest, most gracious church members one could ever wish to meet. So many, within the various churches, brought tremendous energy, skill, humour, dedication, creativity, and cordiality to the business of advancing the work of God. Special memories were created, and valued friendships were formed. We were favoured to have a front-row seat to see God at work in gloriously changing people's lives and equipping congregations as agencies of healing and redemption. Our sincerest thanks to all who stood shoulder-to-shoulder with us as we served alongside you in your various districts and congregations.² Ava and I are truly grateful to God for having granted us the opportunity to serve in the various ways we've been able to do. We extend to you all our love and very best wishes.

Forty-one years of denominational service . . . it's been an incredible journey, and it's not over yet. Although I entered retirement in December 2020, the way I see it, we're still involved in pastoral ministry, only now no longer on the conference payroll. Spoiler alert: I may be coming by your local church in the near future . . . but, alas, without my trusty flannel board, black light apparatus or film strips. They've all become as extraordinary as spaghetti-and-cheese-flavoured ice cream!

¹Fellow students of that era included such notables as John and Mary Barrett, Jeff Brown, Vince Goddard, Bernie Holford, Victor Hulbert, Ian Lorek, Rainford McIntosh, Mick Smart, Paul Tompkins, and Mike Toy, among others.

²Pastoral districts in which we served, as well as SEC administration, in chronological order: Brixton & Battersea (internship with Cecil Perry), 1980; Peckham & Deptford (now Greenwich), 1981-83; Willesden & Kingsbury (now North Wembley), 1984-85; Andrews University student, 1985-87; Hackney, Stratford, & Plaistow, 1987-92; Lewisham, Sydenham & Eltham (now known as Welling, having merged with Mottingham), 1992-96; in SEC administration from 1996 to 2007 (along with Harlow); Hampstead, 2008-2013; East Ham (now Ilford Lane) & Leytonstone, 2014-2015; Tottenham Holcombe Road & Barnet, 2018-2020.

my dreams of acting.

Looking back at my ambitions as a young child, I can see that they have been fulfilled, but I know too that when I first expressed my ideas, those prayers of Pastor and Mrs Whiteside – and all through my life the prayers of my mother – kept me on (hopefully!) the right path.

I also thank God for His leading, as through the years I have met some wonderful children and their parents and seen so many of those children grow into remarkably successful adults. I feel I have been truly blessed.

Earth and Soul 6

by David Wright

‘Go watch the ants, . . . watch what they do and be wise.’

Proverbs 6:6, ICB

Biodiversity loss is on the agenda for the COP26 conference in November. With insect populations representing a significant proportion of all animal numbers and biomass, recent research showing catastrophic insect loss is causing serious concern. Britain has over 12,000 insect species – with all playing pivotal roles in sustaining the very terrestrial ecosystems that humans rely on for water, food, energy, clothing, shelter and health.

Bees, for example, pollinate over 66% of the world’s crop species, contributing to a third of the food we eat. Their annual economic value as pollinators has been estimated at £500m. Yet since 1930 the UK has destroyed 97% of its wildflower meadows, and through intensive farming, mono-cropping, and excessive pesticide use has lost 13 bee species, with another 35 now close to extinction. Echoing Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, Professor Dave Goulson at Sussex University has recently published *Silent Earth – averting the insect apocalypse*, which reports British insect populations having declined 90% during his lifetime. It describes how, as insects become scarcer, our world will slowly grind to a halt, as we simply cannot function without them.

One reviewer has written: ‘One of the most striking revelations in *Silent Earth* is

that the UK, famed as a nation of nature lovers – with much-trumpeted national parks and sites of special scientific interest, and millions signed up to conservation organisations such as the RSPB and local wildlife trusts – ranks 189th out of 218 countries included in a recent global biodiversity study – making us one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world!’¹

It seems a tragedy that many insects are still regarded as pests. While we may not be fans of mosquitos, midges, or horseflies, whether we like it or not, they all have vital ecological functions. Wasps, for example, are both pollinators, with 150 plant species being totally dependent on them, and top-level biocontrol predators, providing worldwide food biosecurity worth over £300 billion per annum.

A recent *Guardian* article titled ‘Spare that flea! – how to deal humanely with every common household pest’ has Tim Dowling suggesting we should all learn from Buddhist principles about learning to live with insects and controlling them without killing them.²

Depending on which translation is used, the Bible provides between 90 and 120 references to insects and other arthropods – ranging from fleas, crickets, flies, bees and grasshoppers to locusts, lice, maggots, and moths – sadly, most being regarded as pests, and some recommended for eating.

The Bee Conservancy recommends we all try creating more bee-friendly areas by planting flowering plants around our gardens, hedgerows and allotments, and in flowerpots, window boxes or planters.

¹Caroline Sanderson, *The Bookseller*, 21/5/21

²Tim Dowling @IAmTimDowling, *The Guardian*, 5/7/21

A close-up photograph of a bee on a pink flower. The bee is positioned in the center-right of the frame, facing left. Its body is dark with a fuzzy texture, and its wings are spread out. The flower is a vibrant pink with numerous yellow stamens. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

The Bee Conservancy recommends we all try creating more bee-friendly areas by planting flowering plants around our gardens, hedgerows and allotments, and in flowerpots, window boxes or planters.

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Three writers; one theme; three plays; one powerful weekend.

Lockdown proved to be so many different things to so many different people. There were tales of laughter, love, loneliness, and loss.

As we emerge after our enforced separation, three of London's leading award-winning playwrights come together to create a festival of drama on Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 October at The Union Theatre.

Join Alan Charles, Mark Grey, and Jermaine Wong as each of them explores the experience of lockdown from their own perspective on one amazing night, in one amazing festival. . . .
<http://uniontheatre.biz/lockdown.html>



by Sharon Platt-McDonald

Organic September

In the UK, 'Organic September' runs as a month-long campaign, aiming to raise awareness of organic products; highlighting brands, producers and farmers whose passion for preserving nature and safeguarding our environment is at the core of their business.

This issue of 'Enhancing Health' brings more awareness of eco-health and challenges us to do more to protect the environment and preserve our well-being.

Perhaps the best place to start is to take a look at our soil, to discover what we can do with it and what difference our soil quality and its products could make.

The Soil Association¹ is a charity organisation on a quest to change the way we produce food, while caring for the environment. They state: 'We are the Soil Association – the charity digging deeper to change the way we eat, farm and care for our natural world.' The expanse of their influence and impact is far-reaching, as they seek to make a difference in society. The scope of their remit is expressed in the following statement on their website, inviting us to membership of their organisation:

'Together we can make a world of difference: on the land working with farmers; on the streets campaigning with our communities; in schools and hospitals improving the food on the menu; and in Parliament lobbying the Government for a healthier food and farming future.'

Join Us | Soil Association Membership

Setting targets is a key focal aspect, underpinning the work that the Soil Association undertakes. Government priorities are on the top of their list of areas in which they feel urgent action needs to be taken. They state:

'We're calling for our government to join the dots between the

*interconnected climate crisis, the nature crisis and the dietary health crisis.'*²

Additional areas of action for their annual campaigns to tackle include:

- Reversing climate change
- Ten years to agroecology and sustainable diets
- Better food for all
- Risks from a UK-US trade deal
- Championing agroforestry
- Food security
- Reducing pesticides
- Reducing antibiotics in farming
- Fixing nitrogen
- Genetic modification and gene editing
- Protecting trees
- Supporting agritech

The Soil Association has indicated the top 5 herbs to grow at home,³ giving the following explanatory notes for each:

1. **Lemon balm** – a hardy little plant with a beautiful fragrant, lemony aroma
2. **Mint** – beautifully refreshing and used in many dishes, teas and skincare routines
3. **Fennel** – a sweet aniseed-smelling herb that liquorice lovers will enjoy
4. **Lavender** – one of the best-loved and well known of all the herbs
5. **Camomile** – known for its alleged soothing and calming properties

Assignment: Let's embrace this challenge to grow our own herbs.

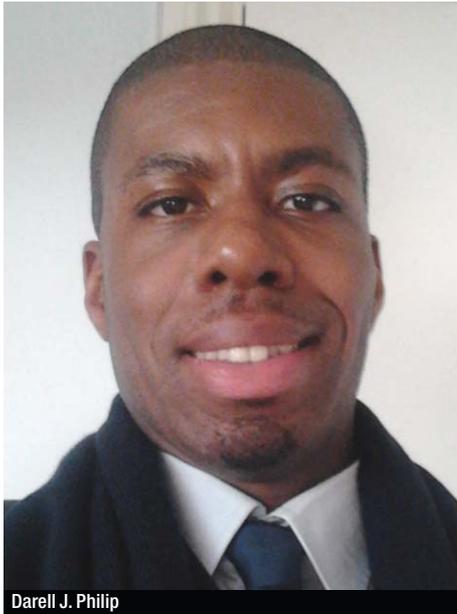
Good health!

¹<https://www.soilassociation.org>

²<https://www.soilassociation.org/causes-campaigns/>

³<https://www.soilassociation.org/take-action/growing-at-home/5-herbs-to-grow-at-home/>

HEALTH



Darell J. Philip



Josh Hubbins

Bridging the gap

Why are many of today's generation leaving the church? What can be done to stay connected and hope they will return? Darell J. Philip recently joined cognitive behavioural therapist Josh Hubbins to investigate further.

Darell J. Philip (DJP): Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Josh Hubbins (JH): I'm Josh Hubbins, aged 29 years, from Wolverhampton. I moved to London three years ago and currently live and work in South London as a cognitive behavioural therapist in the area of mental health. My work involves looking at the difficulties individuals may encounter with the way that they think, to find solutions which will enable them to reach their goals along their journey to positive mental health.

DJP: Can you share with us a little about your upbringing?

JH: Sure. From early childhood both my parents, who were heavily involved in church life, encouraged me to read the Bible and learn lessons from it, but when I was about 5 they stopped attending, and so I obviously didn't attend church much after that. Though my parents (now separated) were not particularly religious, I did have a simple and structured upbringing alongside my six brothers and sister. Being the oldest sibling, there was an expectation for me to be a role model.

It was during this COVID-19 pandemic, when I began to think about my life and its purpose, that I returned to church and haven't looked back since.

DJP: You speak about the expectation of

being a role model to your younger siblings. Who were your role models during your childhood years?

JH: My role models growing up were footballers – I was in awe of any footballer I saw, because I loved watching and playing football. I also admired a variety of musical artists because of their creative talent.

DJP: What makes a good role model?

JH: To start with, someone with a great work ethic. Hard work and commitment are central to success in any and all areas of life. A good role model is also someone who has really good values in all areas of their life – often the result of good parenting or good relationships. As I've grown, I recognise that the ultimate role model is Jesus, with our lives modelled on His. But I also recognise that there are those around us with an exceptional work ethic and values from whom we can learn.

DJP: Role models, then, are important for young people. What role, if any, does social media play in the promotion of role models towards young people?

JH: Social media plays a huge role in the lives of today's young people, with many of their role models found on these platforms. Exposure to those who are deemed successful through television, media and

games is packaged in such a way as to attract the minds of young people wanting to be successful themselves. I believe the bar and measure for success on these platforms is wrong, but alternatively should be measured on the impact such platforms or individuals have on a person holistically – socially, mentally, physically and spiritually.

Our materialistic society equates success with how much money we have in our bank account. However, a far greater measure of success is about how well we build up and make a difference in other people's lives, and the legacy we leave.

DJP: Why do young people leave the church? And what can be done to win them back?

JH: Some of the reasons they have left the church include:

- Church is over-protective
- Diversity fatigue
- Sex and sexuality
- Science – Creation versus evolution
- Intolerance – restrictive and proscriptive church practices
- A shallow experience of God during the teen years and in their twenties

There are some things we can do which can help to bridge the gap. These include transparency: young people appreciate it when people are real and do not pretend to be something they are not. Often church folk look, dress and speak the part well, but mask what they are really thinking, feeling and doing. It's time to remove those masks and be authentic: first with God, then with ourselves personally, and finally with the young people.

Isn't it time for us to share our testimonies with them? What struggles did we face when we were their age? Although some of the challenges we once faced were different, many are similar and we need to let them know that we've walked where they walk.

When it comes to sharing how much we appreciate the Bible as our guide, let's bring it to life in a way which emphasises that there is a story in there which relates to every experience we encounter in our own lives – positive or negative. The biblical accounts of Creation, racism, jealousy, murder, lust, sexual immorality, greed, lies and suicide – among others – are there both for our learning and counsel. Are these not issues we've faced and overcome through our trust in Jesus? Did He not model overcoming evil with good?

And then I think of the parable of the prodigal son. I see the father who welcomes, who embraces the son. Could it be that the first welcome step is to listen to young people without – how shall I put it – casting the first stone? Listen, just listen to young people. My experience in counselling tells me that 'listening' is a great but essential way to bridge the gap, to set them on a good path – hopefully, one which leads them back to Christ.

Aberdaron camps – junior, earliteen, and youth

by Pastor Adam Ramdin

‘I learnt a lot and definitely feel more “spiritually advanced” than I was when we first arrived.’



On the water at Teen camp



Camp cook, Cheryl Banton

After 18 months of lockdowns, virtual learning and little human interaction, to be at Aberdaron Camp this summer for those able to make it was a heartfelt welcome. During 2020 we were unable to run the camps, but this year, with the roadmap out of lockdown, we could begin to plan for summer camps. Planning was difficult for all, staff and campers, not knowing if the camps would actually run. It wasn't until two weeks before camps were due to start that we got the green light to go!

During August we ran our three usual camps, junior, earliteen and youth camp. Junior camp (ages 8-12) involved 32 campers driven to camp from Birmingham and Manchester by minibus on 1 August, and we knew our campers were kids brimming with energy to get outside and have fun – something that many have not done for well over a year. Melissa Nicholson led this camp, with the able support of the volunteer staff who come every summer.

Earliteen camp (ages 13-16) had 53 campers. As the coach pulled out of the car park of Aston-Newtown Church in Birmingham, rumour has it that some of the parents cheered, as they were getting their first break from their kids in 18 months! This camp, ably run by our camp master, Olivia Campbell, was



Forever friends



On the water at Junior camp



Youth camp 2021

supported by Michael Likupe, along with the amazing counsellors and activity staff. As we experienced at junior camp, excellent weather enabled us to go to the beach several times to make use of the kayaks and the jet ski.

This year's new equipment feature was two huge stand-up paddle boards, each with the capacity to take up to 8 adults at the same time. It goes without saying how much everyone loved them!

Youth camp (ages 17-30+) this year also had a large take-up due to the reality that this represented the first time in two years that most had the chance to have a getaway. While the weather was not so great, the fellowship was really good. Camp worship speaker was the South England Conference Youth Director, Pastor Anthony Fuller. Adriel Chitura, commenting on his camp experience, said, 'I was well and truly blessed. I learnt a lot and definitely feel more “spiritually advanced” than I was when we first arrived.'

Our food was excellently provided all summer by Cheryl Banton and her team. Delicious, plentiful, on time – they did an excellent job, as always.

Over camp season we naturally encountered the challenges of running a camp during a pandemic. With lateral-flow COVID-19 tests taken by everyone on site each week, we also carried out mid-week tests, which unfortunately exposed that some had COVID-19 and needed to go home. This is the new normal, as we try to adapt our old way of living to accommodate the risk of the virus. In the absence of a ready-made manual telling us exactly how to run camps in the new reality, we know we are on a continual learning curve.

We would like to thank all the campers who came, and all the parents and family members who sponsored their children to come. Thank you for taking a step of faith in a pioneer camp that was run during a pandemic. Thank you for the sacrifices that you made, and thank you for entrusting your children and youth to us over the summer. Pictures from this camp can be found online on our Facebook page and our Instagram account: @necyouth.

'Whit & Wild Camp' 2021

'It's the place, it's the surroundings, it's the people, it's the company, it's the spirituality.'



View of Aberdaron Bay

Photos: David Neal



The cairn at the top of Mynydd Anelog

It's the place

When the North England Conference (NEC) purchased a piece of land just outside the village of Aberdaron in the 1960s, little could the then NEC youth director Pastor Jim Huzzey and his wife Gill have imagined the ministry legacy they would create for thousands of Adventist youth. His burden was to find a place where Adventist young people could connect with God and each other in beautiful and natural surroundings. The legacy continued during the 1980s under the leadership of Pastor Bob Rodd and his wife Moira. But it was through the inspiration, dedication and hard work of Keith and Joan Hamilton that the 'Whit & Wild Camp' was created. Their vision continues today under the leadership of Philip and Beryl Emm.

Known as the Land's End of Wales, Aberdaron is located at the western end of the Llyn Peninsula, surrounded by both stunning land and seascapes. The village itself captures a moment in time; cafes set in old cottages, a former fishing village, revealing a remoteness far removed from the everyday existence of most. As English visitors to the village shops and cafes discover, they are most definitely in Wales, with young retail assistants fluent in conversational Welsh, each adding to the mystery of the place.

Glan yr Afon, the location of the 'Advent Youth Camp and Adventure Training Centre', is located just under a mile up the hill from the village.

It's the people

Many who attend 'Whit & Wild' began their Aberdaron experience as children, and then through the teen and young adult years – and, years later, they just keep returning and won't let it go. As Graham Harlin explains, 'It's just about all the friends we've made over the years here and the relaxed nature of it.' Trevor and Christine Hammond agree: 'It's a time away from everything with family, friends, and to enjoy the fun.'

The intergenerational nature of 'Whit & Wild Camp' also gives an added dynamic. It's quite something to discover the children of parents who used to attend the 1980s 'Senior Special Pursuits' camps now enjoying the very same water sports their parents enjoyed 30 years previously, such as brothers Andrew and Laurence Clark from Leamington Spa.

It's the surroundings

Of course, 'It is a place to meet friends,' says Julie Arthur, 'but then it's also a peaceful place to relax and recharge the batteries. And, if you want, it also gives the opportunity to be



The local inhabitants, with their views of The Point and Bardsey Island



Left to right: Grace Summers, Emily Winnitt, Josh Summers, Anna Sanders and Daniel Hammond



Left to right: Beryl Emm, Natasha Shaw, Emma Powls, Martin Shaw, Pastor Derek Simon, and Eleri Dutton

totally off-grid.' Bronwyn Lockham from Leamington Spa enjoys 'the freedom to play – even when you are grown up'. Jacqueline Anderson loves this camp 'to spend time out with friends'. Or is it

also, I wonder, the combination of enjoying good company in great surroundings?



Left to right: Luke Ginton, Yvonne Bauwens, Jacqueline Anderson, Phil Anderson and Laurence Clark

It's the company

James Finch, who has recently started attending the Kidderminster fellowship and is a first-time camper at 'Whit & Wild', had 'never experienced anything like this before'. As he talked with me, I saw him take a glance at Analog (hill) in the distance. 'Everywhere I look around me is beautiful. It truly is a magical place, and I have to say there's no other place I would rather be than here.' For James – a great experience, a new community, acceptance. It was a similar experience for two brothers aged 17 and 14, one of whom shared, 'Why haven't we been to this camp before?' and the other said, 'This is the best camp I've ever been to.'

It's the spirituality

Worship this year was once again led by the Winnitt family praise team from the Kidderminster fellowship. The padre, Pastor Llew Edwards, spoke on the theme of 'Identity', supported one evening by Steve Logan from Crieff, who explained the significance and dynamic of prayer in his life. 'This is where the "Whit & Wild" story gets really interesting,' says Philip Emm, camp director. 'We often say in church life that each of us is at a different stage on our spiritual journey – but I can say this really is the case at "Whit & Wild", and we intentionally and naturally welcome that.' As Graham Harlin sensitively explains, 'We can bring our children, who no longer identify as Adventists, but who remember the Adventist friends that were here when they were children, and they aren't opposed to joining in, and I think that's a good thing for them.'



Left to right: John Dutton, Eleri Dutton, Graham Harlin, Carole Peacock, Steve Peacock and Elaine Harlin

Left to right: Anna Sanders, Tom Sanders, Zoe Skopek, Anastasia Skopek, Krystal Sutton and unknown

What is it about this camp, I wonder? There's something special going on here. I want my church to be like this camp – warm, inviting, accepting, joyful, gracious, kind, supportive, gentle. Or perhaps, to put it another way, why can't the local church community be more like an Aberdaron camp? For Phil and Beryl Emm, it is not a question they take a lot of time to wrestle over – they are just determined to make it happen. They call it a 'Whit & Wild' camp. I can't help but think of it as a 'staying connected' camp – and I dare to think the Holy Spirit does too.

To know more about the ministry Aberdaron offers, go to: <http://www.aberdaroncamp.com/>

EDITOR





Nyah Aymes-Pieterse baptised by Pastor Israel Williams



Alek Turcan baptised by Pastor Israel Williams



Both candidates with Pastor Williams after the baptism

Fifteen baptised in the East Kent district of churches

The churches in Canterbury and Folkestone had cause to celebrate on a Sabbath afternoon during early spring, along with our sister churches in Ashford and Margate, as no fewer than thirteen precious souls were baptised and became members of the church. This was especially joyful after a year in which our churches have only been able to worship online due to the pandemic and consequent successive lockdowns. The services required careful planning to ensure the safety of all concerned, but provided an opportunity to host simultaneous baptisms in Canterbury and Folkestone, linked by the wonders of technology. While numbers present in the churches were severely restricted, members could share the services online and participate in the proceedings.

Pastor Greg Wilson, the current pastor in our district, conducted the baptism in Canterbury, baptising eleven candidates. Meanwhile, Pastor Israel Williams, a former pastor of our churches, baptised the remaining two candidates in Folkestone.

The pandemic did not prevent the Bible studies from taking place in order to prepare our new members for baptism. An elder, Pam Millington of Ashford Church, conducted weekly Bible studies online with the young people, who were the majority of candidates. It was especially joyful for her to see her four grandchildren among those who were baptised. Also included was a young man, **David Trandafir**, from Polegate Church, who joined in the studies. The other young people baptised were as follows: **Cai’Ron Benjamin, Cam’Ron Benjamin, Carter Benjamin and Tyler Benjamin; Marielle Zaccaria, Menahem Zaccaria and Christian Zaccaria**. These belong to two families from our Ashford church. Another young person baptised was **Ini Ajanaku**.

The other candidates, baptised in Canterbury, were **Colin Lucas** – an older gentleman who discovered the Canterbury church during the first lockdown – and **Innocent Kachoka**, one of our young people from Margate.

Simultaneously, two young people were baptised in Folkestone Church. They were **Nyah Aymes-Pieterse and Alek Turcan**.

In his appeal, Pastor Greg Wilson shared his own testimony of how he had resisted the Lord’s call for years before surrendering to the Lord, realising how God had led him. Challenging the online congregation and those present in the church, he asked the question: ‘Jesus has robes for every one of us. Are you ready to claim your robe?’

In answer to this word of inspiration, the baptistry in Canterbury was opened again on Sabbath morning 1 May as Carlotta Iannoni took her stand for Jesus. Carlotta is from Italy but has joined our online services, thanks to the witness of a couple in our Ashford church. God led her to accept the Adventist message, and she has become a member of our Ashford congregation.

Two weeks later, on 15 May, Pastor Greg Wilson was back in the baptismal pool – this time in Folkestone – to baptise a young man, **Jordan Mutemeri**. Jordan had been preparing for baptism, but finally felt ready to come forward and join the church. It was a particular joy for his mother to witness her son take his stand for the Lord.

We rejoice in how God has led His church in our district, and pray that more precious souls will join His people in the future.

JOHN WILSON (CHURCH ELDER, CANTERBURY)

The pandemic won't stop us

Like many other churches, Balham members have been determined that the pandemic won't stop us from having church. With this in mind, we pursued our plan to hold an evangelistic campaign – albeit with a little twist.

The twist was that the evangelist from the USA, Pastor Claude Edwards, wasn't able to travel to London for the campaign, but through the use of technology joined us each day for two weeks, as he presented the message and sang each night online. The series hub was at the Balham church on the large screen, but with the added dynamic of other members and visitors watching online in their homes.

The series started with a concert which included various artistes from home and abroad, sharing the Gospel in song, either live or pre-recorded.

Pastor Edwards hails originally from Jamaica but currently lives in Florida. A well-known singer, author and motivational speaker, each evening he shared the Gospel through both preaching and singing, supported by UK singing evangelist Paulette Prendergast, along with other artistes. For the health emphasis feature we used 'Life Colours', presented by Dr Chidi Ngwaba.

As the series concluded, **Darnell Christie, Malachi Obama, Suzette Martin and Angela Martin** declared their commitment to a new life in Christ through baptism. Some have been studying with others for months, and one was the son of the singing evangelist. We celebrated with them, both at church and with those viewing online. We knew that God had done it again!

The full series can be watched on the Balham church media page.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYxHBlg45NH6LWechH6cfu-A>

ERROL ANDERSON, COMMUNICATION LEADER
PHOTOS BY PAUL BROWN



Evangelist, Claude Edwards



Left to right: Pastor Akapo, Sally Brown (elder), Suzette Martin, Malachi Obama, Angel Martin, Darnell Christie, Sharon Cameron (elder), Bartholomew John (elder), Sindi Mabena (Bible worker)



Riva with her mum, Sharon

teenager – and now a member of the global Adventist family.

Pastor Valentine Roach assured Riva that following Jesus is the single most important decision she will ever make, one made for eternity.

Pastor Clifford Herman, SEC Pathfinder Director, was in attendance and encouraged Riva by presenting her with an Adventist Youth pin, and with the text 1 Timothy 4:12: 'Let no one despise you for your youth' (ESV).

Also in attendance was Pastor Michael Mbui, SEC Personal Ministries Director, who was blessed to see another young person dedicating her life to the Lord – a life of discipleship. As Riva continues to grow in Christ, Scripture will continue to be the significant guide. As her faith grows, her desire is to serve and build up the church as an active and gifted member.

This was the first time some of Riva's extended family had witnessed a baptism by full immersion. Many commented about how special the service was.

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Following Jesus . . . is for eternity

Entering the sanctuary with a guard of honour by her fellow Pathfinders and Adventurers, **Riva Ramberan** publicly declared her love for Jesus through baptism on Sabbath 7 August at the Watford Town church.

Riva made her decision for baptism at the last Trans-European Division camporee in 2019, but she wanted to be baptised in her home church. After extensive Bible studies with her Pathfinder leader, Caroline Kamara, and elder, Richard Henry, she prepared for her special day.

Since March 2020, Riva has blessed the church throughout the lockdown by sending the church WhatsApp group a hymn beautifully played by her each Friday, encouraged by her supportive mother, Sharon. A special slideshow, with music played by Riva, showed her progression from baby to

The relationship between doctrine and Christian love

by Dr George Knight

‘Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. . . . If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.’
(1 John 4:11, 12, NASB 1995.)

Imagine that if we could earn salvation under our own steam we might have reason to be proud of our accomplishments and even treat other ‘lesser beings’ with a bit of disgust since they hadn’t managed to reach our high level of accomplishment.

But that’s not the way it happens. All have failed and continue to do so. It is only the love of God that rescues us. Given that fact, the only possible response is love to Him and to our fellow beings. Love is the only proper response to a God who has saved us in spite of ourselves.

It’s not that doctrine isn’t important. Ellen White, for example, had a profound interest in the correct understanding of the Bible and Christian doctrine. Yet she was even more concerned that Bible study and doctrinal discussion take place in the context of Christian love.

Back in 1887, when she saw the cruel spirit of Minneapolis on the horizon, she had written that ‘there is danger of our ministers

dwelling too much on doctrines, . . . when their own soul needs practical godliness’ (Lt 37, 1887).

Again, in 1890, D. T. Jones (secretary of the General Conference) wrote to W. C. White that ‘your mother and Dr Waggoner both say that the points of doctrine are not the matters at issue at all, but it is the spirit shown by our people in opposition to these questions which they object to. I am perfectly free to acknowledge that the spirit has not been the Spirit of Christ. It has not been so in my case, and I think I can discern enough to be safe in saying that it has not been so in the case of others. I have often thought over the matter and wondered why it was that such unimportant matters, practically, should cause such a disturbance, such a division. . . .

The point in your mother’s mind and in the mind of Dr Waggoner was not to bring in these questions and force them upon all, but to bring in the doctrine of justification by faith and the Spirit of Christ, and try to get the people converted to God.’

There’s the crucial point! Let’s face it – when our ‘Christianity’ makes us unloving we obviously don’t have the real thing, even if we are correct on all the doctrines. But when we realise that Christ, through the grace of God, has truly rescued us from the pit of sin, our response will be love. A lack of it indicates that we have yet to be rescued ourselves.

Help me, Father, to accept Your saving grace so that I might become a channel of Your love.



At a glance . . .

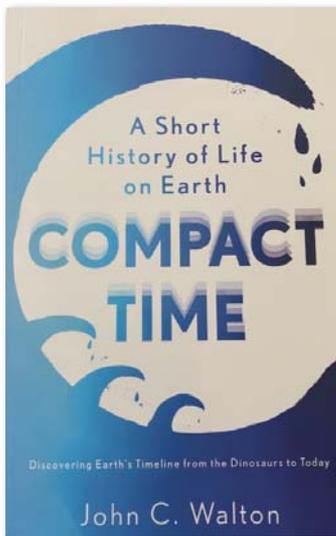
- **Debleaire Snell will be the new speaker and director for Breath of Life Ministries**, replacing Carlton P. Byrd, who accepted a call in May to serve as the president of the Southwest Region Conference in the United States of America. The *Adventist Review* quotes G. Alexander Bryant, the North American Division president, as saying, ‘Pastor Snell is a gifted communicator of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.’ Snell says he is ‘humbled’ by his new role, going on to say, ‘It is my goal to zealously make Christ known through the preaching of the Gospel.’ Amen to that!
- **‘Our nurses and physicians are exhausted,’** say AdventHealth doctors responding to the needs of the Central Florida community in the United States of America. AdventHealth’s chief nursing officer, Linnette Johnson, says the healthcare system has enough supplies to cope, but the staff are approaching the limits of human endurance. Dr Neil Finkler, AdventHealth’s chief clinical officer, said over 90% of COVID-19 patients are unvaccinated, and in recent weeks the patients have been younger. He says, ‘None of these patients thought they would get the virus, but . . . even the young and the healthy, including pregnant patients, are now starting to fill up our hospitals.’ Consequently, AdventHealth staff are urging everyone to get vaccinated and wear facemasks, in line with current governmental guidance.
- **A Psalm 23 garden has been created at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show**, according to the *Baptist Times*. Sarah Eberle’s garden, set up for the international charity Bible Society, ‘is set to spearhead a campaign to see the creation of community gardens around the

country as we emerge from the pandemic’. The key features of the garden include green pastures, still waters, a difficult journey and a homecoming at journey’s end.

- **A fascinating new documentary has been produced by Hope Channel Norway and the Trans-European Division.** *Codex Sinaiticus: A journey in biblical discovery* takes viewers to the mysterious St Catherine’s Monastery near Mount Sinai, home to over 2,300 ancient manuscripts – including, historically, some of the earliest extant copies of the Holy Scriptures. The documentary, which faced logistical and security challenges to produce, also relives the biblical accounts of Moses and the children of Israel, and has been available on the TED YouTube channel since the beginning of September.
- **The Church Times has taken the unusual step of publishing the findings of a review that calls for the resignation of a presiding bishop**, the Bishop of Aberdeen & Orkney. The diocese has been described as suffering ‘systemic dysfunction’ with multiple accounts of bullying and intimidation. The bishop values ‘clarity’, and has ‘learned to be both decisive and forceful’, but has had the unfortunate effect of alienating, offending and destroying her colleagues. May we as a church take cautionary lessons from this, and pray for our fellow Christians to find healing in Christ.

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

ANDREW PUCKERING



Compact Time – A Short History of Life on Earth

John C. Walton

ISBN 9781800461246
Paperback, 200 pages

Now available from
<https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk>

challenge the breadth of evidence. For many, infinite elastic time and randomness sit uncomfortably with the complexity, diversity and interdependent ecology observed in nature.

Professor Walton is an eminent research chemist qualified to be critical of interpretations held by advanced colleagues, with the authority to offer credible alternatives. He identifies simply as a 'conservative Christian', though is well known among Adventists in Scotland and the British Union.

Compact Time is not addressed to any particular religious or scientific group. It is composed in clear English for

those unfamiliar with specialist terms, though some exposure to science is helpful. The text does not set out to address the cosmic time of the universe, or the precision of creation in seven literal days. Its purpose is to compress evidence attributed to 'deep time' into 'compact time' which is measured in thousands of years. It incorporates discontinuities like floods and earthquakes to account for rapid changes in species among layers uncovered in the earth's crust. Evidence for compact time relies on the presence of 'carbon 14' throughout the geologic column which dates the lowest layers in aeons with recent composition situated closer to the surface.

This rare isotope decays by half every 5,700 years, such that over ten cycles or 57,000 years its presence should be undetectable. This is well short of the horizon set by deep-time proponents.

Time is a significant concept for Adventists. The celebration and sanctity of a special Creation frames our basic belief system. But, beyond our understanding of origins, the duration of time is critical to moral history as portrayed in the great-controversy narrative which connects Genesis through the Cross to Revelation. In short, 'deep time' offends our understanding of a just and merciful God, while 'compact time', though still difficult, gives hope for a time when sin and suffering will be no more. In this sense Dr Walton's contribution is redemptive.

The compact work, published in 2021 over 167 pages and eight chapters with endnotes, deserves to be read by those seeking to reconcile the tensions between their religious belief and popular expressions by public advocates.

VICTOR PILMOOR

In conversation over the years there are subjects that friends file as 'too hard'. While most people adopt views about the origins of life through billions of years, few are sufficiently schooled to form a coherent view of their own.

By similar token, those who accept a time-frame consistent with Adam, Eve and Noah find themselves ill equipped to

Newbold
Diversity
Centre

Autumn semester 2021

Theme: Urban religious
diversity

Tuesday 12 October at 7.30pm (Zoom) –
The 2021 Beach Lecture in Bridge Building
Exploring faith and community through
Christian-Muslim dialogue

Speakers:

Dr Hassan Rabbani – Muslim chaplain, University of Edinburgh

Dr Lia Shamada – Senior researcher for the Susanna Wesley Foundation
and associate chaplain of Whitelands College, University of Roehampton

More information at:

<https://www.newbold.ac.uk/diversity-centre/>

Diversity
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lectures



Grace Community Church teams up with local community group

The newly formed Grace Community Church has since the start of the pandemic been providing regular support to a local Tottenham-based community group.

The group, known as Community Cook Up, provides local residents in need with fresh fruit, vegetables and other food items on a weekly basis. With the support of Grace Community Church, these residents have also been able to come along and receive a hot meal.

On 1 July 2021 Grace Community Church once again joined with Community Cook Up volunteers, local residents, relatives and friends of the group to enjoy an open day that was held in the grounds of the Eric Allin Community Centre in Northumberland Park, Tottenham, London N17.

There was a variety of activities throughout the day, along with the regular food bank. Entertainment included music, a bouncy castle, face painting and games, and there were also advice sessions on housing-related matters.

As well as providing a barbecue meal, Grace Community Church arranged a health tent, administering blood pressure and cholesterol checks, with booklets and advice on healthy living. Grace Community Church also opened up a prayer tent to which everyone was invited, and a number of visitors took the opportunity to receive prayer over their lives.

The weather on the day was very good. Everyone was made to feel welcome, and it was delightful to see people from different generations, religions and cultures having fun together.

Community Cook Up and Grace Community Church are very much dedicated to continuing their partnership to make sure that the centre is a hub of the local community, and this event showcased what can be done when we work together. There certainly was a lot of hard work to ensure that a great time was had by all, and it definitely paid off. It really was a team effort. The event was so successful that it was decided to repeat the whole day again on 29 July 2021.

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH
COMMUNICATIONS DEPT



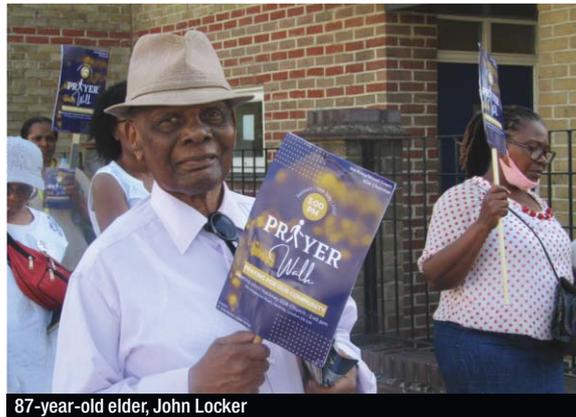
Hackney prayer walk and food bank

Hackney members have been engaged in two important outreach activities recently:

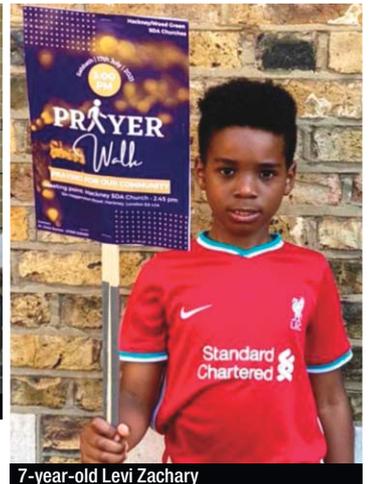
Hackney prayer walk

On the afternoon of Sabbath 17 July, members of the Hackney and Wood Green churches took to the streets of Hackney on a prayer walk for the community.

An emphasis on the need for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the community was highlighted throughout the



87-year-old elder, John Locker



7-year-old Levi Zachary



day, along with biblical texts used as spiritual armour while going out in the mission field.

Participants ranged in age from 7 to 91, proving that when it comes to prayer walking there are no age restrictions. The procession stopped at five different points, and at each stop prayers were offered for forgiveness, peace, spiritual healing, families, and church commitment to the community.

Steps to Christ, Power of Hope and Health and Wellness

were distributed to passers-by, some of whom were open to receiving prayers for themselves and their families, with others expressing an interest in attending church when it was fully open.

At the end, the Hackney pastor, Joojo Bonnie, commented: 'Just as Joshua and his army walked around the walls of Jericho seven times before the walls came tumbling down, we have walked around Hackney, praying for our communities, knowing that God is able to do exceedingly and abundantly

Church member wins heroes award

Tony Hawkins has always been a member of the Nottingham Deaf Society (NDS) and the deaf community, which he calls his second home.

What we now know is that the NDS on Forest Road in Nottingham had its origins as the Nottingham Deaf School in 1950. Tony has been a longstanding volunteer over all these years in various ways: leader in charge of the Nottingham Deaf Youth Club, a member of various committees,

supporting needs, and helping to establish new support networks for individuals in the deaf community. He has also supported numerous projects and activities of the NDS, and has been an active member of the deaf community in Nottingham.

Before the coronavirus pandemic started, Tony was volunteering as a befriender (getting to know and supporting the needs of fellow deaf people in his community, visiting them in their homes, helping with individual needs) specifically for deaf people who were vulnerable and unable to attend the Deaf Society. When the pandemic began, many deaf people suddenly found themselves isolated at home, unable to see friends and have access to information (news, church, GP) in their first language of British Sign Language (BSL). With more people relying on technology, Tony volunteered to support the NDS in providing BSL information videos on how to keep safe online.

He supported people experiencing social isolation, poor mental health, learning difficulties, disabilities, and dementia. In response to



his activities Tony said, 'I wanted to make sure deaf people had regular face-to-face contact, so I made weekly doorstep visits, identifying additional needs, and worked hard to ensure those needs were met.'

He worked tirelessly to reduce loneliness and promote well-being for many of the deaf by teaching them how to use different types of technology, such as how to video-call to keep in contact with their family and friends. He also supported the NDS with the implementation of a tablet (iPad) loan scheme for socially isolated deaf people across Nottinghamshire without access to technology. Even a 90-year-old deaf man after a few weeks successfully got the idea of keeping in contact with friends!

Tony is an active member of the Deaf Church online (Zoom), which is headed by Pastor George Hamilton, and is fully aware of the needs of the deaf to access the Word of God in their first language. At the beginning of the pandemic, when all churches closed, he raised the concern for the need for deaf people to access church.

Recently baptised in March 2020, Tony was supported by Pastors Dan Dachin, the pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Nottingham, and George Hamilton in working to provide video recordings of sermons to the Zoom church for the deaf. Tony also supports Revd Wendy Murphy of St Mark's Deaf Church to provide online services through NDS YouTube, providing signed performances of hymns in BSL.

As a trained volunteer for Macmillan and a self-help group, Tony helped set up and host the Deaf Men's Cancer Support Group, working with other trained volunteers to provide emotional support to deaf men experiencing cancer.

After reviewing this catalogue of amazing work that Tony Hawkins has undertaken, the Nottingham Deaf Society (NDS) put his name forward to the Heroes Awards as a nominee for all his selfless work in his community. Three names went forward, and we were all so proud and pleased when his name was called as the winner of this award. When he won, Tony stated, 'It is an honour to win this heroes award as a deaf person in recognition of the work done for the deaf community.'

SHERRELLE RAMUS

more than we can ask or think, according to the power that works within us.'

Buoyed with excitement and anticipation of what God would do for the community, members gave thanks to God for all He had done and promises to do when those who are called by His name humble themselves, pray, seek His face and turn from their sinful ways.

Hackney food bank: a lifeline to the community

Members of Hackney Church have also been involved in running a food bank throughout the past year.

Beverley Daley, an assistant in the food bank, saw the need after members of the community had asked why the church doors had been closed. 'Many members of the community expressed various needs which they felt we could meet. So we decided to reopen our food bank,' said Beverley.

Running on Mondays and Thursdays from 3pm to 6pm, the food bank has supported single parents, the unemployed and the homeless. Hackney member Myriam Barham expressed pleasure in giving her time to serve the community: 'The food bank is an important service to the community because it serves everyone – all echelons of society.



Public Hackney Food Bank

There is no shame, because at some stage we all fall on hard times, but when we do it's good to know that the church doors are open and that someone cares.'

Marcus Arnold, a member of Hackney Church, delivers food packages. He said: 'I help with the delivery of food packages to the household, local hostels and the homeless.'

Pastor Joojo Bonnie says the food bank has been a lifeline to the community. 'We have



Beverley Daley, Myriam Barham, Monica Gayle and Marcus Arnold



A selection of the food at Hackney Food Bank

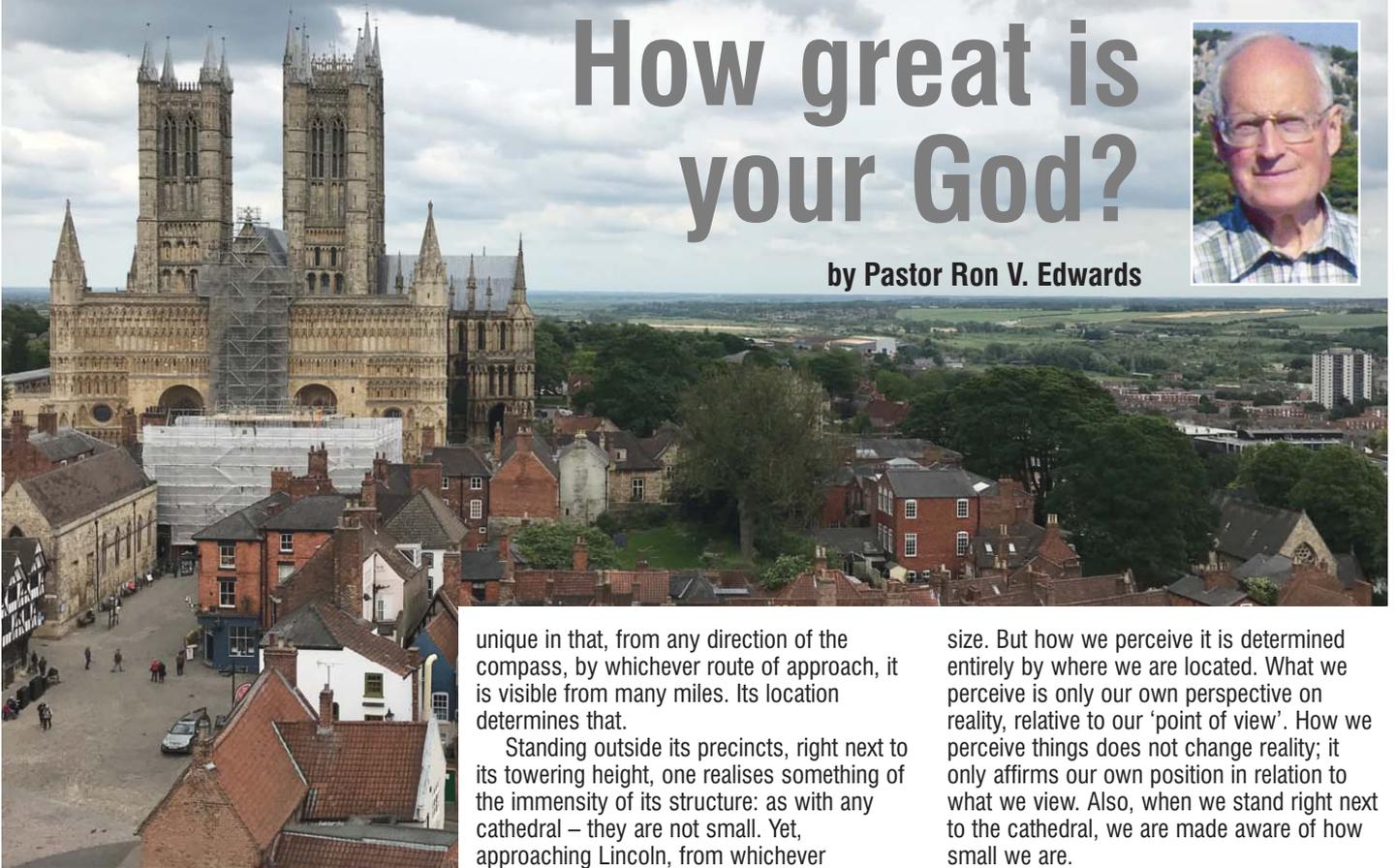
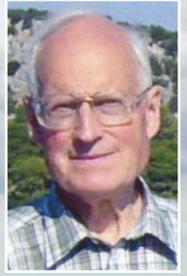
seen the numbers of those accessing the food bank steadily rise, with the number currently standing at 80 individuals per week. We see it as our Christian

duty to show the community that we care and that we are available to meet their various needs.'

DARELL J PHILIP, PR & COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT

How great is your God?

by Pastor Ron V. Edwards



The temple of Solomon must have been a breathtakingly magnificent structure: inspired by God for its design, in the choice of its structural materials, and its contents; but, above all, as the abiding place of God among His people, within the Most Holy Place. Without question, it must have been one of the then-current wonders of the world!

Yet that temple was representative of something far greater and more significant: of Jesus Himself, the Abode of God among humanity (John 1:14; 2:21; Colossians 2:9). Jesus' radiance, His spiritual splendour, His true glory, eclipsed that of any material, earthly temple: God made visible, in humankind, to human eyes!

Lincoln Cathedral, located on the brow of an escarpment overlooking the Trent valley, is

unique in that, from any direction of the compass, by whichever route of approach, it is visible from many miles. Its location determines that.

Standing outside its precincts, right next to its towering height, one realises something of the immensity of its structure: as with any cathedral – they are not small. Yet, approaching Lincoln, from whichever direction, as the cathedral comes into view from 20 or more miles away, it appears so tiny it would fit into a thimble. Has the cathedral, by some unexpected 'miracle', suddenly shrunk? Of course not! It is only a matter of perspective: one's own position in relation to the object viewed; and the closer you come, the larger the cathedral appears; till again, when you stand right next to it, you sense its true dimensions.

Of course, some might have a defect in their vision, or others might even close their eyes, so that, though standing right next to that mighty edifice, they cannot see it. Yet that is exactly what some people try to do with God: they shut their spiritual eyes, then pretend God is not there (Psalm 14:1).

Facts are absolute – such as the precise design and dimensions of the cathedral. They cannot change; the cathedral never alters in

size. But how we perceive it is determined entirely by where we are located. What we perceive is only our own perspective on reality, relative to our 'point of view'. How we perceive things does not change reality; it only affirms our own position in relation to what we view. Also, when we stand right next to the cathedral, we are made aware of how small we are.

Now, is this not a true representation of our relationship with God? The closer we are to Him, the more consummate is our experience of His infinite majesty and immeasurable power; but from far away that grandeur is lost on us.

So we can tell exactly how close we are to God by our perception and experience of His real greatness; or how far we are from Him by the diminution of such perception. To what extent do we experience His activity and providence in our own life? Can we trust Him? Do we trust Him that He is adequate to fulfil to us His gracious promises; or does our faith lack such unconditional confidence? Not to claim what He has never promised, yet to take Him at His word. That was the experience of Abraham, who was called *'the friend of God'* (Isaiah 41:8-10).

How close a friend to Him are you?

The Peacocks celebrate 50 years

Stephen and I met at Aberdaron youth camp one summer when I was 15 and he was 18. I lived in Manchester and Stephen lived in Coventry, so we were 100 miles apart. Stephen regularly hitchhiked up to Manchester to visit me, and in this way we were friendly for about two and a half years. Subsequently, we parted, and I moved to Leicester to do my teacher training at Scraftoft. Then we met up again in my final year and resumed our friendship, getting married in Manchester on 1 August 1971 by Pastor Ron Surridge.

We bought a tiny cottage which was almost derelict and we lived in a touring caravan in the garden for the first nine months of our marriage while our builder, with Steve as his assistant, renovated it for us. Stephen worked with his father and mother in the family business



of watchmakers and jewellers in Coventry, while I taught maths and science for two years in a secondary school in Bedworth and then for another two years at a middle school in Rugby.

We attended the Coventry church, and during these first years of our marriage were a part of the 'Gate' Christian folk club. It was a busy time, but very rewarding, with several people, including Pastors John Ferguson and Peter Jaynes, coming to join the SDA church through Gate.

Our daughter Claire arrived in March 1976, then our son Jonathan in November 1978. We lived happily in our little cottage in Long Lawford, but moved to Stretton-on-Dunsmore in 1983 to enable our children to attend a Church of England school. During this time we led out in adult and children's Sabbath School, and held other church offices in Coventry.

As a result of our house group Bible study and prayer meeting held in a home in Warwick, those of us who lived outside the Coventry area were impressed that we needed a church group in the town of Royal Leamington Spa; and, as such, we were founder members of the Leamington Mission church, meeting firstly in a chapel attached to a nursing home, then in a school, and, finally, after years of building and renovation work led by Pastor Alan Conroy, we met in the present building in Leamington.

We both worked for many years in the Peacock family business until we moved to Scotland, where Stephen worked at Roundelwood Health Spa, and Carole as administrative secretary in the Scottish Mission office. After Roundelwood was closed, Stephen worked for Rob Roy Homes until retirement.

Now retired, we continue to enjoy living in this beautiful part of the world and are very involved in Crieff Church. We have so much to thank God for in leading and guiding our lives over our fifty years of marriage and for the blessings of family – a caring daughter, son and daughter-in-law, and three lovely grandchildren. We celebrated this milestone of 50 years together with friends and family in the grounds of Crieff Church on 1 August 2021.

CAROLE PEACOCK

John Hemming (1937 to 2021)

d. 15 June. Born within the sound of the legendary Bow Bells, John Hemming was an authentic cockney lad. However, the timing of his birth meant that just two years later other noises were to be heard ringing around north London – the sounds of conflict as World War Two broke out. Most noticeable was the blast of falling bombs during the Blitz, when John and his family were bombed out of their home three times. By then John's father was in Egypt, away from John, his mother and his elder sister Pauline for six long years.

After the war, John finished his schooling and in 1955 was called up to the army. He was sent out to Malaysia, where he was awarded the Military Cross for his exploits – a medal that is granted in recognition of 'an act or acts of exemplary gallantry'. However, like many of his generation, he refused to discuss the events that led to him receiving this honour. This and other medals decorated his coffin at his funeral as silent witnesses to this part of John's life.

Upon leaving the army, John worked for a while as a policeman for London Transport; that is, until he got bored and left for New Zealand. While there, he attended 'Dead Men Do Tell Tales' meetings run by Pastor Bob Cherry, and his life was never to be the same again as he got baptised and became a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

He returned to England only to discover that both his parents were furious at his decision to join the church, being from a Catholic and Methodist background. With his father very ill, he and his parents moved to the Isle of Wight, where John had bought a house.

One Sabbath in 1968 John had a nice young lady sit behind him in church. After the service had finished, John went and introduced himself. Her name was Ruth Price, and she was on holiday. They knew right there and then that each of them had met their life partner. Six months later they were married and were to spend fifty-two years together.

Later, returning to the mainland as a married couple, John got a job training as a chef at Newbold College. Initially attending Reading Church, John ended up serving as leader of the new Wokingham church. Their mainland stay came to an end when Ruth's parents passed away and they once again found themselves on the Isle of Wight.

The island, as it is called by the locals, has never been blessed with great numbers of church members, so has always had the feel of being a frontier mission project. And it is through the dedication of members such as John that such groups keep going through the inevitable challenges that come their way. After Pastor Peter and Vera Stearman left the island, the group rallied and pulled together and managed to survive, not least because John took charge of the group.

John used to cycle everywhere, no less on Sabbaths, when he used to bike the four or so miles up hill and down dale to where the services were held to get there early, open up and ensure everything was ready for the folks to turn up.

John was passionate about spreading the Gospel. He was known for the many visits he made to folks on the island, his chaplaincy work at the prison and especially his love for going door-to-door collecting for what became ADRA. Ruth reports he

would have been out every waking hour collecting if she had not made sure he came home to eat.

In his later years John was diagnosed with Parkinson's. Although he was able to soldier on for a while, eventually things got difficult, not least when he contracted a life-threatening bout of sepsis. Ruth was able to care for him at home with the admirable support of Dolphin Care. Following a chest infection he was laid to rest in St Mary's Hospital on 15 June, but not before telling Ruth how much he loved her.

PASTOR ADRIAN PECK

Messenger

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 Editorial secretary: Sarah Jarvis
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Sunset

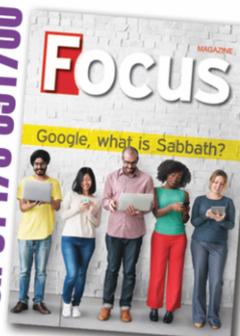
Sunset times are reproduced with permission from data supplied by HM Nautical Almanac Office.

	London	Card	Notf	Edin	Beif
Sept 24	6.54	7.06	6.58	7.06	7.17
Oct 1	6.38	6.50	6.41	6.48	6.59
8	6.22	6.34	6.25	6.30	6.42
15	6.07	6.19	6.09	6.12	6.25



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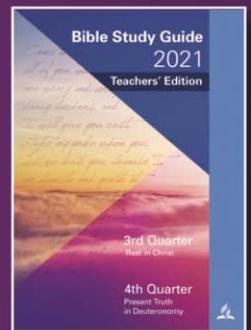
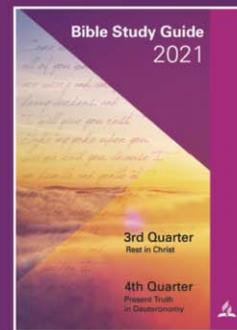
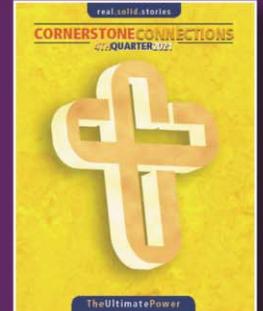
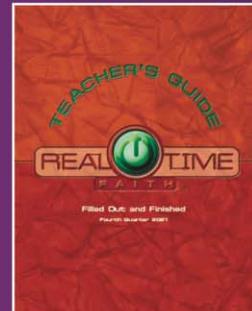
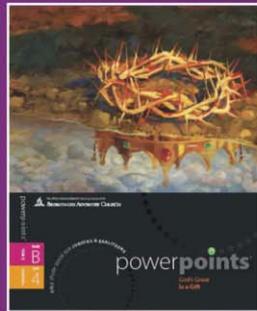
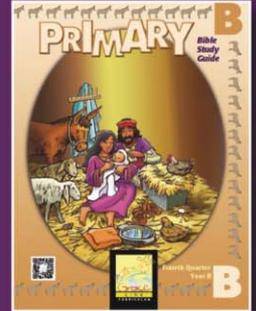
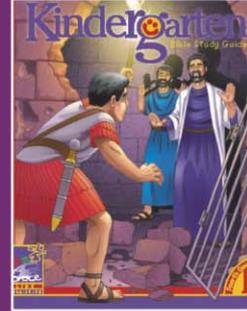
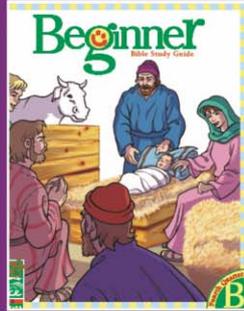
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