



Small group takes to Facebook

by Steven Hulbert (LIVE St. Austell)

It all started several months ago when we came to the realisation that hardly anyone, and sometimes no-one, was turning up for our Small Group on a Friday night. We kept it running as it was nice to begin the Sabbath together, but we realised that something needed to change for more people to be involved.

So, what did we do? I have a good number of friends on Facebook, and every so often I would be invited to see one of them broadcast their adventures, funny moments in life, or whatever they really wanted to share live on Facebook in real time. Which got me thinking, 'What if we did this for our Small Group?'

One Friday I announced on Facebook that at 8pm that evening there would be a LIVE St Austell Facebook Live worship session. It turned out to be just Jena (my wife) and I in front of my iPad. We sang several worship songs together, I read a portion of Scripture, spoke a few short sentences to accompany it, and then we finished with a song. That was it, 30 minutes and done. But boy, was I surprised as we worshiped together to see people engaging with the songs, commenting words of encouragement, even song requests. The biggest surprise was that within a few hours the recording had received well over 400 views; now that was a few more people than we had turning up on a Friday night! We had to do it again.

Over the following months I invited fellow musicians and singers to come and be a part of this new experiment, with good friends joining us from the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church and the Church of England,

offering genuine selfless worship to an online audience we would never ordinarily meet. This was turning out to be something special, not just because of who we were interacting with online, but because of the group that was starting to form in front of the camera on Friday nights.

On Friday, 6 April, it became apparent to me that this was an event we have to continue. Steven Webb turned up at the house an hour early to set up various iPhones and iPads (mine included), so as to make the live streaming more interesting. During the week several youths we are connected to through the church, asked to be there, along with the various artists I had invited for the evening. It really was one of those moments about which one would say, 'You have to have been there!'

It was a God-filled room, crowded with people of all ages, along with guitars, keyboards, a saxophone, and the cajón drum. The Scriptural inspiration for the evening came from John 14:27 and our sharing was on the topic of 'What do we worry about?' Among those in the room, many said that this was what they had needed at the end of what had been a busy week, and several texts from the online audience said exactly the same.

Why have I shared this with you? Because I believe that God can turn an empty living room on a Friday night into a space with the potential to speak to hundreds.

Please watch this space, for there will be more to say about our Friday Facebook small group. Feel free to join us online too.



How healthy are you? Part 2f – the HEALTHY format

Home health

The sixth segment in the HEALTHY series, 'Home', discusses the home environment and wellbeing.

Research from the University of Minnesota has revealed some interesting findings regarding environmental impact on psychological, behavioural and social wellbeing. On their webpage, under the 'Taking Charge of Your Health and Wellbeing' segment, they posted this article: *How Does Your Personal Environment Impact Your Wellbeing?*¹

Here are their findings:

- **It may influence your mood.** For example, rooms with bright light, both natural and artificial, can improve depression and anxiety.
- **It may impact your behaviour and motivation to act.** For example, a messy hall with shoes, bags, and so on, may prompt you to drop what you are carrying right there. Conversely, a clean entrance and adequate storage will encourage you to take the time to put the items away.
- **It may facilitate or discourage interactions** amongst your family and with guests. An inviting space with comfortable chairs *can* encourage people to sit and chat.
- **It can create or reduce stress.** This impacts not only your emotional, but also your physical health, including your longevity!

How about cosmetics and personal care products used for hair and body?

WebMD published an article by Dr Matthew Hoffman titled: 'Healthier Hygiene', which highlights the possible dangers of some

personal care products and how to choose healthier options. The article quotes from Alan Greene (MD, clinical professor of pediatrics at Stanford University and author of *Raising Baby Green*) as follows:

'It's not in question that many consumer products contain toxins – they do! Dr Greene concludes: 'Most are felt to be in too tiny of a [sic] quantity to pose any real risk. But sometimes, very small exposures can have large impacts.'²

Web MD's article highlights that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is so concerned that they have stepped up their screening and pursuing of public health discussions on the health impact of these products. CDC now randomly monitors the levels of cosmetic ingredients and other products in the blood of the US population.

Harvard School of Public Health, in their article, 'Harmful, untested chemicals rife in personal care products',³ lists formaldehyde, triclosan, phthalates and parabens as harmful cosmetics ingredients to watch out for. Mia Davis (head of health and safety for the personal care product company, Beautycounter), who was interviewed in the article, states: 'Chemical exposure has been linked to rising rates in breast cancer, asthma, autism, reproductive problems and other health issues.'

Always check the ingredients in your cosmetic products.

Good health!

¹ <https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/enhance-your-wellbeing/environment/your-personal-environment/how-does-your-personal-environment-imp>

² <https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/features/healthier-hygiene#1>

³ <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/features/harmful-chemicals-in-personal-care-products/>



What's a 'bot'?

If you read *The Sunday Times* today (29 April), listened to the national TV news programmes, or browsed BBC's online news site, you may have noticed the term 'bot' used quite freely – not in this case as an abbreviation for a toddler's *derrière*, or by an Antipodean wishing to describe a 'person who persistently borrows or cadges from others.'

Nowadays, it is being used to refer to 'Internet bots' (robots), which is 'software that performs an automated task over the Internet. More specifically, a bot is an automated application used to perform simple and repetitive tasks that would be time-consuming, mundane or impossible for a human to perform.'

But why *today's* sudden interest in bots? For the simple (and sinister) reason that it now appears that the Russian state – either directly or through a third party – used bots in a concerted attempt to influence the outcome of our 2017 general-election. This breaking news is based on information gathered by *The Sunday Times* in close collaboration with a group of Swansea University academics. The report stated that:

'From the tweets expressing a view on a party, the vast majority were pro-Labour or anti-Tory. Indeed, nine out of 10 messages giving a view on Labour were positive and nine out of 10 Conservative messages were negative. They were posted by 6,500 Russian accounts, most of which were clearly identifiable as automated accounts.'² However, lest we are tempted to view this as an insignificant sample, the academics see it as it is: that the data they examined 'is a very small sample of all general-election-related Twitter activity, which means **the Russian interference detected is "the tip of the iceberg"**.'³ (Author's emphasis.) They went on to make this observation, 'Our team of researchers found 16,000 Russian bots had been tweeting on British politics since April last year.'

Did the bots achieve anything?

Well, you be the judge of that: 'The election proved to be an extraordinary success personally for Corbyn, who saw his party's support rise from 25% to 40% over the course of the campaign – **the largest surge in support during a modern election**.' (Author's emphasis.) Perhaps this twitter campaign even influenced *our* votes – yours and mine!

If wishes were horses . . .

Yes, there are days – like today – when I could angrily wish the whole social media 'family' into extinction, including email and the internet in general! Why? Because I am sick and tired of the problems caused by many who use them for 'fake news', bots, 'phishing', scamming, hacking, email 'spoofing', spam, cyberbullying, online stalking, viruses, the Deep web, the Dark web and the Silk Road – by no means an exhaustive list.

But then I come to my senses, remembering that the internet, email, Skype, WhatsApp, etc., add immense value to my life, and to those of countless others. I quickly remind myself that cyberspace, that global technology environment upon which all these things depend, is also part of God's great creation. And that He personally founded the greatest intergalactic 'Wireless Network' imaginable – it's never down, costs nothing, has no data limits, requires no hardware to use successfully or (thank goodness) multiple digit passwords!

It's not about technology

In reality, it's not about technology, and never will be. It is about me and you. **It is what we do with technology, and what we let technology do to us.**

There are lots of things we can do to prevent cyber-attacks. Improved passwords, anti-virus

software, firewalls, being 'cyber-savvy' when it comes to our financial information and the opening of suspicious attachments – all these things can help. In the long run, however, the issue we face is not really about technology and software, it's about us.

All those bot-driven pre-election tweets were not randomly occurring cyber-accidents. They were initiated by people. Likewise, the cruel and abusive campaign against those health professionals treating little Alfie Evans at Alder Hey Hospital didn't just happen. It became so bad that the hospital released this as part of an open letter on 25 April: 'Our staff have received in person, via phone calls, email, and through social media channels a barrage of highly abusive and threatening language and behaviour that has shocked us all.'⁵

That 'barrage' of abuse wasn't caused by multiple touchscreen malfunctions. It was caused by maliciously directed human fingertips! Clearly then, technology is not the enemy, but what we do with it is. **This is something over which we have a choice.**

Something else over which we have a choice is **what we let technology do to us.** There is a strong body of opinion that recognises the danger that easily accessible internet pornography poses to modern society, especially to impressionable children and youth. That said, although pornography may be easily and privately accessible today, it still needs human intervention to do so. The right combination of keystrokes and mouse clicks is required – it remains a choice – and we are not its innocent victims!

The social media milieu

When it comes to our children and teenagers, however, there is another enormously powerful force at work that puts them in great danger. The modern social media milieu **into which** – and **by which** – our precious offspring are being socialised is an all-pervasive, portable, 24/7 presence. According to the *New York Post* of 14 November 2017:

'Suicide rates for teens rose between 2010 and 2015 after they had declined for nearly two decades, according to data from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Why the rates went up isn't known.'

'The study doesn't answer the question, **but it suggests that one factor could be rising social media use.** Recent teen suicides have been blamed on cyberbullying, and social media posts depicting "perfect" lives may be taking a toll on teens' mental health, researchers say.'⁶ (Author's emphasis.)

In dealing with this we will need to be **'as cautious as snakes and as gentle as doves'** (Matthew 10:16, GNT)

¹ <https://www.techopedia.com/definition/24063/internet-bot>
² <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/how-we-traced-russian-bots-supporting-jeremy-corbyn-tzg2b2qf93lbid>
³ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/exposed-russian-twitter-bots-tried-to-swing-general-election-for-jeremy-corbyn-zfv8652x>
⁴ <https://www.dailypress.com/news/uk-world-news/bosses-alfie-evans-hospital-hit-12428198>
⁵ <https://www.dailypress.com/news/uk-world-news/bosses-alfie-evans-hospital-hit-12428198>
⁶ <https://nypost.com/2017/11/14/rise-in-teen-suicide-connected-to-social-media-popularity-study/>

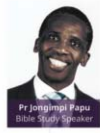
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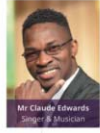
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Pr Isaac Lybird
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EVANGELISM EVERYWHERE

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What can you do?

How should we react to this? Firstly, google the *New York Post* and read the full report. Then pray for wisdom, gentleness and tact before sharing this information with your children. Perhaps you could also discreetly suggest your church's youth be encouraged to discuss this issue at an appropriate forum. You may also want to google the subject of 'teen suicides' for more information.



I like you, God, would you like a game of chess?

It was a cold, dismal, wintry day. The rain that had been threatening had come and gone, but it was still miserable outside. The door of the local 'foodbank' opened and a small man stepped into its warmth and brightness. He was dwarfed by a huge rucksack and shrouded by an equally bulky black anorak. His small bespectacled face was creased with apprehension as he fumbled in the neck of his rucksack and found the neatly folded voucher that would entitle him to a pack of provisions.

He approached us nervously, but it didn't take too long for him to relax. With a steaming cup of tea in his hand he smiled and displayed his one remaining tooth. Then he started to tell his story. *'I've walked from Leicester this week,'* he announced. *'It took me three days. I've been to lots of towns. I was scared in Leicester – people tried to hurt me...'* As he talked, it became abundantly clear that he was a gentle, simple soul who was extremely vulnerable. You could almost see the word 'victim' etched on his brow. People are cruel. Just by looking at him they knew he couldn't defend himself, so the blows and the cruel jibes often rained down on him. His only protection was to be unseen – invisible. So he would do his best to avoid people; he'd keep his head down; hide his belongings; keep well away from confrontation and quickly walk away from any perceived trouble.

I don't know how it happened, but the conversation turned to God. It might have been triggered by his experience at one of the local churches in Grantham, for not only had he been served a hot meal there, but he had been taken to the Council offices, where a kind official recognised his vulnerability and had immediately arranged emergency accommodation and given him a foodbank voucher. He felt God had blessed him and announced it like this: *'I like God, you know!'* He then recited a short poem, which began: *'Monday, I was homeless; Tuesday, just the same.'* It listed the hardships of homelessness as he went through the days of the week until he came to Sunday. *'Sunday, heaven's clouds were drawn asunder.'* He smiled his one-tooth smile. *'I don't know what it means,'* he said.

'Well,' I suggested, *'it could mean that the clouds in the sky parted and that he could look up and see God in heaven.'*

He obviously liked the suggestion. *'I like God,'* he declared. *'Do you*

know if I were to pass away today I'd see God and He'd say to me, "I'm glad to see you lad, come and sit by me" ... and I would say: "I like you, God, would you like a game of chess?"' His face was glowing as he spoke and I felt moved to tears. How blessed I had been. God had surely been with us as he had spoken of his trust in the One who gives him comfort when he is afraid; healing when hurt; love and acceptance when he feels unloved and unwanted; and a future happiness that he knows will one day be his. What a witness!

He came to mind once again recently when I read these words by Ellen G. White in *The Desire of Ages*: *'... Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven's chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world... We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old, but the most effective witness is the sharing of our own experience.'*

Put very simply, telling your story, telling others of your love for Jesus and what He means to you and what He is doing in your life is the most effective way of witnessing about Him. We are using heaven's best marketing strategy when we do. That is how Jesus wants us to reveal Him to a world that so desperately needs Him. Our stories can have a huge impact. No one can deny what we have experienced – however sceptical they may be. And what's more, no one can tell your story quite like you!

A couple of weeks later I saw David – for that was his name – enjoying breakfast at our weekly 'Passage' community outreach. He was talking animatedly to one of our clients who, like him, had been placed in emergency accommodation after a long spell of rough sleeping. I looked out for him as the weeks went by, but I didn't see him again. 'Have you seen anything of David?' I asked a fellow volunteer from the Passage.

'No,' she replied, 'the last thing I heard was that big Wayne had thumped him and that he was walking to Oakham.'

I wonder where he is now. Wherever he is, I would imagine he will be taking every opportunity to tell his story, simply and honestly, to anyone who shows a friendly interest. Maybe his words, 'I like God, you know,' will also live on in the memory of others who hear his story, and make them think, too.



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South England Conference Vacancy Radio IT Technician

Reporting to the Radio Director, the Radio IT Technician will primarily cater for the technical needs of the Adventist Radio Station. Based upon the applicant's knowledge of IT, additional duties will include providing some IT office support.

The successful applicant will implement suitable quality of service protocols to ensure the radio station has constant bandwidth and a secure connection. He or she will have extensive knowledge not only of IT but also of radio and audio.

The successful applicant is required to have a Bachelor's Degree (or equivalent) in Computer Science, Networking Infrastructure, or a similar qualification, and a prior, proven track record, as well as experience working in a professional IT capacity. It would also be highly desirable for applicants to understand audio and audio equipment infrastructure.

Radio Specific:

- Maintain a separate LAN for the radio station.
- Maintain a separate Dante network for the audio devices.
- Configure radio station encoders and monitor network bandwidth to ensure uptime and that quality transmission takes place.
- Assist with audio configuration tasks for Radio studio recordings.
- Maintain and troubleshoot RCS Zetta and G Selector software to ensure smooth operation of the radio station playout system.
- Other tasks as necessary related to maintaining the radio station and troubleshooting.

The successful applicant will often be required to work hours which may fall outside the normal 9-5, especially as part of the Adventist Radio London team. They will also be required to work at weekends or during the evenings as the need arises.

Applicants should have their own transport and be able to travel. A clean driving license is necessary.

Working 37.5 hours per week, depending on the level of experience and qualification, the annual salary range will be £21,903.96 to £28,162.20, which includes the London Weighting Allowance.

Applicants must have the right to work within the UK and will be required to undergo all necessary checks.

For an Application Form, Job Description and Person Specification, please e-mail Mrs Jacqui Crawford at jcrawford@secadventist.org.uk.

The South England Conference is an equal opportunities employer.

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Newbold School vacancy: KS2 teacher

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Tel: 01344 421088;
Website: www.newboldschool.co.uk



How to be a snow sermon

The theme of Hemel Hempstead's Global Youth Day was 'Be the Sermon', with the focus on 'food and drink'. So, on Sabbath 17 March the youth of Hemel Hempstead Church were up early and walked around the cold and snowy streets in the vicinity of the church building, to 'be' and to 'preach' their 'Food Sermon'. Going from door to door, they spoke with the local residents, offering them homemade cupcakes and inviting them to a 'Community tea and cakes' event scheduled for the following week. About 100 homemade cupcakes and 150 invitations – designed by one of the young people, Anna Sanders – were given out.

Many of the doors the youth knocked on were opened by elderly residents, who received the group very favourably. Knocking on the doors in this way also revealed a number of needs, ranging from the need to befriend the elderly to the need to assist them with their gardening.

This will no doubt feature in the months to come as the Hemel Hempstead youth put their community-centred plans into action.

COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT



From Windrush to Witness

What would the Seventh-day Adventist Church here in the United Kingdom have looked like if it hadn't been for one memorable event in the year 1948? Seventy years ago Britain was still living under war rations, with a struggling economy, while facing the need to rebuild the nation after World War II. This was also the year of the first summer Olympics since 1936, the so-called 'Austerity Games', that were held in London. The British government at that time sought workers to fill job vacancies in the newly established National Health Service, British Rail, London Transport and the General Post Office. Beginning in the West Indies, adverts were taken out in local newspapers, inviting those who could afford the boat trip to come! According to Trevor and Mike Phillips in their book, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain*, this invitation was 'an important landmark in the history of modern Britain'.

On 22 June 1948 the Empire Windrush pulled alongside the quay at the Tilbury Docks with 493 passengers on board, principally from Jamaica. With a resolve to remain in the UK for five years only, what these new migrants met was racism as cold as the snow on a December morning. The racism was also overt! 'No dogs! No Irish! No Blacks', were the notices posted on many boarding houses. These were not welcoming signs for those who were invited here, but perhaps the Seventh-day Adventist Church that many were members of would be different.

The membership of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the UK from 1948 to 2017 is as follows:¹

- 1945 – 6,372 • 1946 – 6,268 • 1947 – 6,167 • 1948 – 6,367
- 1958 – 8,681 • 1968 – 11,666 • 1978 – 13,556 • 1988 – 17,197
- 1998 – 19,641 • 2008 – 29,044 • 2017 – 37,917

Based on the above statistics it is fair to say that the Windrush generation, by the providence and grace of God, helped to stabilise and grow the Seventh-day Adventist Church here in the UK.*

Over the past 70 years the Adventist component of the Windrush generation have given of their means, their labour and their love for the cause of Christ in the British Isles. Seventy years ago, when they alighted from the ship dressed in their 'Sabbath best', they brought with them two things: their grips (suitcases) and their faith in God. It is God that has kept this generation of people through the harsh times, the happy times, and the hopeful times.

We salute these dedicated members who helped swell the ranks of our Church, breathing new religious dynamism into a post-war Britain that was struggling with the concept of God in the midst of the tragedies of war.

We honour these pioneers who fought racism with righteousness, and discrimination with Godly determination. We affirm their legacy and honour their memory as we stand on their shoulders and look forward to the day when Jesus will come, and, in the words of the prophet: 'But let judgement run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream' (Amos 5:24, KJV).



Happy 70th anniversary!

¹The British Union Conference Secretariat (Adventist.org.uk)

Editor:

*It should be noted that many of the other immigrant and migrant communities of the UK have also helped to increase the BUC membership.

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ADRA-UK pioneers virtual gift boxes



Between 2005 and 2017:

- Number of countries: 12
- Number of boxes shipped: 50,000 – 60,000

In 2017:

- Cost of the programme: £30,000
- Cost per gift box shipped: £7.00
- Number of gift boxes sent to UK churches: 6,000
- Actual number of boxes sent to Rwanda: 5,000
- Missing-in-action boxes*: 1,000 at a cost of £2,000
- Only 115 out of 330 churches participated (due to limit on boxes available)
- Only one in every 7 members participated (due to limit on boxes available)

*Boxes sent to UK churches but not returned to ADRA-UK.

Seven benefits of the Virtual Gift Box:

1. Every member and friend in the UK can participate
2. Unlimited scope of this type of programme
3. More children can benefit
4. Gifts will be appropriate for the local environment
5. Excellent value for money (little spent on shipping and logistics)
6. Much smaller carbon footprint – better for the environment
7. Benefit to the local economy



Nothing at ADRA-UK pleases us more than to bring a smile to a child's face. In all we do to help others, our work with children takes a central position. The annual Gift Box Appeal was born out of this passion to help children.

For the past twelve years ADRA-UK have run the Gift Box Appeal, distributing boxes in Madagascar, Zambia, Ghana, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Swaziland, Sierra Leone, Togo, Guyana and, most recently, Rwanda. Last year we were able to send a shipping container with just under 5,000 boxes to a refugee camp in Rwanda, and over the years we have probably transported between 50,000 and 60,000 of them to children in the countries mentioned above. What an accomplishment!

But here is the thing: what if we could find a way to have **more people** in the UK get involved, and we could bring smiles to **more children** that really need something to lift their spirits?

We want to find ways to make the Gift Box project **bigger, greener** and yet more sustainable. Importantly, we want

to explore a new delivery model that maximises donations, while also reducing one of our biggest Gift Box project overheads – shipping and customs charges. After researching options, we want to try something new: we call it a 'pilot project' – to test if this is the way forward. A Gift Box pilot project that will bring positive change to the way we do things – one that will help us break through the 6,000 box restriction cap that applies to shipping a container.

Here is what we are planning to do!

Our pilot project will be launched with ADRA Swaziland. Two years ago, we took physical gift boxes to Swaziland, and the region presents an ideal location to test the new Gift Box pilot project and compare the impact.

Instead of a complicated and limiting system of sending actual Gift Boxes overseas from the UK, we want to bring the Gift Box Appeal into the new digital age.

This is where we need your help. Everyone who wants to be part of this pilot project will be given an internet link and can fill

a virtual Gift Box using a new secure web app. Through a 'drag and drop' system a box is filled with virtual gifts. Each box filled will cost just £10. Nothing new here, *except* that we will not send *real* boxes to Swaziland; *instead* we will send the money directly to ADRA Swaziland to **source the gifts needed locally**. We are aiming to send at least 100 virtual gift boxes in this pilot project.

This initiative will have several benefits, including support for the local economy, as gifts are sourced locally, and a significantly reduced carbon footprint for the project. Instead of spending precious ADRA resources on a complex logistics system, we will benefit children more effectively and directly.

Project updates with human interest stories and pictures will arrive in each donor's mailbox and these will bring smiles to *our* faces too!

We really want to try this out and measure the results. That's why it is a pilot. Can we really get **more people** involved and reach **more children** in this fashion?

Are you interested in helping us with this pilot project? Are you

willing to buy a virtual Gift Box and help us test and evaluate the model? Do you want to bring a smile to children's faces in Swaziland, again? Discover more and register your interest in this pilot project, which will run from 11 June to 31 July. Help ADRA today by visiting www.adra.org.uk.



Eager school children await their gifts



Aids awareness group



The Adventist school



The unexpected providence of God



The volunteer group



The annual Gift Box distribution has become one of the highlights of the ADRA-UK calendar. Each year, there is no shortage of interest from volunteers, excited and passionate about seeing the children receive their lovingly packed presents.

This year would be no different – or so the team of 14 volunteers thought! Their excitement was palpable as they flew from all over the UK to Rwanda for the first time. There were also some among the group who wondered what the social climate of the country would be, two decades after the genocide there.

During their visit to Kigali Genocide Memorial Museum they were exposed to the atrocities of this terrible event – but its strongest message is one of hope. The volunteers saw the powerful story of healing, as survivors chose to live out forgiveness, extending grace and reconciliation to those who have committed crimes against their own family, friends and country.

As the team then travelled across the smooth, evenly tarmacked roads of the country, no-one doubted why so many have come to call Rwanda home. The vibrancy of life almost overwhelms the senses, and the colours of nature provide a mesmerising backdrop to the daily routine. The untouched beauty of the country, its ebony-hued inhabitants and the never-ending lakes and blue skies were a moment-by-moment reminder of a loving Creator who lavishes beauty on the world. How blessed we are to enjoy and give heartfelt adoration for the earth He has set before us!

The original plan for the trip was to distribute gift boxes in the Kiziba refugee camp, home to tens of thousands of people escaping conflict in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, on our arrival we were told that, due to social unrest within the camp, the Department for Education in the Eastern Province of Rwanda had

deemed it unsafe for our team to enter.

There was only one venue at which to distribute boxes, and we now risked having no project site or children to benefit from our visit! Yet, we often see the loving mercy of God – not so clearly in how things come together, but in His ability to bring good out of a situation that has completely fallen apart.

After various speedily called planning and logistical meetings between ADRA-UK and ADRA Rwanda, it was decided that we would find impoverished schools within the area and give out a small number of the boxes to their needy children, leaving the bulk for the refugee camp when it was deemed safe to distribute. Fortunately, one of the Ministers of Education is an Adventist and was immediately able to arrange for this with four schools in the area. God was already working!

The next day, as we sat tightly packed in a minibus, we prepared ourselves to distribute more than 2,000 boxes. We started by unpacking a container of boxes, sorting them into age groups, and then following the truck up a hill to the first school! The volunteers encountered various challenges, such as waiting for an entrance way to be broken down because the van was too high to enter one village; crowd-controlling hundreds of children who were eagerly anticipating gifts; and the physicality of lifting and sorting boxes from van to school to playground! Yet, it was in these long days of work that the volunteers experienced the joy a small box of presents can bring.

A special moment during the distribution was experienced at an Adventist primary school, where the children greeted the team with songs, while waiting in perfectly ordered lines to see their unexpected presents from thousands of miles away. One child remarked to her teacher, 'Who are these people who have come to give us presents and gifts? They are good people and they have done a wonderful thing.'

The group then heard the inspiring history of the school from the headmistress. Local Adventist members wanting to provide a holistic education for their children decided to build a school, which was completely supported and funded by one church. This means that they are in constant need, which could be clearly seen in the lack of a playground and education resources.

As we listened to the story and saw their needs with our own eyes, we relished the thought that there are no coincidences in God's plans, knowing He had brought us to this specific school for a specific reason. Many of the team pledged that on their return home, they would donate funds to the school and unite with the faith shown by the parents in providing a Christian education for their children.

Another unexpected journey was to a remote village where we spoke with some beneficiaries and local volunteers who were part of an anti-AIDS awareness group. They, too, met us with traditional dancing, singing the powerful words, 'AIDS is a problem and it has reached Rwanda. We must rise up and fight it, it is our responsibility and it is your responsibility.'

The group were inspiring in a way that many of us had never experienced. They spoke of how they were a collective of 186 people who felt passionate about reducing the number of new HIV and AIDS cases in their community. They had partnered with ADRA-UK and went throughout their village encouraging people to go for testing but, more importantly, telling them how to prevent infection, whether through lifestyle choices or better awareness of how the disease is contracted. One of the group shared how difficult it had been to be tested or receive the necessary medication because of their rural location, but how, since the awareness programme began, health services were now within easy reach, with some people even being tested in their own homes.

When asked if their work had made a difference, they proudly informed us that the number of new cases had fallen to the lowest point since their establishment. In truth, the biggest message they communicated to their community was one of hope and unity. Many people who feared they had contracted HIV or who had been newly diagnosed became hermits, shutting themselves off from society in fear and shame. Yet, the Anti-AIDS group declared that their mission was to let sufferers know, 'Life goes on; you are not supposed to hide away in secret... even if you have the infection, there is still a God who looks after you. And when this life is over, God will provide you with a new life and a new body in heaven.'

ADRA Rwanda's support of the Anti-AIDS group will soon be over, as their project funding ends this summer. The group intend to keep creating awareness in their community, and when the ADRA-UK volunteers asked if there was anything they could do in support, they were told about the need for a new public address system, so that everyone can hear their words of help and hope at events.

The volunteers from ADRA-UK, again moved by a very present need, decided that whatever funds they raised would be split between the Adventist school and the anti-AIDS awareness group. To date, and in under two months, they have raised nearly £2,000!

What a marvel is the providence of God! There is no doubt that prayers uttered on the hills of Rwanda reach the ears of a loving God. A trip that had been planned almost a year in advance, which had fallen to pieces a day before the team arrived, was fulfilling other plans close to God's heart. In the refugee camp we would not have seen or heard of the school's needs, or those of the AIDS group. More importantly, we would not have had the chance to hear the Spirit's voice, instructing us to help others in need throughout the Eastern Province of Rwanda.

We are all just small parts of God's master plan. Whatever seems contrary to our own plans is often a chance for God to work miracles in an area of life we had never imagined. This trip will not easily be forgotten by the volunteers and we are excited to offer other life-changing opportunities like this to all who are interested!

Our next trip will be to Nepal in December – and the only thing missing is you! For more information about the project and how you

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Telford baptism

It was on the last Sabbath of 2017 that Telford Central Church conducted their first baptism within the church building.

Members, friends and visitors rejoiced as the mother (Goret Chavez) and son (Damion Chavez) gave their lives to the Lord. Goret and Damion came from South Africa, and had both been attending Telford Church for over 12 months before making the decision to be baptised. Both of them received Bible studies under the guidance of the first elder, David Miller, assisted by Pastor Jeremy Johnson.

Friends from the Birmingham and Wolverhampton churches were in attendance to help with the setting up of the pool and clearing up afterwards.

BUC Evangelism Director, Pastor Kirk Thomas, was a special guest, and supported Pastor Johnson in this wonderful inaugural baptismal service. Pastor Thomas has been working with Telford Church to cultivate their passion for evangelism, of which this baptism was the first fruit.

PASTOR JEREMY JOHNSON

Weston-super-Mare baptism

On Saturday 17 February, Weston-super-Mare Church celebrated the baptism of two sisters, Johannah and Vania Mathew, at Milton Baptist Church, which overflowed with more than three hundred members, friends and family from India, Australia and the United Kingdom. Among the special guests were the Family Ministry Director of the North England Conference, Pastor Paul Liburd; the British Union Conference (BUC) Treasurer, Earl Ramharacksingh; and the BUC Youth Director, Pastor Dejan Stojkovic, who preached the sermon on 'Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the Well' to an audience that included more than one hundred non-members from the local community.

The whole service was blessed by beautiful singing, with eighteen young Adventist musicians playing the flute, trumpet, clarinet, violin, cello and guitar. They were led by conductor, Alexander Douglas; song leader, Katie Musgrove; and pianist, Ariadna Vasile. The Mathew family presented a special item, and Johannah and Vania gave their testimonies. Vania also sang a beautiful song, accompanied by Johannah on the piano.

Pastor Roy Chisholm baptised Vania, whom he had dedicated as an infant at Enfield Church in 2005, while Pastor Robert Vine baptised Johannah, whom he knew as a child from 2004, when he was the pastor of Stanborough Park Church.

A special offering raised £800 which went to ADRA, Helping Hands Mission Against Poverty, and the educational expenses of a local Adventist medical student.

After a tasty traditional Indian meal, the afternoon sessions by Dr Adam Ibrahim, entitled 'Managing Mental Health using Gospel Principles' was well received. After evening worship there was a games night for the children and youth at Weston-super-Mare Church led by our Pastor, Rio Espulgar.

To see videos, photos and VLOG of the programme, please visit: www.facebook.com/WsMSDA.

JOJI AND DR VIOLA MATHEW



Chard, Yeovil, Dorchester and Taunton DOF

On Sabbath, 10 March, the Taunton, Yeovil, Dorchester and Chard churches, under the pastoral leadership of Deyvid Valente Batista, met for a day of fellowship at Chard's Town Council Hall. The event was well attended by the members of the four churches, as well as by more than 30 visitors. A troop of Pathfinders and Adventurers in full uniform welcomed everyone to the service, and Pastor Namushi Namuchana was the guest speaker. Afterwards, a potluck vegetarian lunch was served, which everybody enjoyed. The highlight of the fellowship, however, was in the afternoon when the congregation witnessed the baptism of Joao and Karl, who became new members of the Chard and Taunton churches respectively.

Joao was born in Portugal and came to the UK for work. He met Isidro, who is an active member of the Chard church plant. They work in the same place and share a house together. At Isidro's initiative, Joao started Bible studies with him, and after a year Joao decided to commit his life to Christ and get baptised.

Karl discovered the Sabbath through his personal study of the Scriptures and by listening to sermons on the internet. He decided to look for a Seventh-day Adventist church near his home in Wellington and ended up at the Taunton church. He was amazed by the hospitality of the people and decided to come regularly and take Bible studies with pastor Batista.

Karl invited three of his friends to attend the baptism, and they were impressed with the service, as were the rest of the congregation.

MERVIN CASUCAND



Baptism at Leeds Central

On Sabbath evening, 17 March, Leeds Central Church witnessed the baptism of Hazel Shaw and Londekile Maboyi by Pastor Sam Gardner.

Hazel, who regularly attends the midweek prayer meetings, was blessed in song by the prayer group as she celebrated this special event in her life. Londekile was supported in song by her mother. The evening was a joyous occasion, well attended by their friends and family members.

JOANNA MATHESON



Baptism at Lodge Causeway

The Sabbath of 3 March was notable for two reasons: more snow than Bristol has seen for a while, and the baptism of Rosalyn Andrews. Rosalyn's family was able to get to Bristol in spite of the difficult travelling conditions, and everyone enjoyed the service.

Pastor Rudi Puskas conducted the baptism, while Rosalyn's son-in-law, Hugh Grey, preached the sermon. Her granddaughter, Kayla Guthrie, performed a reading, while another, Maiya, told the children's story. Rosalyn's younger granddaughters sang an item together, as did her son-in-law, Roger, and two friends from Lewisham Church.

Rosalyn's family has been instrumental in encouraging her to give her life to Jesus. Following the baptismal service, family and friends enjoyed a Sabbath meal together.

DAVID ANDERSON

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Exeter Pathfinder induction

'Spirit of Service to God and Man' was the title chosen for the Pathfinder induction day at Exeter Church on 27 January, which was arranged by the new leader, Chiedza Gwelo, and her assistant, Rose Mogeni, both Master Guides. The two pre-Adventurers, six Adventurers and eight Pathfinders looked very smart as they walked into the church, which was overflowing with proud parents.

Pastor Clifford Herman, the main speaker for the day, wore a Pathfinder uniform while addressing the young people. As an object lesson, he used the idea of knots and had Sheila Skerrett and Allan Kissack demonstrate their knot-tying skills – which was quite inspirational. The children also took part in the programme and recited their law and pledge as Pathfinders. They were warmly supported by visitors from Plymouth and Taunton.

Thanks to the cooks from the participating churches and their helpers, a wonderful fellowship lunch was enjoyed by all. There were not enough seats, so many people ate standing up! After the meal, Chiedza made plans with the enthusiastic parents for future events, while



the children were busy with craft activities. A big event has been planned for each quarter.

CHIEDZA GWELO AND STELLA JEFFERY

The Bristol parables

During January, as part of a plan of spiritual renewal in the Bristol district of churches, the local pastor, Royston Smith, planned a series of seven sermons and four inductive Bible studies, entitled 'Christ's Object Lessons – Avenues to the Heart'. These followed Christ's example of drawing out simple lessons from nature and everyday life that revealed truths about Jesus and His Kingdom. The presentations were primarily led by the elders of the church and featured a selection of parables including 'The Sower and the Seed', 'The Faithful and Wise Servant', and the 'Wedding Garment'.

According to Pastor Smith, 'One of the things we are seeking to accomplish within the Bristol District is to educate, inform and develop the spiritual resilience of members, as well as encourage members to get back to reading the Bible and appreciating the Spirit of Prophecy.'

Through revisiting these familiar parables, the elders and congregation were challenged to re-evaluate their perspectives and their spiritual health.

One of the newest elders, who accepted the post for 2018, Donald Ndhlovu, explained what particularly stood out for him: 'I remember I was challenged by the parable of the wedding garment as I saw that my righteousness is as filthy rags and only Christ's righteousness will do, and that this "garment" is freely given to those who desire it.'

The series was well received by the congregation, with one member, Prakash Pawar, reflecting on the parable of the sower in this way: 'This parable reminded me that it's very easy to get choked up with worldly things, but we should be more like the good ground, as the more you go deep down in the word of God the more you grow in God.'

One of the other elders, Janet Lawrence, preached on humility, based on Luke 14:7-11, where Jesus uses the illustration of a man invited to a wedding feast who chose a position of honour and was forced to move down. She said, 'Preparing for it really helped me to think differently... It helped me to put my Christian life in perspective – to see myself in relation to others, understanding that being humble means really knowing God. As a result I've started to put it into practice, caring more about others spiritually, mentally and emotionally.'

Pastor Smith summarised the series like this: 'Both myself and each of the elders had to spend time in prayer, Bible study and conversation with God and each other to fill ourselves before inspiring the general membership... The parables have become relevant to us today in Bristol, so that in a way they are now the "Bristol parables".'

IAN SABADIN (COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER)



Donald Ndhlovu

Pastor Royston Smith

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Hyland House School Junior Master Chef competition

On Sunday, 11 February, Hyland House Seventh-day Adventist School held an outstanding Junior Master Chef competition. This event saw 17 enthusiastic pupils from Years 3 to 6 split into three groups, each with a set menu to cook. The school's Headteacher, who is also the South England Conference (SEC) Education Director, Mrs Gina Abbequaye, said that the competition was a result of excellent collaboration amongst the pupils, as well as the amazing work put in by the teaching staff.

The participating students were part of the 10-week Healthy Cooking Club, which took place each Tuesday after school during the Autumn term. During this time, the pupils learnt many skills that are needed to cook successfully. 'I was happy to be able to chop the vegetables; holding a knife was such a challenge for me at the beginning,' said the youngest participant from Year 3. For the competition they chose to create their own menu: 'Mediterranean on a Plate' (starter); 'Tropical Aloha' (main course); and a 'Trio of Delights' (dessert). 'We discussed among ourselves which group would cook which part of the meal,' said Naomi, a Year 5 pupil.

On the day, as the pupils entered the spacious, well-equipped Home Economics room, there was a sense of excitement. After Mrs Abbequaye prayed, she called out 'Ready, steady, cook!' and the competition began. Throughout the three-hour process, the children appeared to be calm and in control of the steps they had to take. There was a strong sense of team work and they received minimal help from teachers. 'It's amazing to see how well they work together,' said Year 1 teacher, Mrs Smith.

All the pupils were given a certificate of participation, a Hyland House special wooden spoon and a cookery book as a congratulatory gesture for their participation. All of the recipes can be found on the school website. The winner was the main course, 'Tropical Aloha', and those responsible for it were presented with Hyland House School Junior Master Chef aprons.

At the end of the event, the parents got to the food, a truly pleasurable moment to witness. One parent said, 'This school is amazing, and I am happy that my son has been part of this process... in such a nurturing and caring environment.'



JUDITH MAKANIANKHONDO NYIRENDA

Bournemouth's first Pathfinder Day

The idea to start a Pathfinder club at Bournemouth Church came to life in January 2015, when the number of children in the church rose to 25. Eventually, at the beginning of May 2017, the club was successfully started by Alzbeta, Rodrigo and Khonzani, with great support from Sirbrina Ramharack from areas 3 and 4. Pam Catchpole, from areas 1 and 2, has been helping our new Adventurers club, which started at the end of January this year and already has about 20 members.

On 3 February, the Pathfinders held their first official day and the Adventurers cheerfully joined in support. It was exciting to watch the children singing Pathfinder and Adventurer songs with such passion.

The Pathfinders themselves conducted

the day's worship service, sharing with the congregation what they have done since the club started. They were also awarded honours for their various achievements.

We are grateful for the great support from our church pastor, Laszlo Liebhardt, and from the members of our congregation.

ALZBETA KUCERAKOVA AND RODRIGO CERENCHOVICH



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18	8.50	9.03	9.01	9.25	9.28
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