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Messenger

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# New life in Birmingham and the West Midlands

(see pages 4-6)



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In a 'survival year', God will provide the means needed

## Amid global challenges, Adventist Church financial officers call for trust in the Lord's leading

by Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist Review*  
(adapted for *MESSENGER*, with permission)

In a time of worldwide challenges to the financial operation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on 8 October world church treasurer Juan Prestol-Puesán called on church leaders of the General Conference Executive Committee, meeting virtually for Annual Council, to redouble their dependence on God's guidance and protection. 'This continues to be more relevant than before,' he said, 'as our new realities have changed our expectations for 2020.'

Prestol-Puesán acknowledged that between March and June 2020 all major church regions reported a declining rate of tithe and mission offerings, year-over-year. It is expected that July to December will be no different. 'We know that the year 2020 is a survival year, and that normality may return sometime in 2021.'

### Impact on church operations, programmes, and events

In April 2020, Adventist Church financial officers had reported the positive results of fiscal year 2019: but 'the closing of operation for 2019 feels like it was a long time ago,' Prestol-Puesán acknowledged. 'We are in the middle of an extended worldwide economic slowdown; the US dollar shows itself strong in relationship to other currencies, and unemployment remains high in the United States.'

He also reminded Executive Committee members that many congregations are unable to meet other than digitally, church executives' travel has stopped, and adjustments to the operations have been introduced, including the remuneration levels at headquarters.

Adventist institutions and programmes have implemented significant budgetary adjustments in order to survive 2020, Prestol-Puesán said. In that regard, he expressed his appreciation to institutional leaders for their proactive approach and for what he called 'the innovative spirit displayed by our division leaders by adjusting budgets and adapting their finances to the days we are living in'.

'According to reports received from Division treasurers,' Prestol-Puesán continued, 'the decrease in tithe income could be estimated as low as 5 percent and as high as 25 percent in some places, and the decrease in mission offerings as low as

10 percent and as high as 40 percent. Despite these and many other changes, we remain optimistic and positive about seeing some improvement in the next few months.'

### Financial results and actions through to September 2020

Summarising the operating statement (for the General Conference) through to September 2020, Prestol-Puesán reported that it showed a decrease in net assets of almost US \$5.9 million. The church's working capital (current assets minus current liabilities) level is 86.04 percent, and liquidity (assets that can be converted into cash quickly to meet commitments) stands at 102.26 percent. 'We are grateful that our existing resources have provided for our contracted obligations and responsibilities,' he said.

### Guidelines for the 2021 budget

Among the guidelines to inform the 2021 budget, Prestol-Puesán mentioned, among other items, applying reserves as needed to seek the presentation of a balanced budget for 2021, and reassessing the financial situation after the 2020 fiscal year income has been recorded. It is also key, he said, to maintain communication with the world field through the Division treasurers and Division officers as to the progress of the strategy.

Prestol-Puesán explained that the final impact of COVID-19 on church life is still unknown. 'We know that it will affect the finances of the church at every level even more,' he said. 'We are still unable to see the entire panorama; and, while we believe we will be able to see it even more clearly in the next few days and weeks, we must remain proactive, vigilant, and conscious that every dollar spent is of importance; and, while mission must continue, our level of financial diligence must remain high to conserve resources.'

### A word of thanks

In concluding his report, Prestol-Puesán said that he wished to express his immense gratitude to God for providing the resources during the first nine months of 2020, and for making church programmes still viable despite the circumstances. 'We believe that He will provide the means and the people that will do



the work that remains to be done,' he said.

Prestol-Puesán also had a special word of thanks to the many volunteer local church treasurers, the treasury personnel who serve in multiple entities around the world, and the dedicated and efficient treasury and accounting staff of the General Conference.

He closed with words recorded in the Bible in Psalm 121: 'Our help comes from the Lord,' Prestol-Puesán reminded the committee. 'He does not slumber.' And, he added, 'He is our keeper; He is our shade; and He shall preserve our going out and our coming in, now – during the days of COVID-19 – and for evermore.'

Former General Conference president Jan Paulsen seconded the report with the comment, 'The Lord will provide – working also through very competent and skilful, faithful servants.'

Prestol-Puesán agreed. 'We will never run out of money before the Lord decides we should run out of money,' he said. 'We will be faithful, and we will do our best with what the Lord has entrusted us with. The rest is up to Him. He will see us through.'

To read Marcos Paseggi's full report of the Annual Council treasury presentation, go to the *Adventist Review* online: <https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story15553-in-a-survival-year-god-will-provide-the-means-needed-treasurer-says>

## Each day this week . . .

### Week of Prayer, 7-14 November

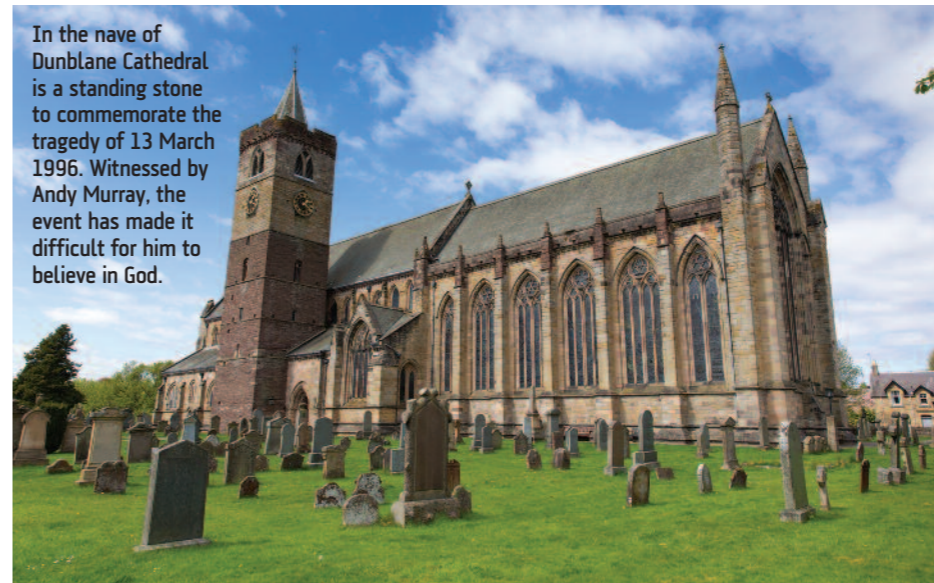
Theme for the week:  
**'Reach the World: Faithfulness  
in Christian Lifestyle'**

To download readings, click here:  
<https://www.adventistworld.org/november-2020/>



David Neal, *Editor*

## 'I wish there were a God'



In the nave of Dunblane Cathedral is a standing stone to commemorate the tragedy of 13 March 1996. Witnessed by Andy Murray, the event has made it difficult for him to believe in God.

It was perhaps the strangest statement for Andy Murray to make in a brief Sunday magazine interview. Perhaps better to wonder the other way around. How and why did the *Observer* journalist, Kevin Mitchell, come to ask such a question? Mysterious – but this is what Murray said:

**'I wish there were a God, but I don't believe there is one. If there were a God, surely, He or She would stop the suffering in the world. God is always taught to us as this incredible thing, but why would so much suffering be allowed to go on for so long? I don't get that.'**<sup>1</sup>

In the same interview Murray shares the painful experience of his parents' divorce, and witnessing the killing of 16 children and one teacher at his Dunblane school in 1996. His reaction to God is entirely understandable.

The actor, comedian and writer Stephen Fry goes much further, and argues that because of the injustice and pain in the world he can't bring himself to respect such a 'capricious and mean-minded' God. By using the word 'capricious', Fry's suggesting that all he can see of God is One who acts according to His 'mood swings'. He even asked, a long time ago in a TV interview, with all the suffering in the world, how could this God even dare to show His face?

While our immediate reaction is to be distressed by Fry's forthright and disrespectful attitude to God, nonetheless, along with Murray, we might consider the core question, 'Why does God permit suffering?' to be a legitimate one. For *MESSENGER* readers who feel

they are settled into understanding how the Lord works, I imagine that might be a good place to be? Note the question mark at the end of that sentence. It was put there deliberately, as I'm not so sure.

In fact, I will go further. When it comes to explaining how the Lord works – His plans and purposes; why some people I know suffer incredible hardship, while others who are not so good apparently seem to prosper – I don't think there is a single line, or even a single Bible study, which will give an 'A+B=C' answer.

For is it not the case that the issue here is not about our understanding of how the Lord works, but about trusting His ways? For the person who is not a Christ-follower, I can see how easily Murray and Fry reach the conclusion they do. Theirs is a logical position.

A long time ago I belonged to a youth group committed to connecting with God through Bible study each Wednesday night in London. One of the passages we chose to study was Romans 8:28-39. All I can remember is that for weeks we 'wrestled' over the following verses together.

*'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose'* (verse 28, NIV).

*'For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son'* (verse 30, ESV).

*'If God is for us, who can be against us?'* (Verse 31, ESV.)

*'For I am convinced . . .'* (verse 38, NIV).

Wrestling over this passage was one of the most intellectually challenging Bible study experiences in my life. It was a time when, with youth on our side, we were still to experience some of the hard knocks life would throw at us. I'm sure that shaped how we approached trying to understand the passage.

I remember feeling a great sense of unity as we tried to discover together God's will for our then-young lives. But just at the moment we thought we'd found the answer, it would immediately raise another problem about the nature of God.

And perhaps that is actually the point. Faith is not about knowing the answer to every question. As one of the most superbly written passages Scripture contains, I love the way Paul's personal statement of faith shines through in verses 38 and 39 when he says (NIV):

*'For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'*

It is Paul's conviction that helps me trust God when things are upside down. More often than not, there are no answers: because, while I trust the Lord both as Maker of the universe and as a close and personal Friend, how He works, to my mind, gets more baffling every day. As an 'expectant' Christian waiting for His return, watching the world spiral into more distress every day, I'm with Andy Murray when he states, 'Why would so much suffering be allowed to go on for so long? I don't get that.' Neither I nor anyone else really knows. Nor are we the first to ask the question, 'How long, O Lord?' (See Psalm 13.)

But this is what I do know. Trauma can lead some people to follow God, but it can take others in the opposite direction. I'm not sure why this is so, but that's reality. What then can we do – not simply for ourselves, but for those around us – struggling not only to understand God, but to have faith in Him?

I need to thank the members of a current Bible study group I belong to for this thought from the seventeenth-century Frenchman, Blaise Pascal (a mathematician, among other things), who was grounded by his Christian faith. One of his quotes jumped from the page as we considered how he encountered God. Referring to how we share the Gospel, he said: **'Make religion attractive; make good men wish it were true, and then show that it is.'**

That's it: 'Make good men (and women) wish it were true.' May the Lord help us to make religion attractive – and then show that it is.

The good news for Murray – he's already on the journey of faith.

<sup>1</sup>The *Observer* magazine, 18/10/2020

# Birmingham churches reach out under lockdown

Although the pandemic has caused the doors of our church buildings in the West Midlands area to remain closed for the past seven months, our members have been able to influence the lives of people in their communities in ways we would not have thought possible. Hannah and Louisa Jeffery share a roundup of how members have been able to serve.



Top left: details of Dudley Church's 'We Can Help' initiative; bottom left: Dudley Church's food bank; top middle and bottom right: Handsworth food bank; top right: Handsworth Church's Secrets of Prophecy seminar promotion



**Bearwood Church:** Bearwood members have delivered food parcels and held fortnightly seminars on Revelation, stewardship and marriage. To support their youth, they joined the Youth Ministries Department of the Coventry North church to host presentations on topics pertinent to young people of today. At the height of the pandemic they were streaming two presentations a week on Zoom, and they continue with a programme each Friday evening. Past guest presenters have included Pastor Wesley Knight and his wife, Pastor Anthony Fuller, and Dr Carlton Byrd, among others, attracting more than 300 on their Zoom platform, with more watching on Facebook and YouTube. All praise is given to God.

**Chelmsley Wood Church:** The Chelmsley Wood church worked with St Basils, a charity for homeless young people. They are now building this partnership further as one of their outreach ministries. Responding to the closure of schools, the church also ran an online Vacation Bible School over the summer via a Webex platform. The children studied Maths, English and Bible knowledge, and even did some physical exercises.

**Dudley Church:** Dudley members formed a COVID-19 Lockdown Response Team when the lockdown was announced. This initiative, entitled 'We Can Help', aimed to support people who were self-isolating by delivering groceries or providing words of encouragement. They also set their church hall up as a food bank every Sunday, with the option to deliver groceries to people's homes on request, and provided cash support as needed. The church also distributed little books on *The Power of Hope* and *Health and Wellness* to homes in their local neighbourhood (these can be purchased online at

[www.lifeforcebookshop.co.uk](http://www.lifeforcebookshop.co.uk)). They also provided weekly soul-lifting programmes, and between 30 August and 5 September they hosted a one-week virtual revival series with speakers from across the globe.

**Erdington Church:** When the lockdown was lifted, the Family Life Department visited members, as many had not had any personal contact for a long time. This was greatly appreciated. Some members help to organise food distribution in partnership with the Aston-Newtown church and non-Adventist churches, and Erdington members helped fund the Aston-Newtown church's food bank. One Erdington Church family invited their neighbours to come out and sing with them on Easter Sunday, and the community singing continued regularly for three months and became true street witnessing as they sang and spoke about the love of God.

**Halesowen Central Church:** Throughout the pandemic, Halesowen Central has delivered a range of ministries. The church had established an academy to provide extracurricular support for children. The project was led by Pastor Obinnaya Iheoma, who donned his former teaching hat to deliver weekly Mathematics classes for KS3-4 children. When lockdown began, the classes were moved online; and, by recruiting the voluntary support of other qualified teachers from churches across the city, the academy has now increased the syllabus offered to include tutoring in English, Maths, Science and French. Currently, 25 students are registered and attend on a regular basis.

In January the church also began an 'Excellence Academy' for women. Seminars continued online when lockdown began, attracting even wider audiences. In July, the academy held a seven-day 'Pray for Health Challenge' through its Facebook page, which provided daily spiritual readings, prayers and health tips. The series attracted new members to the group, including people from non-Christian faiths.

Throughout the pandemic, in addition to the online Sabbath morning services and family service, the Youth Department has led a Sabbath afternoon AY programme. This is followed by an eagerly awaited 'chill time', which gives more opportunity for sharing, laughing and encouraging one another. The children are a central part of the church too. The Children's Ministries and Pathfinder departments have worked hard to deliver art and craft sessions, bake-offs, bedtime stories and an i-camporee. Children are also involved in the family worship programmes, reading the scriptures and presenting musical items. On Wednesday evenings the members get together for Bible study via Zoom. This programme is interchanged with a programme devoted to prayer and testimony on the first week of the month. The church's WhatsApp groups have also helped to maintain its close family community. They also set up a 'Pray for Me' text line at the start of lockdown, through which people can contact the church or submit an

anonymous request for prayer. Members also supported neighbours by getting food, and at the time of the NHS clap they witnessed to their streets through sending the lyrics and sound tracks of hymns on community WhatsApp groups, reminding people of the love and power of God to bring deliverance from the crisis.

**Handsworth Church:** From the outset of the pandemic the Pathfinders and Children's Ministries departments resolved to help. A house-to-house delivery to just a few became a weekly food distribution based at the church. Approximately 70 families are now helped with the tangible love of Jesus each week. Every Sunday at 11.30am the queue starts to form from the church gates as people await the 12pm opening. Stories abound from families reporting that the leaflet through the door was the direct and immediate answer to prayer. Some families have shared their own surplus with the food bank as a way of saying thank you. Members contribute financially, from their allotments, and through buying food to donate on a regular basis. Each bag also receives literature and details of the church. To contribute, please contact Janice: 07957 401283.

Prior to the lockdown, Handsworth Church had held two successful prophecy seminars and was due to start a further two. Undeterred, members agreed to conduct them online. This 26-week programme is already bearing fruit with an average weekly attendance of 35, of whom one third are not yet Adventists. A weekly newsletter supports the course, and attendees can request DVDs for certain lessons.

**Kings Norton Church:** Kings Norton Church distributed food during the lockdown. They started by providing monthly food parcels for twelve families, but with help from an external charity they were able to extend this ministry and have now supported more than twenty-five families weekly for about three months. Some members also helped the elderly in the community with garden clearance and assisted vulnerable people with shopping. During the latter part of the lockdown, the church presented a three-week evangelistic series over Zoom, entitled 'Secrets of Prophecy', and four people came forward for baptism. With pools and churches closed, social distancing measures in place and the pastors on furlough, Allison and Daley Thompson were baptised by the elders in a pool in their garden, while the congregation of family, friends, well-wishers and the Kings Norton church members watched via Zoom. The baptism was also streamed on Facebook, receiving many viewings. Georgina Mendez was later baptised in a church hall with family present, and the fourth candidate awaits baptism soon.

**Ladywood Church:** The 'Ladywood Labour of Love Food Bank', which Ladywood Church started in January 2011, has operated throughout the pandemic and now includes a delivery service. In April they also began a shopping ministry for local retirees, and their Personal Ministries Department set up a chatline to provide a befriending ministry. This service was offered to the retirees and local residents. As lockdown restrictions were lifted, the church started a clothing ministry that currently runs on the last Friday of every month. Those in need can come and select clothing. Their Men's Ministries Department also started a voluntary gardening ministry. Five years ago, their Personal Ministries Department began a ministry entitled 'Ray of Hope', which takes songs and scripture readings to the retirement village and two nearby care homes. A small group of six have been able to go to the Retirement Village to sing and read scriptures to the residents in the garden area.

**Northfield Church:** Northfield Church provided food for 36 families by donating gift vouchers which can be exchanged for food. They are thankful for the donations from members and the 10% return from their 2019 ADRA Annual Appeal, which enabled them to fund this programme.

**Winson Green Church:** Members have distributed food to those who have lost jobs as a result of the pandemic.



Left: Allison and Daley Thompson (as pictured on the front cover); right: Georgina Mendez

**Area 5 churches together:** Area 5 churches have been working more closely together to establish online platforms for worship, sharing speakers and delivering outreach projects. In May and June, the Erdington, Halesowen Central and Northfield churches enrolled as distribution sites for LUSH products, which had been shared with ADRA by the Kindness Offensive. Small teams at the churches packed the fragrant natural cosmetics into attractive gift bags, together with tracts and details about their churches, which they distributed to local key workers, as well as people who were sick or isolated. The bags were greatly appreciated.

Early in the pandemic, medical students Jemima Nambo and Helen Gaynor from the University of Birmingham's Adventist Students on Campus Society – together with area coordinator and university chaplain, Pastor Obinnaya Iheoma, and Hannah and Louisa Jeffery, who work at the university's medical school – asked Area 5 churches to help raise money for a new type of personal protective equipment for care homes. The AerosolShield had been developed by specialists at the University of Birmingham. Area 5 churches identified the care homes in their districts that required support, and helped distribute the AerosolShields to them. Over £9,000 was raised, sufficient to buy 200 devices that were distributed to twenty-one care homes. The area is now looking for ways to build lasting connections with them.

Top left: packing bags of kindness with LUSH products, church details and tracts at Halesowen Central Church; bottom left: Erdington Church preparing to distribute bags of kindness



## Great Brickkiln St (Wolverhampton) prayer breakfast and communion: 'Moving forwards'

by Helderberg Jackson

With great excitement Great Brickkiln Street Church (Wolverhampton) was planning to re-open after the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. With risk-assessment protocols in place, we thought we were 'good to go'. Hearing that the North England Conference leadership had understandably postponed opening up the churches, as the COVID-19 crisis again seemed to be on the rise, left us disappointed. Leading up to reopening, we'd planned a special week of prayer. Plans change – and our spiritual emphasis went virtual from 12 to 16 October.

Unlike a traditional prayer breakfast, this was only a 'spiritual breakfast'. With songs and testimonies, our pastor, Dr Patrick Herbert, fed us the Word.

Commencing at 6am each morning was a challenge, because, as *MESSENGER* readers well know, there are 'morning larks' and 'night owls'. However, a good number faithfully gathered in the Zoom room long before 6am each morning.

The daily programme was a mix of songs, readings from Psalms, testimonies, devotionals and, of course, prayers, designed by the church elders (Algie Henry, Andrew Hazel, Alton McFarquhar and Bev Perry) and the pastor.

Considering the time, numbers attending grew daily, joined by friends from even Zimbabwe and Australia.

The themes for each day, led by Dr Herbert, were described by one member, Janet McConnell, as 'encouraging, uplifting and a blessing'. Expressing thanks to Dr Herbert for his daily sermons, she also confessed, 'Pastor, it's not easy to get me up so early normally, but when I think what God has done for me, getting up an hour earlier is nothing in comparison!'

We share with *MESSENGER* readers the opportunity to consider the daily themes in their devotional time, and we trust they will be as blessed as us.

- **Monday:** 'Why do you cry to Me?' (Exodus 14:15, 16)
- **Tuesday:** 'Looking back is not an option' (Luke 9:57-62)
- **Wednesday:** 'No need to stay there; keep moving' (Psalm 23)
- **Thursday:** 'Trusting the Lord of Breakthroughs' (2 Sam. 5:17-25)
- **Friday:** 'When He has tried me I'll come forth as pure gold' (Job 23:8-10)

Though our virtual prayer breakfast had left us full, our spiritual feast was taken to another level on Sabbath 17 October when we held our virtual communion service, led by our elders and their wives. Behind the scenes, our team of deacons and deaconesses worked hard to make this unique service a reality – for which we are most thankful. Pastor Herbert shared a communion message, 'Since the Blood', supported by his wife, Anne-Marie, singing 'Your Grace Still Amazes Me'.

Commendation and thanks must go to our Communication Department – stretched to the limit. It truly was a case of 'all hands on deck', and a demonstration of what can be accomplished with the privilege of helping members grow in their faith. Through this week of spiritual emphasis and our communion service, members have felt connected as a church family, and through it they feel uplifted. We know it was worth it, as Wendy Watson shared: 'Taking part in the prayer breakfast allowed me to get up each morning and spend time in fellowship and worship, which was a great start to the day – I thoroughly enjoyed it.'

A final thought from our pastor in his Wednesday presentation, sharing a quotation from Charles Spurgeon: 'Before a man can truly say, 'The Lord is my Shepherd', he must first feel himself to be a sheep by nature, for he cannot know that God is his Shepherd unless he feels



in himself that he has the nature of a sheep.' I think we can all say an 'amen' to that.

### How we organised our communion service

1. We decided on a date, and that it should be the climax to a week of spiritual emphasis (the virtual prayer breakfast).
2. It would be held at church with limited personnel (three elders and their wives, the pastor and his wife, and four praise team members).
3. The pastor put together the order of service and shared it four days ahead of the service with all participants and the Communication Department, carefully designed to make the service flow unannounced. At the same time the service had an element of simplicity about it so that as a broadcast service the main theme of communion would not be missed.
4. Two weeks ahead of time, members were informed by the leadership team and the diaconate, and were given the invitation to participate.
5. Sealed emblems were ordered two weeks ahead of time.
6. The diaconate decided to use home-baked bread rather than wafers in the sealed emblems.
7. Distribution to the elderly and shut-ins was completed by the diaconate on the Wednesday before the service.
8. Those who were able collected their emblems between 10.30am and 6.30pm on the Thursday prior to the service.
9. Rehearsal took place on the Thursday evening prior to the service, so that all participants could familiarise themselves with the items in the service and have an idea of where they would stand and sit.
10. Prior to the service, an elder and his wife were chosen to lead the foot-washing as a demonstration on camera for the broadcast.
11. On Sabbath morning, an hour before the broadcast, the communication team and the participants of the service met and had a further briefing.
12. The communication team dealt with the filming and technical aspects of the service.
13. It was then that we were ready to broadcast – our church's very first attempt.

DR PATRICK HERBERT, PASTOR

## MISSION

# Hyland House School

*Life after lockdown*

During the first week of September, when our pupils returned to school, this is what some of them said . . .

'What I really love about being at Hyland House is that it's like my home away from home, my family.'

Amyah (8 years old)

'Hyland House is the best thing that ever happened to me. I get to learn so many different things.'

Jed (9 years old)

'I've got so many friends at Hyland House School, and we will be friends for ever and ever.'

Alana-Mai (8 years old)



We were excited to have them back. We had missed them immensely.

At Hyland House School we continue in our mission to help our pupils to 'dream big'. A commercial pilot, a marine biologist, a builder, a caring nurse, an inspiring teacher, a store manager, an aspirational songwriter, a creative architect, an engineer, a motivational speaker, an entrepreneur, a bio-medical scientist . . . these are some of our former students. The opportunities are endless!

Hyland House is a dynamic, Christ-centred primary school for children aged 2 to 11 years. Our school is small enough for each child to remain an individual and not lose their personal identity. We are dedicated to the development of the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of each pupil, and our focus is to develop confident, well-rounded, resilient children who will become the

responsible citizens of tomorrow's society.

'Achieving Excellence' is our goal. Through a loving, nurturing atmosphere, children are encouraged to understand their strengths and growth points and to develop knowledge, skills and understanding that will help them to have a positive sense of self.

There are no failures at Hyland House School, because children are taught: 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me' (Philippians 4:13, NKJV).

We provide a rich, balanced and ambitious curriculum taught by committed, professional, caring and creative teachers.

At our core, we believe in traditional values. We have high expectations for good manners, discipline and respect, which is reflected in our ethos:

**'Through Jesus I can show love, joy, kindness, perseverance and self-control.'**



Our state-of-the-art facility in North London comprises:

- Fully equipped infant and junior science laboratories
- A home economics room housing 10 cookers, 10 sinks and 10 workstations
- A computing suite with 22 Apple computers
- A gymnasium
- A fully furnished music room
- A dedicated French language room
- Infant and junior art rooms

We have every confidence in the excellence of our Adventist school, and in November 2018 Ofsted judged our Early Years Education to be 'OUTSTANDING' and the rest of our school to be 'GOOD'.

**'The early years is outstanding, because children make an excellent start to their education. The quality of teaching is exceptional, which has resulted in children making very good progress.'**

**'Pupils are happy, safe and enjoy coming to school. They are well-behaved and show respect to each other and adults.'**

Some schools prepare students for a job, and others prepare and equip students for life. At Hyland House School we do both. Indeed, the Lord is the Master of our school!

So, when you contemplate that important decision, that crucial option, that life-changing, critical choice of a school for your child . . . know that at Hyland House School we will equip your children with the tools to help them soar as they reach up to the stars to chase their dreams and aspirations!

JESSICA LEMONIUS, HEAD TEACHER

For more information, please visit our website at: [www.hylandhouseschool.org](http://www.hylandhouseschool.org) and telephone us on: 020 8520 4186 or email us at: [info@hylandhouseschool.org](mailto:info@hylandhouseschool.org).





# The Creator and creation: God's affection for this world

## part 2

In this, the second article in a two-part series on the relationship between our Creator and His created world, Dr Jo Ann Davidson (Professor of Systematic Theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary) examines how the whole natural world joins together in praise of its Creator.

The psalmists regularly ascribe praise to the Creator for His marvellous works, rehearsing God's affection for all life: *'Your righteousness is like the great mountains; . . . O LORD, You preserve man and beast'* (Ps. 36:6, emphasis added). Psalm 145 echoes this, again praising God's providence. The word 'all' or 'every' (the same word in Hebrew) occurs sixteen times in this short psalm, underscoring God's limitless love for all creation – for everything He has made! The

psalm climaxes by exalting divine affection: *'The LORD is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works'* (Ps. 145:17).

Psalm 148 lists the myriad different voices of a choir praising the Creator: *'Kings of the earth and all peoples; princes and all judges of the earth; both young men and maidens; old men and children'* (verses 11, 12). These are joined by *'great sea creatures and all the depths; fire and hail, snow and clouds; stormy wind . . . ; mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and all cedars; beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl'* (verses 7-10). This multitude joins 'His

angels', *'all His hosts', 'sun and moon', 'stars of light', 'heavens of heavens', and 'waters above the heavens'* (verses 2-4). The final line closing the entire book of Psalms (Ps. 150:6) is again inclusive: *'Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!'* (Ps. 150:6, emphasis added.) Praise wends to the Creator from many diverse voices!

In the prophetic books the Creator mourns the breakdown of creation by human beings; for 'God's creation is at stake in Israel's behaviour, not simply their relationship with God.'<sup>1</sup> His words through Isaiah seem very contemporary: *'The earth*

*mourns and fades away, The world languishes and fades away;*

*The haughty people of the earth languish.*

*The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants,*

*Because they have transgressed the laws,*

*Changed the ordinance,*

*Broken the everlasting covenant.*

*Therefore the curse has devoured the earth,*

*And those who dwell in it*

*are desolate'* (Is. 24:4-6).

The prophet Jeremiah concurs, listing a litany of human sins. Then God wails:

*'"Shall I not punish them for these things?" says the LORD. "Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this? I will take up a weeping and wailing for the mountains, and for the dwelling places of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up. . . . Both the birds of the heavens and the beasts have fled; they are gone"'* (Jer. 9:9, 10, emphasis added).

God laments the ruin of the natural world. Decrying human sinfulness, He mourns for the resulting degraded creation because He cares for this earth.

As the book of Jonah closes, God again reveals His love. He tells His petulant prophet, who is raging against God's mercy: *'And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left – and much livestock?'* (Jonah 4:11, emphasis added). God specifically states that by sparing Nineveh He can also save innocent animals, again underscoring His affection for the life He has created.

When the Creator walks on the earth, even His early childhood years are instructive:

*'Through all those secluded years at Nazareth, His [Jesus'] life flowed out in currents of sympathy and tenderness. The aged, the sorrowing, and the sin-burdened, the children at play in their innocent joy, the little creatures of the groves, the patient beasts of burden, – all were happier for His presence. He whose word of power upheld the worlds would stoop to*

*relieve a wounded bird.* There was nothing beneath His notice, nothing to which He disdained to minister.'<sup>2</sup>

He later refers to divine affection for all life when He mentions that God notices when a sparrow falls (Luke 12:6). He also admires the things His own hands have made: *'Consider the lilies of the field . . . even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these'* (Matt. 6:28, 29). In His parables He often draws lessons from nature. And once again He compares His love to that of a mother bird: *'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . I how often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!'* (Matt 23:37, emphasis added.)

During a major address in Athens, the apostle Paul speaks of God, who *'gives to all life, breath, and all things'* (Acts 17:25). He also instructs us that the invisible attributes of God can be learned through the things He has created: *'For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse'* (Rom. 1:20).

Much earlier, the wisest man, King Solomon, intriguingly instructs us how animals can be our teachers: *'Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise'* (Prov. 6:6); *'There are four things which are little on the earth, but they are exceedingly wise: the ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their food in the summer; the rock badgers are a feeble folk, yet they make their homes in the crags; the locusts have no king, yet they all advance in ranks; the spider skillfully grasps with its hands, and it is in kings'*

*palaces'* (Prov. 30:24-28, emphasis added).

Solomon, apparently, was an impressive biologist noted for his great wisdom.

When receiving guests who came to learn from him, Solomon *'spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon'* (1 Kings 4:33, 34).

In spite of how humans have wreaked havoc with this world, the heavenly beings who cheered God on during Creation Week (Job 38:7) still continue to praise Him for His creative acts: *'You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created'* (Rev. 4:11). God's other great act, that of salvation, is not even mentioned in this creation hymn.

As Scripture closes, God's affection for creation is highlighted once more. After His Second Coming, Jesus does not whisk the redeemed away to a new planet in another part of the universe and get rid of this contaminated place, the 'one dark blot' in the universe. No! He renews our 'nest'. When God points towards the establishment of His righteous kingdom, He pictures it through the animal kingdom:

*'The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze . . . and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the*

*cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD'* (Isa. 11:6-9, emphasis added).

The non-violent, peaceful diet of Eden will be restored. The extremely cruel treatment of animals through the modern practices of 'industrial farming' will be halted. The brutal sport of hunting will cease. Finally, the Creator's dreams for this world will be fulfilled.

The doctrine of Creation, the doctrine of Life, is a lot more than not evolution. It reveals the Creator's heart of love for this world, as seen all through Scripture. Someday soon, those accepting redemption will join the heavenly chorus to praise the Creator face to face, and there will be a celebration of re-creation. Chanting praise in that mighty choir will be many diverse voices. Psalm 148 anticipates what the book of Revelation describes of that time:

*'And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever'* (Revelation 5:13).

The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, **all things, animate and inanimate**, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, **declare that God is love.**<sup>3</sup>

#### For further study

If you would like to gain the full blessing from reading this article, we warmly encourage you to do so by copying the link below into your search bar. This will allow you to read the complete article with the extensive original footnotes. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1183&context=pubs>

<sup>1</sup>Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2005), p. 165 <sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), p. 74 (emphasis added) <sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), p. 678 (emphasis added)



Photo: Geoff Lyford

Photo: David Bell

# 'I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love ...'

A brief study of Paul's letter to Philemon and the Onesimus story

by Dr Kendra Haloviak Valentine

To get the best out of this study, it may be worth taking just a minute or two to first read Paul's letter to Philemon (Ed.).

As we go through this one-chapter letter in the New Testament, I've tried to emphasise the rhetoric of the passage. Consider at least five appeals Paul is making:

- To welcome Onesimus back as a brother (vss. 12, 15-17);
- To release Onesimus from slavery (vs. 16);
- To transfer any debts from Onesimus to himself (vss. 18, 19);
- To do 'even more' (maybe to send Onesimus back to Paul?) (vss. 13, 14, 21);
- To prepare a guest room for Paul (vs. 22).

Notice what this epistle is challenging. This epistle in our scriptures undercuts the attitudes and value systems that enabled slavery in the first century – the same attitudes and values, I would suggest, that enable white supremacy in this century.

It advocates equality in the family of God. Superiority is challenged because of the brotherhood and sisterhood of humanity. Superiority is challenged by renouncing human hierarchies, because all are made in the image of God. It is challenged because of the sharing of debt. It is challenged through fellowship and service. It is challenged through hospitality.

Paul destroys the foundational attitudes on which slavery (and, later, racism) rests. Ethnocentrism and ethnosuperiority are gone. Class superiority is incompatible with the Gospel. Paul and Onesimus are brothers. Paul, Onesimus and Philemon are brothers.

But, as people sometimes ask me, 'Why isn't Paul calling for a protest at the Roman Forum to rid the Empire of slavery?' While it's true that he does not call for this, neither does Paul live in a democracy. But let's not miss what Paul is doing. He is, it seems to me, theologically destroying the very foundation of both slavery and racism in the church. Paul is saying:

**Church** – you can't own a brother or a sister.

**Church** – you can't embrace white supremacy.

**Church** – you can't endorse the brutality of Roman soldiers on enslaved bodies.

**Church** – you can't endorse police brutality on black and brown bodies.

Because when you see brown or black bodies, you see a brother, you see a sister, you see a child of God. She or he is not something to be objectified, but a person invited into hospitality.

Remember Paul's letter to the Galatians: 'There is neither Jew nor Gentile' (3:28, NIV)? If, with the Gospel, ethnic and class and gender superiority are no more, how will this play out in the Christian communities? Clearly, Christian churches are still wrestling with that question.

Kendra Haloviak Valentine, PhD serves as Professor of New Testament Studies at La Sierra University, California. This study on Philemon is the foundation of a presentation given to the Azure Hills Church, in a series of conversations on 'Race and the Church'. The full one-hour presentation can be found at the following link. The Q&A at the end is as enlightening as the presentation.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdrxqQF0dHE&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdrxqQF0dHE&feature=emb_title)



Lead us forward into freedom;  
From despair Your world release,  
That, redeemed from war and hatred,  
All may come and go in peace.  
Show us how through care and goodness  
Fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living,  
Let it from the earth be banned:  
Pride of status, race or schooling,  
Dogmas that obscure Your plan.  
In our common quest for justice  
May we hallow life's brief span.

You, Creator God, have written  
Your great name on humankind;  
For our growing in Your likeness  
Bring the life of Christ to mind,  
That by our response and service  
Earth its destiny may find.

This hymn is often sung to a variety of tunes.  
Listen here as the Cornerstone Choir  
sing it to the traditional melody, 'Rhuddlan':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwOqnxnm7w0>

## For the healing of the nations

Author: Fred Kaan (1965)

Scripture reference: Revelation 22:2

For the healing of the nations,  
Lord, we pray with one accord,  
For a just and equal sharing  
Of the things that earth affords.  
To a life of love in action  
Help us rise and pledge our word.

## Returning tithes and giving offerings under lockdown

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70100 – £1 | 70300 – £3 | 70500 – £5 | 70575 – £10

To give £20, text 70750 as a one-off donation, NOT weekly. The donation will be added to your monthly bill or deducted from your pay-as-you-go balance.

*'I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your faithfulness and generosity in supporting the church during this very difficult time.*

*Please rest assured, the coronavirus will pass. May the Lord bless you and keep you safe.'*

Emmanuel Osei, President

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**Online donations** can be made via the Conference's own website: <https://nec.adventist.uk/contact-us/donate/>. Simply follow the instructions given on each area of the page, and ensure that the North England Conference is your choice for where the donation should go.

*'In seeking to fulfil the commission of Matthew 28, it is my desire that each congregation within the North England Conference should be an integral part of its community. Our congregations should be the place that our communities look to in times of storm, in times of crisis, in times of happiness and in times of celebration. Our congregations should be the place where refuge can be found, because we have demonstrated to them that all it takes to bring calm to a situation is a word from the Master, who never sleeps. Thank you for your continued faithfulness.'*

Richard Jackson, President

**Newbold Diversity Centre**




Lecturer:  
**Amanda Mukwashi**  
Chief Executive, Christian Aid

## DOES POVERTY HAVE A COLOUR?

How the Church can restore dignity, equality and justice for all.

Tuesday  
**10th**  
November  
**2020**  
7.30pm

[newbold.ac.uk/diversity-centre](http://newbold.ac.uk/diversity-centre)  
contact: Helen Pearson 07775 612 610



As supplied, errors and omissions excepted

# Charlotte Fidelia – I serve my church in cradle roll

by June Coombs

I am visiting my three-year-old granddaughter in Northern Ireland. It's 10 o'clock on Sabbath morning, my son turns the television on, and we enter the Stanborough Park Cradle Roll Sabbath School. Not since 1998 have I attended their Cradle Roll Sabbath School with my youngest son. And now here we are, grandad & granddaughter, in 'virtual Sabbath School', watching an incredibly interesting and professionally prepared programme hosted by Charlotte Fidelia. Here's her story, as told to June Coombs: why she serves, and what it takes to produce the weekly programme. (Ed.)



I would love to share with you my experience of creating the Cradle Roll Sabbath School programmes. The ideas came from my mum, Carol Fidelia, who led Cradle Roll Sabbath School for over a decade, and I have now been part of the programme for just as long. For most weeks I have led the programme, including singing, playing the piano and story-telling. My musical gift was passed down from my grandmother, Valerie Fidelia, and my dad, Alain Fidelia. As a trained

musician I play numerous instruments to a high standard, but have achieved Grade 8 in singing and flute and Grade 7 in piano. This has helped me to provide music for Cradle Roll, and as Head of Music for the Parallel Service for a few years. God has also blessed me with the ability to use technology easily, being completely self-taught in media and photography. I used to work for my parents' company in the holidays, providing photos, videos and media for their websites. All of this was invaluable for providing virtual Sabbath School.

everything was very crude, but it provided worship for the little ones for that first month of April. Our aim was to provide a monthly programme, as per the GC's guidance. I did not know how far this video would reach – we have almost ten thousand views on that video. I was getting messages from all over the world, thanking me for bringing worship to their little ones in areas where there was no church or Sabbath School. Relatives in Mauritius, Brazil and Cyprus shared it with their families and churches. I knew that we had to continue bringing worship. Working as a qualified specialist paediatric physiotherapist in a London hospital has inspired me to work professionally with young children. During this incredibly challenging time, working in one of the worst-hit hospitals in London, I was re-deployed to work with the mortuary and bereavement services for three months, which was difficult. My background is in ITU and respiratory medicine, and I helped these teams on weekends, being on-call on nights – so by the end of the peak I was exhausted. I have only just returned to my normal role, which has been greatly adapted to combat the pandemic. All of this has greatly affected my time. In the beginning, creating programmes for Cradle Roll took up every evening I had. I had to streamline things as much as possible to give myself some time while bringing the best programmes possible to the children.

When we thought about providing Sabbath School virtually, I took an entire day to record everything on my phone and laptop and put it together. The way I created



## Charlotte Fidelia – this is how I create my programmes

- 1. Equipment:** I record all the videos using my Canon 650D DSLR camera. I place a plain blanket over the TV as a background, put the camera on a table, and set up the ring light that attaches to my camera. I record the music on either my phone or iPad from my Clavinova piano once I have learnt to play the songs. I then use my laptop to put the programmes together using Kden (video-editing software), Audacity (audio-editing software) and Photoshop (creating pictures for the video). I then upload all the videos to YouTube for storage, as they are too large for my laptop or portable hard drive, and send through the final version to the Stanborough Park media team, who then upload to the Stanborough Park social media pages.
- 2. Monthly recordings:** at the start of the month I record sections of the programme that will be the same for the month. This includes the welcome, the prayer, the offering section, the memory verse and the end of the Sabbath School.
- 3. Music:** I learn the songs on the piano and then record myself playing them using the voice recorder app either on my iPad or phone. I email this over to my laptop, where I put the piano underneath the vocals in the Audacity software. I usually sing a cappella, and (blessed to have very good pitch) little editing

needs to be done, except for some rhythmic changes.

**4. Songs:** I record and edit songs individually – the file size of one long video would be too big. Putting multiple videos together saves time and file size, and I can put different songs into the programme easily. I try to record a new song every month. Currently twenty songs are used regularly, and some songs are re-recorded monthly, such as the offering songs.

**5. Stories:** We try to get leaders and parents to record stories each week. The story remains the same for the month. As long as I get a new story each week, a new programme is released. Cecilia Davidson has produced the most stories, and she usually produces the first story of the month so that there's a programme for at least the month.

**6. Programmes:** My mum has used a set programme format for years. I place songs, stories and memory verses into this format, and *voila* – we have a programme. I then let it render and send it off to Ben and Jef (media team), who upload it for Sabbath mornings. Twelve completed programmes are live on the web and have been used for witnessing globally.

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*'This crisis has taken us by surprise, but not God; He's still in control, and, at this time, may we all continue to entrust our lives and means into His care. Thank you all for your faithfulness and support in ensuring that the Church continues to fulfil her mission and carry out her ministry of care, nurture, and love. Blessings and good health to you all.'*  
Dan Serb, President

**Scottish Mission**  
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*'Thank you to all our members for making God first a way of life for all times and in all circumstances. I think for all of us this is a non-negotiable and irreducible minimum of our Christian faith. He is faithful and remains our "Jehovah Jireh" – the Lord our Provider.'*  
Paul Tompkins, President

**Welsh Mission**  
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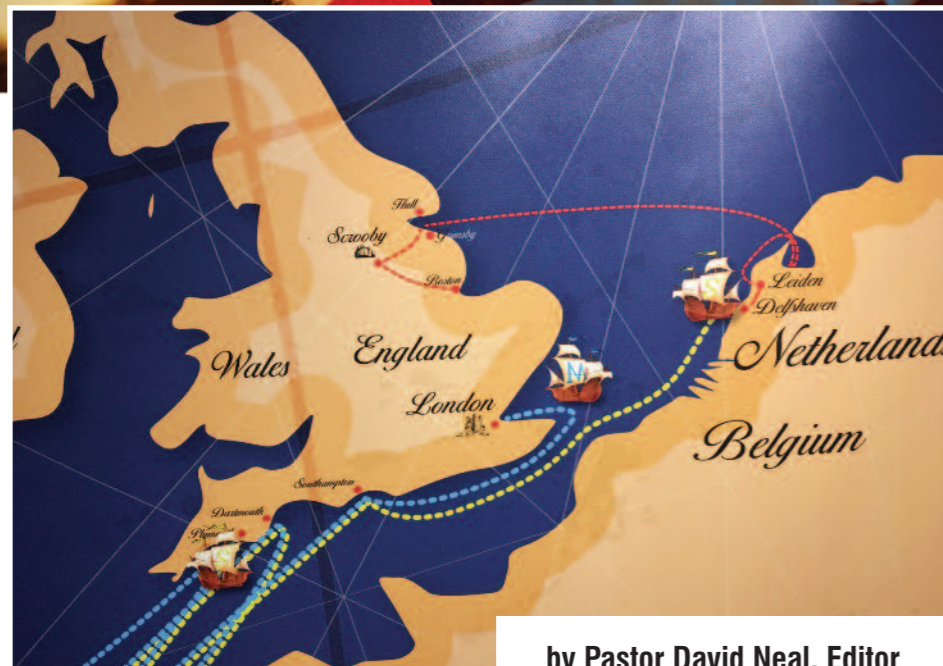
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*'Often, it is in times of great anguish that we are able to see more clearly the goodness of God. Let us continue to be faithful and true, for we are confident that even though we walk through the darkest valley, God is with us; He will never leave us and never forsake us.'*  
Emanuel Bran, President

For returning tithes & giving offerings in the **Irish, Scottish or Welsh Missions**, email: [abarki@adventist.uk](mailto:abarki@adventist.uk), including the breakdown of T & O, the name of the church, and your Gift Aid number. The local budget offering will be credited into the church deposit (trust) account and later transferred to the local church bank account, upon the request of the treasurer.

# AMERICA: a 'Promised Land'?

Part 1



by Pastor David Neal, Editor

The title of this piece goes to the heart of what America was and continues to be all about. The title is actually taken from Barack Obama's new biography (shortly to be released). He's not the first to write about the hopes and dreams of a nation that was started on promise and hope – perhaps more than any other nation in history. If we are to understand where America is today, and where it is likely headed in the future, particularly in the context of biblical prophecy (as portrayed in Revelation 13), perhaps we need to go back to where it all started.

A couple of months ago, when my wife Marci and I were experiencing 'cabin fever', we decided to go out for a ride in the car. With the UK East Midlands still a very new world to

us, we find a new town or village of interest almost every time we go out. On this particular late September day, it was to explore the small market town of Retford, Lincolnshire, just over 40 miles north of Grantham. What interested me in the town guide was a brief mention of the Mayflower Pilgrim Visitor Museum.<sup>1</sup> In this dramatic US election year, it seemed that such a visit would not be without significance, and we declared this to be a 'must see'.

On arrival in the town, searching for the museum was a challenge. I had the address, and followed the satnav, but couldn't find it. I Expected to find a one- or two-storey museum housed in an old Methodist church or historic municipal building, but it was nowhere to be

found. The local shoppers didn't seem to know where it was, either. After walking up and down the designated street three times, suddenly, as if out of nowhere, appeared a small sign over the front of what looked rather like a small charity shop. Sure enough, this was the museum's location. On the ground floor the shop sold books, cards and souvenirs. On the first floor was the museum, housed in a small room not much larger than the size of an ordinary living room. Such a humble museum for such significant history.<sup>2</sup> . . . For it was from Retford and the surrounding area of North Lincolnshire that the journey to the 'Promised Land' began.

When James I ascended the throne of England in the early sixteen-hundreds, there was a great expectation that 'tolerance' would replace the oppression enforced during Elizabeth I's reign, ruling supreme on all matters spiritual. While the Catholic era had come to an end, Church of England worship continued to retain some aspects of Catholicism.

For the Puritans, reform could not come quickly enough, so in protest they presented James with the 'Millenary Petition', representing a thousand Englishmen. They charged that the church was corrupt and decadent, and made it clear that no reform-minded Protestant could accept continuing papal practices. James conceded to just one of their demands – the call for an 'Authorised' Bible – but nothing else.

For the Puritans (also known as Separatists), this was still not enough, and to stay with the established church was for them nothing but compromise. Under the leadership

of John Smyth in the North Lincolnshire parish of Gainsborough, they separated themselves to worship the way God wanted them to worship. Even under James I, worship not 'sanctioned' by the Church of England was an act of rebellion, a decision that would have 'life-threatening' consequences for the families who followed Smyth. It was not long after that that they experienced the 'heavy hand of opposition upon them'. By 1608 Smyth and his congregation felt they had no alternative but to self-exile to Amsterdam. By 1609 fellow Separatists in the Scrooby congregation (a neighbouring parish a few miles away) followed the same road to Holland, via the nearby port of Immingham – a journey they believed would lead to freedom.<sup>3</sup>

For a while the Puritans experienced a fair level of religious freedom in Holland . . . but something was wrong. Their faith continued to be challenged, not so much overtly by the state, but more subtly. Not least, they were beginning to think that Holland, being a place full of 'worldly influences', was not right for their children. Frightened of assimilation into Dutch society – including values that were in direct contradiction to what they understood to be God's Word – it was in 1620 that they left for a 'Promised Land', eventually crossing the Atlantic in early autumn on a ship called the *Mayflower* (from Plymouth, England). After a tortuous 66-day voyage, the ship arrived at a place on the eastern seaboard known today as Cape Cod on 9 November.

In the DNA of the 'Puritans' was a belief that they were the chosen people. They were 'spiritual Israel'. Against the forces of state religion, they would have identified with the words of John in Revelation. They could see, and had experienced, the forces of Babylon

that John described in vision. Knowing that Babylon could not be reformed, they would escape to a place where they could be both pure and free from tyranny. With God on their side, they would be safely delivered from the enemy. During their voyage on the *Mayflower*, they could be forgiven for thinking that they were fleeing from Egypt – and, while the sea did not literally open up for them, deliverance in the hands of God was over the sea. Notably – and not a line to be missed – it was God's 'Providence' that enabled them to land at Cape Cod.

Without question, they believed that their journey across the Atlantic was to set up God's kingdom on earth – a promised land where freedom would reign and they would be free from religious oppressors – and, just as significant, where they would be free to create a society in the image of God. This new land was to be their 'Canaan', intentionally different in design to their former home, the apostate countries of Europe. This was not just the arrival of the new world, but the society they believed God wanted – one described by one church historian as a 'monolithic holy commonwealth', membership of which was made up of 'the elect' or 'proved saints'.

But, as is often the way with religious belief, some of them soon started seeing and understanding the Bible from a different perspective; and, as some religious folk seemed to be less 'perfect' than others, the old-world habit of 'coercion' was not entirely deleted from the hard drive of those early settlers. With history repeating itself, it wasn't long before some settlers had to flee and escape persecution – even in the new world.

Notwithstanding, as Clifford Longley expresses in his book *Chosen People*,

'America imagined itself into existence by believing in the future.'<sup>4</sup> As Longley further points out, the founding dream 'under God' was that 'they were the chosen of God' and were 'rewarded not just with victory over their enemies, but with prosperity; but in return (like Israel of old) they have to remain faithful'. I'm labouring this point for a later purpose; but, as Longley describes the founding act of 1774, at the opening of the Continental Congress embracing the then 13 existing colonies, he makes a most significant point in this story:

*'It was, par excellence, the act that founded America upon a specific understanding of God's purposes. Henceforth the Chosen People were to be not the Jews, not the Catholics, not the English, and not just the New Englanders, but all Americans. Henceforth 'being an American', like being a Jew or being a Christian, was to possess a distinct religious status as one of the elect.'*<sup>5</sup>

**What does it mean when Longley suggests that the 'American dream' is based on 'American exceptionalism'? And why is the dream, for some, still a distant reality? Why is it that many 'God-fearing people' believed Donald Trump's leadership to be much safer than that of Joe Biden? And isn't it just a little far-fetched to believe that America could end up as a religious oppressor? These matters we will consider next time in part 2.**

<sup>1</sup><https://www.mayflower400uk.org/visit/scrooby-babworth/notts-attractions/mayflower-pilgrim-visitor-centre/>  
<sup>2</sup>In Plymouth, Devon, there is a more extensive Mayflower museum – <https://www.mayflower400uk.org/visit/plymouth-england/attractions/mayflower-museum/>  
<sup>3</sup>Williston Walker, *History of the Christian Church*, p. 407  
<sup>4</sup>Clifford Longley, *Chosen People*, p. 8  
<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 67

**British Union Conference Presents :**  
**THREE COSMIC MESSAGES**  
 13 Week Series  
 Starts Friday 16 October  
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**EARTH'S FINAL  
 CONFLICT**  
 MARK FINLEY

As supplied, errors and omissions excepted





From left to right: Ian Clutton, Paul Brewin, Jacqueline Anderson, Sarah Jarvis and Elisabeth Sangüesa (Managing Director)



just that day, but throughout the pandemic, and we give glory to God. Not only the Press was open – customers were able to buy items in person at several shops operating under the LifeSource Bookshop banner, which were open to the public, with Trevor Johnson, the UK Sales Director, present to encourage the staff and take orders. Along with special

offers and extra opening hours, a full programme of uplifting messages was streamed live by the SECmedia from 2 to 4pm, and we received word that many people had found it a blessing.

Although this September's Virtual Open Day is now over, don't despair, as it might not be the last of the year: there is talk of holding similar events before Christmas!

Until then, we look forward to hearing your voice over the phone on 01476 591700, or receiving your order of the ever-growing number of our products posted on the LifeSource website: [www.lifesourcebookshop.co.uk](http://www.lifesourcebookshop.co.uk). See you soon, and God bless you!

ANDREW PUCKERING



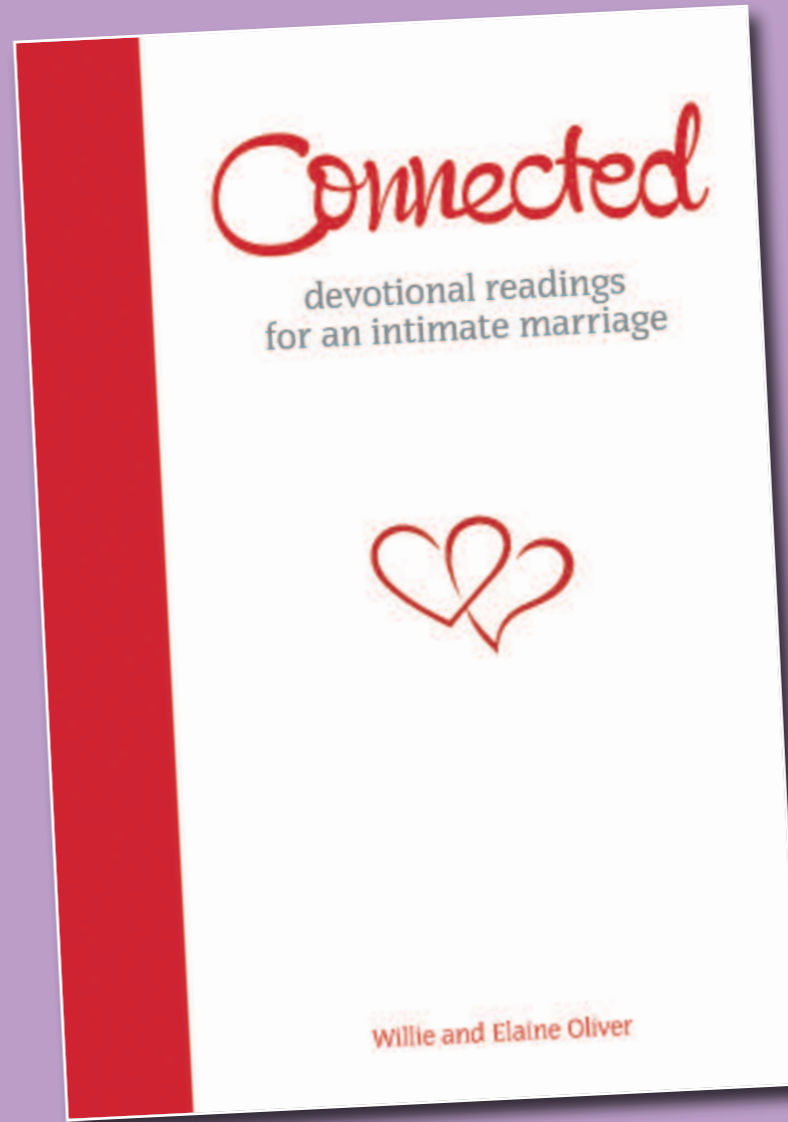
### An open day like no other

Staff at the Stanborough Press this year weren't sure how busy the Stanborough Press Virtual Open Day would be. Following camp meetings where we didn't meet except online, we were now to have an open day when the Press was closed to visitors, but open to telephone and online orders. Would this be much different to a normal working day? Would staff be anxiously hanging around, waiting for a tiny trickle of orders? O ye of little faith!

The tiny band present on the Sunday represented a fraction of the number that would usually be there, but we were all eager to see literature going out and homes being blessed. Keenly aware that even a scrap of a torn page has the potential to save a lost soul for the Kingdom, and that Ellen White had advanced that our literature should be distributed 'like leaves of autumn', we started the day with worship and were immediately encouraged by the

news that forty-two online orders had been placed on the Friday and Saturday night, before the main event had even started – praise God!

One of the first orders turned out to be among the biggest – sixty Bibles and tens of copies of Ellen White's books, requested by a member in London who has been known to the editor for many years. Every one of them was intended to be shared with a friend searching for God. We love orders like that, because it shows us that Christ is still moving upon the hearts of His people to share the Gospel, and it makes us excited to be able to participate in that ministry as the storehouse able to supply His faithful workers. Managing Director, Elisabeth Sangüesa, confirmed that many such orders had been received, not



### Connected: Devotional readings for an intimate marriage

Willie and Elaine Oliver  
ISBN: 978-1-78665-112-9



*Connected* is a freshly designed devotional journal for loving couples. It is written by Willie and Elaine Oliver, Family Life ministers of the General Conference, and is organised into 52 readings.

I'm one of those 'blokes' who cringes when confronted with 'touchy feely topics'. So how did I cope?

Mercifully, every reading is short and brisk, directed towards relationship building and values that make for a wholesome marriage. There is no direct discussion of physical intimacy, which might be a disappointment for those looking for a Christian approach to these matters. The focus is on the marriage of friends, equal partners in love, going beyond the parental context.

The language is straightforward, other than the occasional extravagant outburst, which reflects the cultural style of the authors.

The text is well set out and easily absorbed. Best value will be experienced by those who engage in the conversation starters at the end of each chapter.

The approach is overtly Christian, though, alienating spouses who do not claim faith or understand religious patter. Still, the basics hold true.

In conclusion, then, it's a weekly refresher for our marriage relationship. It is a book to embrace and a gift to share. I declare it to be cringe-free!

VICTOR PILMOOR



### Connected

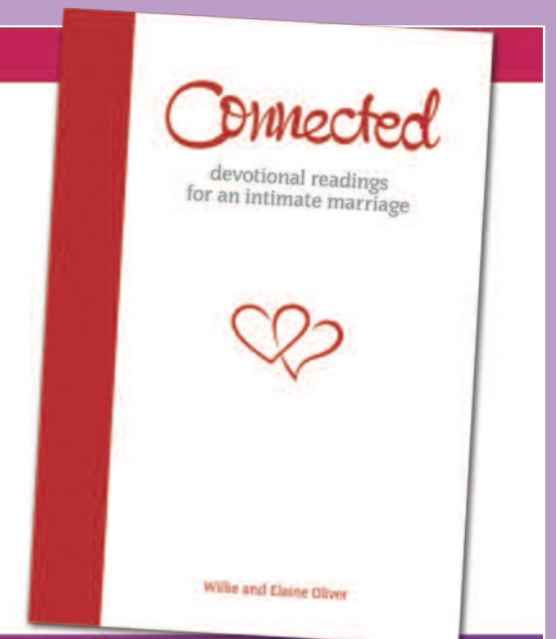
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**Harold and Ralph Hudson (d. July 2018 and April 2020).**

Brothers Harold and Ralph were born two years apart in the beautiful island of Cuba to their parents, Hubert (from Jenkin Mountain in Hanover, Jamaica) and Gertrude (from Barbados). The family emigrated to Jamaica, where their youngest brother was born. They lived in Westmoreland and went to the Axe-and-Adze SDA church, one of the oldest buildings in the community.

Harold and Ralph went to Mt Peto School, Westmoreland, Jamaica. They lived and worked



in America before emigrating to England in the early 1960s. Harold settled in Oxford with his young family and had eight children with his wife, Ruth, who passed away in October 2016. Ralph settled down in London and had a son, Sacha.

Harold and Ralph were so close that Harold helped his brother obtain employment as an engineer in Oxford, where he lived and worked for a period of time. Harold was a founding member of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Oxford. They met in a small chapel in St Mary's Road and moved to a brand-new building in Chester Street in 1971, where the church will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary next year. Harold was a deacon for many years; he collected thousands of pounds ingathering, and spent many hours transporting new

members to the church.

Harold was a generous person, always looking out for others. Harold and Ralph visited each other regularly and often travelled to Canada and Jamaica to see their younger brother and other relatives. When Harold's health deteriorated and he could no longer go to church, his daughter Maureen travelled every Sabbath from Northampton to Oxford to make sure her dad had adequate support, until he could no longer care for himself. When her dad moved into a care home, these visits continued.

When Harold passed away in July 2018, Ralph was devastated and his health deteriorated. Maureen travelled to London by train every few weeks to support her uncle, carrying home-cooked Caribbean meals, and he looked forward

to daily phone calls. She also arranged home care for her uncle. Ralph passed away 20 months after his brother, in April 2020. A memorial service was held at Oxford Crematorium on 9 October 2020, conducted by Rev. Jeryl Bayona, a former chaplain of Brookfield Nursing Home, where Harold spent his last two years.

They leave behind a brother, sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, grandchildren, friends and neighbours. *'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also'* (John 14:3, KJV).

MAUREEN EVANS

Messenger

Volume 125 • 22 – 9 November 2020

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COPY FOR No. 23 – 12 November 2020

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Sunset

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

	Nov	6	4.24	4.36	4.24	4.21	4.37
	13	4.14	4.26	4.12	4.08	4.08	4.25
	20	4.05	4.17	4.02	3.57	4.14	
	27	3.58	4.10	3.55	3.48	4.06	

Letter to the Editor



The following letter was first published in *The Pilgrim*, the BUC newsletter for retired church employees. Due to the

significance of the subject matter, we are reproducing it here.

Dear Editor

I would like to thank Pastor Anthony for his timely thoughts about church administration levels. Someone once said that man's extremity is very often God's opportunity – so maybe once again, with the current COVID-19 situation, the church is being given an excellent opportunity to re-think the financial cost of maintaining its excessive organisational hierarchy.

I remember a few years ago a series of letters appearing in the *Messenger* on the same theme, to which many, including me, contributed. Both the Union and South England Conferences subsequently initiated reports and discussions for restructuring, but sadly nothing substantial resulted. As the late Ken Hammond wrote so aptly, 'Turkeys rarely vote for Christmas.' After reading Pastor Anthony's thoughts I dug out my copy of George Knight's *The Fat Lady and the Kingdom*, published 25 years ago, which highlighted the need for the church back then to find fresh strategies to short-circuit the institutional and organisational problems that threaten it. It could have been written last week. Here are just some of the fascinating and pertinent quotes from it.

- 'The preservation of the structure and/or institution gradually overtakes mission as the

predominant concern' – sometimes known as 'the iron law of oligarchy'!

- 'Administrators breed administrators, and even in times of financial crisis it is hard to decrease their numbers.'
- 'We have followed the corporate model of hierarchy and not the biblical model of talents or gifts. Administrators need to see themselves as servants and facilitators, rather than "bosses" or "career bureaucrats".'
- 'We need to change the mentality that treats a move from the pastorate to administration as a promotion.'
- 'Seventh-day Adventism adopted a multi-tiered administration structure that, in its trim state, was well fitted for mission expansion . . . but decades of change . . . have created a bureaucracy that is extremely expensive to maintain.'

There is only one other world-based Christian denomination that has so many hierarchical layers, and that is the Roman Catholic Church. For many years I worked for a different worldwide Christian organisation (which, interestingly, also began in 1844). In the UK its membership and location numbers were very similar to Adventist figures, but its organisation was much simpler, with all its resources and operational emphasis aimed at the local level.

As George Knight pointed out – denominational institutions, structures, traditions and so forth should not be ends in themselves, but simply the means of helping people to be ready for Jesus' return; or, as he then put it, 'When Adventism loses the ability to change dynamically it will be ready for the museum of denominational existence – with the likeness of a crusty old wine skin that has lost the flexible dynamic that made it successful in the first place.'

DAVID WRIGHT, DEVON

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