

M

Messenger

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

26 February 2021 • Volume 126 • 2

Does Youth Week of Prayer matter?

20-27 March 2021

Youth Week of Prayer has never had the profile given to the November 'Annual Week of Prayer', or even the more recent January 'Ten Days of Prayer and Revival'. It is tempting for those of us well past our youth to think: *Good for them; nothing to do with me.*

What if this year we press the reset button? See pages 12, 13 & 17 for ways to connect.



For more, go to **MESSENGER Extra**
MESSENGER • Inform • Educate • Inspire





The mission of the South England Conference

by Pastor Emmanuel Osei, SEC President

The Lord called us into office in September 2019. I met with our new directors, and together we wrestled with the Lord in prayer, seeking His will for the South England Conference over the next four years. The Lord impressed upon us that we have been too comfortable in our churches, enjoying the fellowship and worship experience. It is time to get out of our comfort zone and interact with our community. He was clear regarding the message that we are to share with the world, which is clearly articulated in Revelation 14:6-12.

In meeting our community, we knew we had to be relevant. How did Jesus do it? We were reminded of Ellen G. White's statement in *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143: 'Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me."'

Following Christ's example requires us to shift our emphasis and focus from the church pews to the community. With the inception of the pandemic, we were forced to close our churches but continue with ministry. Perhaps the lockdown was a blessing in that respect. We mingled with people in our communities; we desired their good; we showed sympathy for them and ministered to their needs. Thank God, strong relationships and connections have been built, and some are following the Lord Jesus Christ. We can attest to the fact that Christ's method does work and bring success!

In 2021, we placed greater emphasis on the discipleship element of our theme. Although we are grateful for the 26,000-strong membership of our conference, the Lord impressed upon us the need to transition from being just members to being disciples. Very often, as members, we sit back and allow the faithful few to 'do the work'. However, God wants us all to be participants in this great work. He wants to transform our characters to become more like Jesus. Not only does He want us to become His disciples, but He also wants us to become disciple-makers.

We solicited the services of Dr Peter Roennfeldt, who delivered a

training programme for all directors, administrators, office staff and members of the treasury team. It is important to note that we believe that all workers must be involved in disciple-making. Next, we held another training session for all our pastors. Finally, at our Evangelism Expo 2021, Dr Roennfeldt shared with the membership the practical aspects of discipleship and trained us to become disciple-makers.

Due to our desire to have everyone catch the vision and own the mission, we had further discussions with our pastors at a workers' meeting and invited them to meet with their local congregations to participate in an exercise:

- **Wish:** Local churches are to dream and share what ideal discipleship and community-building would look like in your local context.
- **Outcomes:** What actions or behaviour would you need to change for this to happen?
- **Obstacles:** What stands in the way of achieving this dream?
- **Plan:** What do we need to do in order to remove those obstacles?

Once local churches have identified what they can and would like to do to make their churches relevant to their community, they are to be encouraged to engage in ministry. Our SEC directors are now able to supply resources and assist local churches or districts in their areas of expertise. So, if a church is passionate about Pathfinder, for example, perhaps its members will seek to reach young people in their community. Our SEC Pathfinder director will be available to provide appropriate resources and assist them. If another church is passionate about feeding members of its community, once again, its members should be encouraged to engage in this ministry and the SEC Community Services Department director will be available to assist.

This work of making disciples and building communities is a paradigm shift from how we have 'done church' in the past. However, if we are to proclaim the everlasting Gospel to all within the South England Conference territory, this would require a total membership involvement. Every member must become a disciple and a disciple-maker. It is my hope that, as we continue this exciting journey together, the Lord will be with us and fulfil His mission through us.

MESSENGER subscription

Welcome to the second edition of *MESSENGER* for 2021, the second to be printed, and the second to be sent to you by direct mail. We have been very encouraged by the positive responses of those who received the first edition, and we're busy processing all of the updated addresses, requests for electronic versions, and requests for copies for other members.

Our aim is to send one printed copy of the *MESSENGER* to the household of every member who wishes to receive it. We realise that the first mailing did not reach all such households, and we would be grateful for your assistance in getting our information up to date. If you know of any members who want a printed copy of the *MESSENGER*, but haven't so far received one, please let us know.

Also, please note that if you want to keep receiving the *MESSENGER* by post you will need to let us know, either by returning the card that is included with the magazine, or by sending a brief email to: msubs@stanboroughpress.org.uk. If you are already in receipt of a delivery by post, please include your unique ten-digit subscription number found on the front of the envelope, located above the address.

This is a major new initiative to give help and support to all of our members in these strange and challenging times. We really appreciate your feedback and your assistance as we work with the church clerks to make it a success.

PETER OPPONG-MENSAH AND PASTOR JOHN SURRIDGE, DISTRIBUTION COORDINATORS



David Neal, Editor

'We would see Jesus'



We need to find a fresh and new vision of Jesus Christ. It is a fine and well-meant line, but what does it mean?

Who is Jesus Christ? What is He like? Christ-followers believe with certainty that He was an extraordinary person like no other human being who has ever lived. We describe Him as 'fully God and fully human'. We believe He was sent by God for a specific purpose, summarised best in John 3:16. Able to recite it with ease, we seek to understand and explain it well. We even go so far as to say that He gives life its ultimate meaning. In grateful response, along with Christians past and present, we shape our lives around His, and offer Him worship.

Why then the need for a fresh and new vision of Jesus Christ? Because we are human, a condition Christ recognises. Speaking to His followers struggling to stay faithful during difficult times, He clearly understands our humanity, and lovingly holds us accountable – ('I call to account – prod and correct and guide,' He says in The Message rendition of Revelation 3:19) – but then extends an invitation. 'Look at me. I stand at the door. I knock. If you hear me call and open the door, I'll come right in and sit down to supper with you.' (Revelation 3:20, The Message). For a brief moment let's imagine having that supper with Him – for a relationship 'reset'.

We listen . . .

You are blessed when you mourn, when you are meek, when you seek Me, when you show mercy, when you are pure, when you make peace, and – recognise a reality – when you may even be persecuted because of Me, He tells us (Matthew 5:1-12). Why's it like this? Because My

kingdom is the polar opposite of the picture your leaders portray of My Father. Mistakenly, they believe it's about power and control. But don't be fooled: the joy of My kingdom is in letting Me show you what God, My Father and yours, is really like – so that you can know Him too. Never in history has this happened before, and that's why I am here. Follow Me; look and learn; let Me be your Friend, your Companion, your Mentor on life's journey . . . but – most of all – trust Me!

When was the last time the Spirit of Christ gave us a prod, corrected us, and suggested in the gentlest of terms, as if talking one-to-one during a meal, *Are you sure the direction you are going in is the best? Why does it take so long for My kingdom teaching to sink in? I sometimes get the impression that you think more of yourself than you do of others – and, dare I say it, of Me? Is it possible that we've known each other for too long? Are you tired of Me and My ways? Surely you don't want us to go our separate ways?*

For this reason, the writer of Hebrews suggests that Christ-followers need to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2). Whatever faith tradition we belong to, whatever understanding of God we have, it gets seriously distorted without Jesus at the centre. More than that – distorted religious faith and practice drags us down, not up (Hebrews 12:3)! Distorted religion buys into the sin of 'exceptionalism', the idea that we are the chosen ones, and others are not – and we thank God that we are not like them. By the way, we had better do our utmost to 'preserve' the society (or even the church) we think God approves of.

Our 'reset' conversation with Jesus invites

us to keep our eyes fixed on Him – because He is our example for living. He is not only our moral compass, but – deeper than that – our 'Lover', the person who shows supreme love through His sacrifice at Calvary to get us back in a relationship with God, our Creator. Who put Christ on the Cross? We did.

'You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us' (Romans 5:6-8, NIV).

Whatever you do in the name of Christ, in society or in the church, if you do not have love – just forget it; don't even bother; because it's a huge adventure in missing the point (1 Corinthians 13). Come off it, Paul – really? Lighten up – please? 'No kidding – I'm serious about this,' says Paul. And when Paul talks about love, he is talking about the love of Christ:

'So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind' (Philippians 2:1, 2, ESV).

As we conclude, you might suggest it's time to come back down to earth. No – let's not, because 'keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus' is not 'pie in the sky', but a simple invitation to look up to Him, in contrast to looking down and finding the dross that all too often surrounds us. It is by looking up to Him that we experience His presence in our lives.

You and I can be absolutely sure about one thing: our vision of Jesus can fog up at any time – it's called life! Recognising this, J. I. Packer, explaining Paul's fruits of the Holy Spirit metaphor as found in Galatians 5:22, 23, invites us to connect them to the realities of daily life.

- *Love* as the Christlike reaction to people's malice;
- *Joy* as the Christlike reaction to depressing circumstances;
- *Peace* as the Christlike reaction to troubles, threats, and invitations to anxiety;
- *Patience* as the Christlike reaction to all that is maddening;
- *Kindness* as the Christlike reaction to all who are unkind;
- *Goodness* as the Christlike reaction to bad people and bad behaviour;
- *Faithfulness* and *gentleness* as the Christlike reaction to lies and fury; and
- *Self-control* as the Christlike reaction to every situation that goads you to lose your cool and hit out.¹

Would we see Jesus?

¹J. I. Packer, *Knowing God's Purpose for Your Life* (Regal Books, 2004), p. 289



How COVID-19 re-shaped SEC children's ministries

by Judy Clements, OBE, SEC Children's Ministries Director

Having become Children's Ministries Director in September 2019, I completed my four-year strategic plan for the quadrennium:

- **A vision:** to facilitate raising 'young disciples ready to fulfil their God-given purpose';
- **A mission** to enhance the spiritual, social, psychological and emotional development of children;
- **Strategic aims** to strengthen the partnership between home and Sabbath School; develop children into ambassadors able to influence their communities with the Gospel; and improve the departmental impact of engagements and resources for parents and teachers on matters relating to child well-being.

I created infrastructure to deliver child safeguarding training across the SEC, and produced an up-to-date training package

delivered by professionally qualified Adventist social workers, all by the beginning of November 2019, ready for the start of my area visits to observe the diverse approaches to delivering Children's Sabbath School. Simultaneously, we embarked on delivering safeguarding training on an area basis, starting with Area 1. Five training sessions were delivered between November 2019 and February 2020.

By March 2020 the country faced its first lockdown, necessitating the acquisition of new technological skills to function effectively.

Post-lockdown, we had an Easter programme and a Vacation Bible School, with over 600 watching each day. It connected with some non-Adventist families, creating a warm, friendly environment to grow young ambassadors for Jesus. This event culminated in a virtual graduation ceremony with a special message from Pastor Emmanuel Osei.

The lockdown also gave the Children's Ministry Department an opportunity to work creatively. During the Week of Prayer in November 2020, we invited individuals from across the SEC to read a different story each evening (available on YouTube).

We concluded 2020 by celebrating 25 years of children's ministry and telling the story of Jesus from birth to resurrection, seen through the eyes of children, who demonstrated their talents by contributing to the programme. This, the Easter programme, and VBS were joint projects in partnership with Brixkidz, an Adventist-owned independent children's ministry.

The SEC Children's Ministry Department is mindful of the stress brought on families with young children and the increased risk of domestic abuse. Adventist families are not immune from the social, emotional and psychological pressures of being confined at home for several months, and many have fallen victim to the coronavirus or had to cope with loved ones being affected by it.

The next challenge was to roll out a one-day training programme on a complex topic remotely. At the time of writing this article, over 400 members have received their 'Keeping the Church Family Safe' training. Demand for this training remains high, and all courses have been oversubscribed. One distinct advantage of the online training is that we can reach more members.

Remember this?

Is a promise to put GOD FIRST for the good times only?

Faithful stewardship - more than a merely optional Christian grace.

The graphic shows a red 'Messenger' magazine cover with the text 'Journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United Kingdom and Ireland' and '24 January 2020 • Volume 125 • 2'. Next to it is a white card titled 'GOD FIRST' with a ladybug icon and 'I PROMISE:' followed by a checklist of six items, each with a checkbox. The items are: 'To set apart the first moments of each day with God.', 'To improve my relationships through love, forgiveness and reconciliation.', 'To practise one new health principle for the potential of living life at its best, as Christ promised (John 10:10).', 'To ask the Holy Spirit to guide me to those in my daily life who are open to hearing about my journey of faith in Christ, and His gift of grace for them.', 'To prepare for, and enjoy, Sabbath.', and 'To faithfully return God's tithe: 10% of whatever income He first gives to me.' Below the checklist is a line for 'To give a percentage (___%) of my income as a regular offering.' At the bottom of the card are fields for 'With God's help: _____' and 'Date: _____'. The card is from 'STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES'. Below the card is a silver door handle.

For more, go to **Messenger Extra**
 Messenger • Inform • Educate • Inspire



Jesus – the Advocate for some pretty big paradigm shifts



by Pastor Wayne Erasmus

SEC Director of Church Growth and Adventist Mission

Imagine you have spent 20 minutes with your GP. There is one thing you can do to improve several aspects of your health: walk 10,000 to 15,000 steps a day (6-8km or 3½-5 miles). It's a big number: far more than you normally take. How long would it take to walk that many steps? About 2.5 hours, depending on your walking speed and general fitness.

And all of a sudden you realise that getting 2.5 hours of fast walking into your life will not fit! You could try parking the car further away and walking the extra distance. Or you could walk to the local shops, buy fewer groceries, and walk home again. You could take up rambling. One thing is certain: it is going to take some reorganising to walk 15,000 steps intentionally, not merely intermittently.

And that is why most of us (who can) don't walk 15,000 steps a day. Our lives are not currently set up to include 15,000 steps, and we can't imagine not doing any of the things that currently fill our waking moments. We don't walk – not because we fundamentally disagree with the concept of walking; nor because we have moral objections to it; but because it doesn't fit into our lives.

To make the change requires a different approach. We call it 'a paradigm shift' – a fundamental change in approach or underlying assumptions. It doesn't come easily. When Copernicus (d. 1543) advanced the heliocentric theory of the Solar System, he was proposing a new paradigm. It hardly created a stir until Galileo built on his work and the Church threatened him with heresy charges. In 1633 Galileo was convicted under grave suspicion of heresy for 'following the position of Copernicus, which is contrary to the true sense and authority of the Holy Scripture',¹ and placed under house arrest for the remainder of his life. Paradigm shifts do not come about easily, for they require us to understand ourselves and our world differently.

The South England Conference has adopted the vision: 'Making Disciples, Building Communities'. This represents the aspiration and desired outcomes for the 2019-2022 Conference term. But it also, potentially, represents a paradigm shift – viewing ourselves and our surrounding landscape from a different vantage point. You don't see things differently by looking at them the same way; and you don't change anything by doing it the same way.

Like 15,000 steps, 'making disciples' sounds easy to fit into what I am already doing, until I recognise the practical and time implications. In my sedentary, predominantly meeting- and desk-oriented job, 15,000 steps does not happen easily. If I am ever going to have a hope of hitting that target, I have to change things up. When I look at local churches, plants and groups and notice how much volunteer time is used in meetings, preparing for public worship services that largely encourage passive listening, and members' travel to get from their homes to the building we call 'the church', there is very little time left over for life-on-life, relational discipleship, where there is deep, consistent, faithful investment over time. David Kinnaman, president of the Christian research organisation, Barna Group, notes that 'disciples cannot be mass-produced. Disciples are handmade, one relationship at a time.'²

Let that percolate a bit (yes, I did use that metaphor).

We serve a changed and changing context – we have known this for some time – yet our defaults to a 'churched culture' keep us looking at ourselves and the world as it is today through the same lenses we have been using for quite some time. Callahan notes that most churches assume the following as the basis for their ministry in the world:

- The minister serves inside the church.
- The laity ministers in the world.
- The world is seeking out the church.³

These assumptions may still work within some parts of our faith community. Nevertheless, for much of our mission context, the assumptions fall short of reality. In an unchurched culture we notice a different set of factors at work:

- The value of church is not among the major values of the culture.
- A substantial number of persons are not seeking out churches on their own initiative.
- By and large, persons live life as though the church did not substantially matter.⁴

While there is much to attend to, both within and outside of the church, people lead in direct relation to the way they experience being led. When the leader's focus is inside the church, it signals to others that their focus should remain inside as well.⁵

Let's steer away from production line trainings, 'mass' baptisms, and streamlined processes designed to produce good members, and let's accept the vision for what it is: a paradigm shift of huge proportions. We cannot engage the handmade nature of relational discipling and community building without sacrifice. We must surrender mass discipleship as a preferred model, and recognise that if my church is too big to understand the unique callings, sensibilities, and questions of that young person, that single mother, or that frustrated senior, then we are too big to do effective ministry and discipleship. We can give up some of the time-consuming but not disciple-producing activities and commitments in favour of life-on-life vocational mission. It is neither flashy nor old-fashioned: rather, it seems to be the way of Jesus . . . and He advocated for some pretty big paradigm shifts!

¹From the Inquisition's sentence of 22 June 1633 (de Santillana, 1976, pp. 306-310; Finocchiaro, 1989, pp. 287-291) ²*You Lost Me*, 2011 ³Kennon L. Callahan, 1990, *Effective Church Leadership*, p. 10 ⁴Op. cit., p. 20 ⁵Ibid.

Christ's method of connecting – for disciple-making

by Peter Roennfeldt



The word *evangelism* inspires – but also evokes fear or guilt. We know all believers are called to witness to the good news of Jesus and make disciples, but it seems so complicated – something only professionals with seminary degrees can do.

Most believers are not gifted public preachers, do not have the courage to knock on doors, and shrink from approaching strangers on the street. At some stage most have tried telling friends or family about end times, the Sabbath truth, or the state of the dead – and, as an elder told me recently, ‘People are not interested! Few will listen to me!’

Why is it so difficult?

Why do we face so much resistance? Might one reason be that we are starting in the wrong way? Sharing our message seems a good place to start: however, that is not how Jesus connected. As surprising as it may seem, Jesus did not start with His message – telling the people what they really needed to know.

Jesus made disciples in a particularly challenging environment. Likewise, our mission field is tough – post-Christendom paganism defined by deeply entrenched scepticism, cynicism and resistance towards

Christian faith. Christianity no longer interests or appeals, dismissed by many as a failed religion of the past.

So where would Jesus start?

We are not left to wonder. In all the Gospel stories we see Jesus the disciple-maker at work. Then, in Acts – following His death, resurrection and ascension – early believers continued what He had started, following His method.¹

When commissioned to ‘go and make disciples’ (Matthew 28:19)² – and to be His ‘witnesses’ (Acts 1:8) – they did not need to devise strategies and plans; they simply put into action the method they had seen Jesus use. To multiply disciples for His kingdom, they followed His life’s example, teaching and commission.

Christ’s method alone

Most Adventists can recite, ‘Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people’ – and also complete the statement with: ‘The Saviour mingled with [people] as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, “Follow Me.”’³

But has this become a meaningless

Adventist mantra – recited and believed, but rarely acted upon? Some respond, ‘Yes, but our world is different. We cannot simply do what Jesus did!’ Then, others see *The Ministry of Healing* statement as a comprehensive outline of Jesus’ disciple-making – but it is not. It simply points to how He connected – His method of ‘reaching the people’.

It’s not about us – or our message

This seems counterintuitive. Don’t people need to hear our message and the truth? Yes, but will they *hear* if we have not first connected or engaged with them?

In training disciple-makers Jesus outlined His simple process of relating and connecting. It is not aggressively oppositional, blandly compromising, nor graciously accommodating – but it is an approach that affirms our Saviour’s uniqueness, distinctive message and mission, and the experiences we have with Him. It is an approach that guards against attitudes of pride, superiority and exclusivity.

Jesus’ training

Re-read Luke 10:1-24. Imagine that Jesus is equipping you as a disciple-maker. In the little book *If You Can Eat . . . You Can Make Disciples*, I unpack this training.⁴ It is practical – demystifying witness and evangelism; demonstrating that disciple-making is not done by proxy, nor by professional evangelists alone; showing that all believers can share faith without fear, and that His method works in our contexts.

First, in preparing believers for disciple-making, Jesus:

- Formed small *teams* for support, encouragement and fellowship (Luke 10:1). We might team up with a friend, spouse, parent or child.
- Sent them to the *places* and people ‘*where He was about to go*’ – some close, and some distant (Luke 10:1).
- Urged *prayer* for more workers, for He foresaw a ready harvest (Luke 10:2) – a vision few of us have when looking at our communities.
- Forbade carrying a lot of *stuff*, working superficially, and rushing from one house to the next (Luke 10:4, 7).

Second, look for key people. Jesus was headed for Judea, Samaria and Perea. Over the ensuing months His disciples would engage with Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles. Their Hebrew greeting, *Shalom*, or ‘*Peace to this house*,’ would be understood by all, and if received would indicate a welcome (Luke 10:5, 6).

In the same way, when welcomed by neighbours, work colleagues or fellow students, you may discover *people of peace* – not necessarily the most important city officials or community leaders, but key for God’s kingdom movement. Jesus identifies them by their welcome, receptivity to the Spirit, reputation (good or bad), and the

influence they have within their circle of family or friends. When we find such people, Jesus says, 'Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you' (Luke 10:7).

These *key people* may be unbelievers who live next door, work associates, team members in sporting clubs, or family members living in our own homes. They need to know and follow Jesus and His message – but it is not time to dump 'the message' onto them. Rather, Jesus said to eat – outlining important steps before you 'tell them' anything.

From sharing a cuppa to sharing our message

It surprises many to learn that the first step of evangelism is eating. Once we have connected with people, Jesus said, 'Eat what is offered to you' (Luke 10:8). He didn't say 'eat everything' (and we won't!) – but He said, 'Eat.'

Jesus then outlined what to do while eating. He said, 'Heal those there who are ill' (Luke 10:9). The picture is becoming clearer. All of us *eat*, and all can *heal*. However, if we are to *heal* we must know what the need is – physical, mental, emotional, social, relational or spiritual.

These are the steps:

- First, **eat** with people – and listen. Accepting their hospitality builds trust. It may be a cuppa, a glass of water or a snack. It is not time to talk, but to *listen* – to listen to their story and needs. This takes personal effort.
- Then, Jesus said, **heal** them . . . and the continuing instruction from the *Ministry of Healing* statement on page 143 is: 'The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counselled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice.' Then we read, 'Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.'⁵
- This draws us to the third step. Note how simply Jesus tied *healing* with *telling*. First, eat – listening to their story. Second, heal – meeting their needs and praying with them. Then, third, while healing and meeting needs, **tell them**, 'The Kingdom of God is near you now' (Luke 10:9, NLT, emphasis supplied).⁶

Try it. If You Can Eat . . . You Can Make Disciples.

During COVID-19 restrictions you may not be able to eat with many, but you can call or Facetime to listen to needs – and, when eating with those in your household, practise listening! Then, meet needs in appropriate ways – encourage, shop, support, drop off food, help access community services, etc. – and always offer to pray. Be brief and specific: 'It's lonely. I will keep in touch – and I can pray for you, "Dear God, this is a frightening

time. Be really close to my friend. Thank You."'

Never separate what God has joined. It is not *needs-oriented evangelism* when we meet needs but neglect to tell people about God's care. When meeting needs, always offer to pray – and then always share: 'God cares about you and loves you.' I encourage you to try this – today.

Next month we will share where to go to next – a way of sharing faith that is simple, reproducible, anyone-can-do-it – at no cost! But, for now, remember: *never dump our special three angels' messages onto others before taking these first steps that Jesus*

taught and used – listening to their stories; healing or meeting their needs; praying with them; and telling them, 'The Kingdom of God is near you now – and He loves you.'

¹See Peter Roennfeldt, *Following Jesus* (Signs Publishing, 2017) for the stories of Jesus' disciple-making and movement-building; and *Following the Spirit* (Signs Publishing, 2018) and *Following the Apostles' Vision* (Signs Publishing, 2018) to examine the early believers' application of Jesus' methods.

²All quotations are from the New International Version (Holman Bible Publishers, 2011) unless indicated.

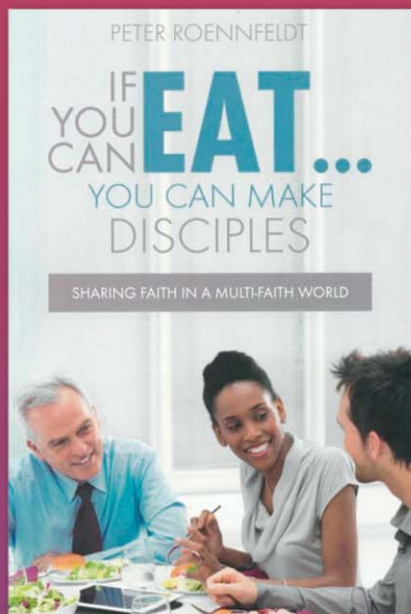
³Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Pacific Press Publishing, 1905), page 143

⁴See Peter Roennfeldt, *If You Can Eat . . . You Can Make Disciples* (Signs Publishing, 2018)

⁵White, op. cit., page 143

⁶*New Living Translation* (Tyndale House Publishers, 2015)

Dr Peter Roennfeldt



If You Can Eat . . . You Can Make Disciples

What does it mean to be a Christian and share our faith in a multi-faith and no-faith world? In our complex post-Christian world, sharing our faith can seem equally complex. But consider how Jesus related to His multi-faith context, particularly His teaching in Luke 10:1-24. He engaged Jews, Samaritans, Roman Gentiles, peasants, fishermen, urbanites, religious leaders, soldiers, merchants and others in spiritual discussions. His compassion, insights, authority and methodology left people amazed. Drawing on this key teaching and the example of Jesus, this book suggests a simple, reproducible approach. It seeks to demystify evangelism, putting it within reach of every believer.

ISBN: 9781925044829

£5.75

Order online or call 01476 591700



More titles available from:
www.lifesourcebookshop.co.uk



I try to witness through the rearranging or reimagining of songs

DN: Continuing our conversation, Ken, I'm interested as to how you use your giftedness to draw people closer to Christ, lifting them above the dross of personal and national life. As an example, you conducted the 2018 Big Sing in Scotland, aired at a time when the whole country was tearing itself apart over Brexit.

The programme began with the tremendously uplifting song 'To God be the glory', particularly as you led 900+ singers to change key in the middle of a verse – musically quite challenging? As the hymn ended, all clapped and the camera panned in on a Scots lady with her friend. Viewers could not hear what she said to her friend, but by lipreading she said, 'That was brilliant.' I have no idea of the faith of that lady, but in that moment it was a wonderful contrast to the UK mood.

KB: Working on *Songs of Praise* I'm discovering the power and beauty of hymns; and, in arranging hymns, I don't just think about what can sound good, but I look historically – at the meaning of every line. The reason for that shift in the middle of the verse – 'but purer, and higher, and greater will be / Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see' – is to highlight that moment when we see Jesus. When I'm arranging, I commit everything to the Lord in prayer and say, 'Lord, I want what's happening musically to

actually have an impact.' People obviously know the song, but I want them to look at it in a different way. As an arranger, I have to get out of the way. If

someone hears an arrangement and all they hear is the arranger and they say, 'Oh, isn't that a great arranger!' then I haven't really done my work.

What I do is similar to what a preacher does when he helps someone to see a Bible verse from another angle. Maybe we sing that song – 'but purer, and higher, and greater will be / Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see' – and it's automated. But I want them to think about what this line is really saying . . . and, again, it's the Adventist coming out in me: 'Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.' That's what I feel, and that moment shifts from the terrestrial to the celestial – and that's when that key change came in. I try to witness through the rearranging or reimagining of songs.

DN: 'It's the Adventist coming out in me' – let's explore that further. Your parents were key to your grounding in Adventism?

KB: Absolutely! And it wasn't just because my parents were Adventists, but because they were active and passionate Adventists. I have memories of home worship, when my father would sit, close his eyes and enjoy the music. Both parents probed us about what we were getting out of what we were doing. As children we'd read a Bible text, and they would ask,

'What does this mean to you? What excites you? What text jumps out at you? What impacts you?' All these questions made us think about what these things actually mean – not only to provide an intellectual understanding, but how does it change you? What



Ken's piano teacher, Margaret Carr Singh, first encountered by Nehemiah Burton, while colporteur



does it move you to do?

It was the same for songs. My father would choose a song and say, 'Can you imagine, for example, "Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside"?' He'd say, 'Can you imagine 10,000 thrown in as a bonus?' So we were taught not just how to interpret, but how to feel, how to be impacted by the power of the Gospel, and for me that was a very powerful thing. It was the core part of my parents' character, and it has rubbed off. That grounding at home has been a big influence on what I do musically.

DN: Your home church was Croydon – which I imagine to be a very positive experience.

KB: Indeed, I loved the Croydon experience, because there was a lot going on with a strong youth programme, including a youth club on Saturday evening. It was also a close-knit community and a very caring place. I saw lots of care – not only through programmes, but through people caring for each other. It could be something as simple as, 'Oh, your jumper's ripped. Don't worry, I'll take it back home and sew it up for you and bring it back to you next week.' How beautiful is that!

Church was quite involved in our sports days. I never got to run, but I did watch. We had a very powerful music activity: we had four choirs at one point: children's choir, youth choir, gospel choir and the church choir, as we called them (rather than the senior choir). There was a lot going on to keep us active within the church. We also had some very inspiring characters. I remember my Sabbath School days – with older youth I looked up to. They were also able to influence me during the week – not just on a spiritual level, but outside the church. It's so important that church becomes a real community rather than just a one-day-a-week thing.

DN: Let's talk about the church and racial justice/equality. We're not there yet, are we?

KB: No, simply because the world is not there yet. Racism is a mindset, and you'll find it right across the world. I would say – not wanting to play the victim –

that there is another continent where people who share my skin colour are seen to be at the bottom: Africa, where I have seen incredible levels of racism. (My point is that in every continent, including the African continent, there are lots of examples of people with darker skin colour being treated as lesser.) My very first sub-Saharan tour with the London Adventist Chorale was to a country where we saw racism being carried out by the black folk against other black folk in the caste system or whatever – coloureds, whites, blacks and so forth – and how they actually spoke about it.

We stayed in different homes – lovely homes – and we went to one area where singers overheard different family members saying, 'We hope that person's not coming to our house' – based on how dark their skin complexion was! And these are all black people. I'm saying it's a mindset, and unfortunately it's built into the way the world thinks. It has become so normalised that we don't even realise that what we're talking about is racism.

A key element of racism is the feeling of superiority over others – and I've seen this when Downing Street briefings are given, with an abundance of superlatives. The language of briefings is often based on pomp, arrogance, and a highlighting of how great we are. That sense of entitlement, self-importance or superiority is at the heart of racism. While I have no issue with countries being proud of their honest achievements, some

sentiments stand out: 'the world-beating system' of vaccination, or of track and trace – we're at the top of this and the top of that – we're the best in the world. That such a mentality still exists really bothers me.

I hope I don't come across as insensitive when I say this, but I believe I saw what was coming with the mutation of the virus. I saw something almost prophetic. I thought, *People are getting a little bit too big about themselves. There's little acknowledgement or calling on the name of God.* Sure, governments are not inclined to do that, and understandably science gets a lot of praise, but it is as if we are saying, 'This problem is in our hands, and we are in control.' So it occurred to me to try and imagine what the global pandemic is like from God's perspective.

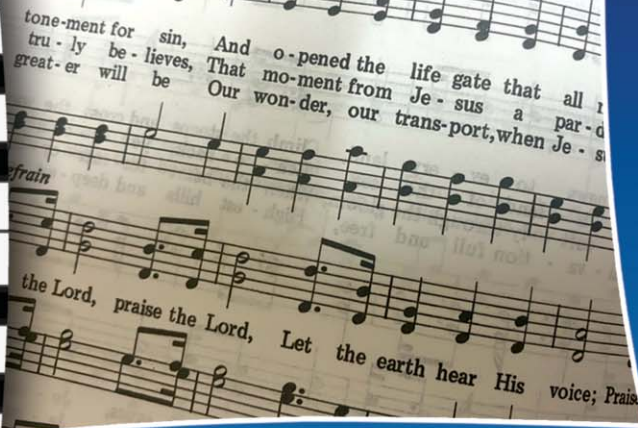
I come back to racism as a mindset,



Ken, aged 11



A photo of the Burton family, taken by Brother Nehemiah Burton



influenced heavily by tribalism, which continues to reign in many places across the world. We have become a polarised society – divided by Brexit, Trump, and so many other things – there seems to be no room for middle ground. If you are not for us, you must be against us – and with the others. Before we can even start to understand how we’re going to break down barriers and walls, we have to be rid of the idea that one is better than the other.

DN: Can I clarify what you are saying here? I think you’re saying that governments (and not only our own) have an over-confidence in their own power. We are the people who can sort it out, and of course science helps, but we lack collective humility, because we’re not actually in control as we think we are.

KB: On a post on Facebook a few months ago I made a comment: ‘The greatest way to deal with the coronavirus is humility.’ And it definitely is very much that. People think they are so invincible that they can walk out without a mask, or deny that it even exists. I have lost Adventist friends to this, younger than me. I’m 51. I’ve lost family members; I’ve had family members affected by this . . . so humility is a key in how we deal with this, and humility is how we’re going to deal with anything to do with interpersonal relationships.

DN: Institutionally, what must the church do over the next couple of years? This year and next, there are likely to be leadership changes in the church, both nationally and globally. What are some of the first things our leaders could do to move things forwards?

KB: When George Floyd died last year and turbulence followed, I was moved. I’m not typically someone who talks a lot about politics, because I am very much aware of how divisive or controversial it can be. But last year there was something in me that thought: *I need to address this, because if I’m conducting people on Songs of Praise, bringing congregations together in praise of God, then why should I not talk publicly (in a loving way) about the theme of justice, which is the Gospel?*

Take Isaiah, for example, our current Sabbath School lesson theme. God raises the matter through His prophet. The worship of Israel is rejected – offerings, sabbaths, and the new moon festivals. Why? Because the

people have blood on their hands, and are not looking after the fatherless and the widows. ‘Justice’ and ‘righteousness’ are words closely connected to each other in both the Old and the New Testament; so I think it’s really important that we have what I call a ‘dialogue which doesn’t become a die-alogue’ – in other words, you start the conversation and it dies away and it becomes a couple of weeks of talking. We’ve got to keep the conversation going and we’ve got to thrash it out.

There may be misunderstanding, but try to take the time to really say, ‘Let’s work out this whole thing about togetherness, justice, and humility.’ I think it’s important to have ongoing conversation and dialogue with de-education and re-education. I also did some thinking about some of the catchphrases we hold dear and use as Adventists, which can easily tie into the whole theme of social justice.

- To take one example, ‘Spirit of Prophecy’:
- ‘In the spirit of the prophets, let’s condemn injustice,’ and so forth.
 - If we say we believe in Creation, we’re saying that we are created beings, not evolved beings. Evolution is what led to the idea of eugenics, and pseudo-science has suggested that evolution has made some better than others. But we believe in Creation and the Father, and we believe in salvation – Jesus coming down, humbling Himself, becoming one of us to raise us – He came for all of us, without exception.
 - We believe in the three angels’ messages, which begin with the Gospel going to ‘every nation, every tongue, every people’. It is the everlasting Gospel, which is the antidote to tribalism.

The doctrines we hold dear flow with language that addresses who we think human beings are in Christ and in God. How do we marry words with actions? One of my favourite texts is Matthew 23:23, where Jesus, talking to the Pharisees, says, ‘These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone’ (NKJV). In other words, we don’t just preach social justice without the three angels’ messages or vice versa: we preach it all, and put it all into context – making it all relevant to everyday life, which leads to eternal life.

As a church, then, I believe we need to re-evaluate what our message means for everyday living.



Seriously nice!

by Bert Smit (CEO, ADRA-UK)



Rural Chad



ADRA team member teaching how to purify water

On 2 February we signed a Memorandum of Agreement with our partner, ADRA Chad, for a complementary project to one of their school construction projects. Dieudonné Lasndroma Kabdana is the country director for ADRA in this challenging part of Africa. A local, he is always on the hunt for funding for their projects, especially those that support children affected by living at the very edge of existence. Chad is one of the poorest and most corrupt countries in the world; most inhabitants live in poverty as subsistence herders and farmers. Think 'predominantly desert': sand; heat; aridity; flat, featureless ground. Water comes from deep wells – many actually drilled by ADRA. ADRA-UK has been working with ADRA Chad since 2014, and we have been trying to seek large amounts of funding for ADRA Chad, but have been limited to providing financial support to UNICEF projects. In 2018 we were almost ready to sign a large grant with an external donor, but under political pressures (read: 'probably corruption') this ended in vain. Our gift catalogue provided funding for some desperately needed wells in Chad.

For the last two years we were not able to help Chad. However, in 2020 we were approached by a software company based on the Isle of Man which wanted to make a donation of £10,000 to an ADRA project overseas.

We immediately thought of Chad and submitted a proposal to provide access to clean, safe water and hygiene facilities for children in two new ADRA-constructed schools in Chad. The project would also adopt a gender mainstreaming approach, ensuring that the facilities meet the menstrual hygiene needs for girls, which can often act as a barrier to education for girls in the area.

We were delighted to receive the funds in December, and the project is now in full swing.



Water system and tank constructed by ADRA Chad



Dieudonné with a construction team on site



Frank Teeuwen (ADRA-I) and Dieudonné talking budgets

How did this happen? Well, Jackie Jackson (Mwambi) is a church member on the Isle of Man who works for this software company. Every year the company asks team members to nominate a 'good cause' to support . . . and Jackie nominated ADRA.

One of the company objectives is 'to generate profits, and to use them creatively in the relief of suffering, the improvement of society and furtherance of the Christian Gospel'.

Not just one or two projects, but in 2020 actually over 70 projects received funding. What an amazing commitment – to let your profits work for good. The funding we received will benefit children in a very rural part of Chad for years to come.

The owners of this software company on the Isle of Man are true visionaries who let their Christian values lead and bring hope to people who need it most. That is what I call 'seriously nice'!

1 Timothy 6:17-19, ESV:

'As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.'

Matthew 6:19-21, ESV

'Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'



Lord, renew me and I will go

From 20 to 27 March it will be the annual Youth Week of Prayer, a time when Adventist youth from around the world connect with each other to pray. We share here a condensed version of the opening reading based on the theme of the week, 'I Will Go', looking at Isaiah's calling.

(Isaiah 6:8)

The writer Stephen R. Covey, in his book *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, relates an experience from the New York subway. Covey tells that on that day the people were sitting calmly; some were reading the newspaper, while others were lost in their thoughts or simply resting with their eyes closed. In short, the atmosphere was peaceful and tranquil.

Suddenly, a man and his children entered the train. The children were so boisterous and disobedient that the environment changed immediately.

The father of the children remained with his eyes closed, ignoring the scene completely. The children jumped from here to there and screamed at their whim, throwing objects, even snatching the newspapers from people. The situation was very annoying, but the father didn't do anything.

Covey could not believe what he was seeing. How could this man

allow his children to behave this way! He stood up and addressed the father, saying: 'Sir, your children are irritating many people. Can't you control them?'

Then the man raised his eyes and said softly: 'Oh, you are right. I guess I will have to do something. We went to the hospital . . . their mother died about an hour ago. I don't know what to think. I guess they don't know how to react either.'

Covey wrote: 'Suddenly I saw things in a different way; and, since I saw them in a different way, I *thought* in a different way; I *felt* a different way; I *behaved* in a different way. My irritation faded.'

This shows that when our vision about something changes, our thoughts, our feelings and, above all, our behaviour change as well. In our message today I would like to invite you to renew your vision of God. I assure you that if you do it, your life will change completely!

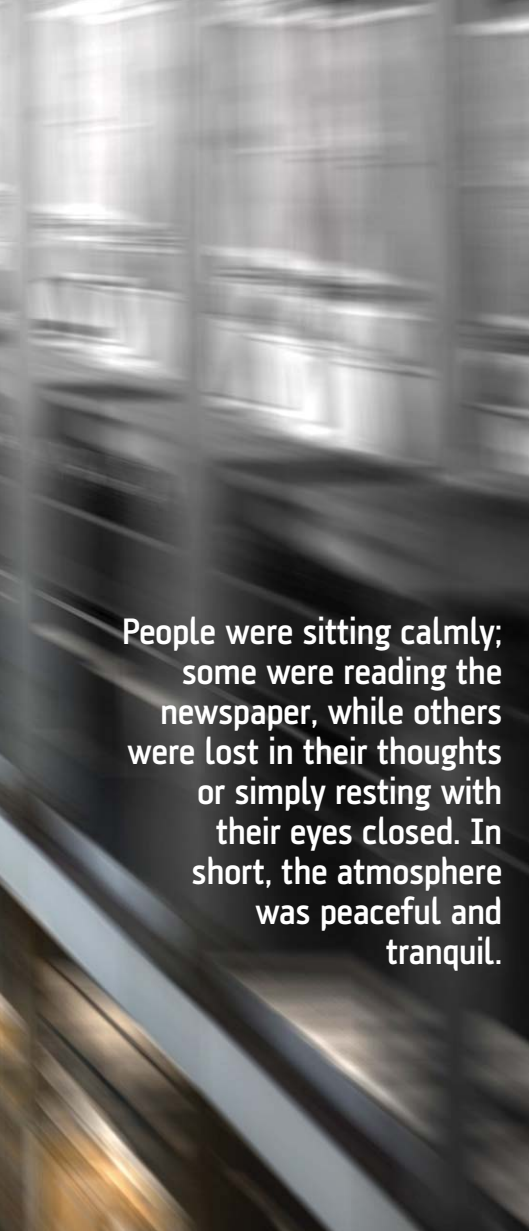
The Bible presents the story of a man who was changed completely when he renewed his vision of God. I am referring to the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah is one of the most interesting books of all the Bible – a miniature Bible! It's the Old

Testament book that speaks the most about Jesus! That is why Isaiah is called the Messianic prophet. Isaiah tells us everything about Jesus:

- His birth (Isaiah 7:14)
- His family (Isaiah 11:1)

- His anointing (Isaiah 11:2)
- His character (Isaiah 11:3-5)
- The simplicity of His life (Isaiah 7:15)
- His meekness (Isaiah 42:1-4)
- His death (Isaiah 53)
- His resurrection (Isaiah 25:8)



People were sitting calmly; some were reading the newspaper, while others were lost in their thoughts or simply resting with their eyes closed. In short, the atmosphere was peaceful and tranquil.

shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Three experiences

- When the prophet Isaiah had a vision of God, *the first thing he experienced was the greatness of his sin.* If you read chapter 5, verses 8 to 30, you will find that the prophet Isaiah preaches against the sin of his people: but when he has the vision of God he doesn't point to other people's sins; instead, he looks at his own life full of sin.
- The second thing Isaiah experienced after having the vision of God was *the depth of divine forgiveness.* Isaiah was not left in the desperation of sin; instead, he was granted divine forgiveness.
- Lastly, when Isaiah saw God, he *responded with courage to the divine call.* Isaiah heard the call of God and said: *'Here am I. Send me!'*

The life of Isaiah was never the same again! His life came to centre itself completely in God and His service.

When we have a vision of God in our lives, we will never be the same person again. Our thoughts will change; our feelings will change; but, above all, our behaviour will change. We will never be static! Faced with the call of the Lord, we will always be available to respond: *'Here am I. Send me!'*

When you renew your vision of God, your thoughts will change; your feelings will change; and, above all, your behaviour will change.

What occurred to Isaiah happened to young Charles. For a long time, Charles had been a

nominal church member. One very snowy day, he attended a church service. Since the designated preacher was snowed in, the sermon, given by a shoemaker, was on the text, *'Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other'* (Isaiah 45:22, NIV). The shoemaker had little prior experience in preaching, but he looked Charles straight in the eyes and said, 'Charles, it looks like you are sad. You will be unhappy if you don't obey.' Then he shouted with more force: 'Look to Jesus!'

That day, Charles says, he decided to look to Jesus – and his life changed completely. Who did he become afterwards? He became a preacher known in history as Charles Spurgeon, the prince of preachers. When Isaiah renewed his vision of God, his life changed. When Charles Spurgeon renewed his vision of God, his life changed. When you renew your vision of God, your thoughts will change; your feelings will change; your behaviour will change. You will no longer be only a nominal member of the church, but a servant of God who will be willing to say: *'Here am I. Send me!'*

Today I invite you to renew your vision of God. I guarantee that the day you do it, just like Isaiah, you will say, *'Lord, I will go!'*

*Stephen R. Covey, *Los 7 habitos de la gente altamente efectiva* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Paidós, 2003), p. 19

This reading, authored by Dr Yeury Ferreir, is taken from the readings for the 2021 Youth Week of Prayer and can be found with all the readings for the week at: <https://youth.adventistchurch.org.uk/youth-week-of-prayer-2021>.

Copyright © 2021 by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist® Youth Ministries Department. Used with permission.

- His glorious reign (Isaiah 65:17-25)

When Isaiah wrote his book, things weren't well inside of God's people because they had moved away from God; and, consequently, they were suffering badly.

The prophet Isaiah felt very sad about the condition of God's people, and felt the need to speak to God about it in the temple, where he received a vision of God. It was there that God completely changed his thoughts, his feelings, and, above all, his behaviour.

God revealed Himself to Isaiah! The prophet contemplated God sitting on His throne, surrounded by angels filled with a radiant glory and who sang without rest, saying: *'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory'* (Isaiah 6:3, NIV).

What happened in the life of Isaiah when he had this wonderful vision of God? Verses 6-8 (NIV) explain:

'Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom

Week of Prayer

SUNDAY 21.03.2021
CLIFFORD HERMAN
SOUTH ENGLAND CONFERENCE

MONDAY 22.03.2021
BOGDAN STAN
IRISH MISSION

TUESDAY 23.03.2021
DAVID RANCIC
WELSH MISSION

WEDNESDAY 24.03.2021
NJABULO KING NDLOVU
SCOTTISH MISSION

THURSDAY 25.03.2021
DEJAN STOJKOVIC
BRITISH UNION CONFERENCE

FRIDAY 26.03.2021
IKWISA MWASUMBI
NORTH ENGLAND CONFERENCE

7:30- 8:30 PM

As supplied, errors and omissions excepted



Newbold launches Centre of Ministry and Mission

by Felicity Brodrick



Dr Daniel Duda

On 29 January 2021, Newbold College of Higher Education announced the launch of the Centre for Ministry and Mission, immediately replacing the Department of Theological Studies (DTS) with the new Centre of Ministry and Mission (CMM). The current Trans-European Division (TED) education director, Dr Daniel Duda, is the transitional head of the new centre.

A former Theology lecturer and college governor, Dr Duda will be on secondment to the college from his role at the TED until 31 December 2021. The next few months are set to be busy as finalisations are made ahead of the new academic year in September.

Dr Duda shares his insights into the motivation behind this major change; what he aims to achieve in his appointed role; the plans for the relaunch; and how the new centre can equip ministers, evangelists and life-changers of the future.

Many readers will be familiar with the 'Department of Theological Studies' at Newbold, but it was recently announced that the college is launching the 'Centre of Ministry and Mission' – why is this?

The Board of Governors made the decision at their extraordinary meeting of 30 September 2020. The reason was that they see Newbold as playing a significant role in all 14 of the TED unions/fields. The goal is to recast a vision for Newbold's mission in the multicultural and generally post-Christian context of twenty-first-century Europe by revising the curriculum to inspire and equip men and women for front-line service. The TED needs about 30 theologians in its five higher-education institutions; and over 300 front-line church planters, pastors, evangelists, Bible workers and leaders will be needed to replace retiring church workers in the next five years.

Can you offer insight into your role as the transitional head of the centre, and what you aim to achieve?

The new Centre for Ministry and Mission needs to have implemented this change of direction by September 2021. My role is primarily to mobilise my colleagues in the department so that this reorientation is in place and we all provide the inspirational spiritual leadership that begins in the classroom, but also nurtures the learners in their placement and subsequent internship and sets them on a path to continued education. Newbold is just one player in the training of pastors and church workers. Other entities need to play their important roles too.

Plans for the relaunch are well underway. Can you give us an idea as to what this new approach will look like?

Six different panels have been made operational that deal with different aspects of college life, current operating model, organisational structure, accreditation, modes of delivery, use of buildings, and overall finances. The public will hear about the results of their work and recommendations once the Board of Governors approves their conclusions and suggestions.

There will be a restructuring of the curriculum offered by the centre on campus. The four programmes currently on offer with the University



of Wales Trinity Saint David will be maintained (BA Hons, graduate diploma, MA and postgraduate certificate). We are pursuing formal academic degrees, not just certificates and short courses. Teaching of the biblical languages (Greek and Hebrew) will be preserved, as well as three streams within the MA degree (Biblical Studies, Theological Studies and Pastoral Studies). However, the curriculum will be restructured to reflect this reorientation, with greater emphasis on Pastoral Studies. The framework for developing the adjusted curriculum is the *Seven Pastoral Competencies* document voted by TED field leaders not long ago.

Should prospective students expect any key changes to be made to the existing curriculum?

The command of Jesus is to make disciples which make new disciples (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:2). If done right, this will lead to the multiplication of disciple-makers. Therefore, CMM will provide a mix of on-campus intensives and a combination of online and classroom training. We will do our best to preserve the campus experience, together with hybrid training for full-time and part-time programmes.

The current BA programme has 44% of credits in Biblical Studies, 22% in Theological Studies, and only 17% in Pastoral Studies. In the new BA all three streams will be balanced (each at 28%; plus 11% for Biblical Languages and 5% for the dissertation). The PG Cert will offer three practical modules addressing the pastoral experience in twenty-first-century Europe, rather than exegetical classes.

Will the educational experience in the new centre offer practical, hands-on opportunities?

Yes. There will be a revamp of the placement experience, with more consistent supervision from the CMM side. Also, more training of supervising pastors will be offered. A discussion is taking place on how to make placement part of Pastoral Studies modules on the BA level.

The placement will be compulsory also on the Grad Dip level. There is also a recommendation that students who came through the Grad Dip stream and thus had only one year of placement (versus three years for BA students) should continue their placement during the two years of their MA programme.

What do you think ministry of the future will look like? How will the new centre prepare students for a successful career in it?

Nobody knows what the future ministry will look like. Clearly, the world after the pandemic will not go back to pre-pandemic realities. If Jesus

Newbold
Diversity
Centre

COVID-19 AND WOMEN LEADERS

WHAT'S THEIR RECORD?

Tuesday
9th
March
2021
7.30pm

newbold.ac.uk/diversity-centre
contact: Helen Pearson 07775 612 610



Lecturer:

Professor Uma Kambhampati
Head, School of Politics, Economics and International Relations,
University of Reading



As supplied, errors and omissions excepted

does not come soon, our current graduates will be in ministry 30 years from now. How do we prepare them for ministry in a world that none of us can even imagine? That is a difficult task. We need to provide them with tools, rather than answers.

Thus, we will teach them principles of reviving existing churches, planting new churches for new target groups of people, understanding worldviews, and engaging contemporary European culture. We will help them to feel at ease with digital discipleship – and, above all, to understand how to approach the Bible not as a code book for recipes, but as a source of principles that are timeless.

Is the subject of theology really for anyone?

Yes and no. If you are a believer and you reflect on how your life and spirituality are going, you are already 'doing theology' (though if you don't know you're doing theology, you might not be doing it well). On the other hand, a Master's degree in the UK academic environment is not a basic human right that everyone is entitled to – you will not get it for sitting in the classroom, or for providing only descriptive work – but classes like Old Testament Apocalyptic, Reformation Theology and its Legacy or Approaches to Mission will broaden your perspectives, challenge your thinking, and develop your spiritual walk with God.

What will the mission side of the centre look like?

The offering of One Year in Mission and Service will be maintained. Besides the on-campus offering, a **new intensive BA programme** will be offered for the Baltic Union and the two unions on the former Yugoslavia territory. This will be offered through Andrews University, as it allows the students to work through their native languages. There is also a plan to offer an off-campus MA starting in September 2022. All these will take into consideration the unique missional side of different parts of the TED territory, and will thus improve students' service.

What is the one piece of advice you'd give to anyone who is considering studying Theology?

If you feel the call from God, go for it. Your life will be transformed, and you will experience a ride more exciting than you can imagine. You will gain new tools to deal with difficult questions and doubts, and you will be able to help other people as well.

But, of course, one does not need to be a pastor to serve the Lord; so, once this CMM reorientation is in place, we hope to reintroduce non-Theology programmes. We will still keep the name 'Newbold College of Higher Education', as we do not want to reduce Newbold to a seminary only. There are different ways to serve the Lord in twenty-first-century Europe, and short courses will be offered for lay people too!

Can you recommend any academic work or literature as a starting point for those wanting to learn more about Theology as a subject?

N. T. Wright writes not only scholarly works, but also popular works for everybody (as Tom Wright). He has been dubbed 'the C. S. Lewis of the twenty-first century'. I recommend three books by him: *Simply Jesus* (2012); *Simply Good News* (2015); and *Spiritual & Religious* (2017), which is an excellent analysis of how modern Christianity has devolved into a baptised paganism and humanism.

If someone wants more challenging reading: Alister McGrath, *Theology: The Basics* (2017).

We're going to play three rounds of this or that – ready?

- Bagels or toast? Bagels.
- Alaska or Hawaii? Alaska in summer.
- Bugatti Veyron or Bugatti Chiron? Bugatti Chiron. I have seen it: it looks astounding! Just the price is outside the reach of a pastor's (and most people's) salary!



HEALTH

by Sharon Platt-McDonald

Let's talk

Each month, the National Health Service (NHS) calls our attention to a specific health focus. The 2021 Calendar of the National Health and Well-being Campaign¹ outlines the special days for each month. *Enhancing Health* will feature one of these in each issue.

NHS special days for February:

- Time to Talk
- World Cancer Day

Let's talk

Whenever I hear someone say to me, 'Let's talk,' I give them my full

attention, knowing that a deep conversation is about to ensue. February 4 – *Time to Talk Day* – was a national call to pay attention to mental health issues and allow time for their discussion.

Carrying the caption, *'Time to change: let's end mental health discrimination'*, the campaign message clearly states its discussion point, followed by the request: 'Join us to start conversations about mental health and help end the stigma.'²

A further explanation states: *'We know that the more conversations we have, the more myths we can bust and barriers we can break down, helping to end the isolation, shame and worthlessness that too many of us with mental health problems are made to feel.'*

This is precisely what children's minister Vicky Ford did when she opened up, revealing for the first time that she had struggled with a mental health condition as a teenager. Her 'talk', captured in *The Sunday Times* (31 January 2021), carried the headline: 'I was a 5-stone anorexic,' says children's minister Vicky Ford'³

An MP for Chelmsford, Ford explains how she was inspired to 'tell her story' as a result of the increasing numbers of young people suffering from mental health challenges, particularly eating disorders. She expressed concerns about the increase in young people being treated for eating disorders since the onset of the pandemic.

In a BBC News interview with Mark Austin on 1 February, Ford spoke more of her teenage mental health challenge and her wish that her story would encourage young people to talk more about mental health difficulties. She also felt that her disclosure would offer hope to other struggling teenagers that recovery is possible. Ford concluded by stating her desire to do more to tackle mental health issues in her role as children's minister.

The Mental Health Foundation, advocating the benefits of talking therapies, states: 'Talking therapies can help you work out how to deal with negative thoughts and feelings and make positive changes. They can help people who are feeling distressed by difficult events in their lives, as well as people with a mental health problem.'⁴

The *Time to Talk* health focus is outlined on the following website: <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/get-involved/time-talk-day>.

Let's keep talking!

¹<https://www.nhsemployers.org/retention-and-staff-experience/health-and-wellbeing/understanding-your-data/calendar-of-national-campaigns/calendar-of-national-health-and-wellbeing-campaigns-table> ²<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/> ³<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/i-was-a-five-stone-anorexic-says-childrens-minister-vicky-ford-bspwm6vz7>

⁴<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/t/talking-therapies>



Painting of Erdington Church by Arthur Jacques

Christmas COVID-19 giveaway

(Don't read the headline the wrong way, or Erdington youth will be in trouble!)

Cast your mind back to the most recent Christmas Eve, when Erdington youth carried out a community project unlike anything ever before seen in the Erdington area. 'COVID-19 Giveaway' was the vision of an Erdington young person burdened to spread hope to the community as the country entered yet another lockdown, which began on 5 November 2020.

The initial idea for the COVID-19 giveaway was for youth to give out paper bags containing hand sanitiser, protective masks in a sealed pack, and two *Signs of the Times* magazines: 'Who are the Adventists?' and 'Living Longer and Feeling Better' (both available online from the LifeSource website: <https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/signs-of-the-times-magazines-pack-of-100/>).

The initiative nearly hit the buffers due to COVID-19 restrictions, but God made a way. 'Supportive,' was the response from the police department and Birmingham City Council: 'So long as you adhere to the 'Hands, Face, Space' rule with a very small number of people running the event on the day.'

Erdington youth thought the matter through. Sure enough, they wanted to share hope, but they also wanted to meet the needs of those struggling for whatever reason. And that's when the COVID-19 goodie bag grew!

And grow it did, as the youth team sourced extra items to include in it. One team member found a sweet company called 'Candy UK', located in Blackpool, which gave a free donation of 100 candy canes and festive lollipops to the initiative, wanting to help a good cause! By the first week of December each goodie bag additionally included a three-pack of Lotus biscuits, a box of juice, sanitiser wipes, a Mini roll, a festive cone of assorted chocolates, a £5 ASDA gift card, a packet of crisps and a Christmas card.

While the giveaway was originally planned to take place outside on the grounds of Erdington Church, we believe God worked yet another miracle! It was agreed that the initiative could take place in the church foyer, subject to social distancing rules. On 23 December the rain poured from the heavens, but the event still went ahead. Keeping to the rules, we set up our tables. It was giveaway time! Not only were the bags given away, but also woollen hats and gloves, biscuits and poetry books, tracts, literature and more.

The event was a great success. Our minister, Pastor Gutu, walked up and down the street outside the church, informing passers-by of what was on offer. 'Perfect!' was the reply of one guest. 'This is just what I need during lockdown.' Another responded with, 'This is a lovely idea. It really shows that people still care for me and are thinking of others, even in a lockdown.' A young woman from the community took a goodie bag and returned later, informing us that she had given the bag to her elderly nan. The word from her nan was, 'Thank you so much! This has really made my day.'

Of course, some of our friends from the community wanted to know more, giving us an opening to invite those who were interested to our Zoom services.

Why was this event a great success? 'I have learnt what the true meaning of Christmas really is.' Who said that? It could easily have been said by a recipient of the giveaway bags. Perhaps just as significantly, it was a remark made by an Erdington young person. 'Helping others in need' is the call of Christ, and the Youth Department hope and pray that all the people who attended the event have been blessed and are a step closer to knowing God as their personal Saviour.

REBEKAH ECCLES (COMMUNICATION SECRETARY)

At a glance . . .

- **Blackburn Cathedral is just one of several religious sites in the UK now offering immunisation against COVID-19**, and is one of the largest. According to the BBC, 'Thousands of people aged over 80 within 45 minutes' drive from the site are being invited to attend appointments, echoing the days when people flocked to monasteries for medical treatment and cathedrals housed the first medical schools.' The dean of the cathedral, Rev. Peter Howell-Jones, said that using the building for such a public service showed the 'welcome and hospitality at the heart of Christianity'. It would also be true to say that it fulfils Christ's injunction to protect the vulnerable and care for the sick, along with fulfilling the commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill' in a positive sense by helping to save lives.
- **Seventh-day Adventist church leaders in the town of Kenosha in Wisconsin, United States**, have been helping to alleviate poverty and ease tensions following violent protests within their community, according to the *Adventist Review*. They prayed for the community, helped to clean up after the riots, and did something tangible for an area where unemployment stands at 10 percent and one in every 5.3 residents lives in poverty. Zack Payne, head network pastor for the Wisconsin Southeastern

Network of Adventist churches, said, 'We wanted to come together and show some unity in Christ so we can unify our community and help. . . . We're here and we care.'

- **At the start of the year, ADRA responded to two earthquakes in Croatia** that affected 60,000 people, injured 26, and killed seven. According to Slavica Marceta, country director for ADRA in Croatia, many people needed 'roof repairs, shelter, food, non-food items, and clean water'. ADRA volunteers were able to distribute hot meals, water tanks and other supplies, along with assessing needs and identifying those in need of government assistance.
- **New wells have been drilled in dry regions of Brazil by Maranatha Volunteers International**, including one at the Pitimbu Seventh-day Adventist church that pumps out more than 1,000 gallons per hour. So far, Maranatha has drilled 85 wells, mostly at Maranatha-built churches, making our churches in north-eastern Brazil a free source of life-saving water for those who are thirsting.
- **A team of Adventist palaeontologists from the Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU) in the United States** recently published a peer-reviewed research paper on dinosaurs for *PLOS One*,



an open-access science journal for an organisation 'empowering researchers to accelerate progress in science and medicine by leading a transformation in research communication'. The team comprises Jared Wood, director of the Dinosaur Science Museum at SWAU; Arthur Chadwick, director of the Dinosaur Excavation Project at SWAU; and Keith Snyder, chair of the SWAU biology department. Their paper, which goes by the catchy name of 'Over 13,000 elements from a single bonebed help elucidate disarticulation and transport of an *Edmontosaurus* thanatocoenosis', posits that all dinosaurs from the main bonebeds were killed at once in a giant catastrophic aquatic event.

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

ANDREW PUCKERING

Does Youth Week of Prayer matter? 20-27 March 2021

Remember reading, a few pages back, 'Lord, renew me and I will go', about the call of Isaiah? Youth Week of Prayer has never had the profile given to the November 'Annual Week of Prayer', or even the more recent January 'Ten Days of Prayer and Revival'. It is tempting for those of us well past our youth to think: *Good for them; nothing to do with me.*

What if this year we pressed the reset button on this? What if those of us who are parents and grandparents decided to try and spiritually re-connect – with our own children, or even grandchildren? They and other youth we know may be at the heart of church life, or on the fringe. Or they might have – in a term they use – 'moved on'. To help us on this journey, here are a few starter ideas to help reconnect.

- Decide to view the evening online BUC programme (details on page 13), and let a young person you care about know that you'll be watching. Invite them to watch too.
- If this is not possible, let a young person know that you are praying for them, that God will do something wonderful in their life (*say no more, say no less*).
- Create a list of every young person you know of – family, friends, church youth, and those from neighbouring families. During

20-27 March, make those youth the focus of your prayer agenda.

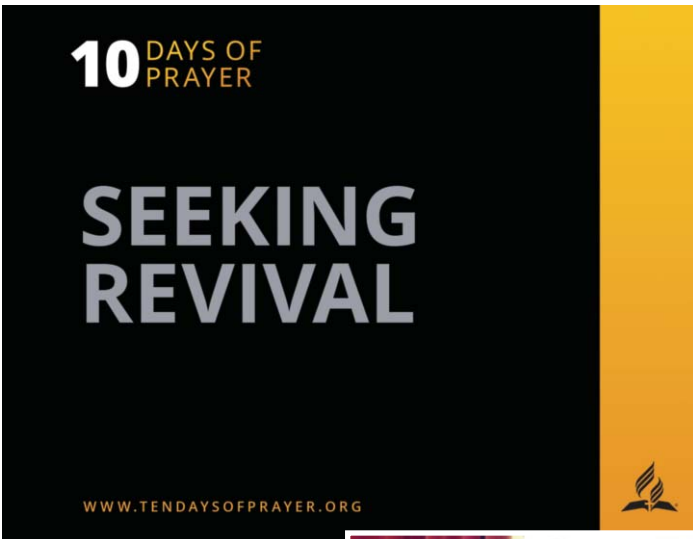
- When Youth Week of Prayer is over, determine to stay connected with a young person in your church.

Lord, we pray for wisdom for all young people; for those seeking guidance for their future studies, and those still seeking employment in their chosen profession; for those finding it all but impossible just to say no in the face of pressure from their peers, and for those who have made Christ Lord of their hearts – may He also be Lord of their plans and dreams, their choices and relationships.

We pray for young people whose lives and values are a challenge to all, and for those whose lifestyle causes pain and despair to family and friends.

May the light of Christ be their source of wisdom. In the name of Jesus, we ask our prayer.

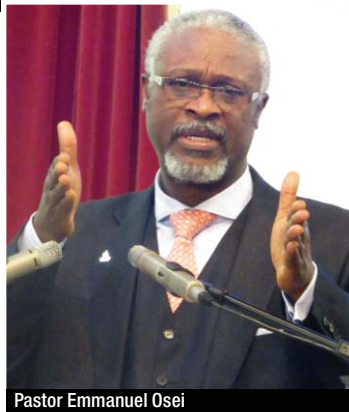
Prayer excerpt from *500 Prayers for All Occasions* by David Clowes, Kingsway Communications, 2003



Ten Days of Prayer – London Area 6C

Adventists around the world began 2021 by joining together in ten days of prayer from 6 to 16 January. Revival was the theme – this year in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, which has brought the world to a standstill and a moment of crisis. If ever a time was needed for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church, and the revival He brings to those seeking after it, then certainly that time is now.

Hosted by the London Ghana church under the leadership of Pastor Ebenezer Jones-Lartey and Area 6C coordinator Pastor Anthony Opoku-Mensah, London Area 6C members joined this prayer initiative



Pastor Emmanuel Osei

each evening by sharing their testimonies of thanksgiving to God, as well as their personal prayer requests for themselves and their families, friends and loved ones.

Putting revival into practice

On Sabbath 9 January, South England Conference President, Pastor Emmanuel Osei spoke on the theme of ‘Putting Revival into Practice’, describing three groups of people and their relationship to God (see 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 and 3:1-4):

- The natural or ‘worldly’ person, who has no relationship with God;
- The spiritual or ‘Spirit-filled’ person, who has a full, genuine relationship with God;
- The carnal person, or ‘person of the flesh’, who has a feigned or divided relationship with God.

Pastor Osei gave a reminder that we belong to either one of the last two groups. If one finds oneself in the latter group – ‘carnal, person of the flesh’ – repentance and prayer are necessary for a renewed infilling of the Holy Spirit to bring about the revival and transformation that are needed. ‘We are not to look at what group other members find themselves in, but are advised rather to mind our own business by taking a good look at ourselves to determine if we are in a right standing with God,’ he counselled.

Are you distracted by many things?

In the concluding Sabbath address on 16 January, Pastor Kwame Sarpong used the biblical account of Mary and Martha found in Luke 10:38-42 to illustrate the importance of sitting at the feet of Jesus before standing before men. He explained, ‘Like Martha, we can, through our business, become distracted by many things which cause us to lose sight of Jesus. Before we work for Jesus, we must ensure that we spend adequate time sitting at His feet as Mary did. Why? So that when called to stand, we do so empowered by the Holy Spirit as opposed to our own strength.’

The ten days of focused prayer were later concluded with a half-night of prayer led by leaders city-wide. Many testimonies of praise and thanksgiving were shared for answered prayers, as well as the promise that, while the church continues to pray together in one accord, God will send an outpouring of His Holy Spirit to bring the transformation and healing desperately needed within our nation.

DARELL J. PHILIP, AREA 6C COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

BUC ZOOM

PRAYER MEETING

On Wednesday 4 March 7:30pm

then every first Wednesday of the month.

Zoom details are: Meeting ID: 873 7894 0121 Passcode: 790322

YouTube: Search BUC News Channel

As supplied, errors and omissions excepted

Dudley elders – ordained virtually

Is this a first – and how?

It is Sabbath 16 January, and, in the context of the ‘new normal’, the Dudley church held an ordination service with a difference. Three young gentlemen – Valton Benjamin, Matthew Lawrence & Tinotenda Siyapi – are valuable members of the pastoral team, under the leadership of Pastor Rainford McIntosh. Providing valuable leadership and mentoring skills, Pastor Rainford McIntosh delivered a thought-provoking sermon, ‘Ordained to Serve’, and prayed the ordination prayer.

The natural and obvious question every *MESSENGER* reader will ask is – how?

While the ordination prayer was being offered, all ordained elders present online were instructed to lift their hands in endorsement, and the words rendered were: ‘And now we ask that God lay His hands upon the ordinands as we consecrate them to His service and glory.’

Pastor McIntosh was assisted in the service by Elders Matthias Siyapi (head elder), Errol Tomlinson, Hubert Smiley, Grace Walsh and Anthony Sawyers. This brief roll call does not do justice to the leadership they have shown in nurturing and encouraging our new elders on the journey towards this new role. Neither do we forget their family and friends, who’ve also played an important and significant part in their lives. The pandemic has fast-paced all of us into using technology and innovation to keep the mission of God’s church moving forwards. Thank the Lord that the power, presence and influence of the Holy Spirit transcend space!

DUDLEY COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT



Top: Matthew Lawrence and family
Right: Valton Benjamin and son
Far right: Tinotenda Siyapi

Stoke Newington Children’s Department – ‘gift of giving’ project

Some *MESSENGER* readers will know the experience of receiving a food parcel and box full of gifts for the family.

Those who have never been on the receiving end may find it hard to imagine the relief and stress-busting this simple and often unexpected act of kindness can bring to parents, or a parent. Those who have never taken part in a local food kitchen may be unaware of the mix of accompanying emotions and feelings. Perhaps there is anger – a feeling of the injustice that some in our society in the twenty-first century still go without adequate food and supplies to keep going. Another feeling may be that this is the ministry of Christ – to set the burdened free, and feel privileged to be a part of it.

Whatever feelings ‘stoked’ Stoke Newington Children’s Department to act, they decided that they must. Collecting food items and toys from local businesses, church members and friends, they were able to support 94 families. ‘Stoked’ or ‘prompted’ by the Holy Spirit, there is thanks and praise to God today in Stoke Newington for the team of leaders and children that made this happen.

In the photo is Tamar, the daughter of our head elder, a young helper who came out to assist with gifts to the children in the local community.

CAROLINE BANJO, BEVERLY ANDREW, ITOHAN KHAN – CHILDREN’S DEPARTMENT



Tamar, assisting with gifts

Interest coordinators – ‘rays of hope through the clouds’ project

‘But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more’ (Psalm 71:14, KJV).

As 2020 drew to a close, the interest coordinators of Stoke Newington Church were mindful of the effects of separation and loneliness experienced by senior members due to the church family being unable to meet for worship services.

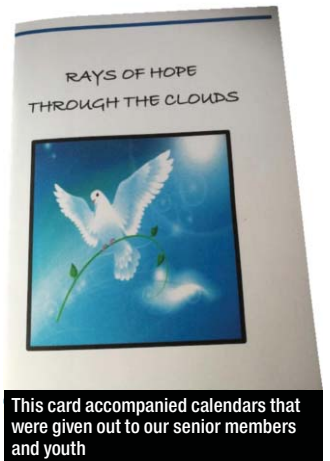
This reality inspired the Stoke Newington interest coordinating team to express love and hope in a tangible way through its ‘rays of hope through the clouds’ project.

Together we designed a greeting card conveying words of hope, and distributed it to sixty of our senior members through the post, together with the 2021 *God’s Wonderful World* devotional calendar (available to purchase online at <https://lifeforcebookshop.co.uk/product/gods-wonderful-world-devotional-calendar-2021/>).

But our ministry did not end there. For many in our church family, including youth and friends of the church, 2020 had been a particularly challenging year. Fitting it was, then, that we should widen the ‘rays of hope through the clouds’ project to include them.

We trust that we have brought hope to the hearts of the church family.

PATRICE COREA, LORRAINE WHITEHEAD – INTEREST COORDINATING DEPARTMENT



This card accompanied calendars that were given out to our senior members and youth

Your Bible questions

with Julian Thompson

I want to ask a question about the COVID-19 pandemic and God. Is it a judgement of God? And if we say it is not, but He permits it to happen, isn't that recognising that it is a judgement of God by any other name? What do we mean when we talk about God's sovereign will?

In short, no, COVID-19 is not the judgement of God. It's no secret that some have attempted to draw parallels between the coronavirus and the plagues of Revelation; but, as even the *Daily Express* noted,¹ such superficial readings overlook the fact that, as terrible as COVID-19 is, with an overall death rate of 0.66% it clearly doesn't match the cataclysmic proportions of the plagues mentioned in the Bible's apocalyptic texts.² While there are times when the Bible describes particular instances of disease as judgements from God (see, for example, Exodus 7:14–12:32), this is certainly not always the case (Job 2). In fact, in the vast majority of biblical cases, the causes of sickness and disease are ultimately unknown; and, on this point, Jesus' warning not to assume that ailments are always the result of a person's sin is particularly telling (John 9:1-3).

Infectious diseases with the potential to affect large population groups are not a new phenomenon. Such illnesses existed in Bible times; and, just like our society today, ancient Israel agonised over how best to respond to them and keep their nation safe. One particularly interesting feature of ancient Israel's approach to disease is their possession of a painstakingly detailed public health policy that included quarantine and self-isolation (Leviticus 13; 14). What's even more interesting is the fact that this ancient public

health policy existed in spite of promises such as, *'The LORD will remove all sickness from you. As for all those dreadful Egyptian diseases you experienced, the Lord won't put them on you but will inflict them on all who hate you'* (Deuteronomy 7:15, CEB).

Let's set aside for a moment the ethically challenging notion that a loving God would inflict disease on anyone, let alone His own people. The existence of an ancient Israelite public health policy alongside the promises in Deuteronomy 7:15 and Exodus 15:26 is not an example of God setting up a safety net in anticipation of Israel's future unfaithfulness. Rather, the context indicates that adherence to ancient Israel's public health advice was an expression of trust in God: the logical outcome being that if you followed it, your health was more likely to be preserved. I think there's an important lesson to be learned here, especially for those who incorrectly use Deuteronomy 7:15 and Exodus 15:26 to justify ignoring contemporary public health advice: in ancient Israel, following public health guidelines was an expression of faith.

A final word on ethics. In the Hebrew Bible there's a peculiar story where, as a result of 'numbering' Israel, David brings disease upon his people. What's most interesting about this story is that it is told twice, and the two versions disagree about who it was that 'incited' David to number the people. According to 1 Chronicles it was 'Satan'

(1 Chronicles 21:1), but according to 2 Samuel (2 Samuel 24:1) it was God. While some have sought to use these examples to argue that the Bible is contradictory, such a conclusion is unwarranted. The writers of 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles were human beings like us, and to me this example demonstrates that, just like us, in the face of disease and suffering, they too found themselves wrestling with the question: 'Where is God in all of this?' While some think that phenomena such as COVID-19 clearly demonstrate the existence of evil, others think that the fact that God allows such events to happen appears to make Him guilty of complicity. Ultimately, God's role in all of this may just be one of those things that is impossible to answer fully – certainly we couldn't do it justice within the scope of this brief article! What I would say, however, is that while the Bible does warn us that 'pestilences' will continue until the end of time (Matthew 24:7), we can take comfort in the fact that one day soon Jesus will return, and all pain, suffering and disease will be brought to an end. Maranatha.

¹Sebastian Kettle, 'End of the world: is coronavirus the prophesied 'plague' in the Book of Revelation?' <https://www.express.co.uk/news/weird/1249246/End-of-the-world-coronavirus-prophecy-book-of-revelation-plague-Bible-COVID19> (12 January 2021)
²*British Medical Journal* 2020; 369 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m1327> (1 April 2020)



This does not feel like my church! Is there a loneliness epidemic in British and Irish Adventism?

by Pastor Max McKenzie-Cook

This does not feel like my church! In recent times I have repeatedly heard this phrase from members, pastors and administrators expressing feelings of helplessness and isolation. Neither are such feelings limited to one theological perspective or another, nor expressed by one particular gender, ethnicity or age group.

What I have heard has made me wonder. What might be the root cause of such feelings? The more I reflect and observe, the more I believe that Adventism in Britain and Ireland is experiencing a loneliness epidemic.

This is my attempt to start a conversation that may lead us to recover the feeling that this really is my church! I recognise that this is a complex issue; and, because my thoughts here are limited by space, I am focusing on just a few areas where I believe the problem is most pronounced. It is a given that further reflection and investigation is needed.

Loneliness in British Adventism

Recognising that national loneliness is a problem, Theresa May in 2018 appointed a minister of loneliness. The latest report on the matter was released in January 2021, finding among other things that there is some stigma around admitting loneliness to others.

I'm sure we've all been there at one time or another. Have you ever been in a populated place but still felt lacking in companionship, inclusion and belonging (at the workplace, school or even your church)? It's understandable perhaps at school or work – but at church? Why would anyone ever say that they lack friends at church, but on the contrary feel isolated and lonely? Left out at church – as if their voice didn't matter? Or could it be that the church is for some people, but not for others?

Over the past few years the South England Conference has encouraged its members to participate in the Natural Church Development Survey, the results of which provide a valuable insight. From their response, our members informed us that while we were extremely loving to those who were outside of the church, it was sometimes the case that we experienced the exact opposite from those inside.

Perhaps my understanding of this is wrong, but if you answered 'yes' to any of the questions above, you are possibly experiencing chronic and sustained loneliness

within the 40,000 members that make up the Adventist community in Britain and Ireland. Furthermore, if a significant portion of our community is feeling this way, could it be that we are experiencing an epidemic of loneliness?

The link between loneliness and hostility

Assuming this to be the case, what potential impact might this have on us as people? In her book *The Lonely Century*, Noreena Hertz cites studies showing that when mice are isolated they become hostile to others. Further, Hertz cites countless research studies which replicate the view that people who feel isolated or marginalised, or who lack friendship, experience greater levels of hostility to others. At its most intense, loneliness then becomes a driver (albeit not the only driver) that allows extremists of all kinds to tap into that hurt and pain, causing a fracturing of society. Hertz gives this as part of the reason why many people voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 election: 'Whether or not Trump's policies would actually improve the lives of his supporters almost seemed to matter less than the fact that he appeared to be listening' (Noreena Hertz, *The Lonely Century*, Kindle Edition). Loneliness is the yearning for belonging, and sometimes it can be found in uniting against those who are taking something from you.

While of course there are differences that will set us apart from what is happening in our wider society, I wonder if this is something that should make us sit up and take note. While there is undoubted good within our Adventist community, I wonder if that is sometimes overshadowed by our sense of loneliness. Could the feeling that this is not our church cause us to see others as our enemies, making it difficult for us to come together? Members against members in church board meetings; pastors against members in business meetings; pastors against pastors in area meetings; members and administrations against each other – and so on. The result is that our membership of the church becomes defined by our hurt, and not our hope. We begin to fracture; tribalism becomes prominent; and we exist in a state of inertia, where unity in Christ is something we acknowledge verbally, but not something we experience.

The impact of loneliness on faith and mission

If we assume that loneliness is at the heart of

the animosity, does it have an impact on our faith and mission? Reflecting on this – the only answer I can come to is: 'Yes.' From beginning to end, the Bible tells of how God brought people from the margins, people who were accepted into His family. Paul says we are adopted children. He had leaders in Timothy and Titus who were young. Jesus had disciples which included Essenes, tax collectors and Zealots. Somehow, through their difficulties, it seems hard to suggest that they never felt like they were all part of the same movement.

I wonder: do we feel the same within our church? When Paul says that you are adopted into his family as children of God, it might be easy to accept intellectually, but is it something you experience within our community of believers? If we ourselves feel lonely in our Adventist community, it is hard to see how we will find the motivation to bring others into this community, unless it is to unite against a common enemy.

Where do we go from here?

As I have already shared, this is my personal observation, having grown up within the church in the UK – but I may be wrong, and might just need to change my perspective. However, if you have ever said, 'This does not feel like my church,' or, 'I do not feel like I belong,' or if you feel out of place – not represented or heard – then it might be the case that you are experiencing loneliness within the church.

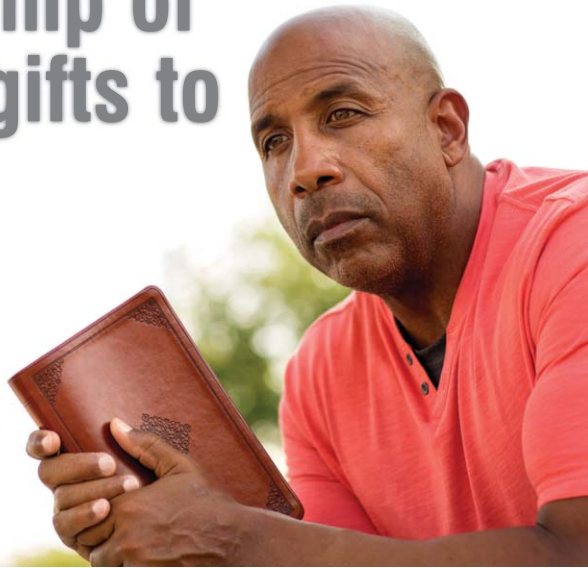
If there is an epidemic of loneliness, we should sit up and take notice. Perhaps it may be an indicator of a structural or systemic issue. What I do know is that it would require us to reflect deeply, with the courage to create safe spaces where each of us can hear and be heard. I cannot emphasise enough the extraordinary amount of courage it takes to listen empathetically and demonstrate kindness.

Could we begin to humanise one another again, and rebuild our community so that we are not alone? I believe we should not disregard the hurt and pain caused by the epidemic. We can grow from it head-on, through a process of healing. It also goes without saying that we need the Holy Spirit's presence and consistent prayer. This is much easier to say than to do. It requires greater courage to exhibit love and justice than to hurt those whom we believe to be hurting us. However, what is the alternative if we do nothing?

Relationship of spiritual gifts to the Bible

by George R. Knight

'Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good' (1 Thess. 5:19-21, KJV).



How easy it is to despise anyone who claims to have the gift of prophecy. After all, we have the Bible. Then again, a lot of crazy and questionable people have made such claims down through history. In the light of such facts it is only natural to doubt, if not to despise.

But then there's the Bible's own counsel on the topic: *'Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good'* (1 Thess. 5:19-21, ESV).

Despising outright those who claim the gift of prophecy is not an option for New Testament Christians. To the contrary, Scripture requires them to 'test' such claimants.

The Bible, fortunately, not only tells us to evaluate them, but it also suggests some ways of how to do it. One appears in the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus commands us to *'beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. . . . Every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit'* (Matt. 7:15-17, RSV).

Applied to a prophetic claimant, one needs to evaluate the results of the principles they

advocate and whether their own lives reflect New Testament Christianity.

Another test occurs in 1 John 4. It tells us to *'test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God'* (verses 1-3, RSV).

We must ask ourselves, 'What's a prophetic claimant's witness to Jesus?' Isaiah 8:20 presents a third test: do such a person's teachings agree with the Bible?

Those are all important criteria, but even more important is whether their teachings point to themselves and their own word, or to Jesus and the Bible.

Those early Adventists found themselves forced to their Bibles as they sought to evaluate the claims of young Ellen Harmon/White and others in the late 1840s . . . and it wasn't always easy to make their decision.

It still isn't easy. But that is not the point. We have a command.

Help us today, Father, to become zealous students of Your Word, so that we might be better evaluators of things spiritual.

This article is an excerpt from Lest We Forget by George R. Knight (published by Review and Herald), reprinted here with permission from the author and the publisher. You can buy the devotional from the LifeSource website: <https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk>.

'I want to see my mother again . . .'

During the short illness of Marva Prince, her daughter Christine expressed an interest in joining the small study group which met at her mother's house on Tuesday afternoons. After her mother's death in July 2020, Christine declared at her graveside, *'I want to see my mother again; I want to meet her in heaven. I want to take Bible studies.'* True to her word, Christine joined the Zoom Bible study group led by Pastor Joojo Bonnie, minister for the Wood Green and Hackney district. It was on Sabbath 26 December that Christine finally witnessed publicly of her love for Christ through baptism. Included among those present with close friends were her brothers, Clarence and Mark. Christine has started her journey with Christ, and is looking forward to a grand reunion with her much-loved mother. Maranatha!

BARBARA SOMMERS
COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT, WOOD GREEN



Marva May Prince (1940-2020)

d. 4 July.

Marva May Prince was born on 6 May 1940 in the parish of St Mary, Islington, Jamaica – one of eight children.



In March 1963 she migrated to England, working as a carer for many years. In 1964 she married Clarence Hubbard Prince, living in Finsbury Park, North London, until they moved to Northcott Avenue, Wood Green, in 1971.

Though living a few doors from an Adventist church, it was not until 1977 onwards that it became central to their lives as Clarence got baptised first, with the family joining him a few months later. Marva often testified that it was after hearing a voice urging her: **‘Remember to keep the Sabbath holy’** that, on 22 April 1978, she accepted the Lord, becoming an active member of the choir and assisting in the Pathfinder and Sabbath School departments.

Marva’s first child was Christine, followed by Clarence Junior, Dr Mark Prince (OBE), and Colin. She looked after her four children and her husband, who developed Parkinson’s disease due to his boxing career.

In June 2005, Marva suffered a brain haemorrhage, and pulled through only with many prayers from her church family. Quick to testify of how God had brought her through challenging times, she told of the day she realised something to be very wrong, feeling she was dying; and, while waiting for the ambulance, picked up her open Bible at Psalm 118:17 (NKJV): *‘I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.’* The Lord kept His promise, and Marva remained faithful until death.

Marva lived through many tragedies. On 18 May 2006 her grandson, Kyian Prince, was fatally stabbed while intervening in an argument between two schoolboys. Kyian had been a promising young footballer, signed up by Queens Park Rangers, with teammates and coaches attending his funeral, along with many others. Later that year, her husband also passed away; they had been married for 37 years.

Her son Mark’s life was derailed by his son’s untimely

death. However, with God’s help, he started to see a purpose in it, forming the Kyian Prince Foundation. A sought-after speaker, he was awarded an honorary PhD in 2018, and published his book, *The Prince of Peace: My Story*. For his services to the community, he was awarded an OBE, bringing Marva great pride.

Throughout her trials, Marva remained faithful to the Lord, continually encouraging her children to remain faithful to God. The church was Marva’s life; she was a ‘mother in Zion’ to all the Wood Green church youngsters, including the writer when the writer’s mother passed away.

In April 2020 Marva was diagnosed with cancer; she was admitted to hospital for surgery immediately after her 80th birthday. Despite a brave fight, she passed away on 4 July.

Marva leaves a tremendous legacy for her children, and prayed constantly for her sons, Clarence and Colin. Her daughter, Christine, has since been baptised.

Marva also leaves a huge gap in our hearts, and in our church. She waits for the dawn of the resurrection morning.

BARBARA SOMMERS
COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

Frank Mitchell (1926-2021)

d. 3 January.

Frank Mitchell (affectionately known as Uncle Frank) passed to his rest on 3 January 2021. He was born in 1926 into an eleven-member family (including his mother and father). Raised as a farmer, Frank left Jamaica at the age of 28, eventually settling in Gloucester. Through his award-winning allotments, it was clear that his farming background and love of the soil never left him. Many tributes at the 27 January funeral service at Gloucester Church spoke of his generosity towards members, recipients of produce from his allotments.

Baptised in 1964, Frank became a member of the Gloucester church, and served as an elder from 1970 onwards for thirty years. During this time, he served both the Gloucester church and, for a while, as a member of the South England



Conference Executive Committee with excellence. Even after retirement, Frank continued to be a mentor and a wise and trusted counsellor to those seeking his advice. Most of all, he was a tremendous example to all who followed in his footsteps.

‘Uncle Frank’ had a ready listening ear; he was a confidant, a father figure to many, and a godly example to the younger generation. Described as an ‘elder’s elder’, we saw this humble man as a ‘man of God’. His calming influence would provide a steady word here and there when required. He will be missed by all who were privileged to know and work with him.

As one of the pioneers of the Gloucester church, Conference officials past and present gave glowing testimonies to his wisdom and leadership. To his son Ainsley and other family members, he was a loving, caring father, who was always there for all of them. Ainsley gave a moving description of his father’s life, which was faced with many challenges at the beginning of his life in the UK; but, through hard work, prayer and trust in God, he had a successful life, one he was able to enjoy with his family – which was his greatest joy.

In those early Gloucester years his pioneering work was shared with Pastor John Baylis and Pastor Roy Burgess, together with families such as the Robinsons, Blakes, HARRISES, Bennetts, and others. Instrumental in 1970 for the growth and remodelling of the church building in Cromwell Street, a November 1970 *MESSENGER* article shows Frank pictured with local civic dignitaries and South England Conference leaders on the day of the official opening.

Uncle Frank is survived by his beloved wife, Ruby; children; grandchildren; and great-grandchildren – but all are comforted in the knowledge that Frank, as Pastor Don Macfarlane expressed in his tribute, ‘died a good death’. Uncle Frank passed to his rest with his family around him, praising Jesus. He went to sleep in Jesus. He will awake with Jesus!

The condolences and sympathy of the whole church family go to Sister Ruby and all the family. Rest in peace, Uncle Frank.

R. HINDS

Your response

Has something you have read challenged your thinking? Do you disagree with the view of a writer? Is there a matter *MESSENGER* readers should hear more about? What’s your perspective on the matter? What about a word of encouragement for leaders? Start the conversation, or join the conversation, by sending a letter to the editor: *MESSENGER*, The Stanborough Press Limited, Alma Park, Grantham, Lincs. NG31 9SL, or via email to: editor@stanboroughpress.org.uk. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Messenger

Volume 126 • 02 – 26 February 2021

Editor: **David Neal**
Editorial secretary: **Sarah Jarvis**
Design: **David Bell**
Proof reading: **Andrew Puckering**
Production and distribution:
Peter Oppong-Mensah

COPY FOR NO. 03 – 1 March 2021

Note to potential advertisers

It is important that those who submit adverts for display in *MESSENGER* ensure that they have permission (and a paid licence where required) to use any downloaded photographs or artwork that they incorporate into their adverts. It is also important that credit be given to the individual, organisation or company from which these have been obtained. For example, something like the following should appear within the advert: ©Joe Bloggs/iStockPhoto.com. Please be aware that images downloaded from Google may also be subject to permission and licensing. The Stanborough Press Ltd takes no responsibility for any downloaded images submitted to *MESSENGER* by contributors and reserves the right to decline adverts about which we have copyright concerns.

Permission relating to photography

Those who submit photographs of minors (persons under the age of 18) for publication must ensure that they have permission to do so from their parents, guardians or carers. We would like these submissions to be accompanied by the following statement: ‘I have the permission of the parents, guardian or carer of the minors who appear in this/these photograph/s to submit them for publication in the *MESSENGER*.’

Copy should be sent to the Editor, *MESSENGER*, The Stanborough Press Limited, Alma Park, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 9SL. Tel: (01476) 591700. Fax No: (01476) 577144. Email: Editor@stanboroughpress.org.uk

Send high-resolution pictures to:

dbell@stanboroughpress.org.uk

ABC Sales line: (01476) 591700

Mon-Thurs only, 8am-5.30pm.

www.stanboroughpress.org.uk

The Editor may alter, clarify, précis or expand articles sent to him if he thinks it necessary. Published fortnightly on Fridays by the British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

For general enquiries, email:

info@stanboroughpress.org.uk

Printed in the UK.

Visit the BUC website at:

www.adventist.org.uk

ISSN 0309-3654

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

	London	Card	Notf	Edin	Beif
Feb 26	5.36	5.48	5.38	5.41	5.54
Mar 5	5.48	6.00	5.51	5.56	6.08
12	6.00	6.13	6.04	6.11	6.22
19	6.12	6.25	6.16	6.25	6.36

LIFE IS BETTER WITH BOOKS



Stanborough Press
Keeping the church
family together

01476 591700
sales@stanboroughpress.org.uk

LifeSource
Christian Bookshop

or visit our shop online at
www.LifeSourceBookshop.co.uk