


Messenger

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Eric Masih installed as High Sheriff of Bedfordshire – the county of John Bunyan

See page 7

Eric Masih on the banks of the River Ouse, Bedford.
In the rear, All Saints Parish Church.

Photo: Thomson Manu



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Crippling blessings

by Pastor Dan Serb,
President of the Irish Mission

The current pandemic is a prolonged and ongoing crisis which has left many people struggling with uncertainty, frustration, and fear – made worse by the clear disparity between the ways people cope with isolation and the threat of infection. As someone said: ‘We are not all in the same boat: we’re all in the same storm, but we try to survive it by different means.’

This crisis, like any other, reveals one’s true self; it also shows what really matters to us and where we place our focus – both as individuals and as a church. Moreover, it uncovers what motivates us, and easily exposes our fears. Fear can paralyse us, make us angry, or blind us from seeing that which could bring us comfort and respite. Many people today are fearful. So how do we deal with fear?

Genesis 32:22-31 tells us the story of Jacob, a man consumed by fear. In this life-episode, Jacob seeks to answer God’s call to return home and thus allow God to fulfil His plan with his life. But Jacob feared going back home, and he feared Esau, his brother. He had reason to fear Esau, as he’d wronged him; he was also tortured by guilt and shame.

Jacob was so encumbered by fear that, when he sealed the covenant with his father-in-law Laban by invoking God’s name, he called Him ‘the fear of Isaac’ (Genesis 31:42, 53). This is the only time in the Scriptures where God is named this way, and this clearly shows that Jacob’s understanding of who God is was also marred by his seemingly all-consuming fear.

After Jacob seeks to appease Esau with presents (32:20), he decides to take time out to figure out a plan of action for the day when he meets with Esau. Sending his family ahead, he stays at the brook by himself, vulnerable to robbers and murderers. Did Jacob want to die?

In the midst of his inner turmoil, in the middle of the night, a ‘man’ shows up: and, because of the darkness within and around him, Jacob erroneously takes the man’s touch for an attack, and then begins to fight. It seems that Jacob isn’t ready to die after all. The ‘man’ is Jesus



Himself (Hosea 12), but Jacob is too blind to see that. The ‘man’ cripples him. As dawn approaches, in the midst of the struggle, Jacob asks the ‘man’ to bless him. The ‘man’ does so, after changing Jacob’s name, and then leaves.

That night, Jacob became Israel; he also conquered fear and escaped the chilling grip of guilt, and limped on with confidence to meet his brother and fulfil his destiny.

There are so many unanswered questions in this story. But there are also a few clear lessons for us:

In the midst of inner turmoil and surrounding darkness, it is easy to mistake God’s touch for an aggressor’s attack. Could it be that some of our most intense spiritual battles have been caused by misdirected anger and blinding fear? Could it be that we sometimes try to fight God off, instead of welcoming His healing touch?

God is in the midst of our darkness. Regardless of our state of mind and heart, He is there!

God is patient. He even allowed Jacob, through his choices, to take a long and painful detour before fulfilling His plan for him.

God’s desire is to bless us. Sometimes His blessings may hurt; they may cripple our ego, break our will, and reveal our vulnerabilities.

Sometimes, in the morning, we may be limping to our divinely appointed destination. But it’s better to limp towards God’s planned destination for us than to run towards destruction.

Will this pandemic be your Peniel? Most of us may emerge from it hurting, but may we also experience His destiny-changing and life-transforming touch!

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Editor





David Neal, Editor

You need confidence to be humble

‘He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble’ (Luke 1:52, NIV).

It is during the teen years that we begin to understand who we are and who we are not. Every teenage boy wants to achieve and to look good in order to be noticed – particularly by girls. Between the ages of 7 and 12, boys are simply happy to learn, play and be fed. And then they enter a time when they suddenly become incredibly self-conscious. It was during those ‘self-conscious’ years that I purchased an Athena poster and put it up on my bedroom wall. The picture was a full-face close-up of a male lion with a mane and the words, *‘It’s Hard to be Humble When You Are as Good as I am.’* It was no coincidence that, at that time, the global sports icon was the champion boxer Muhammad Ali, who all too often repeated a similar mantra.

In the boxing ring Ali was fearless, but on a plane fearful! On one occasion, just prior to the plane taking off, the stewardess requested that he fasten his seatbelt – to which he replied, ‘Superman don’t need no seatbelt.’ Not ready to take no for an answer, the stewardess replied, ‘And Superman don’t need no airplane either.’¹

There is something in all of us that wants to be ‘king’ – and all the power that comes with it. It’s called ‘ego’, which the singer Frank Sinatra heartily embraced in his signature song, ‘I Did It My Way’.

There was a time, not so long ago, when power and leadership structures were ‘top-down’: In civil society, in industry, and even in the church. For example, it was not uncommon for a pastor to receive instructions (an order) to relocate to another district at the word of the president without question or consultation. Not to accede to the request was seen as a negative mark on your employment record. And the same was often the case for numerous professions. In the factory and the office, it was customary for the bosses to enjoy the privilege of position – with perks. While they enjoyed the comfort, luxury and exclusivity of the director’s dining room, the workers ate in the austere surroundings of the staff canteen.

Robert K. Greenleaf in his 1970 essay turned on its head the traditional leadership order by creating the distinction between ‘leader first’ and ‘the servant-leader’. His revolutionary thinking demolished the idea that leaders are primarily appointed to lead for the benefit of themselves. The reward, in his

worldview, was to experience *‘the natural feeling that one wants to serve. . . . The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest-priority needs are being served.’*²

Sharing power, putting the needs of others first, and championing their success have slowly become the paradigm of our time. But we must admit that it is more evident in some places and societies than others. The old habit of ‘top-down’ leadership is not completely eradicated from our leadership DNA (even in the church). Nor is the ‘survival of the fittest’ leadership mindset, constantly in a race to reach the top (even in the church).

Perhaps at the core of the problem is our humanity, and the selfish gene that refuses to go away. To put it another way, it is a human need to be recognised – which leadership affirms. Our ego is easily fed with the rewards that leadership so often offers: greater responsibility, power, influence – and, of course, remuneration. As these rewards feed, comfort and affirm our ego, a sense of pride wells up. We have achieved. We are a success. There must be something very right about us.

‘Not so fast,’ says the philosopher Socrates, because ‘humility is the greatest of all virtues.’ Arguing his case almost 2,500 years ago, he believed that ‘the wisest people are the first to admit to how little they really know.’ And here’s the key for today’s leaders, and why ‘servant-leadership’ is so critical: **‘People with greater humility are better learners, decision-makers and problem solvers.’**³

‘Is this the secret of smart leadership?’ asks David Robson, using the German Chancellor Angela Merkel as an example. Noting her ability for ‘cognitive reflection’, Robson believes this is due in part to her scientific background, leading her to listen to others’ opinions before forming her own. Citing UK leadership coach Khalid Aziz’s assessment that

‘you need confidence to be humble’, the idea sounds as upside-down as it could possibly be – and yet it is the key to servant leadership.⁴

Don’t lose sight of that key to leadership excellence, for it was around 2,000 years ago that a woman called Mary demonstrated excellence in servant-leadership, long before Robert K. Greenleaf raised the idea. The Bible informs us that she was supernaturally informed she was going to give birth to the Christ-child, conceived by the Holy Spirit. In the moment of personal crisis, she could have emotionally collapsed. On the other hand, the idea that she was carrying the future Messiah could easily have gone to her head – the chosen one. Her cousin Elizabeth described her as ‘blessed . . . among women’ because she was ‘the mother of my Lord’ (Luke 1:42, 43).

Far from being a member of the great and the good, Mary’s origins were from the small village of Nazareth, near Galilee. Being the mother of the Messiah not only carried with it great privilege, but also great risk, because, once Jesus had been born, they had to flee to Egypt for refuge from Herod.

Most notable from Mary’s life for us today are the words Mary speaks for herself in Luke 1:46-55, described as ‘The Magnificat’, or ‘Mary’s Song’. It is a song of her ‘confidence’ in the workings of God, expressing obedience and devotion. It is a confidence she would need to draw on continually as she mothered the Christ-child to adulthood – eventually standing at the foot of His cross as He was unjustly crucified.

‘Let every day be a day of humility – be a servant of servants, and condescend to do the lowliest offices of the lowest of mankind,’ says William Law (1686-1761). It was the ‘condescension’ of Christ that led to the Cross. Without his knowing it, Khalid Aziz’s assessment of leadership actually has a deeper meaning: ‘You need confidence to be humble.’

¹<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/01/17/muhammad-ali-was-deadly-afraid-flying-louisville-just-named-its-airport-after-him/> ²<https://www.greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/> ³<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200528-is-this-the-secret-of-smart-leadership> ⁴Ibid.



‘The wisest people are the first to admit to how little they really know.’

Edmonton – the end of an era

by Fifi McKenzie-Cook

On 6 March the Edmonton church put on a Zoom event to go down memory lane for our church building, which has now been sold. Pastor Boldeau gave the opening prayer and welcome. This programme was planned to say goodbye to our church on Cuckoo Hall Lane, as it was sold to acquire a new building, The William Preye Centre on Houndsfield Road.

The purchase of our little church on Cuckoo Hall Lane had been made possible by a few members who made pledges to collect money each week, and then finally, on 21 July 1944, they purchased the building.* More recently, after many years of searching for a new building, God led us to Houndsfield Road Hall; and then finally, on 10 February 2021, we were able to purchase the William Preye Centre, which is right next to Houndsfield Hall.

Special guests were invited, such as the local mayor, Sabri Ozaydin; President Emmanuel Osei of the South England Conference; our neighbours in the community; and members from our sister church, Central and Enfield, plus all our previous pastors.

The programme started off with a brief history, including some interesting facts: when the children's room was built and the driveway was put in, the unwanted piano was buried under the car park! Pastor G. R. Bell and the Dust brothers, Fred and Sydney Dust, built the baptismal pool in the early 1950s.

Our MC for the evening, Trevor Johnson, mentioned a few projects that took place at Cuckoo Hall Lane, such as the 50-plus club, Slimmer's World, Edmonton Drum Corps, and our largest project, the playgroup founded by Sister Ugbomah, which ran for ten years. We also looked back at the work that was done with the ADRA car wash, Community Services, Pathfinders and the Health Department. All departments worked together to do something for our community.

Our neighbours also logged on to say a few words, making statements such as: 'I felt safe knowing that the church was next to me,' and: 'I shall miss hearing your singing and music on Saturday mornings.' The mayor and president said a few words of thanks for the outstanding work that our church has done for the community.

Our previous pastors, Pastor Davis, Pastor Burnett, Pastor Ackie, Pastor De Lisser and Pastor Roberts, comforted us with tributes and words of encouragement, saying how much they also have been involved in trying to purchase a new building. Pastor Geoff Smith contributed on behalf of his father, Pastor Paul Smith. Pastor Steve Roberts was instrumental in acquiring Houndsfield Road in 2009, and Pastor De Lisser sought the warehouse next door to the Cuckoo Hall Lane building in 2017. Pastor Boldeau, our current minister, along with the church members, worked together to raise the money to purchase our new building on Houndsfield Road: the William Preye Centre. Many pastors have come to our church and worked hard; but, as we prayed, God has been helping and directing us in what has been a difficult journey. The names of all our previous pastors date back from 1922 up to 2021, as can be seen from the accompanying table.

Our church has been able to help the community in many different ways. One particular event was the tragic death of Palmira Silva in 2014, who was beheaded in her back garden in Edmonton. We the members showed and offered support to the family, and a few of us, along with Pastor De Lisser, attended the funeral. We've made many new friends and kept in contact with



Church before the pebble stones, 1972



Past elders/deacons and members, 1979



18 February 2021, moving day



all our neighbours; our church members have worked hard in putting on projects, including our big jubilee street party in 2012, the Remembrance Day service, the yearly carol service in Trafalgar Square, and feeding and cooking for the homeless for many years. Edmonton has also enjoyed many social gatherings, such as family camps; cycle trips in Cambridge and a special community Olympic cycling day in 2012, the year England hosted the Games; our very own children's sports day; picnics; hiking; and day trips to the seaside. We were able to reflect on all these good times. Edmonton Church is loving, likes a good laugh, is a praying church, has seen miracles, and is one big family.

To end the evening, a variety of tributes and photos were shown from past members. Then the final movie clip of the building was shown, which had a somewhat sad and nostalgic feeling, with the song 'Bless This House' by Doris Day being played.

One of our young members, Daniella, read for us, ending with: 'As we say goodbye to our little church, we look forward to moving into our new building; but, most of all, we must never forget where we have come from.'

**Some dates and information entered were acquired from past members and documents, and may not be totally accurate.*

Date	Pastor	Notes
1922	Barras, L. W.	With Forest Gate, Walthamstow
1922	Bird, A. F.	With Walthamstow
1929	Timpany, T.	With Forest Gate, Walthamstow, Tottenham
1935	Vince, L. D.	Campaign in Edmonton; plus Enfield Wash/Tottenham
1936	Young, W. J.	Under A. E. Bacon
1937	Bolton, R. T.	With Walthamstow, Tottenham & Enfield Wash; assisting
1937	Parkin, J. H.	Plus Walthamstow, Tottenham & Enfield Wash
1939	Lane, L. E. A.	With Walthamstow, Enfield Wash, Tottenham
1943	Vince, R. A.	With Enfield Wash and E. London district
1945	Mustard, A. J.	Move from Holloway; also campaign in Forest Gate
1948	Bevan, J. G.	With Holloway, Wood Green, Walthamstow
1948	Bell, G. R.	Plus campaign in Enfield
1950	Maudsley, W.	Plus Holloway & Wood Green
1955	Howard, J. M.	Plus Holloway & Wood Green
1955	Burgess, R. A.	With Enfield, helping J. M. Howard
1957	Ball, B. W.	
1958	Surridge, R. H.	Plus Wood Green & New Gallery campaign
1959	Ball, B. W.	Plus Wood Green
1961	McClure, D. P.	Plus Wood Green & campaign in Tottenham
1964	Shaw, John	Plus Wood Green & Tottenham
1965	Taylor, Malcolm	As assistant to W. G. Nicholson, plus New Gallery team
1966	Hodges, Alan	New worker, to assist W. G. Nicholson, in Ilford & Walthamstow
1966	Nicholson, W. G.	Plus Ilford & Walthamstow
1967	Anthony, M. L.	Plus Walthamstow & Ilford
1967	Martin, Brian	New worker, assisting M. L. Anthony, plus Walthamstow/Ilford
1971	Smart, R. M. A.	Plus Walthamstow
1974	Shaw, John	Plus Walthamstow & Wood Green
1974	Nash, Alan	
1977	West, John P.	From 1 July
1977	Smith, Paul R.	Plus Walthamstow
1984	Taffe, Horace	Plus Harlow
1987	Davis, Samuel	Plus Harlow
1992	Burnett, David	Plus Chingford & Enfield
1997	Ackie, Leslie	Plus Chingford & Enfield
2001	Chishom, Roy	
2005	Roberts, Steve	
2012	De Lisser, Richard	
2016	Boldeau, Des	



With churches beginning to open again for worship, there's almost a sense of 'coming home' – a similar feeling, perhaps, to the return of the 'exiles' held captive in Babylon. But, while we may be able to worship together, the COVID-19 public emergency measures continue to prohibit singing in church.

One day soon we will sing together again – a moment which will be quite a moving experience. Not least, I can't help but wonder what hymn we will choose as the first hymn, and never ever again will we think of hymn singing as a routine part of worship.

In a BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme interview on 25 March, a suggestion was made that singing could even help in the recovery of long COVID issues by helping strengthen weakened lungs.

As of now, we don't yet know when permission to sing will be granted – but, because this element of worship has been missed the most, let's take a few moments to think about why singing together is such a significant act of worship.

Augustine (AD 354-430): *'If you praise God, and do not sing, you utter no hymn. If you sing, and praise no god, you utter no hymn. If you praise anything which does not pertain to the praise of God, though in singing you praise, you utter no hymn.'*

Why do we sing hymns?

- To bring glory to God through thanksgiving, adoration and praise.
- To give a glimpse of the majesty and power of God, along with His simplicity, righteousness and mercy.
- To say 'thank You' to God and give Him an offering of ourselves, and to get 'in tune' with heaven.
- To move us, inspire us, and lift us up.
- To teach Christian doctrine, complementing lessons, prayers and sermons.
- To experience a deeper unity through making music together, and singing the same words simultaneously.
- To be an aid to memory, forming our lives for everyday living.
- To wake us up out of our complacency.
- To help us with the process of emotional healing.
- To help us relax.

Directions for congregational singing

John Wesley, back in 1761, provided some directions (in his own direct way) for congregational singing, the principles of which still have application today:

- **Sing all.** *See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up, and you will find a blessing.*
- **Sing lustily, and with a good courage.** *Beware of singing as if you were half dead or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard,*

We will sing again soon

by the Editor

than when you sang the songs of Satan.

- **Sing modestly.** *Do not bawl, so as to be heard above, or distinct from, the rest of the congregation, that you may not destroy the harmony; but strive to unite your voices together, so as to make one clear, melodious sound.*
- **Sing in time.** *Whatever time is sung, be sure to keep with it. Do not run before, nor stay behind it; but attend closely to the leading voices and move therewith as exactly as you can. And take care you sing not too slow. This drawling way naturally steals on all who are lazy; and it is high time to drive it out from among us, and sing all our tunes just as quick as we did at first.*
- **Above all, sing spiritually.** *Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim to please Him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this, attend strictly to the sense of what you sing; and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve of here, and reward when He cometh in the clouds of heaven.*
(From *John Wesley's Select Hymns*, 1761.)

Singing with understanding

When we sing with understanding we experience greater spiritual value. For example, what inspired the author to write using certain words and phrases? If we know what the author was thinking, it helps us better engage with the hymns we sing – helping us gain a deeper insight into God.

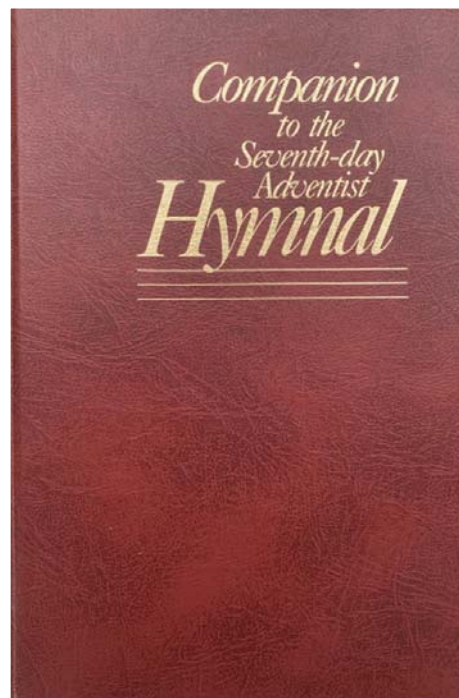
My favourite hymn is 'Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven'. Written by Henry Lyte for his congregation at Lower Brixham, Devon in 1834, it is based on Psalm 103. The line that stands out is the third of the first verse: *'Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven. . . .'* Why? Because that's my experience with God.

The *Companion to the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* continues to be, for me as a pastor, the essential resource for discovering how, when, and why the beautiful hymns we offer to God were written. Not only is it essential for the pastor, but also for everyone involved in the preparation and delivery of worship – elders, musicians, worship leaders, worship planners, and the PA team.

Good worship is planned worship. As we prepare to return to church over the next few weeks and months, why not grow your congregation by helping them sing with



'Singing? Who could object to singing? It reveals our deepest emotions, echoes our faith and builds bonds between people.'¹



understanding? For every hymn in the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, this companion provides an explanation.

Was £21.45, now £10.75. Available from the Stanborough Press at the following link: <https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/companion-to-the-sda-hymnal/>

¹Aleta King, director of Avondale Conservatorium at Avondale University College, Australia and former musical director of the London Adventist Chorale – <https://record.adventistchurch.com/2020/11/20/vocal-ensemble-recording-a-reminder-of-gods-presence-even-in-a-pandemic/>

Adventist installed as the new High Sheriff of Bedfordshire

With Bedford the ancestral birthplace of John Bunyan, 333 years after his death, a fellow Christian pilgrim – a member of the Bedford Asian church, Eric Masih – was installed at St Paul's Church, Bedford, on 7 April, as the High sheriff of Bedfordshire for 2021-2022.

The Office of High Sheriff is an independent non-political royal appointment for a single year. Dating as far back as Saxon times, the role involved responsibility for maintaining law and order within the shire, and tax collection due to the Crown. Today, selecting someone for High sheriff is about finding the right person who is in touch with the community, best suited to serve the Queen, providing support for the Crown and judiciary, particularly supporting initiatives which encourage crime reduction.

Eric has lived and worked with his family in Bedford for well over fifty years. Educated at Bedford's former John Bunyan High School (now Bedford Academy), his life work has been mostly within the property industry, leading eventually to the creation of his own property services company. An arm of the company significant to his community involvement was the launch of the lettings department, Gold Crown Letting Services, which works closely with social housing projects supporting rental accommodation to young and vulnerable people.

The business led him to Queens Park, which, according to Ian Brown, the council's chief officer for public health, as of 2019 was one of the most socially deprived areas of the town, where women were predicted to live on average seven years less than those from the least deprived areas. For men, the gap is 11.4 years.¹

It was at the end of 2013 that Eric became chairman at Queens Park Community Orchard (QPCO), an organisation that seeks to 'address the challenges the community faces, including poverty, isolation, racism and prejudice'.²

'A core project of QPCO,' says Eric, 'was to create an orchard with apple, pear and cherry trees.' Located on the banks of the Great Ouse, Eric explains that its purpose is 'to bring people of all ages and faiths to come together and take care of their public open spaces'. He continues, 'It's about caring for and respecting the surrounding environment – our environment.'

But there is a further agenda, just as significant: 'Yes, we know it is our duty to care for the environment, but we want to bring people together, to understand each other's culture, to develop tolerance and mutual respect.'

One high-profile example of this is the annual multicultural parade. In 2019, 2,000 people gathered together from 28 different communities, waving their national flags, wearing traditional costumes, and experiencing the opportunity of enjoying the tastes and flavours of multiple varieties of ethnic food.

Eric's world and community is multi-faith. As an Adventist Christian in a multi-faith town, how does he connect who he is with his faith? 'First of all, I want to recognise in my life the grace of God and His mercy to me. All that I am, what I have, what I can do, is because of the grace of God.' Serving both as the elder and treasurer of Bedford Asian Seventh-day Adventist Church, Eric is open about his own faith community: 'I want people to know that I am a Seventh-day Adventist.' Explaining how this works in practice, he explains, 'At the same time, as I connect with the community, I want to build bridges, which means recognising that we are all children of God, whether we're of the Muslim, Hindu or Christian faith or none.' 'Bridge-building,' he



A statue of John Bunyan continues to stand in St Peter's Green, Bedford to this day



Eric and Neelam Masih at the installation service of the High Sheriff on Wednesday 7 April

continues, 'usually works best through deeds. From your deeds they can see.'

But there must be times, surely, when he gets into conversations about his faith? 'Yes, I do, but it is always with a gentle spirit. I will often use the phrase, "We are brothers" as the conversation opens up.' Eric shares that in his office, in addition to his own Bible, he has on his shelf the considered 'holy writings' of multiple faith groups in the town. 'Show them your principles; show them who you are and what makes you tick: but, at the same time, have a willingness to listen to their story, their concerns, and, yes, their faith.'

But, as Eric seeks to build bridges, he is acutely aware of how the Christian community often suffers for the cause of Christ. How could he not be – raised and educated in Bedford, at the school named after John Bunyan? His particular concern is for the plight of Indian pastors, along with their members, currently suffering discrimination and persecution by the Hindu majority, with Eric noting, 'Christianity arrived in India during the first century AD.'³

His appointed chaplain is Pastor O. P. Chackochen, minister of the Bedford Asian church, who will accompany Eric on certain official functions.

As Eric Masih fulfils his High sheriff duties, a line from an earlier Bedford pilgrim seems appropriate.

'You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you' (John Bunyan).⁴

¹<https://www.bedfordtoday.co.uk/news/politics/council/poor-men-live-11-fewer-years-their-more-fortunate-bedford-borough-neighbours-688286>

²<https://www.teambedsandluton.co.uk/queens-park>

³<https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/india/>

⁴https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/16244.John_Bunyan



Expanding God's kingdom

'Still the driving force – not holding on, not fitting in, but growing the people of God in Europe.'

A conversation about the emerging strategy of the Trans-European Division, with Pastor Raafat Kamal, president.

we are, but about being a living example to the society that surrounds us. It is called **ethical integrity**.

- **Third**, because we are all alike born into

community. We need to help each other strengthen this understanding.

- **Sixth**, for the very reason that we are an expectant, waiting community, we know we have work to do. The spreading of the Gospel in Europe remains unfinished business. This means we have no time for navel-gazing about irrelevant issues, but are called to **action** to spread the good news of Jesus Christ in attractive and relevant ways to our neighbourhood and beyond. In doing so, we promise to share a life in Christ that is biblically faithful, distinctly Adventist, culturally relevant and authentic to people in twenty-first-century Europe.



Trans-European Division offices at St Albans

DN: Thank you for sharing these values; and, as you can imagine, I want to dig a little deeper on each one. What does it mean, 'meeting people where they are, rather than on our terms'?

DN: Thanks for agreeing once again, Pastor Kamal, to connect with *MESSENGER* readers.

I want to talk today about the values of the Trans-European Division (TED). I note that the core of your mission statement says, 'Our mission: make disciples of Jesus Christ who live as His loving witnesses and proclaim to all people the everlasting Gospel of the three angels' messages in preparation for His soon return.'

Can you unpack this for us?

RK: I think *MESSENGER* readers should be aware that this statement links directly to the world-church mission statement, but is reinforced by six specific values for the TED context.

- **First**, we are committed to meeting people where they are: instead of demanding that they meet us on our terms, we build up the kingdom of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit to create new communities infused by His love. We call this **transformation**, the mark of our missional success here in Europe.
- **Second**, when it comes to leadership matters, we pursue the highest ethical standards, with servant leadership that is open, transparent, accountable, principled and visionary. This is not just about who

the image of God, as followers of Christ, our spiritual DNA drives our **Christ-like compassion** 'without exception' for all people. Here's a reality: communities around us in twenty-first-century Europe are still struggling with this. The church, our church, must not lag behind in respect of **diversity**, but be at the forefront in respecting, empathising and showing Christ-like love. We do not believe there should be any exceptions on the basis of colour, caste, nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, health condition, age, gender, or sexual orientation.

- **Fourth**, because of the challenges in society I've just shared, the role of the church is to bring healing where there is hate and injustice. Doesn't Micah 6:8 tell us what the Lord wants from us – to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God? We call it a ministry of **service**, helping and healing the whole person, particularly those in society who are vulnerable or rejected.
- **Fifth**, there is something **distinctive** about how Seventh-day Adventists understand Scripture in relation to freedom, healing, love and hope in Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that we belong to an 'expectant'

RK: At one time, our evangelistic mode was almost exclusively doctrinal. It was geared as, 'Here is a message; here is the truth we have to share' – usually delivered by a professional (pastor/evangelist). This means of communication still has a place, but is now part of a wider strategy. The focus has moved from the 'evangelist' to the 'disciple' who grows and matures relationships which make new disciples in Christ. If this is ever to become a reality, we need to increase the level of training and practise our faith. Where does the best training take place? In the local church, led by the pastor and elders. I believe that one-to-one faith sharing, guided by the power of the Holy Spirit, has the potential to create a community of disciple-makers all across the Trans-European Division, the like of which we have never seen before.

DN: And what about ethical integrity in leadership?

RK: Because of who we are, leaders from the local to the global are called to be open, accountable and transparent in their dealings with each other and with the members we serve, exhibiting servant leadership by imitating Christ, with the purpose of taking their small group, congregation, mission, conference or institution from where it is now, to where Christ wants it to be. Leadership is about seeing what can be!

DN: When it comes to diversity, do we still have much to do?

RK: Yes, and we can sometimes feel overwhelmed by how much there still is to do, both in the church and in society.

And in the church it is challenging some of us – and, I would add, rightly so. That’s the Spirit prompting us about how we treat ‘the other’ – and the call to do better. This is the space where, in the place of hatred and ignorance, we are to bring love, understanding and acceptance of the other.

We also need to celebrate the tapestry of people in our territory whose customs, culture and understanding, though diverse, have been woven, through the Bible and Christian history, towards an appreciation of God’s inclusive grace.

DN: Adventists and social justice have traditionally had an uncomfortable relationship. Should we engage in finding long-term solutions?

RK: *‘Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow’* (Isaiah 1:17, NIV).

Ellen White reminded us in her book *The Ministry of Healing* (p. 143) that Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. She wrote, ‘The Saviour mingled with people as one who desired their good. He showed sympathy for them,

ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, “Follow Me.”’

She added on the same page that we need to come ‘close to the people by personal effort’: ‘If less time were given to sermonising, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. 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. 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.’

You might ask, how does meeting the practical needs of our communities fit with evangelism? As an end-time prophetic movement, shouldn’t we focus on calling people to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, and let charities focus on the practical needs of people?

However, following Christ’s example, evangelising and meeting people’s actual needs are one. Our participation in building communities and meeting people’s practical needs is not fuelled by a missional imperative, evangelistic pragmatism, or even theological certitude, but rather simple, uncomplicated love and compassion. ‘Love has no need to justify itself.’

It should not be a PR device, a way to win favour in order to lead to conversions, a mere means to an end. It cannot be the ‘sugar on

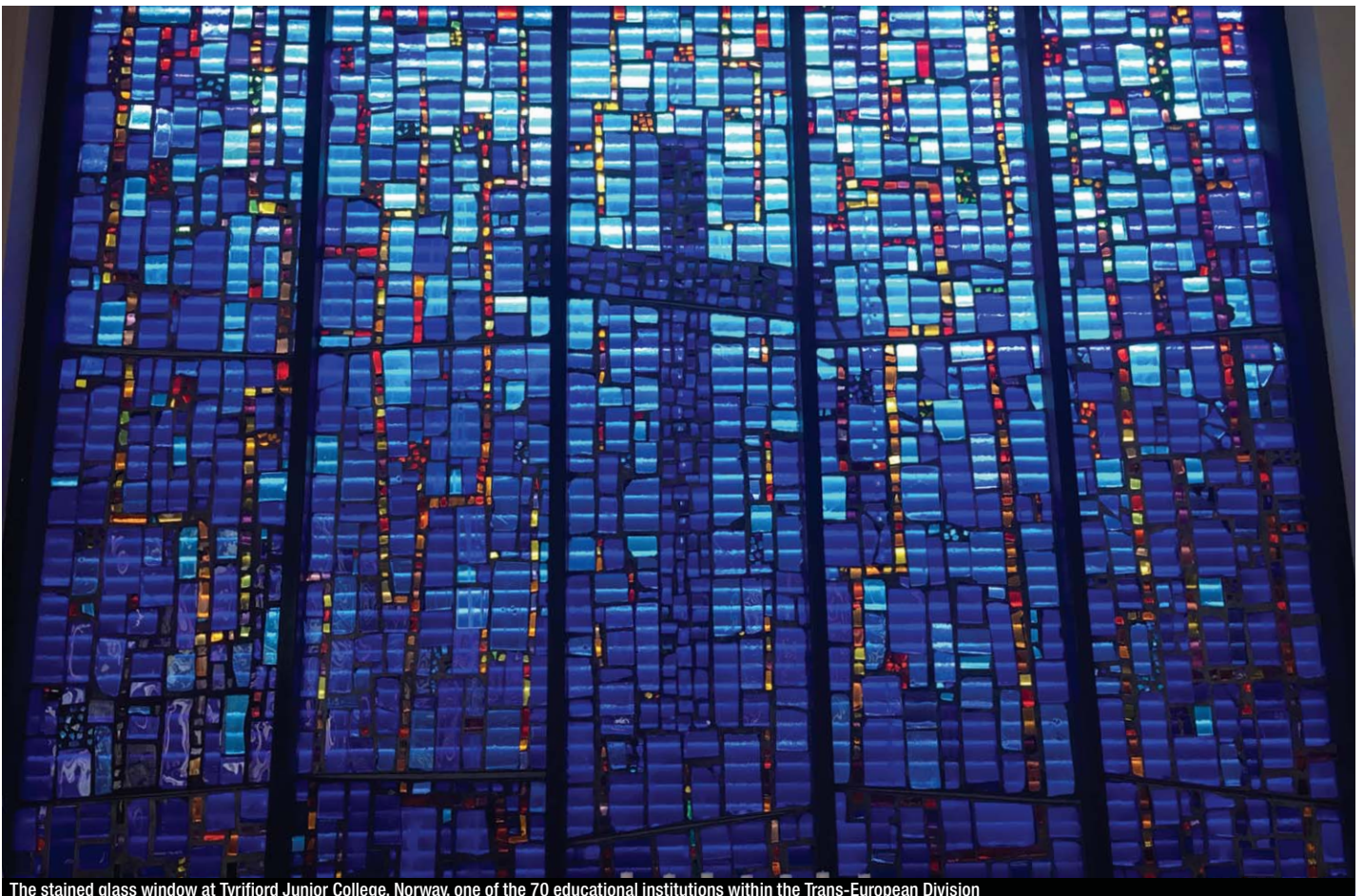
the pill or the bait on the hook’, otherwise the smell of hypocrisy will hang over our intent to bring a Christian blessing.

Meeting people’s practical needs – physical, mental, emotional and social – is a caring, loving and spiritual ministry – in other words, ‘imitating Christ’ – and this is what disciple-making is all about.

DN: What is it about our distinctive Adventist understanding of Scripture that makes us sometimes ‘inwardly focused’, and what will help us keep looking outwards, rather than navel-gazing?

RK: This is the one-million-dollar question. Giving glory to God and expanding God’s kingdom must still be the chief driving force for our existence as an end-time movement, and it is always outward in focus – not holding on, not fitting in, but growing the people of God in Europe. The passion for distinctively Seventh-day Adventist mission for making God known to our family, neighbours and friends needs to impel everything done by the Trans-European Division, by its 11 unions and three attached fields, its 70 educational, publishing, and health and welfare institutions, its 1,400 congregations, its nearly 90,000 members. It is our heritage; it is our challenge; it is our opportunity.

DN: Thank you, Pastor Kamal – I look forward to continuing this conversation next month in the May edition.



The stained glass window at Tyrifjord Junior College, Norway, one of the 70 educational institutions within the Trans-European Division



Earth and soul

by David Wright, a new *MESSENGER* columnist on creation care and climate change



Welcome to the first of a series in the *MESSENGER* about climate change and creation care. Each month it will focus on environmental matters from a theological and biblical perspective, considering the everyday implications for Adventist Christians on how we live, no matter where we live in the British Isles. With the UK hosting the UN Climate Change

Conference in Glasgow in November this year, it will also reflect on whether the increasing climate threat headlines, the 'race to zero carbon', and other green actions being proposed by the Government to protect our environment have anything to do with us personally.

How did we react when the US climate envoy, Senator John Kerry, visiting Britain recently,

suggested that this November would be **'the last best chance to avert the worst environmental consequences for the world'**? As Sabbath-keepers and Creationists who promote respect for the Creator, do we agree with the native American leader, Chief Seattle, who once said, **'The earth is precious to Him, and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its Creator'**?

Some churches think we should not get involved in either local or global action to improve the environment, because it is a distraction to our mission, because it's political, or because other denominations are involved. Since the early nineties, however, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has released numerous official statements about the environment and its stewardship, even telling governments way back in 1995 that they should take all necessary steps to avert the

danger of climate change.

Maybe we have just been too busy sharing the message of Revelation 14 to have time to get involved – if Jesus intends to return soon and the earth is going to be destroyed, why be concerned about it now? Yet some critics believe that most Christians are **'too heavenly minded to be any earthy good'**. This clearly does not apply to UK Adventists, because we have always had green credentials – we advocate a simple, wholesome lifestyle and a plant-based diet, mostly avoid the goods-getting consumerism treadmill, give money to support overseas projects blighted by environmental catastrophes, and promote regular walks in nature. But is this enough?

God's creation, as described in Genesis 1:1-25, comprises the earth and sky with the elements they contain, such as rocks, minerals, soil, water, and air, and all the living things, such as the plants and wildlife. In Britain, most Adventists live and work in urban rather than more natural environments, which makes creation care more challenging, but also more vital.

Stanborough Press author wins The Wise Women Award for Top Christian Book 2021



One of the authors published by the Stanborough Press was presented with the prestigious Wise Women Award on 14 March for outstanding Christian books. The Stanborough Press book, which won the hotly contested prize over many other nominees, was *Cooking With Kids* by Kirly-Sue (also



ADRA on my mind

Getting our fundraising back on track

by Bert Smit (CEO, ADRA-UK)

'All you need is Simone,' my mother-in-law-to-be would claim when I started dating her daughter – over 45 glorious years ago. And it is still true – all I need is my wife, my kids and my grandkids.

I have to admit that I am not a very public person. You will not find me on social media.

As the CEO of ADRA-UK, I often have to lead out in public and be up in front – and yet I prefer to be in the background, a facilitator, a capacity builder and a motivator.

Lockdown has not been *that* challenging for me. I am perfectly fine within my bubble, working from home, and do not feel the need to access a wider world.

And I am aware that, as we are tracking along the path out of this pandemic, many people will feel a sense of what is termed 're-entry anxiety'. How can I return to shops and church? How can we go back to a normal life after working from home, perhaps shielding and living in bubbles? One of my team admitted recently: *'I have very much enjoyed working from home. I have found that I am more productive and can focus differently. I'm happy to go to the shops and get essentials, if required, and to see family members, but I really am uncomfortable about "mixing with people" in person.'* We all may have similar signs of anxiety.

One way I would suggest overcoming this type of anxiety is in nature. Go for a walk and meet up with friends, church members and family, reminding yourself that no person is an island: we have this privileged connection to ourselves, to other people and to our God.

Remind yourself that it *will* be fun to see friends again. It *will* be great to go back to church.

My biggest worry right now is the fundraising we desperately need to carry on the work that we do here at ADRA-UK. The pandemic has shaken all humanitarian agencies out of their comfort zones, and ADRA is no exception.

For years, the church members came together and raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for ADRA's work during Ingathering, or what has come to be known as the ADRA Annual Appeal. But, as in 2020, now in 2021 the majority of our churches are closed, right when we normally would go out to collect money in tins or conduct fundraising activities in the churches.

Without a successful fundraising drive this year, the hard reality is that ADRA would be challenged to continue the work that we do in supporting some of the world's most vulnerable people. Without much-needed funds, we would be unable to provide nutritious food for those living in poverty, or to create learning initiatives for children who have little access to education. We would not be able to support maternal health initiatives or provide training for farmers to support sustainable livelihoods. And we wouldn't be able to give immediate assistance should there be a major disaster.

So my anxiety is not how we will restart our lives; not returning to work; not even what it will be like returning to the church building – but how we will effectively restart our fundraising for ADRA.

Here are some examples of what people are doing right now to raise funds for ADRA:

In Stanborough Park Church, Audrey Balderstone is encouraging members to create a birthday fundraiser for ADRA-UK. Last year, Audrey herself raised £7,547 doing five-minute planks over a period of a few weeks.

Pathfinder Daniel is walking 20,000 steps daily to help ADRA. He has already surpassed his goal of £200. Elizabeth L., another Pathfinder, is walking 5K every day to raise funds for us.

The teens and tweens' fundraising initiative, organised by Sara Shepley, has already raised £1,004, which is twice as much as their original goal of £500.

And three young people from the Leicester West church are going to do a sponsored run.

You too can organise an activity to raise funds to help ADRA to help some of the world's neediest people.

For more ideas, please go to www.adra.org.uk/fundraising.

However, if you just want to donate, please go to www.adra.org.uk/donate.

Regular donations really help us to plan our work more effectively, and you may want to sign a direct debit form to give a monthly donation. Please email us at info@adra.org.uk and request a form.

Thank you for having ADRA on your mind too.



Oscar Vicente, formerly of the York church, at the ADRA Fun Run in Roundhay Park, Leeds in 2012

known as Susanne Kirlew), from the Walthamstow church in London.

The Wise Women Awards Ceremony has been a tradition within the UK for many years, recognising the contribution that Christian women from many denominations in the UK, Europe and the USA have made to the church and wider society.

Asked about how she felt on receiving this award, Susanne explained,

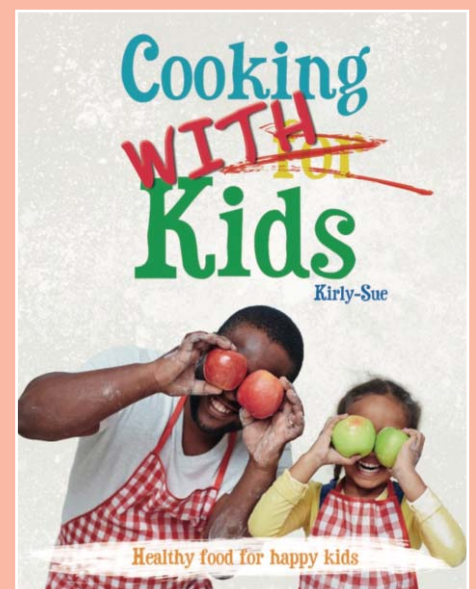
'I thank God for this award. I am so pleased and feel so humbled. However, writing a book is one thing: driving the sales is an even bigger task. But I want to recognise that God has been with me and the Stanborough Press each step of the way, and I particularly appreciate the talent of Abigail Murphy in creating a masterpiece design.'

The award-winning book is a plant-based cookery book for parents and children. From bibimbap to beany balls, and from plantain

porridge to banana bread, there are soups, salads, breakfasts, dinners, smoothies and desserts galore in this charmingly illustrated healthy cookbook. With stunning food photography by Andrea and Andrej Valko and more than 75 individual recipes, *Cooking With Kids* reveals a glimpse into the inner workings of Kirly-Sue's TV shows and philosophy. There are updates of time-proven favourite recipes, inventive new ideas, and contemporary twists on multi-ethnic dishes from around the world.

Says Kirly-Sue, 'Who knew that vegan cooking could be so much fun . . . ? Get your copy now!'

(Available from the LifeSource Christian Bookshop at <https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/cooking-with-kids/> – alternatively, telephone 01476 591700 or email sales@stanboroughpress.org.uk to secure your copy.)





Generations – help me understand

by Pastor Adam Ramdin,
Youth Director, North England Conference

The last 20-30 years have seen the world change in clear and distinct ways that impact how faith is passed on from generation to generation. This has never been an easy process, nor one that is possible to duplicate from one family unit to another. As children become teenagers, and then as they move from being teenagers to young adults, there comes a time when they investigate and explore the traditions and faith of their parents to see what has meaning for them. All of us grapple with this life stage, and the challenge is to make a meaningful sense of faith through the relationships we have, and the knowledge and wisdom available to us. The challenge today, though, occurs because the sources of knowledge, the process of learning, and the fabric of relationships are changing.

These changes can be best summarised in three words: *authority*, *alienation* and *access*. What do these changes look like in everyday life?

Authority

- Today people, especially youth, are more likely to consult the internet than a pastor or teacher when they have a religious question.
- Peers play an increasing role as the spiritual and moral compass for decision making, being exposed to a wide variety of religious content, but often without a grid for evaluating it.

- Youth are tech-savvy, but not necessarily truth-savvy. 'I found it on the internet' is a common claim for informational reliability.

Alienation

- Fifty years ago, 5% of births were to unmarried women; today it's 50%.
- The transition to adulthood is taking longer. In 1970 the majority had transitioned by the age of 30, but this is no longer typical.
- The average young adult has worked for their employer for just 2-3 years, compared to 10 years in older adults.
- Rising costs of living and stagnant wages keep marriage and kids further out of reach.
- Peers, rather than parents, are more likely to be consulted for advice.
- The impact of social media has led to people having many superficial acquaintances but few intimate relationships.

Access

- Young Christians perceive and interpret reality through their screens.
- Most of the information we consume is visual; written words account for less than one tenth of 1% of the total we consume.
- Teachers and pastors can be fact-checked in real time.
- Customised content already sits online, so you do not have to go looking.

- Constant access leads to everyone being an expert, creating a 'my-sized' epistemology.
- There is a desire to be constantly connected at all time ('What's the WiFi password?')
- We are all equal now, with an expectation of flattened structures of hierarchy.

The changing means of communicating and finding information are possibly the main reason why the context for the current generation is discontinuously different from the past. The changing landscape has disrupted the ability to convey the message and meaning of faith in ideas, thought and practice to the next generation. In addition to this, 'Our hyper-individualised, consumer-driven, pluralistic culture invites young people to become their own king or queen, the absolute authority in their kingdom of one' (*You Lost Me*, p. 57).

We are living at a time, then, when there is a deep cultural change taking place, putting tension on the old institutions of society, and when Christianity is further marginalised than it has ever been. In such a context, the lives of exiles in the Bible particularly resonate, as they faced a similar challenge of living 'in – but not of' the world around them. Daniel, Esther and Joseph are three examples, and it's fascinating to look at their stories through the lens of how they lived out their faith in a hostile environment. Some changes they lived with and didn't make an issue of, such as their names, but with others they stood firm.

Our teens and youth need more encouragement than we often give them, because they are struggling to live this balance in a society that's very different to what many of us grew up in. May we provide support and encouragement, and seek to understand the changing world we live in.

Further reading: *You Lost Me*, David Kinnaman
Meet Generation Z, James Emery White



Connections through children's and family ministries

by Leonie Haran and Jonathan Mazura



Ana receiving her basket of fruit and vegetables



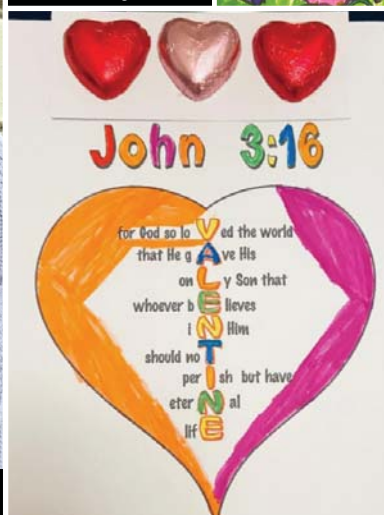
Labalan children: 'God is love'



Lakesha and Lennox with their card



Lorrentine delivering a basket of fruit and vegetables to Ellen



Michaella and Tanesha's card with choccies



Lena and Luca with cards and big smiles

The Cardiff churches have enjoyed the many benefits of using the latest technology for running services, meetings and departments. However, many of the older members of our congregations are unable to access our online provision. This inspired the children's and family ministries departments to organise activities to help stay connected with our older members. We wanted them to know three things: 1. We love them. 2. We care about them. 3. We miss them.

Family Ministries Department

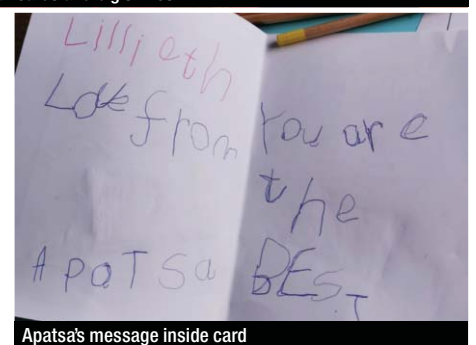
Inspired by Acts 10:38, which says Jesus 'went about doing good' (KJV), we decided to visit elderly members of our congregation, delivering hampers of fruits and vegetables. It was uplifting to see many of our members who do not access our Zoom meetings. In the hope that we will soon be meeting up again with our fifteen elderly members, we included with the hamper a greeting card with the message: 'We are missing you. Our family – a circle of strength, founded on faith, joined in

love, kept by God. "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19, NKJV).'

Children's Ministry Department

Inspired by the Welsh Mission's adoption of iCOR (intergenerational Church of Refuge) principles and values, and by a sermon delivered by Pastor Dejan Stojkovic (BUC Youth Director) with the title, 'What do you have in your hands?' we engaged our children in an activity to connect with older members of the church and the wider community. Using Valentine's cards and bookmarks containing scriptures about God's love, our children wrote messages and coloured the cards. Pathfinders were also involved by helping and encouraging the children to complete the cards during their Pathfinder Zoom meetings. The cards were delivered through the post, containing chocolate hearts and photos.

The joy experienced by the children colouring and posting the envelopes with their



Apatso's message inside card

contents was matched by the joy and surprise of the church members who received them. 'What a beautiful surprise yesterday to receive a lovely card and some photos. I really appreciate it. . . . It really lifted my spirits.'

'Then the King will say, "I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me – you did it to me"' (Matthew 25:40, The Message).

Helen and Michael Pearson receive Weniger Award for Excellence

by the Editor

Few *MESSENGER* readers will have heard of the Charles Elliott Weniger Society for Excellence. Weniger was both an inspiring teacher and a gifted speaker at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary during the 1950s. Every year the society recognises and awards those who have made 'significant contributions to the church, community, and world'. Among the recipients of the 2021 awards were Helen and Michael Pearson, whose life, work, and ministry continue to be synonymous with Newbold College of Higher Education to this day.¹

To the Pearsons, words are important: not just the careful use of them, but the best use of them for the sake of the Gospel. Their appointment to the Newbold faculty during the 1970s was a milestone for the college. Previously, teaching and practice would be largely set within a spiritual and intellectual box: but for a new generation of Newbold students they were the pioneers of the 'authentic generation' – not an educational project, but who they were and continue to be. The college classroom became a safe place to ask the challenging faith questions.

Helen and Mike are teachers – dedicated to the pursuit of truth through asking the right questions. In her role as Public Relations Officer for Newbold during the 1980s, Helen was responsible for the lasting motif: 'Newbold – a place to ask questions'. Mike was quick to create the 'Pre-University' course. A year of study between A levels and university, it was offered to help Adventist youth transition from the intellectual and spiritual security of the Adventist home to the rigour of university life in all its forms.

Mike's commitment to philosophy and ethics encouraged the discipline of spiritual 'wrestling', particularly as it related to the pastor. Helen bore tirelessly through the strongholds of the Adventist 'in-house' speech, the unintended mantras and the clichés. It was a mission with purpose, and a discipline which provided opportunity for many a thought piece for the BBC on both national and local radio.

Both are preachers, and are fascinated with the gift of preaching. The ethics teacher was once invited to teach homiletics. In what other forum could words be more important? Students listened to the teacher preach, to each other preach, and were also taken to sit in front of the master preachers. But, while



excellence in rhetoric and

biblical exegesis was important, for Mike, of equal concern was the outcome – the provision of pastoral care.

Mike's reflective nature has been a source of comfort to many a student perplexed about the great issues of life, both as teacher and tutor, the latter a further example of his commitment to pastoral care. His signature work, *Millennial Dreams and Moral Dilemmas*, explains how the church has navigated through the choppy waters of social change.² While seeking to stay true to Scripture, to what extent has society shaped the church's moral thinking?

In 1992, Helen raised the question: 'What does it feel like to be an Adventist woman?' Using the worship hour as her laboratory, her landmark article in *Ministry Magazine* was a call to the world church to think again about its unconscious 'spiritual masculinity':

'What does it feel like to be an Adventist woman in 1992? Lonely, sometimes. I suspect that there are others who may feel much the same: skilful craftsmen in intellectual college churches, poor in rich churches, blacks in a predominantly white church, whites in a mostly black church, the young in a congregation of senior citizens, or the physically handicapped in a church full of joggers.'³

Helen and Mike are not alone in believing the problem of the church's 'spiritual masculinity' to be unresolved. But the concern for 'others', the 'ostracised' and those in pain, led Helen in 1997 to complete a programme in psychodynamic counselling. For fifteen years she served as coordinator for Newbold's counselling service for students and staff.

Their lifelong journey to 'discover what is true', combined with support for the perplexed

and distressed, is their mission, because that is their understanding of the call of Christ. Such commitment often goes beyond support, even at times leading them to 'fight for' others, even if it makes for an uncomfortable relationship with the powers that be.

In thanking the Weniger committee for this honour, among those whom Helen wanted to honour were those 'who understand that what so many of us lack – male and female, old and young – is not giftedness, but self-confidence, which sometimes needs a boost from authentic words of affirmation and insight'.

Invited to present the keynote speech, 'Excellence: a reflection', Mike noted that, in the context of Christian education, **'Excellence can never simply be about a superior position on a bell curve,' but also 'about endeavour, surmounting obstacles, being curious, and challenging your own best efforts, rather than those of others'.**

Compared to the norms for measuring excellence in secular society, Jesus measures excellence by a different standard: 'It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave' (Matthew 20:26, 27, ESV).

Now formally retired from the classroom, Helen and Mike continue to minister through coordinating and hosting the work of Newbold's Diversity Centre – a place to find good conversation about major life issues, but with the aim of creating a forum where majority and minority groups can discuss, reconcile and celebrate their differences in a safe space.⁴

'All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation' (2 Corinthians 5:18, ESV)

¹The award ceremony was streamed live via the Loma Linda University Church on 20 February and can be found at this link, including Michael Pearson presenting the Clinton Emmerson Annual Address on 'Excellence: A Reflection': <https://www.lluc.org/video-archive?sapurl=Lys5YzdlL21ZGhLS9taS8ra3drN2Q0eJ9icmFuZGluZz10CnVJmVtYmVKPX RYdWU=> ²<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/millennial-dreams-and-moral-dilemmas/1C9DAAA5296E3A19A91C54897F54902#> ³<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1992/01/all-things-to-all-women> ⁴An archive of the Newbold Diversity lectures, and reports about them, can all be accessed at: <https://www.newbold.ac.uk/diversity-centre/archive/>.



Do you have a third place?

by Nathan Stickland

It won't be long now before we see back-to-school advertising splashed across our TV screens and in supermarkets. I know schools haven't yet finished for this school year, and next school year is still a third of a year away (and that sounds like ages away now that I've put it like that), but 'back again' is anticipated by some, and arrives before you know it for others. So how will it be for our churches? Are we looking forward to getting 'back to Sabbath School'?

Some churches have managed Government guidelines quite well with congregating with smaller numbers, social distancing, facemasks, and hand gel flowing like milk and honey. Other churches have adapted to life online. I get a general sense that, either way, attendance has been scaled back by those who were once occasional or frequent church attenders . . . so what will going 'back to church' look like?

In his article, 'Five ways the post-place church will look different after COVID',¹ Thom Rainer seems to emphasise the importance of location as a place of gathering. Working at a Christian research organisation, Rainer picks up on a sense that people desire the opportunity to gather together, but he also suggests that people are looking forward to gatherings which are smaller and more local. Coincidentally, I've just taken a call from someone who is wanting to attend church –

not yet an Adventist, but they've just moved into the area and it's local!

There is a sociology-inspired concept called 'the third place'. This is a place outside the home and work (or maybe place of study), where you build community with others: your third place, where you feel like family. Having visited many churches across the UK and Ireland, I know that many of our churches are chosen places of worship rather than being our nearest local church. Without unpicking that dynamic, we have churches where people commute to attend for a myriad of reasons. Reasons aside, I ponder on the contention of whether our chosen places of worship are our third places; or, indeed, should they be?

One global company has built its values on being a third place for its customers.² The idea of building connections with its customers remains at the heart of its ethos – even to the point of customers becoming patrons of their products, buying branded goods to show their association with this company. 'They connect with us through their barista and the quality of what's in the cup they take with them.' The company's spokesman talks of their desire that people be comforted while holding their product for the next part of their day. This is all about an experience someone has with people in a place.

If going back to church does not instil in us the desire to stay longer at church, attending

more frequently, for a sustained experience, I wonder if we will have missed a divine opportunity? We have an opportunity to build this kind of third place, like a phoenix of the emerging third place rising out of the ashes of lockdown. If we go back to run-down buildings where our youth see their parents shirk involvement and berate presenters, as though church were like a comedy club with bad jokes, would it be any wonder if our young people were to look somewhere else for their third place?

I suggest that, rather than going back to what we had, we build on what we had. Imagine that you invite someone to church, or your Discovery Bible Reading group, and they have their fill of hospitable company, and leave with their 'Jesus experience' with their name on it. How long would it be before they make your place/church their third place? Let's look at new ways we can connect with people and give them a cup of Jesus to go. You can't wait to get back to church! Who else could you give that experience to? If your church isn't having that conversation, start it. It won't be long before we're back at school.

¹https://churchanswers.com/blog/five-ways-the-post-place-church-will-look-different-after-covid/?utm_source=convertkit&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Five+Ways+the+Post-Place+Church+Will+Look+Different+after+COVID%20-%205395302 ²<https://www.businessinsider.com/starbucks-reimagine-third-place-2019-3?r=US&IR=T>

Brothers return to the Lord

As we come to the end of the first quarter, one of Hackney Church's main highlights of the year to date takes us right back to Sabbath 2 January with the baptism of two brothers – Richard (21) and Joshua (20) Weekes.

Among those celebrating the joy-filled occasion with the brothers were their mother, Vivian Nelson, and elder sister, Stephanie Charles, while Hackney members watched virtually through the online live Zoom and Facebook platforms due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The brothers decided to give their hearts to the Lord, having had personal Bible studies as well as regular involvement in youth ministries activities over the years, including a missionary trip to assist in the rebuilding of a church struck by lightning in Kigali, Rwanda.

For Vivian, the baptism of her sons was naturally a moving occasion. 'I am so elated to see my sons accept the Lord as their personal Saviour, because I have tried my best to bring them up in the ways of the Lord, and to see this day happen is a joy that has touched my heart.'

Sharing a little insight into their spiritual journey, she commented, 'They have always been obedient children with a keen interest in wanting to know more about God.' Thinking about their new life in Christ, 'It's my prayer that God will keep them both and the rest of my family along this Christian journey.'

Stephanie proudly sang a special item for both her brothers, and Vivian read their chosen favourite scriptures.

Pastor Joojo Bonnie and Elder John Mathieu read the charge and the vows respectively.

'Hold on to the Lord,' Pastor Bonnie charged, 'knowing that in an age of distractions, especially through various social media platforms, you have made the best decision of your lives in giving your hearts to the Lord while still young.' Reminding them of the reason why, Pastor Bonnie concluded, 'God calls you, young men, because you are strong, and all heaven is rejoicing with us here today.'

With those words of encouragement, the brothers were then baptised and welcomed into the membership of the local Hackney church – but, more importantly, their names were written in the Lamb's book of life, to the glory and honour of God the Father and our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

DARELL J. PHILIP (HACKNEY CHURCH PR AND COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT)



Joshua Weekes in Rwanda



Wrapped in a blanket of love

Ray and I would like to say a big 'thank-you' to everyone in churches right across the country who have been praying for us over the past eight months.

God answered your prayers in a remarkable way. Although being told that I had a very aggressive cancerous tumour and that I would lose my leg, we have had complete peace and lack of fear. As I described it to someone, it was like being wrapped in a blanket of love.

I had the operation four weeks ago and have made a very good recovery. Our faith has been strengthened, and I now look forward with confidence, knowing that God is with us, no matter what happens.

LYN MORRIS



New life at Central London Church



Shirley Stewart



Angelika Smoliga

Central London Church was blessed with two separate baptisms earlier this year – on the first occasion, Joanna-May Stewart Lima was baptised live in the Advent Centre church and Shirley Stewart showed that she had given her heart to Jesus through profession of faith at her home.

Shirley has serious health concerns that made it very dangerous for her to venture out to Central London Church for the actual baptism, so the CLC church board considered it to be wise not to put her in further danger and unanimously voted to allow her to join the church on profession of her faith in Jesus.

The ladies are sisters, related to Colin Stewart, senior pastor at Central London, as first cousins. They became serious in wanting to follow Jesus when another cousin, Raymond Stewart, forwarded a link to Joanna from a series of meetings, entitled 'Unlocking Bible Prophecy', by Adventist World Radio speaker Cami Oetman. Immediately the ladies were hooked on the topics – but more so on the message of the Adventist Church.

After watching the full fifteen-part video messages they were convinced that Jesus is real and promptly rang Colin: going straight to the point, they asked for baptism at the earliest possible date. Excitedly this request and good news was brought to the church board, which didn't hesitate, even although they had no real opportunity to meet the ladies

in the flesh because of COVID-19. Regardless, they gave the green light for the baptism to go ahead.

While planning the baptism and waiting for a window of opportunity as the churches were locked during the first lockdown, virtual weekly Bible studies were given by family members, and eventually the date for baptism was sealed.

While Shirley stayed at home and was received into the church by profession of faith, Joanna came to church with her husband Ivan and daughter Rachael. A special song was sung live by Patricia Stewart, and the baptismal thought was given by another relative, Pastor Stefan Burton-Schull. A special prayer for the sisters was given by another first cousin, Pastor Maslin Holness, after which the immersion happened. A benediction was given by Elder Robert.

Ivan read Joanna's favourite text, Psalm 27, and Rachael read Shirley's favourite text, Deuteronomy 31:6, after which the baptismal gifts were presented in a socially distanced way by First Elder Claudia Passer on behalf of the Central London Church family. So much was done by Claudia, the tech team, and our COVID-19 safe advisor. Later that night Shirley's baptismal gifts were delivered to her home.

On the second occasion, Angelika Smoliga finally gave her heart to Jesus after attending

Central London Church for more than two and a half years. Angelika is the only member of her family to have become a Seventh-day Adventist, and she revealed that on the day of her baptism her mother and family were watching the service, broadcast live on YouTube. She believes and prays that God will use her to reach her family.

Angelika is a firm believer in the Bible and is committed to regular Bible study. She never misses the chance to study God's word, and always has much to say on any given study. She has been prepared for baptism by Esther Abba, and in recent times by Patricia Stewart, with whom she has become a friend. Patricia says, 'Angelika is a very knowledgeable person and loves teaching fitness and well-being. She was very excited to have given her life to Jesus.'

On the day of her baptism, Angelika was accompanied by her good friend Iwona to witness that happy and joyous service. Her friend Iwona also attends Central London Church from time to time. A number of guests and church members were privileged to witness the baptism, and were there to officially welcome Angelika into CLC fellowship (albeit in a socially distanced way).

We give God all the glory and praise for all three of these precious new members.

PASTOR COLIN STEWART



We moved . . . for the sake of the children

by Andrew Puckering

Seventh-day Adventist families wanting their children to have the best education have been moving to Grantham in recent years, specifically so they could enrol their children in a Seventh-day Adventist school. Andrew Puckering recently asked four of these families about their experience. Wasn't this a big step for them to take? Did God make the way clear for them? Did it turn out to be worth it?

Moving town is a big undertaking, and I was surprised to see how many Adventist families have taken this step with the specific purpose of enrolling their children at Dudley House School, an Adventist primary school in the North England Conference. The school, under the excellent and dedicated leadership of the head teacher, Mrs Jenny Johnson, has great Ofsted reviews; and, like many of our Adventist schools, has small class sizes and a warm and caring atmosphere where the children are motivated to excel – and, more importantly, where the children are taught in harmony with what we believe, which isn't always guaranteed at other schools. Is that enough reason to move? I was curious to know more, and asked Pastor Stanley and his wife Rosangela, Bheki and Ildi, Sheryl and Andris, and Judit to share their stories.

'A church school is like an extension of your home,' say Pastor Stanley and Rosangela, 'a place where children feel safe and happy. . . . We travelled to Grantham to get to know the school, and we fell in love with the Christian, cosy and lively environment. . . . It was indeed a present from God, an answer to our prayers, to give our children a Seventh-day Adventist school here in the UK. We felt God's hand helping us to choose Dudley House School, and He has provided us everything we needed to fulfil this dream.'

Bheki and Ildi agree, saying, 'We are so grateful that we can access the independent Christian education that we always wanted for our children but never thought we could afford.' Andris says, 'As someone who received Christian education myself, I always wanted our children to have the same opportunity.' As he explains further: 'When dropping my child off at school, I want to know that I have left him in a safe environment where the values I have taught him at home will not be undermined. As the young mind is developing it is very important to be consistent with the messaging.'

This crucial privilege, however, is not available in every location, as Pastor Stanley

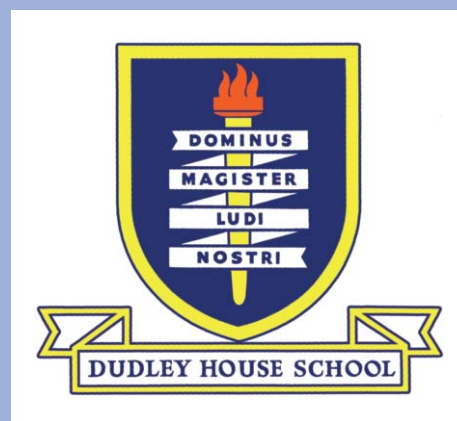
and Rosangela found when they moved from Brazil: 'We had no access to a Seventh-day Adventist school. We both worked in Adventist schools in Brazil for around a decade before moving to the UK, and it was something we dreamed of for our children because of the insuperable value of our education. As they started other schools, we could not stop noticing how far they were from the Christian ethos and aims.' Were their children happy in those schools? When asked, apparently, 'they would never give a straight answer.' Something had to be done!

Thankfully, shortly after they moved to the Peterborough district, they had an amazing experience: 'We didn't know about Dudley House School, but we were praying to find a good school for our children. . . . That was when our neighbour (who didn't know anything about what was going on with us) rang the doorbell and gave us some leaflets and very good reports about the school – which was not so far from our placement!' This, they say, 'was definitely an answer to our prayers'.

Sheryl and Andris were also praying for God's leading: 'We asked God to lead us, and circumstances became apparent for us to relocate to a place with a school that would be suitable. We were open-minded to relocate wherever it might be. I believe it is just like with everything else in life: you step out in faith and see where God leads you. . . . the decision must be made.'

Was following through on this decision all plain sailing? 'It was challenging to move out here to Grantham,' says Bheki. 'We used to live in a big and diverse city, so it took some time for us to settle.' However, it did have its advantages: 'We live in the outskirts of Grantham and the countryside is at our doorstep – we wouldn't have it any other way.' They soon made up for lost friends, as well: 'Grantham church members and the other parents were very welcoming, so we soon made new friends. The school itself is like a small family – we look out for each other and give a helping hand to one another.'

Some parents moved all the way up from



the south. Judit says: 'Tommy was 8 years old when we moved to Grantham specifically to educate him in Dudley House School. We did not know much about Grantham, or the school; but, after prayers, God opened every door for us to take the decision and leave London. We experienced tremendous miracles and support from the church and school.' For Judit this meant taking the big step of working in a new place, but for Sheryl and Andris one of the miracles was being able to work from home, which Sheryl was able to do even before the pandemic. Since then, as Andris points out, 'Relocating may be even easier, since working from home has been encouraged and appears to be here to stay; therefore location is becoming more flexible.'

Were the school fees an issue for any of these families? Pastor Stanley and Rosangela say, 'Although it is an extremely affordable private school compared with so many others, and we had support from the church, it was somehow financially challenging as Rosangela was not working. We stepped out by faith in God's provision and started praying for a job. After a while, God provided a job for her which was exactly what we prayed for, and as an extra gift she has now also become part of the Dudley House School staff. Praise God for that!'

Andris explains, 'It is an investment with great rewards. One would assume that private education would cost a lot, but in Dudley House School's case it is very affordable. The full annual fees are £5,400, but Adventist parents can in most cases apply to their local church or conference for a subsidy to help cover the cost. If you have ever paid childcare fees, this school is cheaper than that.' Ildi agrees, saying, 'Dudley House School provides amazing value for money. The fees are kept at affordable levels so it is indeed feasible; Early Years funding is available, and siblings get further discounts. . . . If we look at the bigger picture, it is only a small sacrifice that we make for our children. God's promises have been helping us to remain content.'

So was the sacrifice worth it? Would they do it again? 'Well worth it!' exclaims Ildi. 'We know that the excellent grounding that they receive at Dudley House School enables them to achieve to their full potential – from a spiritual, academic and social point of view. This will stand them in good stead throughout their lives. It was the best decision we made regarding the future of our children.' At this



Navid (son of Bheki and Ildi) on the left, with Steven (son of Rosangela and Pastor Stanley) on the right



Timothy (son of Sheryl and Andris)



Judit's boy, Tommy

This has also been the experience of Sheryl and Andris's son Timothy: 'Our son enjoys going to school. Smaller class sizes mean that he gets all the help that he may need from his teachers. All the age groups are encouraged to interact, developing family-like relationships. From early years, kids are taught how to present during productions, and by doing so gain confidence to be at the front.' Judit adds, 'Those two and a half years in Tommy's life at Dudley House School gave him loads of security and confidence, and he has definitely grown spiritually.'



Stella (daughter of Rosangela and Pastor Stanley) on the left, with Milan (son of Bheki and Ildi) on the right

point Bheki chips in: 'Our boys are flourishing; they are confident and happy in their school environment, and this gives us peace of mind.'

Rosangela and Pastor Stanley explain the positive effect of the Adventist school on their children: 'Our children have been specially blessed with the small class environment that allows them to express themselves with mutual respect and develop their talents,' especially their art and music skills and their son's writing and poetry. In other schools they'd been reticent to say if they'd enjoyed the experience, but at Dudley House 'they clearly say: "I am happy in this school" and "this is the best school we have been to so far." What else could I ask as a parent?'

Would they encourage other parents to take this step? Pastor Stanley and Rosangela say: 'When we believe something, we need to put our effort into it. God knows the challenges you might have, and we live in uncertain times, but He says, "Ask, and it will be given unto you." We as a family would encourage you to start by praying for it. Once you see a positive answer for your prayer, step forwards by faith. God is a specialist in miracles, and we have experienced many of them. He has opened the Red Sea for us, and can certainly

do it for you also.'

We'll give the final word to Judit: 'We thank God for His grace, His goodness, mercy and care towards those who call upon His name. He is not a deaf God; He hears our prayers, and opens doors for us who wait patiently for Him.'

Maybe reading this testimony has encouraged you to consider joining these parents and enrolling your children at an Adventist school. If so, you may be interested to investigate the Dudley House School website: <http://dudleyhouseschool.co.uk>.



HEALTH

by Sharon Platt-McDonald

'On your feet, Britain'

April's Calendar of National Health and Well-being Campaigns¹ featured the following:

- 1-30 April – Stress Awareness Month
- 7 April – World Health Day
- 29 April – On Your Feet, Britain

This issue of *Enhancing Health* focuses on the health benefits of movement, under the title: 'On Your Feet, Britain'.

On their website,² the NHS calendar of health events for April features some key tips for remaining active – not just for the month of April, but on a regular basis:

- Accumulate **two** hours of standing or light activity during working hours, eventually progressing to **four**.
- **Break up seated work** with standing, regularly.
- **Avoid prolonged static sitting** (and static standing).
- Employers should **promote reduction of prolonged sitting** alongside other health-promotion goals.

On its website, Public Health England highlights the scale of inaction in the UK. It states: 'Around 1 in 3 (34%) of men and 1 in 2 (42%) of women are not active enough for good health.'³

On the same website, a pictorial graphic captioned: 'What are the health benefits of physical activity?' highlights the extent to which exercise reduces the following negative outcomes:

- All-cause mortality by 30%
- Cardiovascular disease by up to 35%
- Type 2 diabetes by up to 40%
- Colon cancer by 30%
- Breast cancer by 20%
- Depression by up to 30%
- Hip fractures by up to 68%
- Dementia by up to 30%

Similarly, in the US, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention further explain some additional benefits of exercise in a pictorial chart captioned: 'Health benefits of physical activity for adults':⁴

- **Balance and coordination** – reduces risk of falls



Accumulate two hours of standing or light activity during working hours.

- **Blood pressure** – reduces blood pressure
- **Bone health** – improves bone health
- **Brain health** – reduces risk of developing dementia (including Alzheimer's disease) and reduces risk of depression
- **Cancer prevention** – lowers risk of eight cancers: bladder, breast, colon, endometrial, oesophageal, kidney, lung, and stomach
- **Healthy weight** – reduces risk of weight gain
- **Heart health** – lowers risk of heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes
- **Mental health** – reduces feelings of anxiety
- **Sleep** – improves sleep quality

On the same poster was another graphic captioned: 'Active people, healthy nation – creating an active America, together'.

The UK's 'On Your Feet, Britain' project is an attempt to get Britain more active, in order to mitigate against the negative health outcomes of being inactive. Visit: <http://getbritainstanding.org/> for more tips.

The World Health Organisation's global analysis highlights what could be gained by being more active: 'Up to 5 million deaths a year could be averted if the global population were more active.'

Let's get moving!

¹Calendar of national health and well-being campaigns table – NHS employers

²<http://getbritainstanding.org/> ³<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health> ⁴<https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/pa-health/index.htm> ⁵<https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/physical-activity>

⁶<https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/physical-activity>

At a glance . . .

- **Prison ministries in Romania have been continuing**, despite COVID-19 restrictions, according to a report in the *Adventist Review*. Despite being prevented from visiting prisons in person for the first time since the fall of communism more than thirty years ago, prison ministries leaders have been keeping in touch by letter and donating 'protective masks, gloves, plastic spoons, soap, and sanitiser to the units in need', and Hope Channel television has been available 'to every cell in penitentiaries across Romania, so that inmates can watch non-stop spiritual, educational or family programmes'. Officials gave permission to launch correspondence programmes and online meetings with detainees, and the Romanian government and prison ministry volunteers have given the inmates computers and laptops. Inmates' families, many of them in poverty, are also being ministered to.
- **Many churches in Scotland have recently resumed worship services**, the first to take place in that part of the UK since being banned at the start of the lockdown, as regional lockdown restrictions are eased. Up to fifty congregants may gather for worship; singing and chanting are restricted; and those who attend are asked for their contact details, according to the BBC. According to one Scottish Christian leader, the Very Reverend Dr John Chalmers, during the lockdown worshippers have been offered a 'glimpse of a very different kind of church – one in which we have

discovered that we are not as reliant on buildings as we thought we were . . . in which we are able, online, to reach a constituency that has been missing from our pews for generations'. While grateful that we are emerging from this 'great difficulty', he says the church 'must build on the lessons we have learned' and 'not slip back into old ways'. Another Scottish Christian, the Right Reverend Mark Strange, says, 'Ultimately we're there for the same reason we have always been – to give worship and praise to God.'

- **ADRA Norway has experienced a record level of ingathering** during the pandemic, according to TED News – the equivalent of \$570,000. This surprising amount, given the inability to knock on doors in the usual way, was raised after ADRA Norway and Hope Channel Norway 'planned a two-hour TV programme to be streamed live' from a Norwegian Adventist church, encouraging members across the country to find alternative ways of raising money. Several Adventist schools organised very successful sponsored runs, and 'Ole Martin Hofseth, a teacher at the Adventist school in Lillehammer, promised to do a push-up for every krone he received in donation to ADRA.' He ended up doing 8,802 push-ups!

'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

Publishing the message

by Dr George Knight

'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will bear witness for me in Jerusalem, and throughout all Judea and Samaria, and even in the farthest corners of the earth' (Acts 1:8, REB).

Small beginnings were the way of the early Christian church. So would they be for Sabbatarian Adventism. One can hardly imagine a more humble start for what would become a worldwide publishing endeavour.

In response to his wife's publishing vision, the financially prostrate and homeless James White stepped out in faith to write and print the 'little paper'. Looking back at the experience, he later wrote: 'We sat down to prepare the matter for that little sheet, and wrote every word of it, our entire library comprising a three-shilling pocket Bible, *Cruden's Condensed Concordance*, and Walker's old dictionary, minus of its covers. Destitute of means, our hope of success was in God.'

Not having much choice, White sought out



a non-Adventist printer who produced the eight-page pamphlet for a total stranger and was willing to wait for his pay until contributions filtered back from the hoped-for readers. James White found such a printer

in Charles Pelton of Middletown, Connecticut.

The first 1,000 copies of *Present Truth* came off the press in July 1849. 'When he brought the first number from the printing office,' Ellen White recalled, 'we all bowed around it, asking the Lord, with humble hearts and many tears, to let His blessing rest upon the feeble efforts of His servant. He [James] then directed the paper to all he thought would read it, and carried it to the post office [eight miles distant] in a carpet bag. . . . Very soon letters came bringing means to publish the paper, and the good news of many souls embracing the truth' (1888 edition of *Life Sketches*, p. 260).

The content of *Present Truth* was what the Sabbatarians saw as God's special message for their time – the Sabbath, the three angels' messages, and related topics. The 'little paper' played an important part in the gathering time of the late 1840s.

God, from a human perspective, often works in strange ways. We are impressed with bigness and power in any endeavour; but the Lord values humility and dedication. Stepping out in humble faith isn't just something for James White. He can use you and me also, if we will give Him the little that we have in humble dedication.

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 purchase the devotional from the LifeSource website: <https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk>.



Letter to the editor

What of Islam?

Dear Editor

While reading the *MESSENGER* (26 February) I noticed an article touching upon the

issue of God's part in the plagues of Revelation 15 ('Your Bible questions', p. 20). It reminded me of Pastor G. D. Keough and his class notes, which Reg Burgess managed to wrest from him in order to provide for the class as a valuable study guide. My bedraggled copy has been closely studied by myself, as well as by two or three church scholars over the years since about 1959.

The question that has intrigued many of us is: 'What does the drying up of the River Euphrates mean?'

Pastor Keough's insights, from a vast knowledge of Middle East culture and languages, are worth noting. But, in a nutshell, he refers us to Revelation 17:15, which is a passage we have understood to mean that 'water represents people'. It was Pastor Keough's belief that this simply refers to Islam.

But how can we conceive of the notion that Islam's millions will become impotent and disappear from the earth? We don't know the answer, as we are not prophets; but we may make a guess. Pastor Keough is bold enough to suggest that when Satan appears as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) and impersonates Christ's second advent, Islam will be dried up and become absorbed into

the threefold amalgam of Islam, apostate Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. How could this happen?

Before answering that, I ask another question: before the visit of Pope Francis to Iran in recent months, could we ever have believed that a pope would stoop for 50 minutes to talk with a 90-year-old ayatollah (Ali al-Sistani)? This is the first time such an event has taken place.

We may apply the words of Jesus when it comes to understanding the purpose of His messages: *'that when it does come to pass, you may believe'* (John 13:19, NKJV).

If anyone wishes to raise another difficult question – especially the age-long one of God's interventions, or lack of them – let them turn to a text that gives a partial answer (Amos 3:6, KJV): *'Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?'*

God is held responsible for everything He allows to happen.

I realise that one vital question is likely to lead to other questions.

Best wishes,
Pastor Derek C. Clothier

Pastor Clothier, retired and living in the West Country, served in most of the British Union fields during his ministry. During the mid 1980s he served overseas as the President of the Pakistan Union. (Ed.)

**Helen Smith
Robinson (née
Grant) (1944-2020)
d. 30 January.**

Helen was born in Aberdeen, a busy commercial port. Pivotal in her life was a 1958/9 series of public lectures on 'The Bible Making Sense'.



Clear, satisfactory answers gripped her. Where was her gran? 'God's day off', 'Jesus' role in my life', and 'Prayer and Scripture' had sensible answers to life, along with 'The week and the Sabbath', 'Charitable giving', and 'Baptism and its personal significance'.

Helen and her friends, who were strangers before the meetings, covenanted in prayer together to 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'; also, to live one's life by the Ten Commandments. They prayed for one another. All their lives were lived in this vein.

Helen's introduction to baptism was five flat rejections of a reasonable request for sunset accommodation on Fridays. Her employer could easily have given her Sabbath adjustments, but chose not to. She never let the experience sour her. It was exactly the same for her friends. A Jewish tailor gave Helen some sewing machine work. Half an hour before sunset, he used to say, 'Helen, shouldn't you be going now?'

Helen was baptised in the Aberdeen church, May 1960. Sabbath, from sunset to sunset, was never up for sale. Neither were tithes and offerings. 'Lay aside,' the Scripture said – and she did.

Newbold College offered a range of courses which helped young people from all over the world to be equipped to fulfil their God-given roles. Helen went to Newbold and graduated from the Bible Work course, May 1964. She served in the Dunfermline and Edinburgh churches before marrying Brian Robinson from Belfast – a pastor serving in northern England, who had also gone to Newbold – in the Aberdeen church, 30 August 1965. Had neither gone to Newbold, they would never have met.

Mere statistics cannot tell the influence of a life lived under the shadow of the Almighty – one for whom prayer was talking to God as to a friend. Psalm 121 says that my help comes from the

Lord, who is always helping, never asleep.

Newbold diplomas were recognised qualifications. Helen had employment in the 1980s in the Job Centre. It was a period of horrific unemployment. Drawing on her rejection experiences, she encouraged the people to believe in themselves: 'Search the board; apply; do not take any old job: you will find one right for you.' When they got the job, the happiness on their faces was satisfaction enough. People never knew of her rejection.

When she left, the situation had turned itself around and levelled out at an employment rate of 97%, which was considered full. The number of jobs listed matched the seekers. Also, the employment law was now completely rewritten, making it mandatory to work out time requests. No reasonable requests were to be refused.

Helen did voluntary work for the blind, as an in-home reader. She was sent to blind persons' homes, who needed confidential letters read, and replies written. With her approval, this expanded into taking people to hospital for appointments.

The start of Sabbath evening at Friday sunset saw family and friends around the table, swapping stories, and a bowl of soup and fresh rolls. Everybody was welcome. Christ was very much a Guest at the table – very much the on-hand Helper and Guide in time of need.

One cannot but mention ADRA: the love of her life. Her tin was on the window sill for all to drop a coin in. The Ingathering tin opened doors of goodwill. Blessings were 'pressed down and overflowing'.

In Albania there was a dreadful insurrection which took place. Sean was caught in the middle of it, with live bullets flying. The whole church prayed. We held our breath in prayer. Then we got the message: 'He is out.' My God had sent His angels to shut the bullets down. Helen and I had been to visit, so we knew the country. Later, in her nursing capacity, Karen went to advise on a clinic. Kirsteen and her family lived in Greece, on the other side of the border, and offered willing sanctuary.

Tributes to Helen's influence poured in.

Helen was a special person with a kind and heart-warming smile. An inspiration to all who

were privileged to know her – ever ready to listen to others, to offer words of encouragement, comfort, understanding – and she always reminded us about our lovingly heavenly Father, who gives strength every day, as we have need.

She was a beloved friend and confidante. I always think of her with love, and am thankful that I knew her.

She was one of the kindest, most thoughtful and caring people, who graced us with concern and compassion. Even in the midst of illness and personal difficulties, she continued to reach out to all with love and a strong faith.

A lovely, genuine individual of integrity, conviction and resolution, what she once put her hand to was purposefully accomplished. I mourn her with my deepest sympathy. I am sure it will not be long before the trumpet will call.

At Newbold, I never forget a morning thought for the day. Helen peeled an orange; separated it into segments; sat down. She waited until the fragrance of the orange permeated the room. Then Helen said, 'May my life today be as fragrant as the orange.' A fragrant orange: if I can help somebody as I pass along, then my living will not be in vain.

The miracle was, whatever type of cancer Helen had, she should have been riddled with pain. God rebuked the devourer, pain – so the usual concoction of painkillers was unnecessary.

Helen read her Bible as a personal letter from Jesus. First Thessalonians 4, which gave satisfactorily comforting answers about her gran, was shared. The Lord Himself, with the angels, will descend, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Helen had a mobile phone with her: 'Helen Mob' was its call sign. It allowed her instant access to her family and friends. She shared Bible texts. Never a day went by without an encouraging query. Everybody was blessed by the prayers. She was at home, in full control of her mind, and able freely to communicate unto the end.

'Now the next person I expect to see is Jesus, and after Him, you,' she shared, privately – with each of these words intending that we sorrow not, but be hopeful.

Jesus was no stranger. As Jesus said, 'I will walk with you

through the valley of the shadow of death. You will fear no evil.' When she fell asleep in Jesus, there was a peace which passes all understanding, which radiated from her being: at rest; at peace; an orange – awaiting the call of the trumpet.

Helen is survived by her husband, Brian, and her children: Sean, pastoring in the USA; Kirsteen, a Marie Curie specialist cancer care nurse; and Karen, a cardiac care specialist nurse – also by grandchildren, Eleanna and Alexandros (of Kirsteen) and the late Vaggelis Dambalakis; Declan and Aislin (of Sean and Catherine Robinson); and Cameron (of Karen and Stephen Mackie) – also family, nephews and nieces in Aberdeen.

B. K. R.

The Robinson family would like to thank the MESSENGER family for their prayerful support during Helen's illness. The promises of the Lord are: 'Yea and amen.' May He be your Guide while life shall last.

**Wendy Maxine
Sterling-Mannings
(1965-2021)
d. 9 January.**

It was with great sadness and a sense of loss that family and friends from the Portsmouth church, Watford and Aylesbury areas met to say goodbye to a dearly beloved sister and friend, Wendy Sterling-Mannings, at the Wickham Road Cemetery, Fareham on 9 February 2021. Officiating at the service was Pastor Tihomir Zestic.

Wendy was born on Monday 11 January 1965, at the Royal Bucks Hospital, Aylesbury, to Daphne and Gifford Sterling. Her personality and energy were like a fragrant flower from a beautiful garden. Growing up as the fifth child of seven and the first born of three in England, Wendy's relationship to all her siblings played an important role in their lives.

In 1987, following the completion of her studies, Wendy began her teaching career in Humanities at Thorpe Bay High School, Southend-on-Sea. Not long after accepting the position, she felt a calling and answered God's call to go to Chuuk in Micronesia, to serve as a missionary. Wendy taught



as an elementary school teacher between 1988 and 1992, and was soon promoted to be the principal of the mission school, training teachers and teaching English as a second language. Upon her return to England, Wendy secured a job as head of year at King Richard College, and continued to succeed professionally, as she later joined the team at Bridgemary Community Sports College, Hampshire as the coordinator for PHSE and citizenship in 2002.

Wendy enjoyed playing the oboe and the piano, and singing. She sang in a group called the 'Aylesraelites' with her siblings and family friends, and she regularly used poetry and music to develop ideas for the various church and youth programmes.

Wendy's love for music and poetry was not only a part of her personal life – it was something which often found its way into her classroom! She was known for being a charismatic educator with a passion for ensuring that every child who entered her classroom felt empowered and capable of success. She used humour, words and songs as tools by which to make learning accessible for all, investing hours of her personal time to ensure that her lessons were both fun and informative! Her zeal as an educator is one of her greatest legacies, and remains a blessing to the hundreds of children who passed through her classroom.

In August 1998 Wendy married Michael Mannings, and in 2005 she welcomed the birth of a son: Jaidan Paul.

Wendy enjoyed spending time with loved ones – family held a special place in her heart. Wendy had a wonderful spirit of kindness; she would never forget the birthdays of all her nieces and nephews. Friends and neighbours would often find themselves receiving little gifts and notes from Wendy, spreading joy and light to all those around her.

In 2011 Wendy was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Despite the challenges of this life-changing disease, never did she complain or lose sight of who she was in Christ Jesus. Wendy continued to work at Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College, Waterlooville until 2012, encouraging young people, amid their challenges, to reach their fullest potential. Few knew of the pain she lived with, so

each day was a blessing.

Sadly, in 2015, a diagnosis of breast cancer put Wendy to the test, but it could not shake her faith in God's goodness. She wrote poems to share her testimony and encourage others; birthdays, baptisms and anniversaries were all opportunities to bless others. Wendy's words of encouragement were part of her prayer life: this brought comfort to many troubled hearts.

Sadly, on Sabbath (Saturday) 9 January 2021, this cruel disease robbed Wendy of her beautiful life, and of her lifelong inspiration and testimony.

Wendy lived her life 'all for God's glory'. Our courageous sister, mother, aunt and friend achieved her life's desire with such beauty and grace, filling our lives with light and laughter. Her heart for others reflected her fervent love for God; she knew who her Father was, and He also knew her.

Sleep on, Wendy, until Jesus calls you home.

Wendy leaves behind her son, Jaidan; six siblings; thirteen nieces and nephews; and six grand-nieces and grand-nephews.

'And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them' (Revelation 14:13, KJV).

KERHYS T. STERLING

Allan Westby Kissack (1944-2021) d. 25 January.

Allan Westby Kissack was born on 7 November 1944 in Douglas, on the Isle of Man, and passed to his rest on 25 January 2021 in Budleigh Salterton, Devon. His funeral was conducted with dignity by Pastor Richard Willis at the East Devon Crematorium on 11 February 2021. Allan always planned his life in meticulous detail, and his funeral was no exception. He had prepared the whole programme of Bible readings, hymns and music. Allan had been a choir boy as a child, and loved hymn singing. He was interested in the stories behind the hymns, and was often asked to relate these in church services. He was sad that people would not be



able to sing at his funeral due to the restrictions, but the organist, Cor van der Wijngaard, sympathetically played each chosen hymn or song. Allan was proud of his Manx identity, and his coffin was poignantly draped with the Manx flag.

Allan attended Manchester University and gained a BSc in mathematics. After university he worked as a computer programmer at the guided weapons division of the British Aircraft Corporation at Stevenage. He met his first wife there, and they eventually moved to Redditch when Allan went to work at Cadbury's, where he was a systems analyst and then a systems manager. While living there, they had two children, Sarah and Danny. Allan qualified as an accountant and he later worked for Metal Box in various capacities, necessitating moving house. Sadly, his wife was killed in a car crash in 1997, which was a huge sadness to the family.

In 1997, Allan was asked to work temporarily as Financial Controller for Carnaud Metal Box in Tanzania. In Dar es Salaam he met Esther Mtango, who introduced him to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Allan had been brought up an Anglican, but had strayed away. He was happy to come back to the Christian fold, and was baptised into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They were married in Tanzania in 1998 before returning to England. Tony, Esther's son, was adopted into the Kissack family. At the end of 1999, Allan retired and they moved to Glossop, then Lyme Regis, and finally Exmouth. Allan and Esther attended Exeter Church and were involved with church life. Allan particularly enjoyed vibrant discussion in Sabbath School. He used to love being on foyer duty to welcome people, and helping with health-check outreach. His love of the rich language of the King James Version of the Bible was also well known. Esther and Allan suggested starting a fortnightly midweek Bible study in members' homes, and Allan organised the rota. The meetings still continue on Zoom.

Allan felt that his life had been blessed in many ways, and he enjoyed a range of interests, including football! He became a referee as a young man. Allan was interested in reading, history, and travelling to different countries. He

was proud of his children and their achievements, and was delighted to be a grandfather to Ailish, Sarah's daughter.

Allan chose 'Face to Face with Christ, my Saviour' as one of the hymns for his funeral. He knew that his illness was terminal, and the promise of seeing Jesus face-to-face was reassuring to him. Esther read Scripture, prayed and sang hymns with him in his final days to support him, as they put their trust in the saving grace of Jesus. Our thoughts and prayers are now with her and all the family.

STELLA JEFFERY

Messenger

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Sunset

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	London	Card	Notf	Edin	Belf
Apr 23	8.11	8.23	8.19	8.36	8.43
30	8.23	8.35	8.31	8.50	8.56
May 7	8.34	8.46	8.43	9.04	9.09
14	8.45	8.57	8.55	9.18	9.22

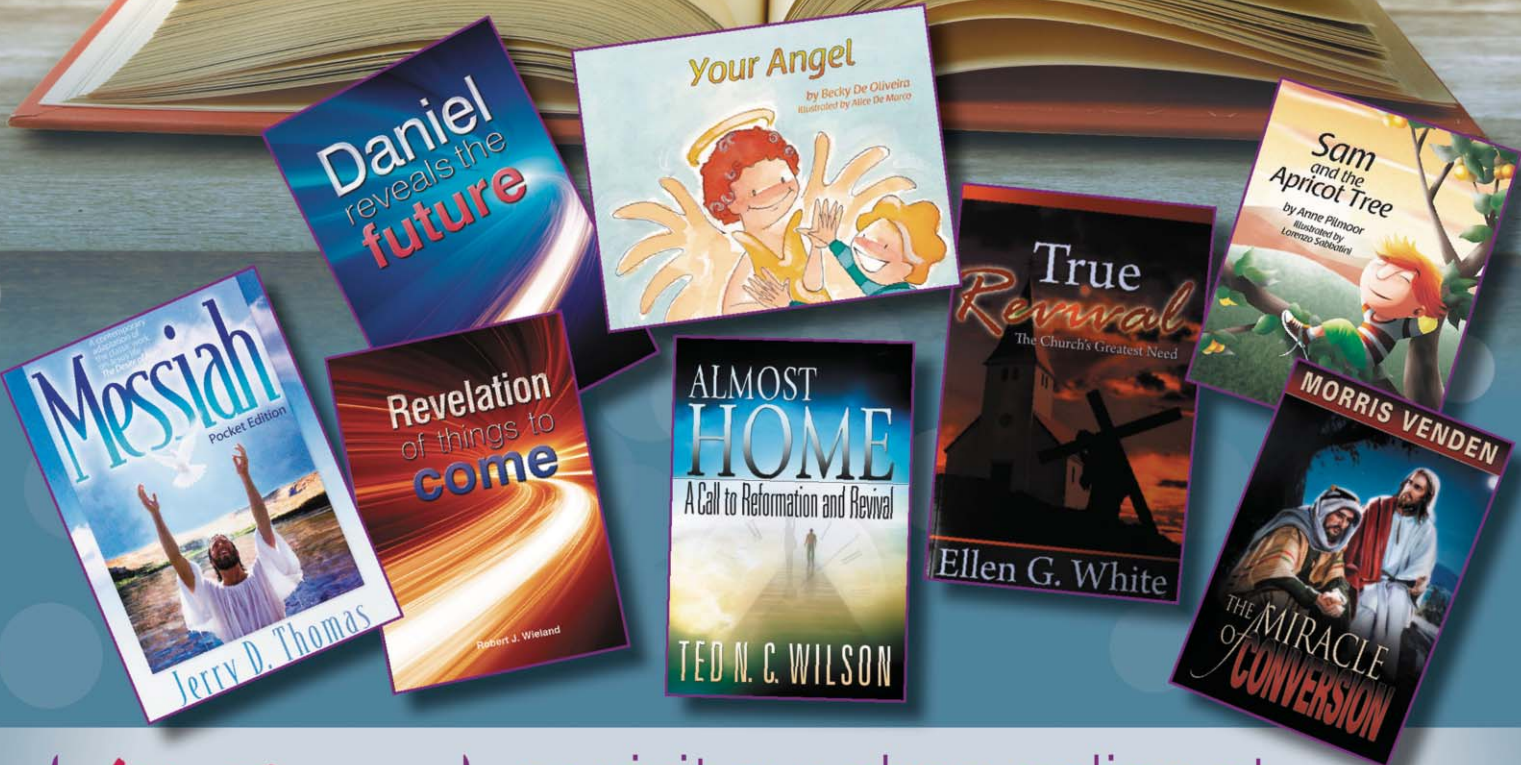


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