



## Historic event – 18 baptised during global pandemic

### Praise be to God!

Praises, honour and glory were given to our God and to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on Sabbath 20 November 2021 as 18 people were baptised at Cardiff Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A number of the baptismal candidates had waited for almost two years to be baptised due to the impact of the pandemic. However, in that time the Horler family, Kervyn and Lorenz from the Labalan family, and Moyochena Mazura joined these candidates in this step to publicly give their lives to the Lord.

Pastor David Rancic reported in the Cardiff Church newsletter:

'This special baptismal service would not have been possible had our church not been active throughout the pandemic. I praise God for showing us that, even during the pandemic and lockdowns, our church was active, and we were able to preach the Gospel and lead people to baptism. He has also shown us that people need God and a clear understanding of the Bible, and that should be a reason for us to be more active in sharing the Good News.'

Pastor Graham Allcock was welcomed to this special baptismal service as the newly elected Welsh Mission president, and presented the sermon, entitled 'Reflecting His image'.

The previous Welsh Mission president's wife, Camelia Bran, and Cardiff Church's assistant youth leader, Sara Talavera, led the praise service.

During the service, special items were given by the Labalan family, the Romanian group, Camelia Bran and Yongen Dai.

When introducing the baptismal candidates, Pastor David Rancic said that he had been privileged to study the Bible with them and help lead them to Christ, together with the help of the former Welsh Mission president, Pastor Emanuel Bran, and our church elders, Pastor Jacob Monickam, Jonathan Mazura and Marcel Sala.

Before they entered the baptismal pool, all of the candidates stood together before the congregation, wearing their T-shirts bearing the words, 'I belong to Jesus', and each candidate in turn gave their testimony of how they made their decision for Christ.

A prayer of thankfulness, dedication and blessing was given by Pastor Bran, who prayed, 'Our Father and our God, we rejoice because we know there is a great and wonderful noise in Heaven. The Bible tells us that when only one sinner returns, all Heaven rejoices and they burst into shouts of adoration and proclamation through the

*Continued on p. 6*



Pastor Monickam Jacob baptises Kennjosh



Pastor David Rancic baptises Mike Horler



Pastor Emanuel Bran baptises Mark Horler



Pastor David Rancic baptises Gabriella Carpaci



Pastor Emanuel Bran prays for the candidates, all wearing their special T-shirts



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# We are stronger together

by Pastor Eglan Brooks, President of the British Union Conference

**'I am also praying for everyone else who will have faith because of what my followers will say about me. I want all of them to be one with each other, just as I am one with you and you are one with me. I also want them to be one with us. Then the people of this world will believe that you sent me.'**<sup>1</sup>

An old man who was at the point of death summoned his three sons together to give them some parting advice. He ordered his servant to bring him a large bundle of sticks.

'Break it,' he said to his eldest son. The son struggled for a long while. But, for all his efforts, he was unable to break the bundle.

He charged the other two sons, 'Break it.' But they too were unsuccessful.

Then the father said, 'Untie the bundle! Each of you take a stick. Now break it.' The young men had no trouble breaking the lone sticks. 'My children,' he said, 'you are stronger together than on your own.'

## The Great Commission expanded

At the end of Jesus' ministry, He delivered two key instructional speeches around the Great Commission. The account of the first one states, 'Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them . . . and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."<sup>2</sup>

The other one revolves around unity. Here Jesus says, 'I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one – as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.'<sup>3</sup>

Often, we see the Gospel mission in simplistic terms. We are to evangelise the world, baptise, make disciples, and teach. And we have no problem with that part of the commission. Yes, it may require courage and tenacity, but there is a plethora of resources and training events to assist us to be effective evangelists.

But 'being one' is a much harder ask. You need to disagree without being disagreeable.

Tolerance is required in the face of numerous irritations. Adopting the spirit of a peacemaker in conflict zones is a requirement. And learning to transform spaces riddled with blame, cruelty, and abuse into places of healing, hope and honour through the medium of forgiveness is mandatory.

It's also much easier to be a witness to the 'world' than it is to be loving and kind to those who are in our church congregations.

But, like that dying father, I strongly believe that we are 'stronger together' as we move forwards to spread the love of the Father to a dying world.

## The role of the BUC

And this is where the British Union Conference (BUC) comes into its own. Our role is to provide operational links between the Trans-European Division and the BUC territory, and to support the two conferences and three missions in our field. The BUC is here to help our institutions embrace a passion for the soon coming of Jesus Christ, while at the same time ensuring that our working practices reflect a message of unity, in both the corporate church as well as local congregations. This is best seen in the values that we have held over the past decade:

- Reflecting Christ,
- Valuing people,
- Inspiring hope, and
- Changing lives.

## Appreciation

Here at the BUC, we highly value the contribution of all our workers. Our pastors are on the 'front line' daily, battling very challenging congregational matters. Not only do they preach and teach, but they also provide spiritual nurture for a growing number of members and non-members alike. In addition, many must oversee million-pound

building projects, navigate responsibility for at least two congregations, and support community outreach, all while manoeuvring through the ever-changing digital landscape in a 'post-lockdown world'.

The teachers in our schools go way above the call of duty and provide good outcomes for hundreds of pupils across the country. Workers in our institutions such as ADRA, the Adventist Discovery Centre (ADC) and the Stanborough Press ensure that the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the UK continues to be outward-facing.

The staff in the BUC office – officers, directors and support workers – play a significant role in supporting and nurturing the work across this field.

We also value the high quality of volunteering that our lay leaders provide to our congregations. The many hours spent balancing the books, preparing Sabbath School lessons, cleaning dirty sanctuaries, working with our

children and young people, and cooking at underfunded food kitchens cannot be quantified.

## Conclusion

Where there are people, there are often challenges . . . and sometimes the ties that bind us together as Seventh-day Adventists are fraying and fragile. Maybe it's time for us to put aside the issues that sidetrack us from our mission, separate us from each other and squander the unity that enables us to effectively witness to a world in crisis.

Ellen G. White, speaking about John 17 and Jesus' rationale for unity, states, 'In these first disciples was presented marked diversity. They were to be the world's teachers, and they represented widely varied types of character. In order successfully to carry forward the work to which they had been called, these men, differing in natural characteristics and in habits of life, needed to come into unity of feeling, thought, and action. This unity it was Christ's object to secure. To this end He sought to bring them into unity with Himself.'<sup>4</sup>

Friends, I believe that Jesus Christ is coming soon: and, when He comes, I trust He will find us like that bundle of sticks – strong and unbreakable, a testimony to His love living in our hearts.

<sup>1</sup>John 17:20, 21 (CEV)

<sup>2</sup>Matthew 28:18, 19 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup>John 17:21 (NLT)

<sup>4</sup>The Acts of the Apostles, p. 20

## Change of editors

On behalf of the BUC, I'd like to thank Pastor David Neal for his role as Editor of the Stanborough Press. David started his new job as TED Communication and Media Director on 1 January 2022. We thank him for his passion and commitment to the Stanborough Press over the past three years. His writing during the pandemic enabled the church to be kept abreast with both news and supportive, Spirit-filled articles.

The BUC Executive voted on 9 December 2021 to ask Pastor Julian Thompson to take over as the Editor of the Stanborough Press. On 1 June, Pastor Thompson, who currently lectures at Newbold College, will join the Stanborough Press as its full-time editor. Julian brings a wealth of deep theological knowledge to the post, along with an enthusiasm to use media to effectively deliver the Gospel message.

Julian will provide editorial support until he formally joins in June. However, editorial queries should be referred to the General Manager, Elisabeth Sangüesa, until that time.

EGLAN BROOKS





**Julian Thompson,**

*Editor*

# All change!

Dear Reader,

Allow me to introduce myself: my name is Julian Thompson, and on 9 December 2021 I had the honour of being invited by the British Union Conference (BUC) Executive Committee to be the next editor of the *MESSENGER*.<sup>1</sup> I have served the church in several formal capacities: as a pastor in the South England Conference; as the Religion Editor for Adventist Radio London; and, most recently, as a lecturer in Hebrew Bible at Newbold College. While the demands of higher education mean that I need to remain in my current role until the end of the academic year, you can rest assured that the *MESSENGER* remains in the very capable hands of Elisabeth Sangüesa and the Stanborough Press team.

As you know, our previous editor, Pastor David Neal, now serves as the Communication and Media Director for the Trans-European Division. I cannot let this edition pass without recognising him for all that he brought to the role, and for the steady hand with which he guided the *MESSENGER* through one of the most challenging periods in our Union's history – COVID-19. While David is, of course, a man of many talents, I especially appreciated the wit, pastoral care, and strong sense of mission that shone through his publications. Pastor Neal, thank you for your service; we wish you all the best in the role to which you have now been called.

This issue of *MESSENGER* comes to you at a time of significant change. COVID-19 restrictions are easing; the world is starting to open back up; and we are beginning to learn what it means for a pandemic to become endemic. We find ourselves stepping out into a very different society, a society fraught with a complex web of interconnected post-coronavirus challenges. Instances of low-level mental health issues are increasing, and inflation and energy prices are rising – indeed, as one commentator noted, in our

supermarkets, food prices are going up even as the number of affordable 'value' range items is going down.<sup>2</sup> We as a church are not immune to these challenges, and neither are the communities that we serve.

While conversations continue apace as to what the 'new normal' will look like in our churches, given the prevailing conditions, I'm sure we all can agree that it cannot be 'business as usual'. The Gospel in its fullness is needed now more than ever; and, as I reflect on these matters, I cannot help but be reminded of Jesus' words to His disciples in Matthew 25 when they asked Him to speak of the signs of His coming and of the end of the age:

'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me

food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:31-46, NRSV).

I am pleased to present to you the February edition of the *MESSENGER*. I pray that within its pages you will find both challenge and hope, and will come to know a little bit more about what God is doing in the British Union.

<sup>1</sup>An Interview with the new editor is planned for later this year.

<sup>2</sup>Jack Monroe, 'We're pricing the poor out of food in the UK – that's why I'm launching my own price index', <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/jan/22/were-pricing-the-poor-out-of-food-in-the-uk-thats-why-im-launching>



**In our supermarkets, food prices are going up even as the number of affordable 'value' range items is going down. We as a church are not immune to these challenges, and neither are the communities that we serve.**



# End Time People

**‘ . . . He says nothing about the signs of the times or the fulfilment of prophecy. These are not on his agenda, and we will shortly see why.’**

**In our second excerpt from *End Time People*, Dr Bryan Ball examines the biblical idea of the end time, ‘The Christ Event’.**

Some have questioned how the writers of the New Testament can so consistently refer to their days as the last days when now, two millennia later, Christians still read the same things and apply them to the twenty-first century. It is a good question, and there is a good answer. It is directly related to the salvation Peter says is ready to be revealed in the last days, and to how we understand the word ‘salvation’ and the term ‘last days’. Does salvation mean only what happened at Calvary; a synonym, perhaps, for redemption?

In his book, *The Jesus Hope*, Stephen Travis places Jesus at the very heart of historic Christian belief and future hope, and explains that salvation includes everything Jesus was, did and will do: not only what took place on the cross, vital though that unquestionably is. He further explains that the last days are the entire time between the resurrection of Jesus and His second coming. This whole period is called in the Bible ‘the last days’. Travis says, ‘They are not the final few years before the return of Jesus, but the whole period from Jesus’ resurrection to His final coming, however long that may be.’ That is why Peter can say salvation is ready to be revealed ‘at the end of time’ (1 Peter 1:5, NEB and GNB),

or ‘on the last day’ (NLT).

This long period between the two comings of Christ has been called ‘The Christ Event’, meaning not merely His birth, death, resurrection, or priestly ministry in Heaven, but everything He was and said and did. ‘The Christ Event’ will not be over until He comes again, and the victory over sin and death and evil is finally won. Speaking of the great conflict between good and evil now being played out on Earth, Travis adds that although through His life and death ‘Christ won the victory in principle at His first coming, the victory will not be complete until His return’. Writing extensively about the kingdom of God, John Bright says, ‘The promised victory, although it could not be doubted, was clearly not complete,’ adding: ‘That victory was not doubted, but eagerly and imminently expected. The early church felt that it was living in the last days and that time was short.’ The Dutch theologian Berkouwer comments on the time between the two comings of Christ, describing it as the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’.

A more scholarly work, *The Parousia in The New Testament*, by A. L. Moore, examines at great length the end-time expectation prevalent throughout the New Testament, *parousia* being the Greek word for ‘coming’. Moore says it means ‘that the End is

near . . . it might come at any moment’, commenting on ‘the readiness of the End to break in to the present order’. On Hebrews 1:2 and 10 he speaks of ‘the approaching Day’, referring to the ‘hope that this may occur soon’ and that ‘it is not far distant’. Moore concludes his enlightening study of the New Testament evidence on a note very similar to the views of Stephen Travis and John Bright. In view of all this it is impossible to doubt that much of the New Testament, including the epistles of Peter, was written to the early church under the conviction that the End Time had come. They were living in the last days, waiting for their salvation to be finally and fully revealed. Some of this may be new to some readers, but it may help to remember that it explains why we are still here.

With this background, we may now return to Peter. As noted, everything he writes in his first epistle is written in the unshakeable conviction that he and those who would read that letter and hear it read were living at the end of time. Yet, remarkably, he says nothing about the signs of the times or the fulfilment of prophecy. These are not on his agenda, and we will shortly see why. Only when he comes to the last chapter of the second epistle does Peter describe the last days, and then

he writes forcefully about the ‘scoffers’ who will come and the false doctrines they will proclaim. He then presses home his main point, asking what might today be called the ‘million-dollar question’ – the big one, the all-important question that cannot be avoided by any who claim to live in the last days, at the very end of time.

The context of this question must not be overlooked. It is the appearance of the scoffers Peter describes in the previous verses. He says they ‘deliberately forget’ the truths of God’s word, turning a blind eye to the evidence and saying, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation’ (2 Peter 3:3, 4, NIV). Such scoffers still exist today. I met one of them at an interdenominational conference in the 1970s. Delegates to the conference had all been assigned to discussion groups to bring recommendations to the main assembly on how the Church could respond to the rising tide of secularism. At what I felt was an appropriate point I brought up the question of Christ’s Second Coming. It went down like a lead balloon. I can still remember the incredulity in the chairman’s voice as he said, ‘You don’t really believe that, do you?’ I replied that there were many thinking Christians who believed it, and that their point of view should not be simply dismissed as irrelevant. Clearly, he was not impressed. He was a ‘modernist’, an ‘enlightened’ member of Christ’s contemporary church who had left behind what they considered to be an outdated theology, replacing it with a more recent and ‘credible’ way of interpreting the Bible. Reading the opening verses of 2 Peter 3 in the context of the preceding chapters, it is clear that Peter knew that similar views already existed in the Church in his day, pointing out that they were



deceptive and dangerous.

In the light of that sobering reality and the possibility that some were already wavering in their belief, forgetful of the things they had learned when they first believed, Peter stresses the validity of the apostolic faith and the certainty of Christ's return. He then asks the 'million-dollar question' – the one that should be uppermost in the thinking of all End Time people. With an unmistakable reference to Jesus' own words about the last days, Peter says:

'The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a


great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, *what manner of persons ought you to be* in holy conduct and godliness?' (2 Peter 3:10, 11, emphasis supplied.)

***In our third and final excerpt the author explains why Peter asked that question in the way he did. But if you can't wait until then, copies are available for purchase from the Stanborough Press for £6.50, plus £2.05 postage and packing.***

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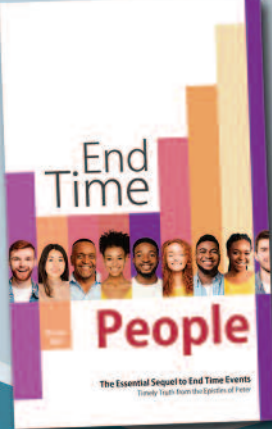
## End Time People

What do End Time people look like? What do they believe? In whom do they trust? And what is the source of their hope?

Dr Bryan Ball, evangelist, author and minister of the Gospel with many decades of experience, answers all these questions and more by taking us on a journey through the letters of the apostle Peter, a church leader dedicated to caring for his flock.

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### Prayer pointers . . .

- Let's pray for our Adventist educational institutions, many of which are in need of greater enrolment.
- Pray for the spiritual health of those affected economically, physically and mentally by the pandemic and resultant lockdowns, that the members of our church may see God's mercy and leading in their circumstances and continue to trust Him for the future. May we be active and zealous in meeting people's basic needs, including both physical needs and the need for companionship and consolation, and may He fill us with His loving heart of compassion for our fellow men and women.
- Pray for the newly elected leaders in the British Union Conference as well as the conferences and missions, that God will fill them mightily with His Holy Spirit and with vision and boldness, as well as overflowing love and a sense of mission and purpose.
- Pray also for those affected by extreme weather events across the globe, and for divine guidance in mitigating our contribution to climate change.
- Finally, let's pray for God to guide us and fill us with His love for the lost, compelling us to go and preach the Gospel to this country and to the world, so that Jesus may return and make all things new.

# HISTORIC EVENT

Continued from p. 1

power of the Holy Spirit, who has worked wonders in our hearts. . . . Today they want to profess, as it is written on their T-shirts, that they belong to Jesus . . . that they love You more than anything else, and that through them You will be able to reach even more souls who are precious to You – people You have died for.'

The baptismal candidates were **Moyochena Mazura; Kervyn, Lorenz, Leanne and Kennjosh Labalan; Novlyn, Mark and Mike Horler; Gheorghe and Georgiana Carpaci; Ionut and Samariteanca Carpaci; Georgian and Gabriela Carpaci; Ioan and Dominica Monica Sala; and Marcel and Daciana Sala.**

- Elder Jonathan Mazura baptised his daughter, Moyochena Mazura.
- Pastor Monickam Jacob baptised Kervyn, Lorenz, Leanne and Kennjosh Labalan.
- Pastor Emanuel Bran baptised Georgiana and Gheorghe Carpaci and Mark Horler.
- Pastor David Rancic baptised Ioan and Monica Sala, Novlyn and Mike Horler, Ionut and Samariteanca Carpaci, Georgian and Gabriella Carpaci and Daciana and Marcel Sala.
- Special songs were sung and played, and favourite Bible verses were read for each candidate during their baptism.

When all the candidates had been baptised and rejoined the congregation, they were welcomed to the body of Christ and voted in as members of Cardiff Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Pastor David addressed the candidates: 'I pray that you have a beautiful and fruitful life in Christ and as Seventh-day Adventist Church members. May Jesus always be with you and bless you. May God be your Father, your God, the One who is going to sustain you and protect you, and may the Holy Spirit be in your heart from this day onwards until Jesus comes down to take you to be with Him.'

Baptismal certificates were presented and gifts were given by the children.

Pastor David said that this was an historic occasion, not only for Cardiff Church, but also for the Welsh Mission. He said it is not the numbers which make this moment historic; rather, it is the great testimony these people have given: that God still hasn't said the last word in Wales, that the Bible still changes lives, and that God and Jesus Christ as our Saviour still change lives. We will share the news about Jesus' coming with even more passion, because we have seen that there are still more people who are searching for Jesus.

Pastor David Rancic in the Cardiff Church newsletter wrote:

'I hope that we as a church will always have it on our minds in order to inspire us to thrive, to be more loving and welcoming, more sacrificing and committed to our Great Commission, and forever surrendered to God.

'Finally, I praise God for showing us that the influence we have upon our children, whether as parents, members or leaders of the church, is

a lasting one. Even if we have doubts, or even leave the church or God, the seed planted in our hearts in the past will one day grow and flourish. So let us work harder and be more committed; let us keep praying fervently for those who are missing in our midst, and go out of our way to show them that they are missed and loved; and let us lift up Jesus before the world for all to see Him and accept Him as their Saviour.'

To view the service, visit:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTxNNvec7zg&feature=youtu.be>

LEONIE HARAN



Pastor David Rancic baptises Ionut and Samariteanca Carpaci



Pastor David Rancic baptises Marcel and Daciana Sala



Pastor Emanuel Bran baptises Gheorghe and Georgiana Carpaci



Pastor David Rancic baptises Gabriella and Georgian Carpaci

# Baptismal candidates' testimonies

Everyone who was baptised at Cardiff had something to say at their baptism. **Monica, Ioan, Marcel and Daciana Sala and Geogiana, Gabriella, Samariteana, Ionut, Georgian and Gheorghe Carpaci** all expressed their love and appreciation for God and their desire to follow Jesus and live with Him in heaven. **Gabriella** in particular realised God's love for her when she had a child after her miscarriage two years ago, and **Marcel** stated, 'I did grow up in this church, but I want to tell everyone that the life without Jesus, without God, is not truly life, and it's not reasonable – I've been far away from God, many times, but I saw that life without God is nothing, so I decided to come back and to keep God's rules. This is the only church that keeps God's commandments. That's why I came here today: to be baptised again, to follow God all my life.'

Each of the Horler family felt they 'had a calling to want to know more about our Lord and Saviour' and 'wanted to build a truthful relationship with God our Creator at different times during the pandemic'. For them, being baptised 'was a truly emotional and joyous occasion'.

**Novlyn Horler** stated: 'I believe in our Creator. I believe our Creator had a Son who walked the earth, who was also God, and He died and He rose and He went back to Him. I want to spend my life worshipping Him because of all of the things He has done for me and my family and how wonderful He is. . . . Just be what He wants us to be, because honestly it's such a wonderful feeling – you feel good. He makes you feel good about yourself because you are doing His will.'

**Mike Horler** agreed: 'The Lord has done so much for me in my life as well. Last year I barely knew Him, and we've come such a long way in our family. And He's just been so good to me. He's helped me out in so many different situations in my life. He's provided for me, even though I feel so unworthy. He's never let me down; He's always been there for me, every step of the way, and even now I feel so unworthy. I'm not worthy to enter into His presence, but He accepts me how I am, and I want to sacrifice myself for Him because He's my God and Saviour. I love Him and I want to give myself to Him, and I pray that all of us can focus on Him for the rest of our lives. Amen.'

**Mark Horler** said, 'I found the Lord recently in my life. I've always been aware of the Lord, but strayed away and came back to the Lord again recently with the help of many good pastors and friends. With this baptism I wish to be cleansed of sin and offer myself to the Lord, to do

all that is righteous in His eyes. I know that when He does return He will take our hands and lead us back to Paradise.'

For his part, **Moyochena Mazura** had 'always been around people who were Christians', including his parents, and wanted 'to have the same extra connection that they had with Jesus'.

Each member of the Labalan family also had a testimony. **Kennjosh** 'was born and raised as a Seventh-day Adventist, knowing God and the teachings of the Church and everything. But there was a stage where I did wander. I didn't feel a connection with God. . . . But I thank God now that He's so merciful and graceful that He's given me this chance to redeem myself and be here today and be baptised.' Speaking about that time later, he said, 'Before doing Bible/baptismal studies, I had a bit of a rebellious phase. I wandered away from God (or at least tried to). I didn't keep my relationship with God, instead distracting myself with other things (including friends, school, reading, games, TV, YouTube, Netflix, and so on). Even after I started (and finished) Bible/baptismal studies, I still took a long time to think through this decision: I wanted to be baptised, but I still procrastinated, and the COVID-19 lockdown extended my procrastination time. Eventually, I heard a phrase from a speaker that struck me and nudged me to stop procrastinating: 'Don't waste your grace away!' It was an intriguing phrase. It was a simple fact, one that I grew up knowing: it is through God's grace that I have a chance of salvation. Yet I took this fact for granted and wanted to waste it. So, in summary, I want to get baptised because I felt regret. I felt unworthy. But I wanted salvation, so I wanted to finally take this step in my relationship with God, officially take Christ as my Saviour, and formally become a part of God's family.'

Kenjosh's sister, **Leanne**, 'had a similar experience . . . but not as bad. I've been a Seventh-day Adventist all my life, and I think I just want to dedicate my whole life to God,' a wish that **Kervyn Labalan** also expressed. **Lorenz Labalan**, meanwhile, brother to Kennjosh and Leanne, said, 'I want to be officially a part of the church of God; I didn't go through a phase of doubt like my older brother and my sister, and I hope I never do.'



Mark Horler's testimony with his family alongside



Candidates with their baptismal certificates and gifts



# Have we given up on evangelism?

## Part 1

by Dr Kirk M. Thomas, Evangelism, Missions, Publishing, Personal Ministries & Sabbath School Director of the British Union Conference

The above question is provocative to some; a reality check for others. Which category are you in? You say the word 'evangelism' and some Seventh-day Adventist Christians and leaders show visible signs of nervousness. Why? Maybe they do not understand the dynamism of the word, or they associate it with negative vibes. Further, they could be reflecting the outcome of some discussion they were part of, or may have heard, which did not positively reflect the concept. So what is evangelism? And is there something about it that must be 'feared'?

Experience has taught me that evangelism can be defined as any witnessing activity where the love of Jesus is demonstrated. Through a conversation, whether written or oral, a person or persons are then given an opportunity to make a conscious decision to accept His love, grace, forgiveness and salvation. As simplistic as this may sound, many Christians freeze at the thought of sharing their faith with others, and herein lies the fear of evangelism.

Then there are those who, over the years, have done their best to make evangelism all about numbers due to their fear of failure. Yet this is how the church grows!

Some are so scared that they do not even want to mention the word 'evangelism' for fear

of some sort of contamination . . . so they find alternative phrases or terms of reference. And, while we fiddle with this necessary work that God has given us, congregations are dying. Many have seen no growth for years because they are simply afraid to publicly preach the Gospel of Jesus. You can sit and drink tea with your friends, neighbours and community for years, and that's all that will happen. There must come a time when you ask the question: what will you do with Jesus? Will you accept Him as your Lord and Saviour? Recently, I asked a neighbour that question. We had known each other for some time due to football, and spoke often. When I asked him the question, his reply reiterated to me that God still works on the hearts of people. He said that for the longest while he had had this desire to know about God but was afraid to ask me. I learnt a valuable lesson that day: while we are afraid to share Jesus, people are longing to know Him. My neighbour is studying the Bible with me as I write this article.

Many do not see that evangelism is the lifeblood of the church. In 1998, as I was pastoring a district of seventeen churches and church plants in Guyana, South America, I received a call from the president of the conference. Being quite young, I wondered if

someone had made a complaint to the conference about my work. It turned out that he was calling to inform me that the executive committee had just selected me to be the new Personal Ministries/Community Ministries/Prayer and Sabbath School director of the conference. Wow! That was huge! The Union Personal Ministries leadership then brought over Dr Earl E. Cleveland, who was retired but active, to be part of an orientation programme for new directors. At the programme he wanted to illustrate a point and called me forward. He placed his huge hand on my right shoulder and told the following story.

He recalled that in the early stages of his ministry he was sent to a district where the members had this large, well-furnished, fantastic church building. Just over the road from the church was a cemetery. Over the years the church did no evangelism, so the members got old and eventually died and moved across the road, obviously to the cemetery. When he got there, only fifteen were left, looking at each other and wondering who would be next. However, through evangelism, within three years the church was filled, and they had planted another church. Then he gave my shoulder a mighty squeeze, which I can still feel today, and said, 'Remember, son, evangelism is the lifeblood of the church.'

Jesus said in Matthew 24:12-14, 'Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will become cold. But the one who endures to the end is the one who will be saved. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come' (NASB). Perhaps the 'silly' question is, whom does He expect to preach? Rocks, or His Spirit-filled people?

I was once conducting a series of evangelistic meetings in a mining town. One day, as I was walking down the street, mingling with drunkards, prostitutes and other sinners, I encountered a grizzled old man selling Christian books. We spoke for a while, and he offered me the old Christian classic, a little book named *The Passion for Souls* by Oswald J. Smith. It revolutionised my evangelistic focus and became one of the most cherished books in my library. Oswald posits that the church is loaded with activities, while the real work of evangelising the world/community and winning the lost is almost entirely neglected. He states, 'Men have forgotten God. Sin flourishes on every side. And the pulpit fails to grip. And I know of nothing less than the outpouring of God's Spirit that can meet the situation. Such a revival has transformed scores and hundreds of communities, [and] it can transform ours.'<sup>1</sup>

Have you given up on evangelism? In part two we will explore change as we rekindle the fire and passion for sharing Christ.

<sup>1</sup>Oswald J. Smith, *The Passion for Souls* (Suffolk, Great Britain: Richard Clay – The Chaucer Press Ltd., 1983)



# 22 opportunities to share your faith using literature in '22

by **Dale Galusha**,  
President of the Pacific Press

Dear reader,

Why not challenge yourself to share your faith using literature in 2022? Magazines, pamphlets, books, and tracts – every member can share these with neighbours and friends! Ellen White wrote:

'The world is to receive the light of truth through an evangelising ministry of the word in our books and periodicals.' *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 145.

Here are 22 ways that your church can use literature to share the Gospel message during 2022:

1. Include a tract in bills when you pay through the mail.
2. Send a sharing magazine such as *Focus* to a friend, neighbour, co-worker, or relative.
3. Give a sharing book to a friend. The 2021 Sharing Book of the Year was *Hope for Troubled Times* by Pastor Mark Finley, and the 2022 Sharing Book of the Year will be available in the coming weeks.
4. Invite friends to a book club at your home or church and study *Steps to Christ* or *The Desire of Ages*. (During the pandemic, this can be done online as well.)
5. Encourage your Sabbath School class to distribute literature to homes near the church.
6. Offer a free book on your church website.
7. Do a postcode mailing of a special issue of a sharing magazine such as *Focus*.
8. Help support a youth magabook programme in your community.
9. Use sharing books as birthday or Christmas gifts.
10. Find public places that allow literature to be placed for people to enjoy.
11. Sponsor a sharing magazine *newsbox* in your community.
12. Dedicate the glove box in your car – or a pocket – and fill it with various types of literature. Pray each day that God will bring you into contact with a person with whom you can share.
13. Volunteer to keep your church literature rack organised and supplied.
14. Pray for the literature evangelists and the publishing houses around the world.
15. Give each person who visits your Community Services facility a piece of literature.
16. Provide literature to those attending evangelistic meetings, health seminars, and other events at your church.
17. Have a table/booth at local fairs and events, and give away literature on specific topics – health, family life, prophecy, and so on.
18. Deliver welcome baskets to new neighbours. Include a loaf of bread or other baked goods along with a small booklet.
19. Join a group from your church or conference, distributing tracts and literature at special events.
20. Donate to your church literature fund.
21. Pray each day that God's Spirit will use every piece of literature to touch people's hearts – both those already distributed, and those that will be handed out.
22. Be always watching for opportunities to share a tract, a booklet, or a book with someone.

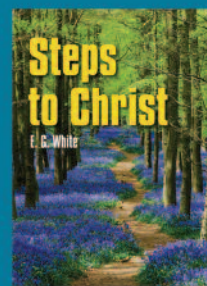
In writing about the power and importance of using literature in outreach, Ellen White wrote:

'The new year is just before us, and plans should be laid for earnest, persevering effort in the Master's service. There is much to be done to advance the work of God.' *Review and Herald*, 20 January, 1903.

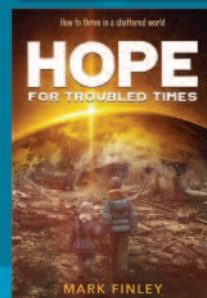
Choose one or more of the 22 ways, and make an eternal difference in someone's life in 2022!

Looking for just the right material to share? Visit your local LifeSource shop in person, phone the Stanborough Press sales line on 01476 591700, or visit the LifeSource online shop at [www.lifesourcebookshop.co.uk](http://www.lifesourcebookshop.co.uk).

Steps to Christ  
50p



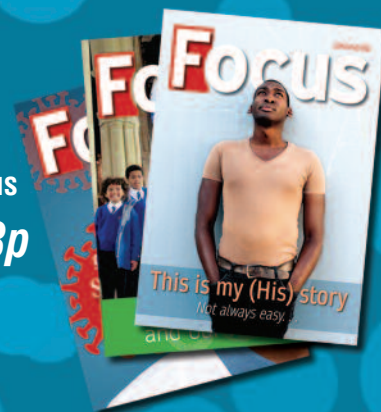
Hope for Troubled Times  
£1.45



Last Day Events  
£2.95



Focus  
33p



Outreach Pack:  
28 x The Great Controversy  
12 x The Desire of Ages  
30 x Steps to Christ  
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# Now you're speaking my language

by Pastor Matthew Herel

As the disciples followed Jesus' pre-ascension instructions and waited in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit, they saw the city getting busier and busier. Pentecost was coming, the harvest festival celebrated 50 days after the Passover. Not only was the city becoming busier, but it was also becoming more diverse. Luke, the author of Acts, paints a picture of the Jewish diaspora as a coalition of diversity, filling the streets of the holy city. There were people from modern-day Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, Egypt, and Libya, among other places.

Perhaps the apostles realised that this would represent an opportunity to share the story of Jesus with people from all over the known world . . . but I wonder if they subconsciously began to think that people would have to hear the Gospel in Aramaic, the language native to Judea. (Perhaps, if they were feeling generous, they might have made concessions for Greek speakers, as Greek was the *lingua franca* of the day.) Maybe they believed that people should hear the Gospel in

Hebrew, the same language in which the Scriptures had been read aloud in the synagogues for centuries.

The truth is, it's easy to think that 'the way we've done things up to now is the only way to do them'. Many of us are guilty of applying this kind of logic, particularly when it comes to our worship and spirituality. What was at one stage innovative has over the years become immovable and unchangeable. (Just try pitching a new start time for worship and watch the fireworks!)

Well, if any of the disciples were thinking along these lines, they were in for a surprise. As the Holy Spirit made His long-awaited debut, He didn't up-skill the multitudes so they could hear the Gospel in 'holy languages'. Instead, He gave the apostles the miraculous ability to speak in all the languages that were represented in the city. It's as if He were showing the apostles: 'The people don't change to connect with you: you change to connect with the people!' We could sum up the Holy Spirit's intervention in one word:

relevance. He made His followers relevant to their audience. And there is nothing more relevant than the ability to speak someone's language.

As each church looks out at the people on its doorstep, the question it must ask is: *Are we speaking their language?* Are we relevant to the people walking past our church every Sabbath? We like to start worship at 9.30am, but is that relevant to them? We like to have Sabbath School first, and family worship second, but is that relevant to them? We like to base all of our worship activities in this building, but is that relevant to them?

What if we experimented with adjusting our service times based on information gathered in a local survey? What if, once a month, we sent a worship team to hold a service in a public space, like a shopping centre – a place full of people going about their business, who would perhaps never walk into a church building? What if we tried to be more relevant?

The Jewish nation thought that engaging with their foreign neighbours would make them unclean – and then, in His very first appearance, the Holy Spirit equips the apostles to speak in 'unclean' languages, to make them relevant to the world around them. The message of the Gospel could not and would not change. But the delivery? That was flexible!

As Peter preached in Parthian, and John preached in Egyptian, many of those gathered must have observed, 'Now they're speaking my language!' What if we made relevance a core value for our churches? Maybe we'd find that communities from Portsmouth to Poplar to Peterborough would say the same.



# Our editor, David Neal, moves on

## Pastor David Neal – a mission-minded man

I can still remember the first article I read by Pastor David Neal, some seven or eight years before he became my editor. He was Irish Mission President at the time, and for his New Year message he wrote passionately on the Sabbath School lessons

we as a world church had just completed on the book of Galatians. That article presented Galatians in a way I'd never seen it before – it stirred me, and I remember taking it down the corridor to comment on it to the editorial secretary at the time.

That says a lot about the kind of editor Pastor Neal would become. Following in the footsteps of his father, Pastor Roger Neal, who gave me Bible studies before my baptism, Pastor David Neal became a truly mission-driven man, and that shone through in his editorial work. Pastor Julian Hibbert used to say that the *MESSENGER* editor must be a pastor for the whole British Union Conference, and Pastor Neal certainly excelled in that role. He provided much-needed encouragement for the church during the time of lockdown; he has always been a champion for caring for God's world; and even before the pandemic he exhorted the church to consider ways to be more relevant in reaching out to the community. Most of all, his editorials were Christ-centred, full of grace, uplifting Jesus and His cross. This grace filled his life as well as his writings, and as an editor he has been a joy to work with –

humble, supportive, collegiate, inclusive, and with a genuine care for his staff.

Shortly after I heard the news that he was leaving for the TED, I saw a post on Facebook from Pastor Victor Hubert, welcoming Pastor Neal as his replacement as Communication Director. The *MESSENGER* designer, David Bell, had left a comment: 'But . . . my editor!' That says it all. We at the Press will miss working with him, and we believe he has impacted the church in the UK for the better.

ANDREW PUCKERING (PROOF READING)

## 'But . . . my editor!'

I have worked for the Stanborough Press for longer than I care to remember, and in that time I have chalked up three editors: Dr David Marshall, Pastor Julian Hibbert and Pastor David Neal. I am now awaiting the arrival of my fourth.

David Neal came to us very green – in other words, he had no editorial experience. But what he did have, in spades, was a drive to push the *MESSENGER* and other publications forward; and, along with his extensive ministerial experience and his obvious love for the church, I feel that he got himself well and truly stuck into the magazine.

David was the head of the editorial team, and he was a great boss to work with. He was friendly, caring and interested in us. He accepted the team's years of experience, and used it to good advantage.

We as the Stanborough Press team wish him every success in his new adventures.

DAVID BELL (GRAPHIC DESIGN)



# Engaged? – Ring!

by Pastor Paul Haworth

What a dilemma! What a state I was in. My personality was split into two parts: one

wanting to go one way, while the other just did not know what to do. How could I know what was the right thing to do when I had two choices? When I made up my mind, I was still confronted with not knowing what was the best thing to do.

Back in that quite ordinary summer of 1974 something odd happened in that unimportant, small, industrial, blackened town of Halifax. As we travel we come to a village about 2½ miles out of the busy town centre. In this village, called Copley, on a short but steep hill on which you would be puffing and panting before you got halfway up, there is an old Methodist chapel recently changed over to a Seventh-day Adventist church. It is here where my story begins.

At the back of the church there is a cottage whose rooms were brightened by the newly arrived presence of a Miss Heather Bryan. I first met this stranger to Yorkshire at a Bible study for young people of the church, as she was the local Bible instructor (a type of assistant minister) and she taught the class. My younger brother, who was not a church member, came along to that meeting; and, as we talked later on our way home, he said that he thought Miss Bryan looked middle-aged. At that I laughed, 'No she is not; she is probably about 30 years plus. Did you notice that when she talked her nose wiggled? She appears to be cheery and very friendly.' To conclude our discussion, we decided that she looked like one of those women who would finish up never getting married – an old maid. How wrong we both were, although her nose did wiggle when she talked!

Two weeks before coming to Halifax she had partially packed ready for moving; then she went to a youth camp 200 miles away for

a week; came back and finished off the packing. During this time her car had been pinched and smashed. This, of course, was a worry; and, along with being very tired, I am not surprised that, by the time she had finished sorting out her belongings again, she looked older than she really was.

Shortly after our first encounter – and because of an evangelistic campaign held by Pastor Rodd in Bradford, a neighbouring second India to Halifax – I helped out, along with many others, doing Bible studies with young people who had asked for a Bible study course. Heather, having a car, used to pick me up, and we would go together. Funny as it may sound, all the rest of the groups' Bible studies fizzled out, but ours still kept going. Through this we became very good friends, finishing off our Bible study evening with a bag of chips, which were the nicest I had tasted. I was sorry when we no longer went on these studies; those chips were really delicious! Oh well, back to reality.

As we became better acquainted we spent time together on Saturday nights. I would invite her back for tea and then we would play games such as Monopoly (which I could never win) and draughts. We listened to classical and some popular music while we swapped tapes and recorded pieces of music and songs on the tape recorders that we both had.

Then suddenly, one day a year later, she told me that she was to leave to help out with a campaign run by Pastor Marley in Glasgow. Here was my problem, my dilemma. Everything was fine until now. *She is going to leave me!* I thought. *What am I going to do?* It wasn't until now that I realised how much I thought about her. As time marched on I began to feel a deeper conviction inside that I ought to go with her. I looked for a job; I talked to her about moving; but I did not really want to leave Halifax.

Two weeks before she left, one evening while Heather and I were listening to music, I hardly said a word. All the time I wanted to ask her to marry me. I couldn't. Even one of the church members had said to me, 'What are you going to do? You're not going to let her go, are you?' One week to go to take-off, and I was still trying to pluck up courage. One night, at the beginning of that last week, my parents were on holiday. So as to make it easier in regard to meals, and partly because I did not like eating by myself, I asked Heather to bring some food and we would have a potluck meal. Over the table I wanted to ask her; once I

started, but she broke in, saying something about her work that day. I tried again later, but somehow it wouldn't come out. She then left.

Then came the Wednesday prayer meeting at a member's house at which Pastor Rodd took the service, which I do not remember at all. How could I? After the prayer meeting Heather took me home, after dropping off some other church members at their respective homes. I invited her in for a cup of cocoa: should I ask her now? YES. How shall I say it? These were questions whirling around in my head. Before I had a chance, she had gone! I sat quietly and pondered deeply over my problem! I prayed for the Eternal One to help me. I asked God to help me to do the right thing. 'Do You want me to marry Heather? I am going to telephone her, and if I get no reply from any of the telephone boxes I know in this area then I know that it is not Your will.'

So off I went at 10 o'clock at night. We had no phone of our own in the house, so I had to go to a public telephone. They had never been so busy. I had to wait at the first one as someone else was using it. 'Hurry up, hurry up!' I was getting impatient. I wanted to know the answer, to settle my state of mind. 'Hurrah!' In I went, and dialled 58594 nervously. . . .

'Engaged! Drat!' I tried again and again; engaged every time. The next telephone box did not help either: it was out of order; vandals had been at it! Telephone box number 3, engaged every time. I tried again, again and again. This was the last telephone box; surely God wanted me to marry, but the answer seemed to be no. I sadly started to go home, my hopes shattered, but thinking, thinking about what had happened. All of a sudden, a thought struck me. I ran. I remembered that there was another telephone box nearby. Why had I forgotten about it? I do not know, but here was another chance. I reluctantly entered, picked up the receiver and dialled 5 . . . 8 . . . 5 . . . 9 . . . 4 . . .

It rang. It rang! It RANG! *IT RANG!*

Now I was forced to be brave. Why should I be ringing her up at this time of the night? A voice came: 'Hello, Halifax 58594.' 'Hello, Paul here,' I said sheepishly. 'I expect you are wondering why I am ringing you. Well,' long pause, 'will you marry me?' The line went dead. Then I heard faintly, 'Let me sit down; my legs have gone funny.' We talked for a while, and then I said, '**Well**, what about it?' 'About what?' she replied. 'About us getting married.' 'YES,' was her immediate reply. After that we hung up and tried to sleep!

In February 1976 we were married at Halifax Seventh-day Adventist Church by, would you believe, Pastor Rodd! I successfully stopped the North British Conference, the administration behind the church, from sending my 'dilemma' away. We now have three children, an eight-year-old grandson and a one-year-old granddaughter. I am glad my 'dilemma' is over. Now I am happily in another one – trying to keep my sanity looking after them all!



# Dudley House School – a nurturing family in the Lincolnshire countryside



and traffic is less of a hassle, but there is still plenty to enjoy.

You might be wondering what a

for a church school, as their children would be leaving church school education at Stanborough Park. It was agreed. The new school was set up in a World War



respect towards each other' – in fact, 'Pupils' behaviour in classes and around the school is outstanding. They are consistently polite, well mannered, responsible and respectful.' Nor is Ofsted's praise limited only to behaviour, as they say that 'pupils thrive because they are well cared for and love to learn.'

The staff at Dudley House work together to make the school one big happy family where every child is nurtured. As Jenny Johnson, the headteacher, says on the school's website: 'We pride ourselves in knowing each child as a special and unique individual. We provide rich and memorable learning activities that inspire and excite the children and help them achieve their very best. . . . All the children from the youngest to the eldest interact with each other. We are like one big family where pupils, parents and staff all work closely together in a supportive, caring, Christian environment.'

paymaster's hut that was, and is still, on the land alongside the Press building. It was a success! Just four years later the two-class school grew to three classes when it moved into the new purpose-built church/school complex on Dudley Road. It continued to grow, for the townsfolk recognised a good thing when they saw it! It was full, and had a waiting list! Every Adventist child in the area, as well as children from the community, filled the school to capacity.

More than 55 years later, the school is still providing quality Adventist education to both Adventist students and pupils from the community who value the excellent provision the school provides, and is consistently recognised by Ofsted as a good school with outstanding features.

Ofsted praised the way that 'pupils show great kindness and

Dudley House School is also a mission field, as the school takes in children from the local Grantham community, many of whom are deeply appreciative for turning their children around with warmth, inclusiveness, and love. We trust that Dudley House will continue to be a centre of excellence and a witness for Christ in the Grantham community.

Would you love your child to be nurtured 'to be the best they can be' in an Adventist school? We are eager to fill every available place so that Adventist education can make a difference to another generation of children.

Why not call the headteacher, Jenny Johnson, to arrange a visit and experience the blessings of Adventist education for yourself?

Last year, the *MESSENGER* magazine featured a special report on several Seventh-day Adventist families who had relocated from across the country to send their children to Dudley House School. What is it about Dudley House School that attracts Adventist families from across the UK? What makes this Adventist primary school special?

Dudley House School is located in Grantham, a historic market town with excellent transport links to London and the North, nestled in the rolling Lincolnshire countryside. Despite being just off the A1 and having regular direct train services to Nottingham, Leeds, York and London, Grantham is a small town with good amenities that can be easily accessed, with plenty of countryside to enjoy nearby. However, four cities are all less than 45 minutes away when needed. Compared to city living, house prices are affordable



Seventh-day Adventist school is doing in a market town in the countryside. The answer is in itself a key piece of Seventh-day Adventist history. When the Stanborough Press in Watford was seriously damaged by a fire, a decision was taken to relocate the Press many miles north of Watford, to a new building in Grantham, which was a more affordable location with better transport links. When the Press moved, so too did the workers – and their families – but only on condition that provision be made

Telephone: **01476 400184**  
Email: [headteacher@dudleyhouseschool.co.uk](mailto:headteacher@dudleyhouseschool.co.uk)  
Website: [www.dudleyhouseschool.co.uk](http://www.dudleyhouseschool.co.uk)

## Exeter Church – a dedication and a farewell

On 18 December 2021, Pastor Weiers Coetser took his last service in Exeter Church before beginning his move to Aberdeen the next day, where he would happily join his wife, who is already teaching in Aberdeen.

It was a special Sabbath, as we held the Communion Service in person for the first time since the pandemic started, although there had been some very poignant services held on Zoom.

Another important element of the service was the dedication of Clara-Rebeca, the daughter of Pastor Florin Orasanu and his wife, Nicoleta. Pastor Coetser warmly addressed the family and dedicated the baby to the Lord. He then presented a certificate of dedication, a card containing a book voucher, and a book for her older brother, Eddie.

Pastor Orasanu will be the next pastor of the Exeter and Torquay churches. In his final sermon, Pastor Coetser linked the ideas of Advent, Communion, a new baby and his last Sabbath. He emphasised



the angels' message of 'Peace on Earth'. The purpose of the coming of Jesus was to reconcile man with God. Jesus presented a peace that could last, as He is higher than all things. In turn, His followers should learn to live in peace with each other. Pastor Coetser exhorted the congregation not to give up on Jesus, but to grow in His grace. It was fitting that the church members shared the emblems of Communion together as a sign of oneness in Christ.

After the service, Stella Jeffery thanked Pastor Coetser for his dedicated ministry over the last two years, saying how much they had appreciated his creativity and humour during very difficult times. She presented him with a card, cheque and photo album of pictures taken by Pastor Orasanu. Pastor Coetser was delighted with this very personal gift, which had photos of the members and events which Pastor Coetser had attended. We wish Pastor Coetser, his wife Simone and daughter Jeandre every blessing in the future.

STELLA JEFFERY



## Manchester Southern Asia news



The AV team



Baptism team: front row, 4th and 5th from left, Rachel Boardman and Nirmika Kandane

### Behind the scenes

These past two years have been really hard for all of us as a church. We weren't able to attend church in person, yet we could worship together on the Zoom platform. We just want to say thank you to all our AV teams throughout the country who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to bring our church to our homes, and they now continue to serve by livestreaming for those who are still unable to attend. God bless the service of all those who are working behind the scenes to enhance our worship experience every week.

### Accepting God's call

Two of our children, Nirmika Kandane and Rachel Boardman from Manchester Southern Asia Church, accepted God's calling and gave their lives to Jesus in baptism on 18 December 2021 at the Manchester

South church. The baptism was conducted by Pastor Ebenezer Daniel; and, after a soul-stirring message by Pastor Michael Simpson, 14 children responded to the altar call. The service was supported by Pastor Campbell and the elders. The Lord is doing a mighty work in Manchester Southern Asia Church, and we can see the fruits of His blessings. Thank you to Manchester South Church for always opening your doors for us. We welcome our newest members to the Seventh-day Adventist Church family.

DIAMOND SATHE, CHURCH COMMUNICATION

## Teens and tweens

Many young people had just finished mock exams, and others were considering university applications, so 2021's last online Teens and Tweens morning on Sabbath 27 November was very aptly themed for looking at their future. About forty young people joined to enjoy worship songs led by Robin Beamish and Sarah and Naomi Shepley; to take part in online polls; and to listen to a presentation entitled 'Wanted! – Murderers, Philanderers, Torturers (No Previous Experience Required)'. The speaker, John Middleditch, talked about Moses, David and Paul, who each could wear at least one of the above labels, yet were used by God. Afterwards there was the chance for the young people to choose from thirteen different breakout rooms, each hosted by an adult from a different profession or life calling, including medical staff, caring and teaching staff, motor engineering, IT and business professionals, and a pastor. Each host's remit was to help young people think about careers in the context of their faith by sharing a little about his/her own work and career journey, and how he/she felt God had guided him/her. Each ten-minute breakout room session was designed to give time for a short presentation and for questions and answers.

As often happens with online programmes, there were a few little glitches – but, with perseverance and some adaptation, all who wished to were able to participate. The young people found the breakout sessions particularly helpful, and Brett, one of the adult presenters, said, 'I'm in my late fifties, and I wish I'd had this opportunity when I was young.'

This looks like something we should do again, and maybe, in time, a face-to-face day would be good. We would like to give thanks to all those who gave their time to the young people that Sabbath morning, especially those who came at very short notice. If you are interested in knowing more about Teens and Tweens programmes, please contact Mike Beamish on 07925 858297 or email him at [mikejbeamish@outlook.com](mailto:mikejbeamish@outlook.com).

MIKE AND VICKY BEAMISH

# ‘Specially’ hospitable

## Welcoming people with special diets

by Karen Holford, Trans-European Division Family Ministries Director



special diets from trying out the special dishes.

- Invite people with special diets to take their food first. Give out

I'm wheat-intolerant. One crumb of wheat will give me severe pain and discomfort, decreased energy, and other nasty symptoms for up to six weeks. I've been aware of my intolerance for more than 20 years, so I've learnt to live with it. Here are some things I've learnt along the way that would be helpful for others to know, too.

Going to an ordinary Adventist potluck with a food allergy or intolerance is like walking through a minefield! Fortunately, as I am intolerant to wheat, and not allergic to it, my reaction isn't life-threatening . . . but for someone with a severe allergy, or a potential for anaphylaxis, incorrectly labelled food can be catastrophic.

My worst experience was a church banquet. The caterers had been told about my diet, but they had forgotten. I couldn't eat the starter, and they promised to find me an entrée I could eat. I asked if I could just eat the vegetables, but they wanted to wait until the entrée was ready. They were too busy to find me anything. I couldn't eat the dessert either. Finally, two hours after the meal started, I was given a quick apology and a plate of cold, leftover vegetables. . . .

### The potluck challenge

Many people who have special diets no longer come to potlucks because it's too stressful to eat food in an environment that is not allergy aware and safe. Some bring their own lunch and make sure that no one accidentally drops any crumbs on their food.

We can also feel awkward when we have to ask the cooks specific details about their ingredients, and bothersome when we have to keep asking questions about our food. We can often feel excluded from church social events, such as pizza parties and veggie-burger barbecues.

And, although it's tempting to be curious about our food intolerances and allergies, please try not to ask, 'So what happens if you accidentally eat some?' Most of the side effects are extremely unpleasant, and we really don't want to discuss them in public!

### Protect the preparation

- Ask those with special diets in your church to train others how to care for their needs.
- Write an information leaflet explaining the importance of being scrupulously careful when cooking and serving food for people with special diets.
- Make food for special diets using spotlessly clean utensils and worksurfaces. Avoid making other dishes at the same time so that you don't accidentally transfer contaminated

ingredients on utensils, by hand or even through the air.

- Line pans and dishes with baking parchment or foil in case there is a residue of allergens on the container.
- Keep special diet dishes covered and protected so they are not contaminated. Place them on the top shelf of the oven so that contaminants like pizza crumbs don't fall into the food accidentally.
- Search the internet for a list of allergen-free ingredients. Lots of everyday recipes are made with perfectly safe ingredients. Use gluten-free breadcrumbs in nut roast recipes, use spiralised vegetables instead of pasta, and cut thin slices of butternut squash or grill aubergine slices to replace pasta strips in lasagne dishes.
- Purchase a variety of allergen-free savouries and desserts, and keep them in the church freezer. Make a sign for the food table or church bulletin that welcomes visitors with special diets and invites them to choose special meals that can be quickly prepared especially for them. When they can guarantee that the food is safe, they'll feel more comfortable joining in with the meal.
- Provide printed labels for potluck foods, listing the most common allergens. Ask people to name their dish and tick any of the allergenic ingredients it contains. Make sure that they check the contents of every ingredient they use, as some allergens are not always obvious in things like stock powders, seasonings, sauces and soup mixes. For example, soy sauce usually contains wheat, but many people are not aware of this.

Your label could look like this:

This dish is: (dish name – *aubergine parmigiana*)

It was made by: (cook's name – *Karen Holford*)

It includes (please tick)

- |                                 |                                 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> dairy  | <input type="checkbox"/> wheat  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gluten | <input type="checkbox"/> eggs   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sugar  | <input type="checkbox"/> celery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> soy    |                                 |

. . . and so on.

### Serving special foods safely

- Place dishes made for special diets on a separate table.
- Provide each special dish with a separate spoon. If someone uses a spoon from another dish in the special food, they will contaminate the food and make it unsafe.
- Discourage people who do not have



passes for the special diet table to prevent other people from taking the food.

- Never top up branded sauce, dressing and ketchup bottles from cheaper bulk catering packs because it 'looks better', unless it's exactly the same brand and the same ingredients.

### Don't forget Communion!

People who cannot eat wheat and gluten often feel excluded from Holy Communion. Provide a wheat- and gluten-free alternative for everyone to eat, or provide a completely separate plate of wheat-free/gluten-free crackers.

### Invite us!

Please invite people with special diets to your home. We just want to be with people without having to worry about the food. Feel free to ask us to bring along an entrée or dessert that everyone can eat, or we can share our favourite recipes with you.

A simple soup or a hearty salad are perfect, and we can bring our own bread if we want to. We're usually offered fruit salad for dessert, but if you can be a little more creative, that would be wonderful! Search your grocery stores for 'free from' alternatives and find out which of your local bakeries and cafes specialise in dairy-, egg-, wheat- and gluten-free cakes, and so on. Look online for raw dessert recipes that will never include wheat. Try out recipes for raw brownies, made with dates, pecans or walnuts, cocoa and other natural ingredients.

### Everybody's welcome!

With a little thought and preparation, your church can provide meals for those with special diets, and everyone who comes to your church will feel welcome. It's such a tremendous gift to me when I go to a potluck where I can share in the food, and the joy, with everybody else. Thank you!

This article was previously printed in *The Journal*, a publication for ministry spouses.



by Sharon Platt-McDonald

## Healthy mind in an unhealthy world

A newspaper article headline on 7 December 2021 read: 'Mental health has worsened since pandemic started, new survey shows' (Healthy Ireland Survey).<sup>1</sup>

The article highlights research involving 7,454 people aged 15 and older, interviewed between October 2020 and March 2021.

The study found that, overall, people's health had declined as a result of the pandemic. Half of those surveyed drank more, smoked more, gained weight or reported mental health problems.

The potential mental health repercussions of COVID-19 were highlighted in an article in the *Independent* (April 2020). The alarming headline stated: 'World will face a mental health crisis after coronavirus pandemic, experts warn'.<sup>2</sup>

This prediction was mirrored in *The Lancet Psychiatry*. David Gunnell et al., in a paper entitled 'Suicide risk and prevention during the COVID-19 pandemic', concluded: 'The pandemic will cause distress and leave many people vulnerable to mental health problems, and suicidal mental health consequences are likely to be present for longer and peak later than the actual pandemic'.<sup>3</sup>

That's the bad news. The good news is that we can mitigate this negative impact of the pandemic.

The Mental Health Foundation<sup>4</sup> highlights the following helpful tips:

- **Eat well** – a healthy diet can lift your mood (<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/d/diet-and-mental-health>).
- **Stay physically active** (<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/p/physical-activity-and-mental-health>): engage in home activities like gardening, or online exercises

(<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/>).

- **Manage your stress levels** (<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/s/stress>).
- **Get a good night's sleep** (<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/s/sleep-and-mental-health>).

### Stay connected

- We thrive better (during stressful times) with company and support. Staying in touch with family and friends helps.
- For emotional support or addressing mental health difficulties, professional help can be accessed via the Mental Health Foundation, the Samaritans, Mind and the Young Minds' Parents helpline.

### Talk to your children

- Be reassuring, truthful and transparent.
- Try to avoid overexposure to negative news.
- Encourage young people to source evidence-based information from reliable sources such as the Mental Health Foundation.

First Peter 5:7 provides spiritual support for stressed minds: 'Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.' (NLT).

### Good health!

<sup>1</sup>Mental health has worsened since pandemic started, new survey shows' ([irishtimes.com](https://www.irishtimes.com))  
<sup>2</sup><https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-mental-health-research-anxiety-a9466466.html> <sup>3</sup>David Gunnell et al., 'Suicide Risk and Prevention during the COVID-19 Pandemic', *The Lancet Psychiatry* (21 April, 2020); [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(20\)30171-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(20)30171-1) <sup>4</sup>[mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/publications/talking-your-children-about-coronavirus-pandemic](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/publications/talking-your-children-about-coronavirus-pandemic)



## Earth and Soul 11

by David Wright

**'We care for the environment precisely because God will create a new earth.'** David Neff<sup>1</sup>

Responding to the most recent official report into Britain's vulnerability to climate change, the Government admitted, just two months after COP26, we are still unprepared for climate chaos – the steps taken so far having been 'inadequate', and even more finance and faster action being required to tackle the 61 climate risks identified across all sectors of our society. The Environment Agency responded cheerfully by warning everyone to 'adapt or die'.<sup>2</sup>

Since April 2021 this Earth and Soul column has attempted to explore the background, build-up and outcomes to last year's UN Climate Change conference in Glasgow, highlighting ecological concerns from both a biblical and a personal responsibility perspective. If climate change and creation care continue to be important to you, and you need more information about British environmental laws, policies statistics,

projects, or actions, take a look at the websites of any of the organisations listed below. They all share the common goals of trying to improve the health of our planet and educating as many people as possible about the environmental plight we face. You can also follow up further COP26 developments on the official [ukcop26.org](http://ukcop26.org) website, or globally on the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) website.

The Green Alliance; The Council for the Protection of Rural England; The Environmental Law Foundation; The National Association of Environmental Education; The British Ecological Society; The Energy Saving Trust; Renewable UK; Friends of the Earth; The World Wildlife Fund; Legislation GOV-UK; Keep Britain Tidy; The Wildlife Trusts; The Woodland Trust; Ethical Consumer; Recycle Now; The Wildlife and Marine Conservation Societies; The Climate Coalition; and the Climate Change Committee.

On a Christian basis, the Creation Care organisation aims to encourage households to make changes to care for God's earth. It covers seven areas of household life, including worship and prayer, the home and garden, travel, food, possessions, community and global engagement. It also provides useful information, ideas, and links to other faith sites that can help with different aspects of our Creation Care journey. Two examples are free leaflets from the Green Christian website, and prayer resources from the Christian environmental charity, A Rocha.<sup>3</sup>

With 84% of the UK population, and most Adventist members in Britain, living in urban areas, it's probably become even more vital to try immersing ourselves in the 'real' natural world whenever possible. Research shows that as little as 10 minutes a day outdoors in a garden or local park can help relieve stress, improve mood, and boost feelings of well-being and joy.<sup>4</sup> Those without gardens might like to consider volunteer community or allotment gardening or joining a local 'It's your neighbourhood' scheme.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>David Neff, 'Second Coming Ecology', 18/7/22

<sup>2</sup>Roger Harrabin, BBC, 18/1/22

<sup>3</sup><https://greenchristian.org.uk>

<sup>4</sup>Trend Deck: Urbanisation', GOV.UK, 2021

<sup>5</sup>[www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)

## A trio of blessings



The pandemic may have affected the way in which we worship, but it has not stopped the blessings that God has for us. The Erdington church was not only blessed with one baby dedication, but three! Emma Emelia Scheau and Ella Emanuela Scheau, the twin daughters of Mihail and Silvia Scheau, were dedicated to God on Sabbath 18 September 2021. The family originally attended the Cahul Maranata church in Moldova. The story surrounding this dedication is one of a mother's perseverance. Before the pandemic began, in March/April 2020, the twins' dedication was due to take place at Camp Hill Church. Unfortunately, on the day of the dedication the church was closed due to the lockdown. Silvia Scheau continued to ask persistently for the dedication of her daughters to take place, and time and time again it was postponed due to the lockdown and the restrictions that came with it. She finally secured a date for the dedication, but Pastor Gutu fell ill, and again the dedication could not take place. Finally, after a year and a half of postponements, her children were dedicated to the Lord. Both parents were presented with gifts, poems and a certificate along with the well-known scripture, Proverbs 22:6: 'Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it' (KJV). The couple's membership was officially transferred to the Erdington church on 2 October 2021.



Left to right: Tawnya Richardson (family friend), Cliff Lewis (elder), Agatha Mackochon (mother), holding Hania, Jonathan (father), Elder Ashley Grandson

A few weeks later, the dedication of Hania, the daughter of a well-known and loved couple, Jonathan and Agatha, took place. They are also proud parents of Hania's older brother. Although their family members couldn't attend, close friends and the church family rallied together to support the young family and help them celebrate this special day.

Erdington dedicate this prayer to Silvia, Mihail, Jonathan and Agatha: 'When it seems that life gives us more than we can handle, may God bless you with the community of a church family to care for you. May God grant you the grace and humility to ask for and accept help. As anxiety arises, change the fear into a prayer. Turn the phrase, "I worry about . . ." to: "God, I know that You have this all figured out, and I trust You to walk us through it." God has chosen you for this important parenting role; He will equip you for the task before you. This big job of parenting may feel overwhelming at times, but God will carry you through each step of the way.'

The church continues to lift up these three young girls in prayer, and looks forward one day to seeing these three young ladies grow up and take part in church activities.

REBEKAH ECCLES

## Serving kindness at harvest

On Sabbath 23 October the Erdington Church Youth Department hosted yet another community giveaway, offering toiletries, children's books, literature, fresh fruit and vegetables, and packaged food products. The Harvest Giveaway was supported by many members of the church, who donated toiletries and a range of food products.

Around 15 members of the church came out to physically support the event, whether that was greeting members of the community at the door, taking their orders, packing their bags, inviting people from the Erdington High Street to attend, or manning the tables. To see members of the church rally round and support the department's community outreach efforts also encouraged younger members to witness too! To see the church working as one body sets a good example for them to follow, and two of them afterwards expressed their enjoyment in taking part, and willingly volunteered to serve in future community events.

Despite the cold weather, many members of the community arrived at church and were very appreciative of the gifts on offer. Members of the community were greeted at the door by one of the older youth, and their food order was taken. While the church members were busy packing up the orders, the community members were invited into the foyer, where they were given the opportunity to choose from an array of fresh fruit and vegetables, toiletries and biblical literature. One lady expressed her joy in receiving her toiletries and packaged food, as she had recently been laid off work and was no longer receiving any student benefits. She went on to say, 'What you are doing has come at a really good time for me. It must be God and His intervention. Without this I wouldn't have eaten anything for the next couple of months.'

In addition to meeting physical needs, the Harvest Giveaway also met spiritual needs. Many individuals went away with a Bible or a *Steps to Christ* book and a bookmark providing the contact details of the



church. Many expressed their desire to attend church services, and asked if the church was now holding regular services again. Many members of the public were introduced to the Seventh-day Adventist Church for the first time. One individual commented, 'I've lived in Erdington 20 years and never knew you were here!'

Some members of the public were baffled by the event, asking, 'Why are you giving away these things? Is there a catch here? Do I need to pay for these things?' Isn't it sad to know that we live in a society where people can be so sceptical and suspicious of acts of kindness, where some have never experienced true and genuine kindness before?

We urge all readers to pray for every member of the community who attended this event, asking that the Holy Spirit will work in their hearts and minds.

REBEKAH ECCLES (COMMUNICATION SECRETARY)





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## Exeter's 2021 baptism

Before the coronavirus struck, Dale Woolner had visited Exeter Church on a few occasions, having been introduced to Seventh-day Adventism by a friend. Pastor Weiers Coetser had kept in contact with him and given him Bible studies. Dale had also studied for himself, and felt that he was being given new light, although he had previously been a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His mother had joined that church when he was just ten.

Pastor Coetser said that although Dale had chosen to be baptised, God had worked in his life to bring him to that point. God had chosen Dale and had a plan. He quoted from Ephesians 1:4, which says, 'For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight' (NIV). Pastor Coetser said that he hoped Dale would continue to grow in grace and become the fullest person he could be.

There was a special prayer for Dale and his sister, who was present to witness the baptism. Their mother was remembered in prayer, as she is frail and living in a care home. Dale was presented with his baptismal certificate and a gift from the church, after which he was voted into the fellowship of the Exeter church. We wish him every blessing as part of the church family.

STELLA JEFFERY  
PHOTO BY FLORIN ORASANU



Pastor Weiers Coetser with Dale Woolner

## Baptism – Josiah Francis

On Sabbath afternoon 22 January 2022 Josiah Francis was baptised.

A very energetic 13-year-old and faithful Pathfinder, he decided that he would, 'with a song in his heart, go on God's errands'. He wanted to follow Jesus by setting an example for all other Pathfinders who have not yet made their decision to be baptised.

Josiah was born into an Adventist family, was brought up within the Nottingham Central fellowship of believers, and enjoyed being nurtured and taught in that community.

His baptism took place at Mansfield Woodhouse Seventh-day Adventist Church and was witnessed by many members of his family and friends, who came along especially to be with him.

He was supported by Edna Mokaya, Master Guide and deputy director of Pathfinders at Nottingham Central, who shared with Josiah and the congregation encouraging words, including heartfelt congratulations to the young man for making such a wonderful decision.

Elders Robert Mokaya and Greg Ramjas were also in attendance, together with our church clerk, Ann Gosling.

Circumstances were such that our incumbent pastor, Dan Dachin, was not able to officiate, and Pastor Curtis Murphy was happy to step in. Pastor Murphy is well known to the family and has known Josiah for most of his life.

We welcome Josiah into the local congregation and to the worldwide fellowship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. One more for the Kingdom – praise God!

DENNIS TAYLOR, NOTTINGHAM CENTRAL CHURCH



Pastor Murphy with Josiah Francis

# Annual toy service for needy local children reaches 60 years



Two special anniversaries coincided with this year's annual toy service at Stanborough Park Church in Watford. Not only has this annual Christmas event been providing toys for needy local children for 60 consecutive years, but its current organiser celebrated her 25th anniversary – so both diamond and silver jubilees were recognised at this year's service, held at the church on Sabbath 11 December.

Since the event was first started back in 1961 by a kind-hearted former member, the late Alf Kelly, who received the MBE for his services to the people of Watford, the church family and their friends have been donating new toys each Christmas to be given to needy local families unable to provide the sort of Christmas for their children that they would wish. Every year since then, hundreds of new toys have been spread out on the platform and around the church; and a Christmas tree with twinkling lights and festive decorations adds to the atmosphere, along with carols. There

are also musical contributions from the younger members of the congregation. During the service the children are invited to bring additional toys to the front of the church, placing them in sacks held by Pathfinders.

Alf Kelly died in 1996, but his daughter, Pat Walton, who first told him about a similar community outreach project at the Ealing church back in 1961, has taken over the role of organising the annual event in his memory, ensuring its continued role in helping the local community. Each year she reminds those present of the event's origins, and of the continuing need for its service to the local community and its value to recipients.

Representatives from Watford Borough Council, social services and local charities attend and often take part in the Christmas-themed service. The current elected mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor, makes sure that he attends, and this year his predecessor, Baroness Thornhill, also formed part of the platform party.



The platform party: Audrey Balderstone (speaking); seated, left to right Baroness Thornhill; and Pastor Wayne Erasmus



The younger members played carols on their handbells



Some of the children sitting in front of the toys that they contributed

The actual display and order of service was organised by Audrey Balderstone, whose floral arrangement skills are well known and have resulted in many medals, including from the prestigious Chelsea Flower Show.

'The giving of gifts has always been part of Christian life, especially to the children,' Pat said.

Peter Taylor, accepting the toys, thanked



Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor; Baroness



Pathfinders helping to bag up the toys



Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor presents Pat Walton with an 'Unsung Heroes of Watford Award'



ed



Even the toddlers want to get in on the action



Baroness Thornhill was pleased to be back



Pastor Wayne Erasmus presents the Christmas message

members for the impact they had made over the decades. (The church runs a welfare department heavily used by social workers – also organised by Pat Walton – and has acted as a food bank and vaccination centre in recent times.) He also recognised it as a church that 'loves God and loves your neighbour, and you recognise that everyone in

the town is special and has value and dignity, and the gifts speak about the values that you have'. Following his acceptance speech he presented Pat Walton with an 'Unsung Heroes of Watford Award'.

Baroness Thornhill, for her part, remarked how pleased she was to be invited back for the event.

This year the congregation was limited to 200 socially distanced people within the sanctuary, with an overflow of 65 in an adjacent hall who watched on a large screen, while there have been over 300 viewings via the internet. The Christmas message this year was given by Pastor Wayne Erasmus, who gave a different perspective on the traditional Christmas story.

The generosity of the church members over the years is much appreciated locally – the only toys some children received at

Christmas were from the church.

The very first toy service was held at Wood Green Church in 1956, and in the early 1960s there were also events at Watford Town, Ealing and Oxford. When The Stanborough Press moved to Grantham in 1966, the migrating workers carried on the tradition in Grantham, where it also flourishes to this day.

JUNE COOMBS



# Transformed, not Transformers

by Pastor Nathan Stickland

'Transformers, robots in disguise.' Did you read it without the catchy jingle to enunciate the words? Go on, try reading it again! If you don't know what I am talking about, you haven't missed much, though the toys, TV

show/films and comics have generated over US\$25 billion in sales. In brief, the recapitulation of the essential storyline is the classic narrative of good versus evil, with the characters being robots which have one form and can change into human-shaped robots who do battle to be victorious. This media franchise started in 1983, but has mostly faded away nowadays, after a number of reincarnations.

What impresses me about Transformers is the engineering and design that went into making these regular toys fold out into robots. It's very clever. But the point of the Transformers is that they change from one form into another, but can reform back into their original shape. Often starting out as a vehicle of some sort, their hinged parts expand out to become weapon-wielding, menacing robots.

The conflicting storylines generally portray a warring between good and bad robots on the battlefield of Earth. Terminologies and characters include: The Great War, The One, a spaceship called The Ark, Omega Supreme (who protects the Ark), a Japanese series called Super-God Masterforce, Exodus, Exiles, and a 'bible' for enthusiasts called 'The Binder of Revelation'.

Don't read too much into this: it's just classic good vs. evil storytelling!

For some strange reason, given that I have not been into Transformers (EVER!) and had to look up the details above, whenever I hear of Transformers, I think of Romans 12:2: 'And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God' (KJV). I am of the generations who grew up on the KJV, and with grinding reluctance these words roll off my tongue; but how about looking at this verse in another translation? 'Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking' (The Message). 'Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect' (NLT).

Go ahead and pick your own translation, but the idea is still the same: when you let God into your life, there is a change, a transformation, a distinction or contrast to the ways of the world. You become different from what you were!

Romans 3:23 says that all have sinned; all start off in the ways of the world. The choice we have is that we can ask God to do a factory reset in our way of thinking, one that affects our behaviour and attitude. Paul talks in Romans 7 of being a wretched man for struggling with doing right, but that Jesus Christ is his Rescuer. Like a Transformer, he is trying to change from a car to a robot (it's a metaphor), but keeps changing back into a car. But Jesus is his help to complete the change.

Paul also writes to the believers in Corinth in his second letter, 3:18: 'And we all, who with

unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit' (NIV).

When we look at Jesus our Lord, a change starts to take place. We depict more and more the glory of God. This is a process, but it can be interrupted by our reverting back to our old way of thinking. We don't have a factory reset button; instead, God has to do some reprogramming. However, the change is clear and distinct: you are clearly not the way you used to be. I wonder if others see in me a difference in my attitude, language, demeanour, and provision to others? Maybe there's a long way to go yet, but the Christian transformation is distinctive.

What part of your life is God waiting to gain access to, but you have been reluctant to give over to Him? God needs an 'Access All Areas' pass to transform you in a sequence best known to Him and most appropriate to you. Transformers are meant to change regularly between two forms, but transformed people are meant to change permanently from one form to another. So, I ponder, what would it look like if I allowed God to keep transforming me, according to His will, without my shifting back into my worldly ways, or restricting the changes He knows need to be made in me next?



## International news

- **The European Adventist Youth Congress this year** will take place in Lahti, Finland, from 2 to 6 August 2022. David Asscherick and Daniel Bosqued will be among the guest speakers. For more information, please visit the AYC Europe Facebook page at [facebook.com/ayceurope](https://facebook.com/ayceurope).
  - **The Trans-European Division (TED) hosted a COVID-19 symposium on 19 January** to address key concerns of the coronavirus pandemic, personal liberties, and the use of vaccines, reports Pastor David Neal, Communications Director for the TED. He reports the concluding thought of the symposium in the following way: 'The Adventist health emphasis and vaccination, in the context of a public health emergency, go hand in hand. They do not antagonise but complement each other.' See the whole presentation at [youtube.com/watch?v=W7mnJVsk0s](https://youtube.com/watch?v=W7mnJVsk0s).
  - **An asteroid in space has been named after a young Seventh-day Adventist teenage girl from Brazil**, writes Jeane Barboza of the South American Division for the *Adventist Review*. Bruna Pontes, who was just 13 in 2019, reportedly 'excelled in an international astronomy project in Campos dos Goytacazes, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil', having spent three hours a day for a month observing images of astronomical objects. Shortly afterwards, she received a certificate from the American National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), which confirmed that asteroid 2013 EG44 would be named Brunapontes in her honour.
- 
- **Seventh-day Adventist Church members in Inter-America are currently holding 100 days of prayer**, writes Libna Stevens of *Inter-American Division News*, lasting from 1 February to 11 May this year. The initiative comes as part of the centennial celebrations commemorating the official organisation of the Division in 1922. Pastor Samuel Telemaque, Sabbath School Ministries Director and main organiser of the prayer initiative, says: 'God has been leading and guiding this church for so long, and because of His goodness . . . this prayer journey is about expressing implicit confidence in God's guidance for the next 100 years and beyond' – on the other hand, the possibility that Jesus will come within the next 100 years seems more likely by the day!
  - **Victims of the Colorado Marshall fire in Denver, Colorado are being assisted** by the Adventist Community Services team from the Rocky Mountain Conference, according to the North American Division Office of Communication. The 6,000-acre wildfire 'damaged or destroyed 1,270 homes and businesses and is considered the most destructive fire in Colorado history', having caused damages exceeding half a billion US dollars. The distribution centre 'operates seven days a week from a former Nordstrom department store', and W. Derrick Lea, NAD ACS Director, shared that the site has been extremely busy, with an outpouring of donations and 'more than 150 volunteers from all backgrounds and areas across the country . . . to serve between 100 and 200 family units daily'. Truly, this is the love of Christ in action!

International News is a regular column for MESSENGER that provides a brief snapshot of developments from the rest of our church around the world.

ANDREW PUCKERING

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# Sparks to light a fire – February

by Paul Smith

**‘For none of us lives, and equally none of us dies, for himself alone.’  
Romans 14:7, REB.**

I may not have money or beauty, and I may lack the possessions of others, but I do have one talent, and this gift is the hidden power of influence. This inescapable power of influence, and of being influenced, is one of life’s richest privileges, and at the same time an exacting responsibility. Each person has both a conscious and an unconscious influence on others, and there is a similar reciprocal influence of others on us.

John Donne, a seventeenth-century dean of St Paul’s, underlined this truth when he wrote: ‘No man is an island.’ No one is neutral.

Your soap (or some other fragrance)

perfumes the air I breathe; possibly your car fumes contaminate it. Your morning smile – even if I am a stranger – lifts my spirits, but a muttered curse would vex me.

We are either on the side of God or of the devil; either we support the forces that make for goodness in the world, or those that make for evil. No one can escape from this situation, any more than we can run away from our shadow on a sunny day. It is either a shadow of healing or of harm. God is aware of our choices.

About twenty years ago, a man drank so heavily that his friends warned him he was

endangering his health. He replied that he was only harming himself, and invited his friends to mind their own business. Approximately five years later he married, and as time went on he became afflicted with cirrhosis of the liver, had difficulty keeping a job, and was uninsurable. During his carefree life – his unmarried, drinking years – he was steadily damaging a girl he had not met and possibly harming children yet unborn.

Minding our own business is often an excuse for being selfish, for indulging ourselves or avoiding doing what should be done. It is tempting to live in the shade of the trees our fathers planted – but we should plant our own, not only for ourselves, but for our sons.

Phillips Brooks once said, ‘No man or woman of the humblest sort can really be strong, gentle, pure and good, without the world being better for it, without someone being helped and comforted by the existence of that goodness.’

If you enjoyed this reading, why not order the full book at [lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/sparks-to-light-a-fire/](http://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/sparks-to-light-a-fire/)?

## Graham Barham retires from ARM UK office; successor selected

Silver Spring, Maryland, 28 October 2021 – Adventist Risk Management, Inc. (ARM) today announced an upcoming change in leadership for the company’s United Kingdom office, which serves ARM’s clients in Europe, Africa and parts of Asia. The current regional manager, Graham Barham, recently announced his retirement, effective from 31 December 2021. He will be replaced by Giles Barham.

Graham Barham’s service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church spans 38 years on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. During his career he served a total of 17 years as auditor and later as treasurer of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Trans-European Division. He spent two years working as an auditor with the General Conference Auditing Service. After 11 years as treasurer of the Stanborough Press, Graham served as chief financial officer of the Review and Herald Publishing Association in Maryland, United States. Graham joined ARM’s St Albans office in 2014 as regional manager.

David Fournier, ARM’s vice president and chief client care officer, said, ‘I have appreciated working with Graham over the last several years and believe that he has led our team in St Albans effectively, while continuing to move our work forwards with positive relationships across Europe and Africa. Graham will be remembered for his quick wit

and keen intellect, always going the extra mile to meet the needs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.’

Graham will be succeeded by Giles Barham, who previously worked for ARM as an account executive from 2015 to 2019, representing ARM across Europe and Africa. He has also worked as assistant treasurer for the South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and associate treasurer for the Trans-European Division.

Giles received Bachelor’s degrees in business management and applied accountancy from the University of Essex and Oxford Brookes University respectively, as well as a Master’s degree in entrepreneurship from the University of Nottingham. He also holds Fellow Membership of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), in addition to a diploma in Insurance from the Chartered Institute of Insurance.

James Winegardner, ARM’s president and CEO, said, ‘Giles Barham will provide strong leadership and continuity as ARM seeks to grow our ministry to the Adventist Church in the territories served from the St Albans office. His experience uniquely qualifies him to excel in serving the Church from this chair.’

ARM’s office in the UK serves clients in Europe, Africa and parts of Asia, including the Trans-European Division, Inter-European Division, Euro-Asia Division, East-Central Africa Division, West-Central Africa Division and Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division. These six divisions of the General Conference include more than 10 million members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



Adventist Risk Management, Inc. is the risk-management and insurance company of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We provide risk-management services and insurance-product solutions to assist the Adventist Church in eliminating oversights that can lead to costly accidents. ARM has its corporate headquarters in Silver Spring, MD, and satellite offices in St Albans (England) and Brasilia (Brazil).

**Marilyn Sylvia Wilson-Cole (née George) (1962-2021) d. 30 September.**



Marilyn was born at Marston Green Hospital, Birmingham, on Sunday 25 March 1962, the first of five children of Philip and Irene George.

She was described by her mum as a quiet baby who would only cry when she was hungry. As the years went by, her parents noticed that, when the family went out anywhere, Marilyn was the only child to be found quietly and peacefully playing by herself. This quiet and thoughtful demeanour and disposition was a unique characteristic she maintained all through her life.

Marilyn attended Camp Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church with her parents, sister and brothers. In 1980 Marilyn and her brother, Clarence, accepted the Lord and were baptised at the old Camp Hill church. Marilyn was a faithful child of God and never lost her faith, no matter what trials came along in life. At Camp Hill she was part of the AY Singers, and appeared with the choir on *Songs of Praise* in the early 1980s. She was also a cast member of the play *The Witness*, which toured around the UK, and even took a trip abroad.

Marilyn attended Ladypool primary and Yardley secondary schools. She pursued and completed an Open University undergraduate degree in Social Sciences, and was awarded a diploma in Computer Science by the British Columbia Institute of Technology.

In 1989 Marilyn met Dr Dennis Wilson-Cole, and their relationship blossomed, resulting in marriage on 2 June 1991. Marilyn relocated to London, where they were blessed with the birth of their

daughter, Chantelle, in December 1993. Marilyn attended the Brixton church with her family, where she served as a dedicated deaconess.

In 2013 Marilyn and her family migrated to the beautiful province of British Columbia in Canada when her husband was offered a senior executive position. She attended the Westminster church, where she served as Sabbath School superintendent and supported her husband during his preaching ministry with children's ministry. Marilyn was blessed to have attended the world church's General Conference sessions in Toronto, Ontario (2000), St Louis, Missouri (2005), Atlanta, Georgia (2010), and San Antonio, Texas (2015). She even appeared on the cover of the church magazine, *Adventist World* (September 2015, international edition).

On 30 September 2021 Marilyn suddenly fell asleep in the loving arms of Jesus. She will be greatly missed, and is mourned by her husband, Dennis; her daughter, Chantelle; her sister, Gloria; her brothers, Clarence, Vincent and Julian; and many family members and friends in England, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Brazil, the West Indies and Canada. Marilyn is sleeping in full confidence of the return of King Jesus to reunite us.

DR D. WILSON-COLE

**Lawrence Beetison (1920-2021) d. 15 November.**

Lawrence (Laurie) was born on 31 August 1920 in Birmingham, the eldest of four boys. At age 14 he left school and became a grocer, working for his father, and in 1940 he met a young lady named Connie. In 1941 he enlisted in the RAF as a wireless observer and operator, and over the next five years was sent firstly to India and then on to



Burma. He had many tales to tell about his service years! When World War 2 ended, Laurie returned home and renewed his friendship with Connie, and in September 1946 they were married, celebrating their 70<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in 2016, three months before the death of his beloved Connie. In time, their marriage was blessed with three children: Ian, Andrea and Elaine.

Back home in 1946, Laurie joined the Birmingham Bus Company, where he worked until 1966, when, after enjoying a holiday in Weston-super-Mare, the family decided to move to Weston, to a house which became the family home until Laurie passed to his rest, aged 101. Although employed as a bus driver, he never owned a car, but was a familiar figure riding his bicycle around Worle, the area where they lived, and Weston-super-Mare, only giving up cycling at the age of 95!

In 1997, Pastor Islwyn Rees became the Weston church minister; and, on learning that some years previously Connie had had contact with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, he visited her. At that time Connie was having Bible studies with another denomination, but Laurie wasn't happy about it, and both Connie and Laurie welcomed Pastor Rees into their home. Bible studies followed, leading to them both being baptised on 25 April 1998. Thereafter they were loyal, much-loved and valued members. At church Laurie faithfully served as a deacon until well into his nineties, arriving early on Sabbath mornings to carry out his duties: making sure the hymn numbers were put up, putting water for the speaker, and counting the offerings each week, as well as going around the members with a smile and an encouraging word and giving visitors a special welcome. With the help of his eldest granddaughter, Natasha, after lockdown, Laurie was able to join services on Zoom on Sabbath mornings, and after the services he loved to stay online and chat with members.

The funeral service, taken by Pastor Rio Espulgar and Weston elder Len Sittou (a good friend to Laurie), together with Laurie's family, was followed by a private family service at Ebdon Road Crematorium. In a church filled with his family, friends, neighbours and church members, Laurie's service was a real tribute

to the happiness he had brought into the lives of all who knew him. Following the address and prayer 'The Last Post' was played, and, as the cortege left the church, the RAF Evening Hymn ('The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended'). Sincere sympathy is extended to his son Ian, daughters Andrea and Elaine, and their families.

Laurie now sleeps, awaiting the trumpet call of God and the call of the Life-giver, having believed Jesus' promise: 'I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.'

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**Notification of the death of Pastor Dennis Uffindell**

Dennis Uffindell was born on 15 February 1932 in Watford, Hertfordshire, and died on 9 December 2021 in West End, North Carolina, USA. He is survived by his wife, Julia, and three daughters, Jennifer, Sarah, and Mary.

Dennis began his ministry in England, including service with the VOP at Stanborough Park. He and his family moved to Newfoundland, Canada, in 1976, and then on to Ontario. He later served as Secretary to the Ontario Conference. From there he was called to Henderson, North Carolina, USA. In 1991 Dennis retired in West Bend, North Carolina.

PENELOPE UFFINDELL

Sunset

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

	Lon	Card	Noff	Edin	Belf
Feb 25	5.34	5.46	5.35	5.38	5.52
Mar 4	5.46	5.58	5.49	5.53	6.06
11	5.58	6.10	6.01	6.08	6.20
18	6.10	6.22	6.14	6.22	6.33
25	6.22	6.34	6.27	6.37	6.47

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