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Pastoral Ministry

The winter of our discontent



by Pastor Eglan Brooks, President of the British Union Conference

'Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious . . .' (William Shakespeare, *Richard III*)

The cost-of-living crisis is on everyone's lips. Whether it be energy or fuel costs, food or nappies, the cost of everything seems to have increased. News commentators tell us that many people living in the UK will have to make challenging choices: 'Do I pay the rent or buy food to feed my family?' 'Do I eat, or do I heat?' These are unpleasant but very real choices for millions of people in the UK.

It is estimated that a lot of businesses may close this winter. There is talk of capping prices on home energy bills, but as of the time of writing this is not the same for businesses. If business energy bills were to quadruple, as is predicted, how would many of them manage?

I was recently asked a question that is very close to home: 'How will local congregations manage their finances if their heating bills significantly increase this winter?' Will we still be able to provide a fellowship lunch for our visitors? How will our community food banks continue to operate when many major food banks are closing?

First, I would encourage you to turn to the Word as a church. In times of difficulty and challenge, Solomon encourages us to 'trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding' (Proverbs 3:5, NKJV). In times of crisis, we are to find the strength and courage, individually and collectively, to surrender to God and allow Him to lead in our lives. Our prayers should not just focus on our own needs. Here, at the British Union Conference, we pray for our territory's needs during our daily morning devotionals and invite God's presence to be with us as we lead in these post-pandemic days.

We want to thank our members for their faithfulness in returning

their tithes and freewill offerings, and for supporting ADRA's humanitarian work.

Second, as a charity, we are looking strategically at ways in which we can support our conferences to assist our churches. Adventist Community Services, under the leadership of Sharon Platt-McDonald, will roll out a programme of practical activities that will help our members and people in the vicinity of our church congregations. This initiative will address rising food costs and the real danger of hypothermia for those unable to use their heating as in previous years.

Lastly, as a corporate organisation, we are custodians of our finances, not only in our reporting, but also in our rationale for expenditure. One of our strategic priorities is to review our finances, including income, expenditure, assets etc. At the British Union Conference, we are blessed to have the benefit of the financial acumen of Wederly Aguiar, our Chief Financial Officer. Together with our Board of Trustees, we will exercise due governance to ensure that our decision-making addresses the current economic crisis. Like Joseph, we will act with foresight and identify how to operate prudently in the likely 'lean years' ahead while still fulfilling our mission. We will also provide guidance and support to our institutions and the five regions within our territory, particularly in relation to how best to make wise cost savings.

Economists predict that this year will be a 'hard winter' – the winter of our discontent. I trust, as we continue to place our faith in God, that we will also put in place compassionate measures to assist our members and the community. As we strategically review our finances, I believe, God willing, that the winter of our discontent will be made glorious.

'Do I pay the rent or buy food to feed my family?' 'Do I eat, or do I heat?'





From the editor . . .

Julian Thompson,
Editor

Dear Reader,

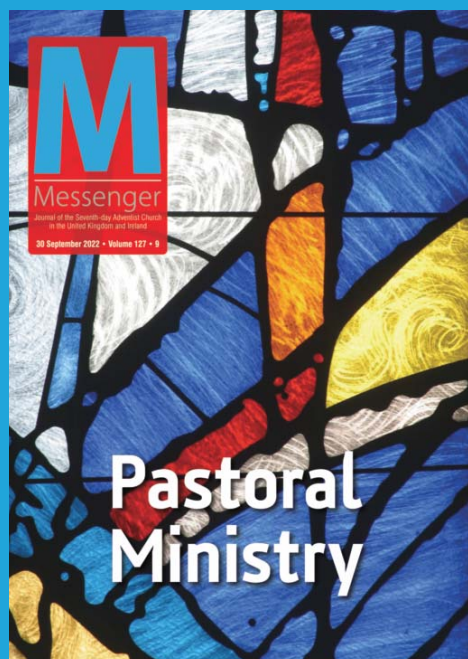
We, along with the rest of the country, were saddened to learn of the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on Thursday, 8 September. Many of us have never known life under another monarch, and, as Pastor Brooks observed in *BUC News*, 'It is hard to comprehend what this nation will be like without her. She was a monarch who gave her life in providing guidance, service and unwavering devotion.' As we reflect on what it means to live a life of service, we join the rest of the country in asking God to bless our new king, Charles III, and his queen consort.

Thank you to those of you who joined us at the Stanborough Press Open Day on Sunday 5 September, especially since this was the first physical open day that we have been able to host since the pandemic. It was a wonderful day with a great message from Pastor Louis Torres, insights on how to write from many of our local authors, and, of course, lots of great deals. As shared during our round-table discussion, if you or someone you know is interested in writing for one of our many projects, don't hesitate to contact us at editor@stanboroughpress.org.uk.

Given that Pastor Appreciation Day is not too far away, on Sabbath 8 October, we thought it would be appropriate to do a feature on pastoral ministry. In this edition of *MESSENGER* you will hear from several pastors – from some who are studying at Newbold and beginning internships to others who have been in ministry for many years. If you're not a pastor already, it is hoped that this edition of *MESSENGER* will give you some insight into what it means to think like one!

We are also excited to introduce a new 'sermon of the month' initiative we are trialling for the first time. It will feature a message preached within the British Union by a BUC minister, so do take the time to scan the QR code and check it out. The first sermon featured is a message by Pastor Marcel Ghioalda on the subject of boundaries.

I am pleased to present you with the September edition of *MESSENGER*; in it, I hope you will find challenge, hope, and the knowledge that, though things are difficult, God is still leading.



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Remembering Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

by Clive Malcolm

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the longest-reigning sovereign in the history of the British monarchy, died at the age of 96 while at Balmoral Castle on 8 September. An official statement from Buckingham Palace, released shortly before 6.30pm the same day, said: 'The Queen died peacefully at Balmoral this afternoon. The King and the Queen Consort will remain at Balmoral this evening and will return to London tomorrow.'

Queen Elizabeth II was the only reigning monarch most of us had ever known, a constant presence in an ever-changing world. Sadly, that constant presence has come to an end. As the nation mourns the Queen's passing, we have an opportunity to reflect on a few aspects of her life which made her one of the most loved and respected monarchs in British history.

Queen Elizabeth's 70-year reign as head of state was far from smooth. She became Queen during a period of great hardship in the aftermath of the Second World War. Furthermore, each decade that followed brought challenges, most notably holding together the union of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Commonwealth and her own family. It begs the question of how she held it together and maintained composure during her 70-year reign.

Elizabeth II began her reign on 6 February 1952, following the sudden death of her father, King George VI, who, like her, found himself unexpectedly made sovereign (after his brother, King Edward VIII, abdicated in 1936). However, it is clear that, from an early age, she thought deeply about her position in society. She accepted that she was indeed privileged, but chose to use her privileges to serve the nation with humility.

The Queen was respected and admired internationally. We all know that you cannot force people to respect you; you have to earn the people's respect. Elizabeth II earned the respect of the people of Great Britain. She gained the nation's trust and affection despite her flaws, and became the nation's matriarch, a grandmother whose comforting words brought hope to millions during the most unsettling moments in British history over the past 70 years.

Despite her friendly persona, the Queen painstakingly guarded her opinions, and rightly so. There must have been many occasions when people sought her views on sensitive political matters, subtly attempting to catch her off-guard, but were disappointed. Her saving grace was to listen attentively to others and think carefully before speaking. In his address to Parliament following the Queen's death, the former prime minister Boris Johnson said that she played a 'role that only she could fulfil because . . . only she could be trusted to be above any party-political or commercial interest'.¹

Her Majesty was well-known for making people feel at ease and had a good sense of humour. She surprised the world by participating in a James Bond spoof with the actor Daniel Craig for the Olympic Games in London. Recounting his story in Parliament, Boris Johnson said he had informed her that, shortly after the opening ceremony, 'the leader of a friendly Middle Eastern country seemed to believe that she had jumped out of a helicopter in a pink dress and parachuted into the [Olympic] stadium'.² Continuing, Mr Johnson spoke of 'her equal pleasure on being told that she had been a smash hit in her [televised] performance with Paddington Bear' (the animated storybook character) at Buckingham Palace during the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June.

In 1947, on her twenty-first birthday, in a speech broadcast on the radio from Cape Town, South Africa, the young princess made a lifetime pledge to serve the Commonwealth. She said, 'I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong'.³ Accepting her limitations, she ended her speech with the words, 'I shall not have strength to carry out this resolution alone unless you join in it with me, as I now invite you to do: I know that your support will be unfailingly given. God help me to make good my vow, and God bless all of you who are willing to share in it'.⁴

The princess's speech became the hallmark of her future reign. Exercising her Christian faith, she called on God to help her 'make good' her vow – in a world of broken promises – and invited the Commonwealth

nations to help her achieve this lifelong ambition. Whether or not she achieved all her goals is debatable. However, what is most important is that she tried; she did all she could to improve and maintain close relations with the 56 member states of the Commonwealth. Her efforts did not go unnoticed. Paying tribute to the Queen, Commonwealth Secretary-General, Patricia Scotland, said, 'Her Majesty loved the Commonwealth, and the Commonwealth loved her. During her reign, she travelled more than any monarch in history, visiting every part of our family of nations. Her devotion to duty was only matched by her skill as Head of the Commonwealth of Nations, always a generous host and consummate diplomat'.⁵

Internationally, beyond the Commonwealth, Queen Elizabeth II was affectionately known as 'the Queen' and played a quiet role in helping to build friendly relationships between nations, such as post-war Germany. Analena Baerbock, the German foreign minister, said on Twitter, 'Germany remains forever grateful that she stretched out her hand to us in reconciliation after the terror of the Second World War'.⁶

Boris Johnson said, 'Relentless though her diary must have felt, she [the Queen] never once let it show, and to tens of thousands of events she brought her smile and her warmth'.⁷ Two days before her death, true to form, the Queen appeared smiling for the photographers as she formally asked Liz Truss to become her fifteenth prime minister. It was as if she had been waiting to perform one last duty: to ensure we have a prime minister to lead the country out of the current economic crisis. Queen Elizabeth II was true to her words: 'My whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service.' God blessed her with a long life that she devoted to serving the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth of Nations.

As Christians, we can learn lessons from the life of Queen Elizabeth II. First and foremost, she had an overwhelming sense of duty and was fully committed to a life of service. She listened attentively, treated others respectfully, and had a good sense of humour and empathy with the nation, comforting millions of people during times of great uncertainty. Finally, as a devout Christian she knew her limitations, and sought God's help and the help of those around her to overcome challenges. May Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II rest in peace. May the peace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ guide and protect King Charles III and the Queen Consort.

¹Live television broadcast from Westminster, BBC, 9 September 2022

²Ibid.

³<https://www.royal.uk/21st-birthday-speech-21-april-1947>

⁴<https://www.royal.uk/21st-birthday-speech-21-april-1947>

⁵<https://thecommonwealth.org>

⁶<https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/queen-elizabeth-death-world-leaders-reaction-1.6576315>

⁷i (newspaper, dmg media), page 5, 9 September 2022



The Queen was respected and admired internationally. We all know that you cannot force people to respect you; you have to earn the people's respect.



More than a gesture?

by Pastor Adrian Peck,
Lecturer in Pastoral Studies at Newbold College



So, I have a confession to make. I am not a great enthusiast when it comes to partaking in Valentine's Day – not least because of the over-commercialisation and the manipulative price hikes. Buying a box of chocolates and some roses to accompany the mandatory card feels like partaking in a living cheesy cliché. The last time my wife and I agreed to go out for a Valentine's Day meal was when we were dating. For me, being surrounded by other

couples who knowingly do precisely what you're doing somewhat suppresses any romantic vibe. There is a sense in which we collectively spend upwards of £1bn around 14 February in the UK simply because we are told to.

My wife has a well-worn riposte to my grumpy reluctance. It goes something along the lines of, 'Well, if you bought me flowers (or whatever) during the rest of the year, that would be fine . . . but . . .' Now it's time for another confession. I don't buy my wife flowers as often as I should: so the advantage of an institution like Valentine's Day is that it acts as a reminder to do something good that might otherwise be forgotten. I like to think I express appreciation and affection for my wife on more than just Valentine's Day, and in ways other than those dictated by that day's traditions. But when you get caught up with life, worrying about paying the next utility bill or putting the bin out, Valentine's Day means that you'll be reminded to make at least one romantic gesture once a year.

Are there parallels to be made with Pastor Appreciation Day?*

Through my years as a district pastor, I found that some of us have the spiritual gifts of encouragement and affirmation. In every church in my care, I had members who told me regularly that they were praying for me. Others would extend a word of thanks for the work I was doing, or regularly make offers of support and help. There were cards, letters and emails containing kind messages.

But maybe some of us need a special day to appreciate our pastor. Not that Pastor Appreciation Day is about being forced to offer a commendation or two, but rather as an aide-mémoire that, as much as our pastors give of themselves to us, perhaps we need to give a little in return; after all, they're human beings too.

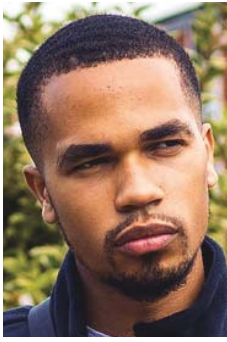
Now, no one becomes a pastor with the intent of receiving praise and kudos. Indeed, part of a pastor's training is to learn how to deal with the expected criticism and negative feedback that comes from within and without. But a little affirmation goes a long way.

There is something bigger here to consider, however. Ideally, our church communities will foster cultures where affirmation and encouragement naturally infuse all of our relationships. The church will be a place where comments like 'well done,' 'good job,' and 'I appreciate what you're doing' are delivered appropriately and often. Even more than that, it can be about recognising that congregations – you and I – can participate with God in helping shape a pastor's call and ministry just as much as our pastor can do the same for us.

After all, even Jesus needed affirmation: 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased' (Matthew 3:17, NRSV).

***Pastor Appreciation Day is on Sabbath 8 October.**





What church means to me

by Adam Best,
Newbold College Theology student

Do you find church boring? Well, whether you do or not, I pray that my thoughts here will help to revolutionise how you see church.

'Church' (*ekklesia* in Greek) means 'called out ones'. It is a word that speaks not of a building, but rather an assembly or

community. We are a community of believers whom God has called out from darkness to light, and from bondage to freedom, into the family of God. In light of God's love for us and acceptance into His family, we should treat everyone with the love and unity that exist in a family. How

else will the world know we are Christians? Just because we have been accepted into God's family, it does not mean that we are to function as an 'exclusive we'; rather, we should be an 'inclusive us'.

We are to reach out in order to invite in. Paul and Jesus set us great examples: they became 'all things to all people' (see 1 Corinthians 9:19-23) and 'mixed and mingled' among them (see Matthew 9:9-13) – which, by the way, is really fun!

We should remove all barriers and obstacles and make it as easy as possible for people to come to Jesus.

I believe that we are here to give the world hope where there is none, to create spaces where people can receive help and healing, and where belonging and acceptance are paramount. We are to show the world a better way of doing life, a way where selfishness is forsaken and love reigns supreme.



Internship aspirations

by Pastor Jesse Samuel

My name is Jesse Samuel; I was recently appointed as the pastoral intern for the Croydon and West Croydon Seventh-day Adventist churches. I'm thankful to God for allowing me to serve in ministry in this part of the vineyard. Ministry has never been a right for me, but rather a privilege. Therefore, I look forward to this opportunity to serve.

At this point in my Christian journey, I have had the privilege of learning from various experienced pastors and elders both in England and the USA, from whom I have learnt a lot. In this new role, I have the opportunity to learn from Pastor Royston Smith, Pastor Blake and the leadership teams. Working with them will help me to refine the personal, administrative and complex situational skills needed to pastor with grace.

I am learning fast, and one of the things I have been most impressed with is the importance of simple outlined processes. As someone who

cares for detail, this will only expand my mind for new possibilities in the future in how best to serve the community.

I have a passion for evangelism and church growth, and believe that any success in ministry stems from a personal active prayer life. With this in mind, I aim to approach this new endeavour anchored in prayer, knowing that God will guide, direct, and lead me in the right way. This is particularly important, as I know full-time ministry will present many new challenges that schools and universities can't prepare you for. As a result, the practical side of ministry will allow me to see the bigger picture of how I can both learn from and impact those I am in contact with.

As a young minister, I have seen and experienced first-hand the freedom that one can experience in Jesus. In my two new churches, I hope to develop a relationship with the youth. I'd love to help them on their journey of knowing God. With all that is happening in our world today, I believe it is essential for our young people to know, experience and see the freedom that is in Christ.

I look forward to this new journey that God has placed me on, and I know He will continue to order my steps as I grow in ministry.

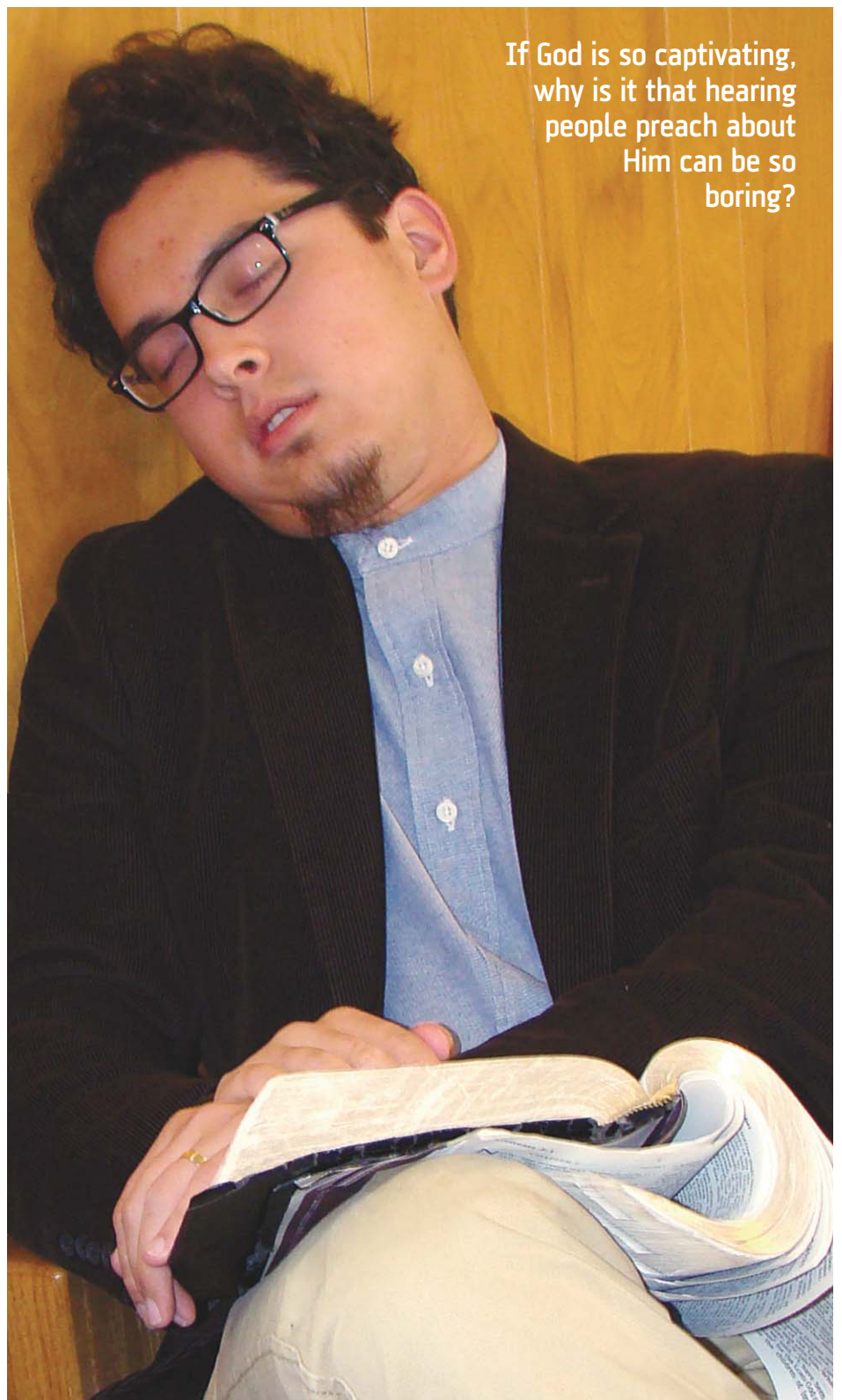
The art of preaching

by Pastor Jonathan Holder*

Everyone has an opinion on preaching because everyone has experience of preaching. Our opinion of preaching has been shaped by the sermons we've been blessed to listen to, or forced to endure; the sermons we have enjoyed preaching, or struggled to make it through, resenting every minute of the experience. Some people would happily do away with preaching altogether because they believe there are better and more enjoyable ways to spend their worship time; while others – and I find myself in this camp – get excited every time the preacher rises to speak. But, unfortunately, sometimes the excitement does not last long. The truth is, it should be inspiring and exciting to hear someone speak of God (Acts 13:42-44). Yet, if we are honest, this is not always the case during our worship services. If God is so captivating, why is it that hearing people preach about Him can be so boring? I think we have lost sight of what preaching can be. So I want to share with you just a few reflections on the art of preaching.

Firstly, preaching should be an encounter with God. It is not an encouraging talk, a telling off, words of wisdom, or even a call to action. It is an opportunity for both the preacher and the listener to see God a little more clearly, to recognise and identify how God is active in the world. In the first sermon in Acts (Acts 2:14-36), this is exactly what Peter is doing: letting the people know what God is doing in the world. On this basis, preaching will always be interesting, because no one who encountered God was ever bored. Moses (Exodus 3), Jonah (Jonah 4), Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1) – the preacher first meets God in the text or passage, and then has a chance to share with others what they have seen of Him. This is the key. If you stand to preach or speak and have not been excited by what you have seen of God in the text, why would we expect it to excite anybody else? We should not preach what hasn't moved us first. Sometimes being moved by God raises more questions than answers. Preaching is not about finding neatly tied-up answers that settle all questions; sometimes preaching should raise questions. Preaching should always be an activity that pushes you to think more deeply about God.

Secondly, preaching requires preparation. There is no area of life where preparation does not assist in making whatever you are producing better, and the same is true of preaching. We have to expect that God will be with us in our preparation, not just in our preaching, and that preparation will make the preaching better. A common piece of advice is



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that we should aim to spend 'an hour in the study for every minute in the pulpit'. While that may not always be possible, good preaching takes this seriously. Preparation is not optional; it is necessary. You are giving not only a word to the congregation in your preaching, but an offering to God. Therefore, our preparation matters.

Finally, and most importantly, preaching is not just the work of the preacher. It requires 100% of the preacher and 100% of God. Every time I stand to preach, I am reminded of the weakness of words: how there really is no power in how I have formed them, or what I plan to say, but that the power only comes

from God. When I stand to preach, I am entirely dependent upon Him to make something of my meagre offering, and I can trust that He will. My prayer is always, 'God, don't waste this opportunity to speak to Your people; You lead in this preaching moment.' God is the One who calls me to preach. God is the One who equips me to preach. God is the One that uses my preaching. I simply bring the best I can, and allow God to do more with it than I could ever have dreamed.

God makes the art of preaching.

*Pastor Jonathan Holder is currently undertaking a PhD in Homiletics at Baylor University.



At the Crossroads

This message was preached by Pastor Marcel Ghioalda at Newbold Church on 29 January 2022.

'If we are to live together, we need to learn to discern the voice of God.'

- Marcel Ghioalda



Follow this link or scan the QR code above to see Marcel Ghioalda preach:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=k7IBgu5xkA4>



Great expectations

by Pastor Nathan Stickland

Maybe you've seen the picture graphic of a sequence of swing designs. With each picture there is a

statement of a certain person's depiction of the expected outcome. I've seen at least two of these picture sequences in circulation. They start with what the customer described, and then proceed to add various other mildly amusing distortions of what the customer was expecting. These might include how the structural engineer interpreted the design, how the sales team marketed the design, and what was built for the customer. Each variation I've seen ends with the same picture statement: 'This is what the customer actually needed.'

I'm not going to ponder on the game 'Chinese whispers', or on the inevitable challenges of the build process, but I do want to consider the expectations of different people in the life and work of a church pastor.

Our world church has set aside 8 October 2022 as Pastor Appreciation Day. This is an annual prescription, seemingly on the second

Sabbath of October. Some Christian organisations seem to make the month of October a pastor appreciation month. An article I read once juxtaposes the idea of one month in 12 against the idea of one sabbath in 52 as being the designated occasion of appreciating the pastor; instead, it suggested that every Sabbath or month should be a pastor appreciation occasion. (A note to my own church district: I'm not feeling unloved or underappreciated! I'm just using the upcoming Pastor Appreciation Day as an opportunity to reflect on expectations. I hope to work with you for many years to come, but that's a subject about length of tenure, something we should maybe ponder another time!)

So what are the expectations of a church pastor? And I think it would be good to recognise that when someone feels called to pastoral ministry, they may be just following a dream, striving for a status symbol, or hoping their spiritual life will get back on track by doing religious things every day. This is where a time of the internship and being a licensed minister becomes a proving ground for an employing body to see evidence of someone's calling, the exercise of competency, and their

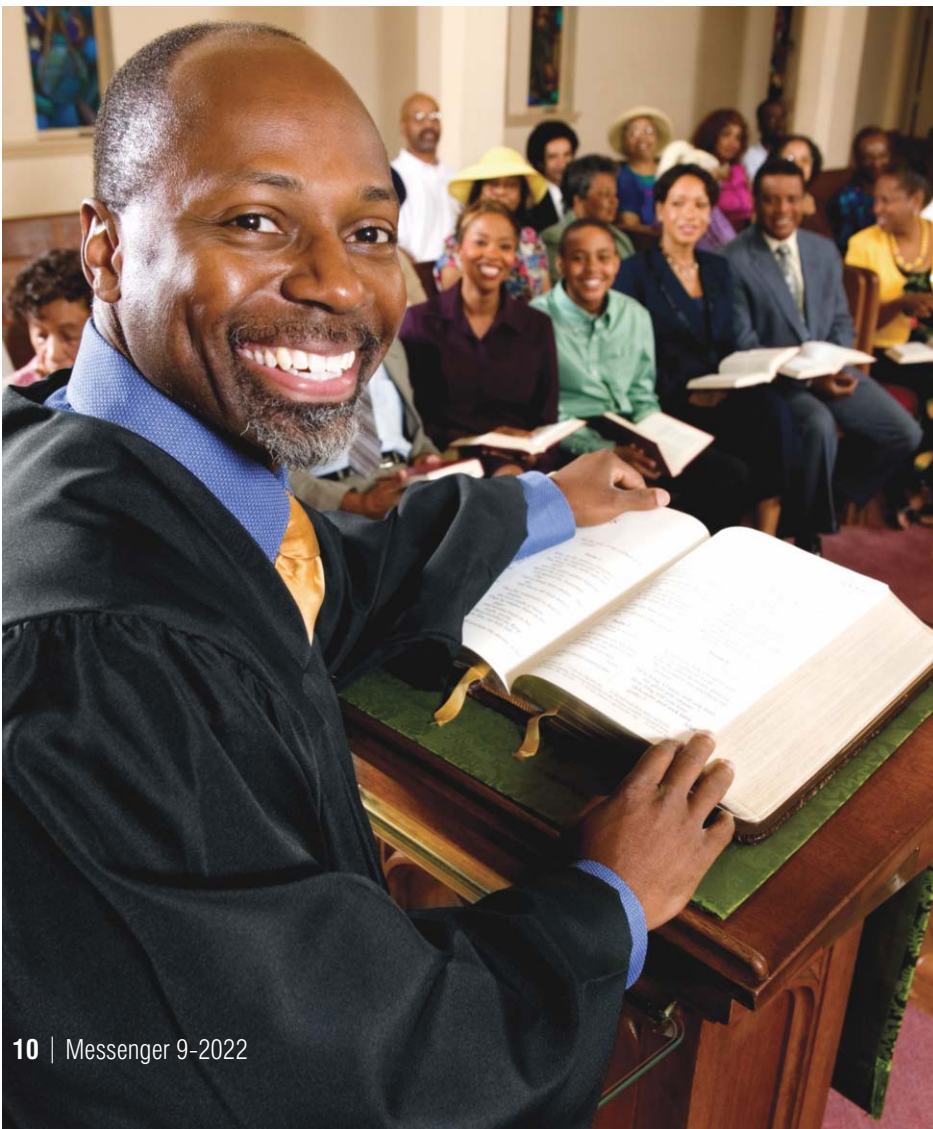
ability to humbly grasp the lasting influence of their leadership.²

While some people roll from school to college to employment as a pastor, others enter pastoral ministry later in life. Both roots come with an element of sacrifice. While there is a slight percentage variation in the salary factor within our church organisation according to the level at which you are called to serve, it's not a career that is entered into based solely on financial prospects. I had one lecturer at college tell us that some members will think we can never be as good as the previous pastor, but that we are better than the next one!

In recent years, I have enjoyed the opportunity of some studies and leadership with a selection of colleagues from across our union and others in Europe. While I don't have the space to deal with all the associated ideas we discussed, I do want to touch on the expectations imposed on those employed in pastoral ministry. If you have had more than one pastor at any church you have attended, you will realise we are not all robots, programmed to act and behave in the same way with exactly the same skill set. This is to be celebrated, and there can be a seed of opportunity that we would fail to have if every pastor were exactly the same.

Whether you appreciate your pastor on a given day or not, I encourage you to challenge yourself in terms of your expectations of him or her. Of the apostle Paul, Ellen White wrote, 'Had the leaders in the church fully surrendered their feeling of bitterness towards the apostle [Paul], and accepted him as one specially called of God to bear the gospel to the Gentiles, the Lord would have spared him to them. . . . The same spirit is still leading to the same results. A neglect to appreciate and improve the provisions of divine grace has deprived the church of many a blessing. How often would the Lord have prolonged the work of some faithful minister, had his labours been appreciated! But if the church permits the enemy of souls to pervert the understanding, so that they misrepresent and misinterpret the words and acts of the servant of Christ; if they allow themselves to stand in his way and hinder his usefulness, the Lord sometimes removes from them the blessing which He gave' (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 417, 418). She even goes on to suggest that God allows some pastors to die in order to bring them rest from the brethren. Ponder that thought!

With various expectations from all quarters, I ponder this thought: might there be a day when we value pastors for who they are not, rather than wishing they were someone they are not? Like the lines of a song, 'You can't always get what you want, But if you try sometimes, well you just might find, You get what you need.'



¹Examples can be found at <http://www.fressadi.com/blog/the-art-of-building/design/what-the-client-wanted/>.

²<https://adventist.uk/fileadmin/shared-data/resources/ministerial/The-Role-of-the-Adventist-Pastor.pdf>



My church – embracing the new normal

by **Dr Mandela Thyoka**, medical doctor and elder of Doncaster Seventh-day Adventist Church

The 'new normal' looks to become a long-term trend, so it is time that the church embraces virtual means of

connectivity. The church's digital presence takes various forms, from simple Zoom looks to highly functional church websites, live-streaming platforms, social media pages and church management suites. These digital platforms allow member-to-member and church-to-world interactions and provide invaluable outreach opportunities.

So, how can my church embrace the 'new normal' in the digital sphere? The church's first and foremost response to the changing world is to be innovative and progressive in embracing change, not just doing business as usual.

Firstly, as church leaders, we should seek members' views through discussions and/or surveys; this will help us to ascertain which digital solutions our members think benefited them most during the lockdown. A needs assessment targeting the lessons learnt and innovative practices that worked can be used to keep the church relevant and future-proof. Those in leadership should seek to integrate the younger ones into the life of the church by making use of their digital skills. In this new digital world, young people are key to helping us implement the digital transformation needed.

Some denominations used innovative methods to continue worship services at the peak of the pandemic. Having been granted an official temporary 'restricted service licence', one even used 'drive-in' church service events where people could park outside the church premises and listen in their cars using their FM radios. This was made possible by waiving the usual 60-day notice period for licence applications, allowing for quick responses to the applications.

I observed that one of the significant benefits of the uptake in video conferencing was increased attendance at meetings other than divine service. Seeing so many online attendees at mid-week prayer meetings, church board meetings and business

meetings was refreshing. It seems to me that continuing to use video conferencing even after lockdown will help increase attendance and participation. Another implication of the new normal is the ease with which we can facilitate online or hybrid seminars and events. Some examples include the South England Conference's first-ever virtual camp meeting and the British Union Conference's Adventurer and Pathfinder e-honours programme.

We would also do well to learn from some of the challenges that virtual worship brings. One of the most notable problems was *Zoom bombing*, where unwanted guests would intrude on video conferences posting inappropriate content. Of course, the solution lies in stricter security measures and more vigilant hosting practices.

While virtual church has brought many benefits, we must note that the advent of

online worship has also created ongoing challenges for local church attendance as members exercise their ability to browse sermon archives and livestreams from churches worldwide.

I am passionate about embracing the 'new normal'; as churches, we must be innovative and progressive in embracing change. We can't do business as usual. To remain relevant in contemporary society, we must embrace change.

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Table 1. Types of Social Media

(adapted from <https://blog.hootsuite.com/types-of-social-media> – accessed 09/08/2022)

Category	Examples	Use
Social Networks	Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn	Form hubs for social interaction
Media sharing networks	Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube	Share photos, video, and live video posts
Discussion forums	Reddit, Quora, Digg	Find, discuss, and share news, information, and opinions
Bookmarking and content curation networks	Pinterest, Flipboard	Discover, save, share, and discuss new and trending content and media
Consumer review networks	Yelp, Zomato, TripAdvisor	Find, review, and share information about places and services
Blogging and publishing networks	WordPress, Tumblr, Medium	Publish, discover, and comment on content online
Social shopping networks	Polyvore, Etsy, Fancy	Spot trends, follow brands, share great finds, and make purchases
Interest-based networks	Goodreads, Houzz, Last.fm	Connect with others around a shared interest or hobby
'Sharing economy' networks	Airbnb, Uber, Taskrabbit	Advertise, find, share, buy, sell, and trade products and services between peers
Anonymous social networks	Whisper, Ask.fm, After School	Not of great benefit

Table 2. Online Video Conferencing Tools (Thyoka, M., 2022)

ZOOM	Free with paid version, multi-rooms
CISCO	Paid
GOOGLE MEETINGS/HANGOUTS	Free with paid version
SKYPE	Free with paid version
MS TEAMS	Free, requires Microsoft account
JITSI	Free
GOTOMEETING	Free (30 DAYS), with paid version
ADOBE CONNECT	Free (90 DAYS), with paid version
PUKKA TEAMS	Paid
FACEBOOK MESSENGER	Free with paid version
GOTALK	Free with paid version



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Discipleship – a tested and proven retention strategy

by Pastor Ebenezer Daniel*

There is a general perception that the attendance of teens and youth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is steadily declining, and there are a number of studies which prove this point. The post-pandemic period has exposed the absence of young people in our churches. While this is true, Manchester Southern Asia Seventh-day Adventist Church (MSAC) is defying this trend.

Some of the statistics from MSAC are worth considering: 33% of the baptised membership are under 25, and 13% of the regular attendees are children under 12. Therefore, nearly 50% of the church attendees are under 25. This is not a recent occurrence, but has been consistent over the last decade. This is something amazing, and it is worth exploring the factors that contribute to this growth and retention.

More than 88% of the baptised members of MSAC in the church membership records attend every Sabbath and are actively involved in some form of church ministries. On an average Sabbath, 13% of the attendees are visitors. Another interesting statistic is that over 95% of children raised in MSAC accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and have joined the church through baptism before 16. In the past two years (2021-22), the local church has organised seven baptismal services, with two more planned by the end of 2022.

What is MSAC doing differently to yield such a great harvest and high retention of its membership?

From the very inception of this church, discipling children has been the centre of church activities. It was an unwritten goal of every parent to ensure that their children remained in church and made a decision for Christ at an appropriate age.

What keeps young people in church is creating an environment that feels like home where they are surrounded by family, while also creating opportunities for them to be an integral part of day-to-day church life. The majority of the children have a passion for church music. Almost every child plays some instrument or has developed vocal skills. Visitors to MSAC are surprisingly thrilled to see a large number of musicians in the church. The music department is led by youth under 25 years old. Some children choose to use their IT skills to support the AV team and diaconate team. On a given Sabbath, it is evident that the church services are well led and supported by the teens and young people. The local leadership also develop teaching and preaching skills among the young people to groom future teachers and preachers. The current church board has four young people who are under 25. The activities of the Personal Ministries and AYS departments engage the teens and young people in community projects such as feeding the homeless, participating in the health expos, literature distribution, nursing home visitation and singing outreach.

Both the church leadership and parents took the task of educating the young minds with the word of God. Over the years, the result of this work has blossomed. MSAC has a strong Sabbath School and Adventurers and Pathfinder club, with the majority of its leaders and teachers being youth and teens. The local church has a high number of Master Guides. The club, which is oversubscribed with teachers, provides staff to sister churches in Manchester.

MSAC is not free from challenges. One practical challenge MSAC faces is the generational gap in worldviews between first-generation migrants (parents) and children

who were born and raised in British society. The youth department of this year (2022) is focusing on 'building bridges'.

Currently, MSAC is witnessing an overwhelming arrival of new migrants. In January 2022, 24 new migrants joined the church family. Almost every month a new family joins the MSAC family. Now MSAC must create space and opportunity for the new arrivals to settle and grow. The care and support they originally received from Manchester South now must be shown to these new immigrants. MSAC remembers the command God gave to the Israelites after they left Egypt, which is recorded in Deuteronomy 24:17, 18: 'Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this' (NIV).

Since June 2021, the pastoral team has been organising baptismal classes every Sunday, and every quarter there has been a baptismal service. This year (2022) MSAC formally launched the 'Discipleship Ministry'. Every young person who was baptised over the years now has a mentor whom they meet to go through the discipleship handbook with once a week. Some of the testimonies from the young people are amazing and heart-touching. It is helping these young minds to be grounded in the word of God, to develop personal relationships with Jesus Christ and a passion for the mission. The mentors have been able to guide these young people when they are faced with practical day-to-day life challenges in their Christian walk.

One of the strengths of MSAC is providing a strong social life to its membership. Meeting outside of the Sabbath day is a common thing for MSAC. The church uses every opportunity, such as birthdays, anniversaries, cottage prayer meetings, day trips, camps and baptismal services to come together and fellowship. Social meals are an integral part of MSAC life.

Mission is the main reason the church exists, but retaining those who have been saved through evangelism cannot be neglected. MSAC's story reminds us that discipleship ministry is a powerful retention tool for every Seventh-day Adventist church.

*Pastor Ebenezer Daniel has critically studied the history, growth and retention strategy of MSAC over the years. Further details of this study can be shared on request.



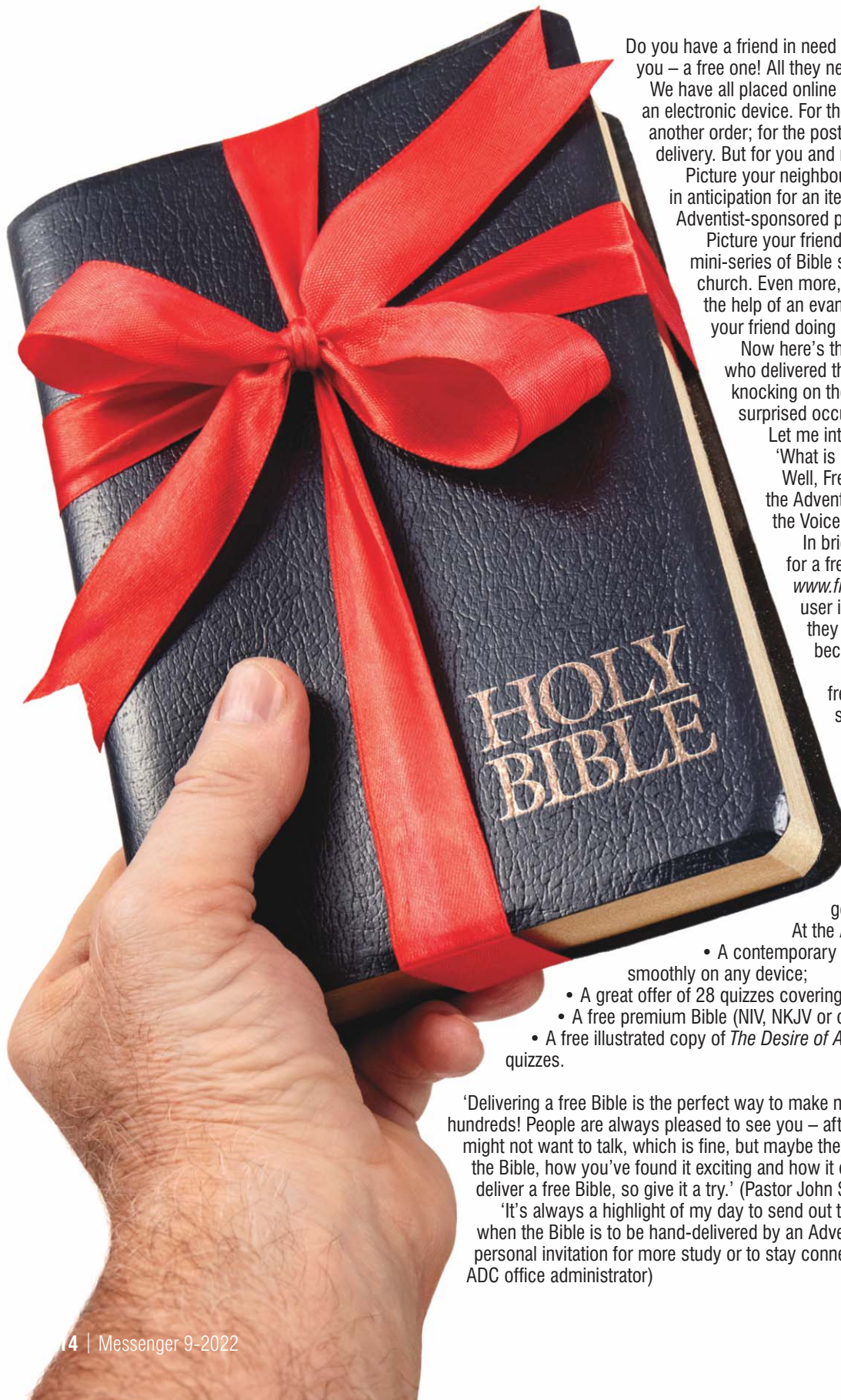
**‘Now it’s up to you. Be on your toes –
both for yourselves and your congregation of sheep.
The Holy Spirit has put you in charge of these people –
God’s people they are – to guard and protect them.
God himself thought they were worth dying for.’**

Acts 20:28, The Message



FreeBible, your mission opportunity – Adventist Discovery Centre

by Christian Salcianu, ADC Director



Do you have a friend in need of a Bible? We have the perfect offer for you – a free one! All they need to do is complete ten online quizzes!

We have all placed online orders, whether for a pizza, a dress, or an electronic device. For the packers at the warehouse, it was just another order; for the postman or postwoman, . . . just another delivery. But for you and me, that package made our day!

Picture your neighbour or colleague at work waiting in anticipation for an item. And imagine that item is an Adventist-sponsored product.

Picture your friend, to get that product, going through a mini-series of Bible studies – the fundamental beliefs of your church. Even more, imagine the studies being done without the help of an evangelist, missionary or pastor. Imagine your friend doing it all on their own!

Now here's the best part – what if you were the one who delivered this order? What if you were the one knocking on the door and delivering the package to a surprised occupant?

Let me introduce you to 'FreeBible'.

'What is FreeBible?' I hear you ask.

Well, FreeBible is an evangelistic tool powered by the Adventist Discovery Centre (formerly known as the Voice of Prophecy).

In brief, it works like this: a person searches for a free Bible online and lands on www.freebible.uk. Two clicks later, the same user is engaged in one of the quizzes. Once they complete ten core subjects, they become eligible to receive one.

We want to partner with you: you can freely advertise FreeBible, engage in and sponsor a FreeBible campaign in your area, and go and deliver the Bibles yourself.

Thousands have done it.

The Bible echo is unmistakable here: 'Who will go for Us?' (Isaiah 6:8, NKJV.) The biblical answer follows naturally: 'Here am I! Send me.' Or, in Adventist parlance, 'I will go.'

At the ADC we provide:

- A contemporary cross-platform website that runs smoothly on any device;
- A great offer of 28 quizzes covering the fundamental beliefs of our church;
- A free premium Bible (NIV, NKJV or other versions that we can source);
- A free illustrated copy of *The Desire of Ages* for those who complete all 28 quizzes.

'Delivering a free Bible is the perfect way to make new contacts. Believe me; I've delivered hundreds! People are always pleased to see you – after all, you're delivering their prize. They might not want to talk, which is fine, but maybe they will: in which case, you can talk about the Bible, how you've found it exciting and how it can change people's lives. It is easy to deliver a free Bible, so give it a try.' (Pastor John Surridge, BUC Executive Secretary)

'It's always a highlight of my day to send out the Bibles. Still, it's even more satisfying when the Bible is to be hand-delivered by an Adventist member. The postman won't give a personal invitation for more study or to stay connected, but you can!' (Audrey Wolfram, ADC office administrator)



by Sharon Platt-McDonald Director for Health, Adventist Community Services & Women's Ministries

Faith and well-being – part 2

Spirituality and wider health impact

The previous issue of *Enhancing Health* featured an introductory look at faith as a protective factor aiding in psychological, social and physical well-being. We conclude this focus with some further research in this area. First, here's a testimonial.

While undertaking a study on how Christians cope with illness, I interviewed a number of individuals who had experienced or were currently living with long-term or terminal illness. One of the questions I asked them was: 'Did your faith have any impact on your illness journey?' One lady, beaming with confidence, replied: 'My faith saved my life!' Her emphatic comment unfolded with an account of being a breast cancer survivor. She had gone through a 'harrowing' time, as she described it, yet her deep conviction was evident as she shared her story with passion, concluding that her connection with God was the key factor in her survival. This she attributed to daily prayer, affirming Bible scriptures, the support from her church family, and the knowledge that God was ultimately 'in charge' of her life.

She isn't the only one to attribute health and healing to one's faith, as research continues to uncover.

An article published by the University of Aberdeen carried the title: 'Spiritual Needs Improve Care Practices'.¹ Study findings by the research team at the university led them to formulate a unique initiative looking at spiritual care within health and social care services in Scotland.

Reporting on the implementation outcome, the article states, 'The initiative has contributed to better practice for the NHS, social care and religious communities following research carried out by Professor John Swinton.'

Further commenting on the study findings, Professor Swinton says: 'Spirituality is a broad concept. For some people it relates to religion, but for others it is much broader, including things such as meaning, purpose, hope and love. The Forum is one place to build

communities where each of us can truly belong. Whether you are religious or not, spirituality can be the beginning of belonging.'

Vibrant Life magazine published an article in their March/April 2021 edition, titled: 'Sacred Science – The Impact of Spirituality on Health'.² The article, by Rachel E. Gabose, presents a compilation of research findings highlighting what *Vibrant Life* magazine explains to be 'the amazing connection between spirituality and your health'. The following are some facts presented in the article:

- **Prayer** – Approximately 1 in 2 Americans pray about their health.
- **Prayer in practice** – Approximately 1 in 2 doctors have prayed with a patient.
- **Prayer impact** – Participating in prayer and other religious activities boosts the body's levels of infection-fighting white blood cells and T-cells.
- **Religion** – 65% of patients think their doctor should know about their religious beliefs.
- **Beliefs** – 10% of doctors regularly ask about their patients' religious beliefs.
- **Spiritual care** – 122 US medical schools offer coursework on the role of spirituality in healthcare. This showed a steep rise from three medical schools in 1992 to 110 in 2012.
- **Happiness** – More than 250 studies have found that religious people are happier than non-religious people.
- **Longevity** – People who frequently attend religious services live 37% longer than those who don't attend.
- **Church attendance** – Going to church prolongs a person's life span as effectively as taking drugs that reduce cholesterol.
- **Sleep quality** – Religious people have better sleep quality than their less religious peers.
- **Mental health impact** – People who state that religion or spirituality is very important to them have a 75% lower risk of suffering from major depression.
- **Alzheimer's research** – Study findings demonstrate that Alzheimer's patients who were nonreligious lost their mental function more quickly than patients who were highly religious.

An article in *Psychology Today* magazine titled: 'How to Incorporate Faith into Our Health Care System'³ highlighted the importance of integrating faith and healthcare. The author, Wayne Jonas MD, explains how healing works by implementing four practices that he highlights as follows:

- **Creating universal faith-health action tools** – Taking into account medical goals and faith practices of patients.
- **The Personal Health Inventory** – Exploring how the spiritual question of what matters most to a person connects with that person's behavioural health and applicable social determinants of health.
- **The HOPE Note** – This is a set of questions to assist in developing a health-life plan for each person, incorporating both physical and spiritual needs.
- **Community well-being coordinators** – Joining healthcare and faith-care to include addressing health-related social needs specific to a given community.

Let's celebrate the holistic impact of faith.

Good health!

¹Health & Spiritual Care, Research, The University of Aberdeen (abdn.ac.uk)

²'Spiritual health' – *Vibrant Life*

³'How to Incorporate Faith into Our Healthcare System', *Psychology Today*





Creating a culture of evangelism – part 3

by Dr Kirk M. Thomas,

Evangelism, Missions, Publishing, Personal Ministries & Sabbath School Director of the British Union Conference

We are privileged today to live in a multicultural world – indeed, there are numerous Bible verses on cultural diversity. We can all learn a lot from each other’s cultures, but, as believers, we are to live as one in Christ. Living in faith together is about more than being accepting of different races and cultures. Living in faith as a body of Christ is about loving God, serving Him and loving people.

God encourages cultural diversity, as Isaiah 56:6-8 says: “Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to attend to His service and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, every one who keeps the Sabbath so as not to profane it, and holds firmly to My covenant; even those I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.” The Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, “I will yet gather others to them, to those already gathered” (NASB).

According to Reggie McNeil in his book, *A Work of Heart*, God uses culture to shape the heart of His leaders – and, by extension, His people. This suggests that culture can be studied and appreciated as a heart-shaping saga in our life stories. We were not born in an insulated hollow. We enter the world as part of the human family with all its experiences. Language, race, geography, demography, and economic status influence and shape our world. They also define our connectedness to it and our distinctiveness from it. Culture gives us a beginning point helping us to understand ourselves. It delivers the necessary ingredients for life development and societal skills.

McNeil posits that ‘we breathe the culture through our minds and psyches, as we breathe the air through our lungs. We enter a story already underway, because culture is the story of a particular time and people.’ There is overwhelming biblical evidence that God uses culture to shape the hearts of His leaders and His people, whether we speak of Moses, Jacob, Abraham, the New Testament church or even the church you attend.

God uses cultural factors to prepare us for life-changing events and spiritual assignments. Just think of Paul, our premier missionary: his culture included Jewish, Roman, and Greek cultural conditioning, which helped him to minister contextually. Jesus Himself used cultural lessons teaching the importance of treating all with love. Think about the story of the Roman centurion in Matthew 8:5-13; he was Roman, but Jesus answered his request all the same. We are all, at least in part, products of the cultural forces within and around us; but our relationship with Christ should affect every part of our culture. Where Christ and culture collide, He takes pre-eminence.

Recently, I have found myself reflecting on the question, ‘Why are



there monocultural and ethnic churches in the UK?’ If the answer is that we need to reach a particular people group, then how can we use this strength to minister to the communities where the group/church is located? What changes are necessary to be a true community church? I’ll use two of my own experiences to illustrate. As I arrived at one church, I was assigned a young lady who was supposed to sit by me and translate while the service was being conducted in the native language. Well, the young woman was a vibrant worshipper, and she got into the spirit of worship, and I was forgotten and spent much of the morning doing my best to acclimatise to the language and at least catch the essence of what was being said. Then, to my surprise, when it came time to preach, I was asked to speak in English because everyone could understand!

On the other hand, when I visited another church, from the time I entered the door my family was greeted warmly by two members who spoke to us in English. They then escorted us to the English-speaking Sabbath School for adults, and the children to their English-speaking class. The service itself was conducted in both languages. I noticed a remarkable occurrence – a family was assigned to a visitor to take care of them for the entirety of the service. They also sat with them for lunch. Wow – what a positive experience! What a great way of turning culture, one of our church’s strengths, into a legacy of mission!

There is need for reflection. Inclusive multicultural faith must not only be preached about, but it must be seen and practised. Let’s use what is one of our strengths to create a culture of evangelism that will transcend language and ethnicities. As spiritual members we must exercise significant stewardship in our response to culture. Remember, Paul shaped the early Christian movement to be cross-cultural. Jesus revolutionised the concept of God and changed the world. Now it’s our turn. Let’s do it!

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Just in at the Press!

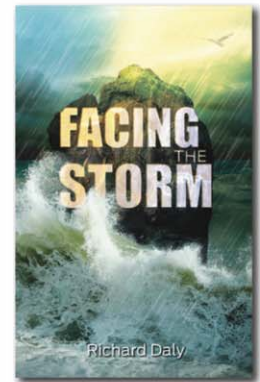
The Stanborough Press has published some exciting new titles over the last few months, and they've started arriving back from the printers – why not take a look?

Facing the Storm

by Pastor Richard Daly

A very encouraging spiritual book to help you face any storm of life with confidence.
lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/facing-the-storm/

£5.95 plus p&p

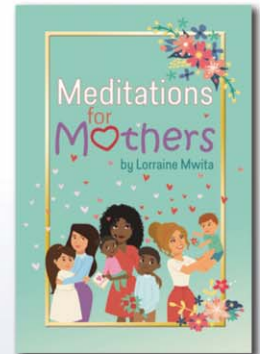


Meditations for Mothers

by Lorraine Mwita

This is the perfect devotional book for any new mother, and it would make an excellent gift.
lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/meditations-for-mothers/

£6.95 plus p&p



Storm-proof Love

by Gabor Mihalec

Discover what you can do now to help your marriage thrive under pressure!
<https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/storm-proof-love/>

£5.95 plus p&p



Coming soon . . .

Whisper it softly, but more books are on the way from the printers as this issue of *MESSENGER* goes to press! They're not available for purchase yet, but we're so excited about them that we think you deserve a heads-up.

The Difference a Day Makes

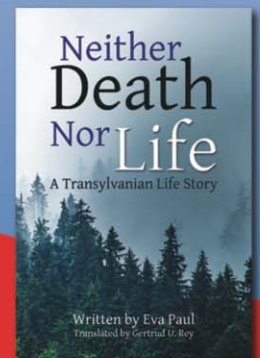
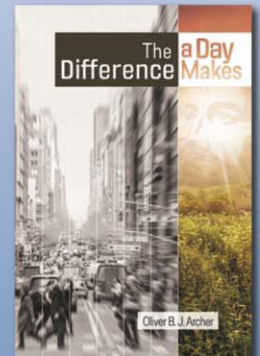
by Pastor Oliver Archer

The Sabbath is more than just a commandment – it's a relationship. You'll learn principles in this book that you can share with fellow Christians, and maybe even discover something for yourself.

Neither Death Nor Life: A Transylvanian Life Story

by Eva Paul

The incredibly exciting and faith-affirming true story of how Hans and Susi searched out the truth of the Bible and experienced miracles amid persecution, sickness, war and Communism in the heart of Transylvania.



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Reflections on enditnow Emphasis Day

by Sharon Platt-McDonald

BUC Director for Women's Ministries, Health & Adventist Community Services

The enditnow initiative is a global drive to raise awareness and advocate for the end of domestic violence around the world. It was launched in October 2009 in partnership with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and the General Conference Women's Ministries Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Explaining its scope, the following statement gives further insight: '**enditnow is the most important stand** the Seventh-day Adventist Church has ever taken regarding violence against men, women and children. Through this campaign, more than 15 million Adventist church members – men, women, and children – are expected to create a global movement that will be mobilised within their own communities, where each person will actively work to create awareness and share solutions on ways to end this global problem.'¹

Each year a different focus is made on varying aspects of abuse, its impact and solutions. 'Abuse of Power' was the theme for the 27 August 2022 enditnow Emphasis Day.²

Reflecting on the efficacy of the enditnow initiative since its inception, and, in particular, this year's focus, I was encouraged by the response to the materials produced for *Abuse of Power*.

One pastor, having received the enditnow materials on Sabbath morning 27 August, decided to change his sermon for that day to reflect the enditnow material he had just received. That's how seriously he took this year's focus.

In a brief interview, Dr Jude Jeanville – Ministerial Coordinator for Area 6D, London, and pastor of the Tottenham Lighthouse and Barnet churches – shared his reflections on *enditnow* and abuse.

Sharon-Platt McDonald – What is one key concern regarding the impact of the abuse of power?

Jude Jeanville – Abuse of power overrides the best interest of others and focuses on self-interest or personal gain at the expense of others. Abuse in any form is a violation of the Golden Rule, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' It violates the obligation to be 'our brother or sister's keeper'.

SPM – What lessons can we learn from this year's enditnow focus?

JJ – Christians are in an advantageous position to avoid the abuse of power because of the theological framework and understanding to which they subscribe. The author of the reading aptly described the genesis of the abuse of power, which started in heaven when Lucifer attempted to place himself above God. Pride, covetousness, hurt and a perceived deficit are roots of abuse, which in turn become a justification for violating or infringing on the rights of others.

Sadly, abuse of power is seen in the home and in the church. Abuse, whether spiritual, financial, parental, spousal, child, or gender-based (or abuse of anyone else), stems in the main from a theology of inequality – a misunderstanding of the nature of males, females and their God-given roles. Consequently, the image of God, which is characterised by unity, oneness and equality, is not manifested in human relationships. Therefore, in their thinking, many form relationships with an inherent notion of inequality, which breeds disharmony and disunity.

SPM – From the excerpts that you have read on enditnow, what do you see as an important message for our church?

JJ – From what I have read, we have a solid base for being serious and intentional to end abuse now. The abuse of women and children will not end if we do not *begin* to name the sin of inequality which has its roots in a demeaning theology of women.

How can the church conscientiously say, 'End it now' and say no to violence when we perpetuate patriarchal and misogynistic policies? . . . We have to do more than talk about it: the church must name the sin of discrimination against women and stand on Scripture.

SPM – There are several action points on the enditnow website that give insight into how to change the culture of abuse. Is there one that stands out for you?

JJ – I was particularly impressed with the action point which states: 'Examine church policies and practices to be sure none foster or encourage hurtful or discriminatory attitudes towards women, children, or men.' This challenges our theology of women and the practice of a two-level playing field for issues such as ordination.

SPM – You have undertaken extensive research into historical and current perspectives on issues pertaining to women and the church. Please give our readers an insight about your upcoming publication, titled Justice for Women.

JJ – My book refutes the arguments the church uses to substantiate a less-than-equal place for women, and calls on the church to apologise for not giving women equal participation and opportunity: to avoid the reputation of misogyny. After all, Joel 2:28 expressly declares, 'And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.' Ellen G. White said, 'There are women who should labour in the gospel ministry. In many respects they would do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God.' – *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, pp. 325, 326. **Women who do such labour, especially full-time, are to be paid fairly for their work from the tithe. 'The tithe should go to those who labour in word and doctrine, be they men or women.'** She added, '**Seventh-day Adventists are not in any way to belittle woman's work**' (ibid., p. 324).

I call upon the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be consistent and inclusive; women's gifts should equally make room for them, just as their male counterparts' gifts do for them. The church does not have a theological basis to limit women. Church policies should be in harmony with Scripture and not culture.

A call to action

There are many ways in which our membership can get involved with raising awareness, creating safe, nurturing environments, and offering support to those who have experienced abuse. An enditnow article submitted to the Adventist News Network, titled 'Because We Care',³ provides the following tips as a starting point:

- Visit www.enditnow.org; there, you will learn not only about the depth of the problem, but also about how you can help get your own

local church members involved.

- Present sermons and workshops to the congregation on issues of gender-based violence relevant to your community. Offer to present age-appropriate information in local schools.
- Examine church policies and practices to be sure none foster or encourage hurtful or discriminatory attitudes towards women, children, or men.
- Provide ongoing support to a local women’s shelter or other organisations benefiting victims of gender-based violence.
- Care for hurting people in our church. Be non-judgmental. Develop support groups.
- Help raise awareness. Share materials about gender-based violence with your church. Please continue to pray for our church response to this key issue, as we strive to reflect God’s love to all in our sphere of influence.

¹<https://www.enditnow.org>

²Adventist Women’s Ministries | enditnow Emphasis Day

³enditnow® Initiative—Because We Care | Adventist News Network



Tottenham Church taking enditnow to the streets, supported by their pastor, Dr Jude Jeanville

Maybe, when we think of millions, it's too big a number to conceive, and it makes us even more detached.



Strangers

(based on 1 Kings 17)

by Catherine Anthony Boldeau

She shuffles slowly as she cleans the tiny two-storey house that she calls home. Her son sits on the ground outside. He is limp and gaunt and tired . . . very tired. He coughs, violently. There is no moisture in his throat, no moisture in the air. The famine has occurred because of the drought, and he and his mother will be the buzzards' next victims.

The stench of death hasn't arrived yet, but the flying undertakers have already taken up residence.

She emerges from their small dwelling place. Her face, like that of her son, is tired, but there is still strength in her eyes; and, although her gait is slow, it is steady.

'Mama, am I going to die?'

Tears well up in her eyes. There is a lump in her throat.

'God will provide,' is her response.

In the distance, she sees the figure of a stranger – or maybe it's an apparition. She hasn't eaten for a while,

and perhaps her eyes deceive her.

She returns to caring for the boy, and the figure becomes more defined. It's a man: bearded; old; worn. Despite his advancing years, his back is upright, and his strides are strong. He approaches.

'Water . . . may I have a drink of water?'

She turns to grant his request.

' . . . and a piece of bread?'

She stops in her tracks.

It was hospitality to give water to a stranger – but bread, in these hard times . . . ?

'I don't have much in the house. Just a little oil and some flour. Our last meal . . .' She felt the lump rise again.

'Give some to me first, and your oil and flour won't run out throughout the famine.'

The woman obeys, and the promise is fulfilled.

In times of crisis, especially economic crisis, we all become territorial. It's normal and natural. We all have a responsibility to care for our families, whether ageing parents, young children, or even distant relatives. We spent the last two years at home with children and spouses. The last two years we have concerned ourselves more about ageing parents and vulnerable relatives. It could be conceived that the last two years have created tighter family units.

However, in doing so, have we lost the ability to feel care and concern for those who aren't as close to us? Are we only concerned about our 'flesh and blood'? Are we no longer 'our brother's keeper'?

During the height of the pandemic, giving to charitable organisations soared. We watched Captain Tom walk miles around his garden with the aid of a frame, raising millions of pounds. Corporate organisations were generous to voluntary organisations, giving excess stock as well as money. Even the furlough scheme introduced by the Government could be seen as an act of generosity.

However, it appears that we now have generosity fatigue, even though the needs in the world are even greater than during the pandemic. In the Horn of Africa, there are 19 million people affected by the worst drought to occur in the region for 40 years. In Pakistan, 33 million people are affected by floods.

Maybe, when we think of millions, it's too big a number to conceive, and it makes us even more detached. But these are real people with livelihoods that are destroyed, homes washed away, schooling ending, relatives lost. They are dying from water-borne disease or wasting away due to lack of food.

Yes, they are strangers. Yes, we don't know their names or their backgrounds. But what we do know is that they are suffering.

Even in your times of crisis I would invite you to be like the widow of Zarephath and support strangers who are also suffering. Please give to ADRA today, and help us to help some of the world's most vulnerable people: www.adra.org.uk/emergencies.

Please note that monies donated to this fund will be used for all emergencies.



Lodge Causeway Church, Bristol: 'To God be the glory; great things He hath done!'

Heaven rejoiced with us on 27 August as six souls were won for the Kingdom of God. It was a Spirit-filled and very special Sabbath at Lodge Causeway Church in Bristol. Friends and families witnessed the baptism of

six precious souls. After a time of searching and study, those six candidates – Talita Valente, Melissa Zuu-Elliott and her husband Maurice Elliott, Paul Nicholas Cann, Brandon Lee Anderson and Tanaka Erasmus Bofu – decided to take the step to follow Christ all the way;



Left to right: Elder Ruth Ohman, Paul Nicholas Cann, Pastor Deyvid Batista, Talita Valente, Brandon Lee Anderson, Maurice Elliott, Melissa Zuu-Elliott, Tanaka Erasmus Kudakwashe Bofu and Elder Des Mills



and, as he baptised them, Pastor Batista said of Melissa and Maurice, 'It is their second marriage in two months for this couple: first they married each other, and today they are marrying Jesus.' The candidates wanted the church and their family to rejoice with them as they made this very important and significant step. The day was made even more special by the rendition of musical items performed by friends and family of the candidates and the delivery of a dynamic sermon titled 'Serve, Endure, Trust'. Ana Arama, our speaker for the day, spoke about the challenges that lie ahead, but implored the candidates to take up their cross and follow Jesus, who will give them strength to endure whatever challenges lie ahead. The divine service and the baptism ended with the presentation of gifts to each candidate and a wonderful Sabbath lunch as church members welcomed them into fellowship.

ELDER DES MILLS (PHOTOS BY CHARLOU MEDES)

Reach out to bring in

'The Way' campaign held in Southall from 9 to 23 July, presented by Elder Benhle Nyathi and Pastor Anthony Fuller, resulted in a baptism where Rachael Gould, encouraged and supported by her grandmother Maureen Gould, dedicated her life to the Lord.

On the Sabbath of 30 July, following Southall's outreach work in the community (which involved street cleaning and health checks), the Mayor of Ealing, Councillor Mohinder Midha, and her team graced the Southall congregation with their presence. It was wonderful to host the mayor, who, having personally attended their health check effort on 3 July, thanked and commended the church for its work in the community. In her delivery, Councillor Midha spoke passionately about the importance of love.

'I will go' has been Southall Church's theme for 2022; pray for them as they continue to 'reach out to bring in'.

SOUTHALL COMMUNICATIONS TEAM



The Mayor of Ealing Councillor Mohinder Midha and consort with Pastor Tsehaye Berhanu and First Elder Esther Bisho



Rachael Gould with Pastor Tsehaye Berhanu

BAPTISMS

A first for Basildon Church

Sabbath 16 July was a day of great rejoicing for the Basildon church family. Our building overflowed to capacity, with friends coming from several neighbouring churches and some from as far as Nottingham to witness and support this special baptismal service.

For the church family, it was a special occasion for two reasons.

1. Our baptismal services are normally held at Chelmsford Church, our sister church. However, on this occasion we had purposefully planned to avail ourselves of a portable pool. On that hot Sabbath afternoon, it was favourably positioned in our back garden.
2. It was our Pastor John Melki's final Sabbath in Basildon, a culmination of serving the two churches over ten fruitful years. This special baptismal service was our way of showing our thanks and gratitude for his unparalleled service.

Five candidates were presented to the church: Elizabeth Bruce, Dr Lendaba Mangena, Meshelemiah Oluikpe, Sindiso Mkwazazi and Niobe Waldron.

We praise and thank the Lord for His abundant blessings, not just on the newly baptised members, but also on all those who attended this memorable baptismal service.

BASILDON CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS TEAM



Above: baptismal candidates
Below: Sister Elizabeth Bruce was accepted by profession of faith and flanked by Pastor Melki and Elder Marc Sabadin



Pastor John Melki baptises Dr Lendaba Mangena



... and Meshelemiah Oluikpe



... Sindiso Mkwazazi



... Niobe Waldron

First post-COVID-19 baptism at Bristol Central

Sabbath 26 March 2022 was an exceptionally high day in Zion when Sue and Shawn said yes to Jesus and, to the sound of joyful singing and rousing amens, gave their lives to the Lord. We were excited to learn that Sister Charmaine Myers had been influential in supporting Sue during the pandemic and encouraging her to continue her



Shanti Masih (1947-2022)
d. 27 June.



On 21 March 1947, Sister Shanti was born into the Mall family of six, three boys and three girls. She was fourth in line. (They included Sosan, Chaman, Samuel, Shanti, and twins Solami and Daniel.) They lived in the northern part of India, in a village called Chandusuja in Punjab. In 1965 she became a pastor's wife when she married the dashing young Pastor Dalbir Masih, and in 1974 they accepted an overseas call to minister in the UK and soon afterwards established the first Seventh-day Adventist Indian church in the UK (Langley Church). She was heavily involved in the Dorcas meetings and activities, and contributed through her love for sewing,

knitting, crocheting, and cooking. She was one of the first members of the Langley choir and a devout deaconess.

Sister Masih was a quiet and soft-spoken woman, but she made friends in the community and throughout the different churches. She was well known for her hospitality and her excellent cooking skills. She would feed people at her home on Sabbath days and other meetings, for which she was admired and loved. Sister Masih had four children who were the strength of her life, and she raised them in a loving Christian environment.

During the latter half of her life, Sister Masih had health issues, primarily with her heart. Doctors had advised the family several times that there was nothing else they could do. However, to the doctors' amazement, she pulled

through each time, reminding the medical staff not to worry and that God was in control. In 2022 she had more challenges with her health. She still happily celebrated her 75th birthday and 57th wedding anniversary; a few days later, in the early hours of 27 June, she fell asleep in Jesus.

On Monday 11 July, a hot sunny day, two white horses and a beautiful white glass carriage carried her white coffin, adorned with pink and white flowers, to the funeral service at Camp Hill Church in Birmingham. As a tribute to Sister Masih, her family and friends wore her favourite colours, pink and blue. Pastor Don McFarlane, an honoured friend of the Masih family for 44 years, delivered the sermon. Present at the celebration of Sister Masih's life were Pastor Richard Jackson (former NEC president) and Pastor George

Kumi (current NEC president). Also present were Pastors Ian Sweeney (TED), Cyril Sweeney, Anoop Gill and Emanuel Bran (current NEC executive secretary).

The family would like to thank all those who stood by them during their time of sorrow, and the various church families, the ministers' families, and the close communities.

The funeral service of the late Sister Shanti Masih can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/EullNpcAy6k>.

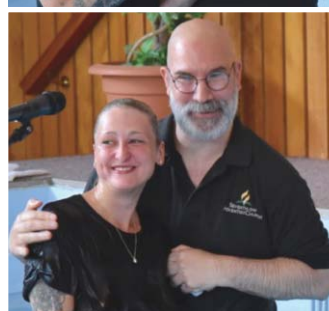
ALF MASIH



Grantham baptism

Ewelina Cnota was baptised in the Grantham church by the resident pastor, Solon Kyriacou, on Sabbath 30 July. Originally from a Polish and Catholic background, she had decided to change the course of her life and follow in the footsteps of her friend, who had been baptised some while ago. A fellowship lunch followed the service, attended by Grantham members and well-wishers from other Adventist churches.

MIKE COWEN



Bible studies with Pastor Anthony Baugh from New Heaven Seventh-day Adventist Church for some time. Shawn's testimony was very moving; he described his COVID-19 ordeal and how he developed life-threatening complications. He was shocked to learn that if he had stayed one more day before seeking medical intervention, he could have succumbed to the virus. 'With all that I have been through,' said Shaun, 'I just wanted to get baptised.' Glory be to God!

BRISTOL CENTRAL COMMUNICATIONS TEAM



Messenger

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	London	Card	Nott	Edin	Belf
Sep 30	6.41	6.53	6.44	6.51	7.02
Oct 7	6.25	6.37	6.28	6.33	6.45
14	6.10	6.22	6.12	6.15	6.28
21	5.55	6.07	5.56	5.58	6.12
28	5.41	5.53	5.42	5.41	5.56

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