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## Messenger

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# I Will Go

**'We have to repent of our pessimism . . . , our low expectations, our cynical unbelief that, although the church may grow elsewhere, it cannot grow among us. Fiddlesticks!**

**'If only we could gain a fresh and compelling vision of Jesus Christ, incarnate and crucified, risen and reigning, bestowing the Spirit and coming again! Then we would have the clarity of purpose and strength of motive, the courage, the authority, the power and the passion for world evangelisation in our time.'**

*John Stott*



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# Searching for good news?

by Pastor Ian Sweeney, BUC President

Before the advent of news channels that broadcast 24 hours a day, 7 days of the week, there was a time when television news coverage was not so freely available. I grew up when television news was scheduled at 1pm, 6pm and 10pm for 30-minute slots. The 10pm news on ITV was supremely important in our household; my father always required hush in the living room when the news coverage was on.

How different today. I can watch news 24/7 from various countries and regions across the globe, including Russia, China, India, the Middle East, the USA, Europe, France and more.

While I have been something of a news junkie, I have started to wean myself off watching so much news, and this started around March 2020 when the impact of COVID-19 hit the UK and Ireland. I began to realise that my constant diet of news coverage was negatively impacting my mental health. The daily coverage of rising death tolls, unemployment and redundancies does not go without consequence. A 2011 study published in the *British Journal of Psychology* (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.2044-8295.1997.tb02622.x>) found that 14 minutes of watching bad news leads to increased anxiety, a sad mood, and a tendency ‘to catastrophise a personal worry’. An anxious state of mind does not lend itself to overall good health. Due to the relationship between our mental health and our immune system, it follows that the more stressed we are, the more our immune system is weakened (<https://www.nextavenue.org/too-much-news/>).

Jesus understood this, and 2,000 years ago He asked whether any of us can ‘live a bit longer by worrying about it’ (Matthew 6:27, GNT). Of course, the answer is no: worry does not positively contribute to longevity, but rather, as we are discovering, actually works against it.

When Jesus began His ministry and preached in His home town of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30), His chosen text was from Isaiah 61, where it is recorded in verses 1-3 (GNT):

*‘The Sovereign LORD has filled me with his Spirit.*

*He has chosen me and sent me  
To bring good news to the poor,  
To heal the broken-hearted,  
To announce release to captives  
And freedom to those in prison.  
He has sent me to proclaim  
That the time has come  
When the LORD will save his people  
And defeat their enemies.  
He has sent me to comfort all who mourn,  
To give to those who mourn in Zion  
Joy and gladness instead of grief,  
A song of praise instead of sorrow.  
They will be like trees  
That the LORD himself has planted.  
They will all do what is right,  
And God will be praised for what he has done.’*

The news that Isaiah and Jesus brought was positive and uplifting, as people were to be healed, freed, saved, comforted and made victorious. Isaiah and Jesus were sharing the Gospel – which, by definition, is ‘good news’.

As Seventh-day Adventists, God has called us as a church to share the news 24/7. The news we have to share, however, does not lend itself to rising levels of anxiety and fear, for ours is good news – the Gospel of Jesus the Christ.

While news is important, as it keeps us informed as to what is happening in the world, we are largely powerless to change anything in the news. However, the beauty of the good news we are called to share is that change occurs and lives are changed for the better.

As part of our world church mission initiative, ‘I Will Go’, let us be involved in ways to share the good news to all people in our neighbourhoods. The good Lord knows, if ever people were in need of some good news, that time is now.



David Neal, Editor

# Fiddlesticks!

*acknowledgement that, although we have made plans as good stewards, we need to be open to the Holy Spirit fine-tuning or adding to our mission priorities.’* In other words – the days of the prescriptive straight-jacket uniform plan is over.

Not since the 1970s have I come across the word ‘fiddlesticks’. As a child I heard it used often as a curt dismissal of a nonsensical idea or plan. It’s clear to me that the author of the quote on the front cover included this word intentionally, to robustly challenge and refute a prevailing mindset: that God’s kingdom in the UK and Ireland cannot grow. Quite the opposite, he suggests – it is possible if we find a renewed vision of Christ and His Spirit.

Across my desk recently came the document ‘I Will Go’, which outlines the global strategic focus for the Seventh-day Adventist Church for the years 2020-2025. Without the surrounding fanfare that a General Conference session usually provides, it was quietly launched on the Hope Channel and various social media platforms last July. I confess, I missed the launch due to other things closer to home pre-occupying the mind.

The purpose of such a plan is to tell us where we are on the journey of the church (particularly in relation to mission), where we should be, and how we are going to get there. ‘Strategic plans come from the business world,’ is the response; ‘we are God’s church – why do we need a strategic plan or focus?’ The point is a fair one: so how does it work in the spiritual realm?

Take a journey through *MESSENGER* archives and you will find the outline of many a plan to ‘move the work forward’, be it at the Mission, Conference or Union level. Usually launched at a session, they came and went with good intent. All were unquestionably prompted by the Holy Spirit and sought to follow His will. Often prescriptive and uniform by nature, and long before anyone had ever thought of ‘key performance indicators’, one cannot help but wonder, in hindsight, if there was actually any space and freedom for the Spirit to act.

As I read through the 10 objectives of ‘I Will Go’, this line at the end caught my attention: *‘to be defined as the Holy Spirit leads’*. That’s refreshing, I thought, and a line you certainly won’t find in any UK top 100 company plans. It’s similar to talents: all people have natural talents, but it is not until the Holy Spirit is invited into the life of the individual that a talent becomes a gift for His purpose. Every believer is given a spiritual gift (or multiple gifts). In the same way, a strategic plan remains just that – until the Holy Spirit is invited in to prompt, challenge, confirm, guide, continually hover over.

In no way was this line added as an afterthought, says Office of Adventist Mission Director Gary Krause: *‘This is an*

The other noteworthy dynamic of this plan is the introduction of key performance indicators (KPIs). In terms you and I understand, ‘Who is responsible for each outcome?’ – a question that needs to be asked at every level of the church. From the local level to the global, and all in between, to hold us accountable to each other, we need KPIs to ensure that our plans are on the right track.

Over the next page are all 10 strategic plan objectives, and it’s worth taking a prayerful look: particularly if it leads to a new and fresh vision of Christ. Perhaps we need to also take a new and fresh look at Matthew 28 again.

## An appeal

Here and there I hear the response, ‘No, I’m not taking the vaccine because I don’t trust it’. Just as I have, you have heard the many objections. Some are understandable, with others far off the mark. Perhaps the most legitimate we need to address is the concern that the research and development of the vaccine has been far too quick. In normal times it would take up to five years before being approved for use.

But we are not in normal times: we are in the middle of a global health emergency; one which has affected our lives in ways previously unimaginable. Our activities are all disrupted because of the virus. Because one in three people who have the virus have no symptoms, we know not if we are spreading, or if the person we meet is a spreader. As I write, the matter of increasing social distance from two to three metres has been raised. The immediate and long-term effects of social isolation have yet to be determined, but they are a medical emergency currently submerged under another medical emergency.

Given the nature of the health emergency, it is both personally wise and a civic duty to take the vaccine. While the matter remains one of personal choice, we are being implored for the good of all to be vaccinated. For me it is the Romans 13 principle at work: *‘Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established’* (13:1, NIV).

It is understandable that some may distrust the Government and giant bio-tech companies. There’s a mixed-to-bad press out there on most. But it’s worth remembering that smallpox has been totally eradicated, and measles, diphtheria, whooping cough, and hepatitis B very much reduced, due to vaccine technology & distribution. The development of vaccines has been the result of science, medicine and data working together to determine that they are safe to be released and, in most cases, with few negative side effects. That’s worth thinking about when someone peddles a theory without reasonable evidence (a conspiracy theory).

I am confident that, in the development of the COVID-19 vaccines, the same methodical principles are at work. This is strengthened by the reality that no bio-tech company or university (at least in the West) is going to risk reputational damage by ‘cutting corners’. The speed of the research and development is due as much as anything to the unique spirit of collaboration currently taking place between scientists, medics and statisticians, all provided with huge funding to develop what we need.

‘Good health does not come in a bottle,’ has been the ethos of Adventists for over a century and a half; and we Adventists are blessed as we continue to live by this wise value: a value that is important as we realise at this point that the vaccine will have its limitations – not least requiring an annual or bi-annual booster. Living a lifestyle that will help keep the immune system as effective as possible in fighting the virus is common sense. But during the time of this health emergency, I would see the vaccine as a necessary and urgent firefighter. With everything there is a risk. On balance, in this case, the scales fall in favour of the vaccine.







## I WILL GO – STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES

The I Will Go strategic plan outlines 10 objectives, divided into the categories of Mission, Spiritual Growth, and Leadership. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church will work together to fulfil these objectives. As you read them, prayerfully consider your role in helping the Church grow and fulfil its mission to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

### Mission Objectives

1. To revive the concept of worldwide mission and sacrifice for mission as a way of life involving not only pastors, but every church member, young and old, in the joy of witnessing for Christ and making disciples
2. To strengthen and diversify Adventist outreach in large cities, across the 10/40 Window, among unreached and underreached people groups, and to non-Christian religions
3. To make developing resources for mission to non-Christian religions and belief systems a high priority
4. To strengthen Seventh-day Adventist institutions in upholding freedom, holistic health, and hope through Jesus, and restoring in people the image of God

### Strategic Plan Objectives

5. To disciple individuals and families into Spirit-filled lives
6. To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults

7. To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview

### Leadership Objectives

8. To strengthen the discipleship role of pastors, teachers, and other frontline workers and provide them with regular growth opportunities
9. To align world church resources with strategic objectives
10. To enhance the transparency, accountability, and credibility of denominational organisation, operations, and mission initiatives

### Holy Spirit Objectives

To be defined as the Holy Spirit leads

Full details of the I Will Go strategic plan objectives can be found by downloading the booklet at the dedicated website:  
<https://iwillgo2020.org/>

## 28 IDEAS FOR ‘I WILL GO’ DURING LOCKDOWN

From one perspective it seems like bad timing highlighting the General Conference strategic plan, ‘I Will Go’, because due to lockdown we can’t ‘go’ anywhere!

Or can we? How can we share our faith in ‘lockdown’ times? A recent survey demonstrates that innovation is key.

#### Jeff Couzins:

1. Community projects open the doorway for interaction with spiritual follow-up when we have established our credibility. People like to be helped and are willing to listen. We can inform them that we are motivated to help them by God’s love for all people.
2. Build on friendships developed before the lockdown via long-distance and virtual communication.
3. Use social media posts on Facebook to encourage people with spiritual and Bible-centric messages.
4. Respond to other people’s social media posts with a few encouraging words from the Bible.
5. Even just being around people can be encouraging for them.
6. During the first lockdown I became a telephone befriender, which is an excellent cure for loneliness. A few encouraging words can go a long way.
7. Prayer for identified people prepares the ground for reaching out to them.

learning together, meeting weekly for an hour and a half. This has created friendships as we learn and discuss things together in a happy atmosphere. It’s open to families and friends from the community; and, because we spend time on each verse together, sharing and searching for meaning, anyone can contribute. The feedback has been very positive, so I have set up two groups so far, and plan to set up a few more.

#### Alan and Joyce Redfern:

10. What do people need in these times of COVID-19, Brexit and the threatened breakdown of democracy? They need to know that Someone is in control. That Someone is God (Ps. 145:13). Everyone who receives *MESSENGER* this year can send a scripture promise of assurance to someone on their contact list.

#### Grace Walsh:

11. Share our faith in ‘lockdown’ times. First Peter 5:7: ‘... casting all your care [anxieties] upon Him, for He cares for you’ (NKJV). Emotional and spiritual resilience allows us to still enjoy life and survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is at these times that we can look at Romans 8:28 and lean on its promise and rely on faith, hope and trust in the Lord.

#### Llew Edwards:

12. Go for your exercise walk, but plan your route so that you pass friends’ homes and text them when you are about to go past their home, asking them to come to the window so you can wave a hello to them.
13. Initiate a friendship at your local store by including a bar of chocolate (or similar gift) in your shopping and purposely leaving the chocolate as you are about to go. When the teller says that you forgot it, tell them it is a thank-you gift for serving the community by working at the shop during the pandemic. Seek to go to the same teller next time and see if the friendship can be fostered.
14. If a non-Adventist shares with you that they have a seriously ill loved one, enquire about the situation, and before leaving ask if it would be OK with them if you included the person in your prayers.

#### Louisa Jeffery:

15. Begin by praying for yourself so that you will be inspired and given the wisdom to know how to take opportunities to share your faith when you are presented with them.
16. Pray for others, that they will be receptive when they see or hear the Word.
17. Write to or call people in your contacts list,

especially those you have not spoken to for a long time. Ask them how they are. Tell them you are praying for them at this difficult time.

18. Make more of your social media forums. Have a page about your own testimony. Use them to share digital tracts/scripture promises/devotional readings. Select a different one each week to spotlight.
19. Organise a virtual thanksgiving service with your church. Collate stories of local unsung heroes in your community who have been doing things to serve others, and invite them to the service to say thank you to them.
20. Host a gospel concert on Zoom. Use it as a way to raise funds, such as for ADRA, and invite friends/the community through your social media forums.
21. Host a Zoom games evening, and invite friends.
22. Put a note through a neighbour’s door that says, ‘We believe that Jesus taught us to love each other, and so we would like to help you. Please contact us on (church number) if you need help with obtaining food or would like a friend to talk to.’ The card could also invite them to your church programmes or give links to church websites and channels.
23. Children could draw or paint a picture of something that symbolises God, His character or His creation: for example, a picture of an instrument with the caption, ‘Lord, make me an instrument of Your love’, and send it out via social media or to friends and family.
24. If your church does not have its own food bank or befriending service, volunteer for one so that you can share your faith with those with whom you volunteer and those you help.

#### Barry and Margaret Alen:

25. We have been distributing *Focus* magazines when going for our walks.
26. We have kept in touch with friends and neighbours via phone and WhatsApp. This is also important for those who are Christians already, as it is a real time of testing for most.
27. We have sent written cards and flowers when it is appropriate. Just really caring is what Jesus would do.
28. Our Zoom meetings for vespers on a Friday evening and our Bible studies on Wednesdays have been attended by more than we could have had before lockdown. Individuals are leading out who may never have done so before, so they are gaining in new ways and developing new skills for the future. This includes new members!

These ideas are by no means exhaustive, and are subject to appropriate social distancing regulations. Why not try one in the spirit of ‘I Will Go’?



#### Clifford C. Herman:

8. I am inspired by two sisters, Sophia and Anna, one a Pathfinder and the other an Adventurer, who took on the challenge and said, ‘I Will Go.’ With the help of parents, they got their phones, created an Instagram page, and presented *God Loves Me 28 Ways*. By inviting a guest every week for 10 minutes to explain one Adventist fundamental belief on a child’s level, they complemented it with games and challenges to bring the Gospel to kids and older ones in a simple and creative way.

#### Beulah Plunkett:

9. One good method for reaching out has been Bible study friendship groups on Zoom – studying a book of the Bible, a verse at a time –



# Being or making disciples?

The idea of being disciples has become the fallback position of many not actively engaged in disciple-making.

by Peter Roennfeldt

Canadian blogger Carey Nieuwhof has reignited the discussion over being disciples versus making disciples – writing, ‘Jesus never asked you to be a disciple; He called you to make disciples.’<sup>1</sup>

But, really, the two cannot be separated.

A disciple is a follower or learner who grows more like Jesus, the disciple-maker, every day in every way – and the interrelationship of making and being is unique.

Unfortunately, the idea of being disciples has become the fallback position of many not actively engaged in disciple-making. It is a kind of post-conversion gradualism – a journey of personal spiritual growth (even of a lifetime) that might one day result in faith sharing, although most never get that far!

On the other hand, making disciples is the priority of movements – with all believers and leaders defined by their participation.

## Jesus championed early involvement

Such early participation by new disciples in disciple-making seems counterintuitive. We think new believers need to attend church and be built up until they can share their faith.

## But Jesus did it differently

He immediately involved new disciples in disciple-making – and it was those making disciples who were called disciples. Involvement in disciple-making was a vital component of His process, critical to the development of character and spiritual maturity.

## Jesus immediately involved people

After 40 days in the wilderness, Jesus called His first disciples at the Jordan River.

- His first invitation, ‘Come and see,’ was experiential. Simple and easy to replicate, Jesus modelled making and being a disciple. Responding to His call, ‘Come and see,’ Jesus invited two of the Baptist’s disciples to where He was staying, and Andrew and Philip spent a day with Him. They immediately called others – Andrew called his brother Peter, and Philip called his friend Nathanael. Even a short time with Jesus prompts participation in inviting others with the same invitation – ‘Come and see’ – to the same experience (John 1:39-46).
- Jesus’ second invitation, ‘Follow Me,’ was relational. Within three days, those who

chose to walk with Him were called ‘*His disciples*’ (John 1:43; 2:2, NKJV). It doesn’t take long to become a disciple who makes disciples.

After spending some time at a wedding in Cana and ‘*a few days*’ at Capernaum (beside the lake) ‘*with his mother and brothers and his disciples*’ (John 2:2-12, NIV), Jesus went to Jerusalem and Judea for 18 months. There He gained ‘*more disciples than John*’, with His disciples baptising these many new disciples (John 3:22; see also 4:1, 2).

Immediate participation by new disciples characterised Jesus’ movement. Like the Samaritan woman, whom He met when returning from Jerusalem to Galilee, all new disciples were immediately engaged in making disciples. When she indicated her trust in Him, Jesus told her, ‘*Go, call your husband and come back*’ (John 4:16, NIV). She had met Jesus and could go into Sychar calling, ‘*Come, see a man who told me everything I’ve ever done. Could this be the Messiah?*’ (John 4:29, NIV; see also Mark 5:18-20.)

A disciple can tell of having met Jesus, and can also extend the first disciple-making invitation to others: ‘Come and see.’

- Jesus’ third invitation, ‘Fish with Me,’ was a call to participate. Just as with physical exercise, participation in disciple-making cultivates spiritual strength. It is therefore not surprising that Jesus made this His priority. It could be called a spiritual law: participation in making disciples cultivates our own discipleship.

## Learning to fish for people

Having returned to Galilee to live in Capernaum, Jesus intensified the equipping of His disciples. Finding Peter and Andrew at the lakeside, as well as James and John, Jesus said, ‘*Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people*’ (Matthew 4:19, NLT).

He was not calling them for the first time, as some of our non-inspired Bible headings wrongly suggest.<sup>2</sup> They already knew Jesus well. They had met Him at the Jordan and had chosen to follow Him as ‘His disciples’. They had been with Him when He performed His first miracle at Cana (John 2:2), witnessed His ‘zeal’ in deconstructing Jerusalem’s Temple marketplace (John 2:17, NIV) and been ‘shocked’ when He invited a Samaritan woman to be a disciple (John 4:27, NLT).

They had, perhaps, travelled back and forth

between Jerusalem and their Capernaum homes, dividing their time between making and ‘baptising’ new disciples for Jesus in Judea and caring for their families and fishing activities in Galilee (John 3:22; 4:1, 2). But Jesus had more to teach them about fishing for people, and each time they gladly left what they were doing to learn from Him (Luke 5:1-11).<sup>3</sup>

## Transformed by God’s mission

In calling a despised Samaritan woman to be a disciple, in engaging with the centurion in Capernaum, and, later, in taking His disciples to make disciples in pagan Decapolis and Phoenicia, Jesus shaped the hearts and lives of His disciples.

- His fourth invitation, ‘Love your enemies,’ was sacrificial. When selecting His 12 from ‘*a large crowd of his disciples*’ (Luke 6:17, NIV), Jesus outlined His core values, saying: ‘*Love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven*’ (Matthew 5:44, 45, NLT). This takes sacrifice – the crucifixion of self, seen in love for all others (Matthew 16:24; see also John 13:34, 35).
- Jesus’ fifth invitation, ‘Receive the Spirit,’ empowers. Having accomplished all that was necessary for our salvation by His life, death and resurrection, Jesus affirmed, ‘*“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit”*’ (John 20:21, 22, NIV).

The same Spirit who anointed Jesus at His baptism anoints new disciples at their baptism – empowering and sending them for disciple-making. Jesus said, ‘*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth*’ (Acts 1:8, NIV; see also 2:1-4, 11, 38, 39).

As His body, we are called to engage with His nature and mission. His commission resonates with our being: ‘*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations* [in Greek, *ethne* – tribes, languages or relational streams], *baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age*’ (Matthew 28:19, 20, NIV).

## The future church

Participation in making disciples is the environment where our own discipleship is cultivated. It is a comprehensive, integrated, transformational journey of growth and learning. Our experiences (our hearts), decisions (our heads) and active participation (our hands) fully facilitate our deepest engagement with God’s heart and mission.

Spirit-empowerment and active participation in Christ’s mission appeal to us. They inspire and challenge us. Tired of slogans and routine programmes, we want to engage with the relational streams of our communities, to make disciples and plant new

faith groups that will reach their colleagues, friends and families with the Gospel.

Only those churches that equip, empower and release believers to use the simple, reproducible, anyone-can-do-it, no-cost disciple-making methods of Jesus will have a future. Nieuwhof predicts, ‘The future church will be filled with Christians who realise they’re called to make disciples, not just be disciples. Churches that help their congregations do this will prevail.’<sup>4</sup>

And, in making disciples, we know that our lives will be changed.

*Dr Peter Roennfeldt is a church planter and author who writes from Melbourne, Australia.*

<sup>1</sup>Carey Nieuwhof, ‘Where Is Future Church Attendance Heading? 10 Questions, 10 Hunches’, 1 June 2020 – <https://careynieuwhof.com/where-is-future-church-attendance-heading-10-questions-10-hunches/>

<sup>2</sup>The titles, ‘Jesus calls his first disciples’ (NIV) and ‘The First Disciples’ (NLT) are misleading, for Jesus had already called these disciples 18 months previously at the Jordan River (John 1:35-51).

<sup>3</sup>See Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry (Editors), *The NIV Harmony of the Gospels*, HarperOne, 1988, p. 57 for comment of the differences between the account of Matthew 4 (see also Mark 1) and that of Luke.

<sup>4</sup>Nieuwhof, op. cit.

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Dr Peter Roennfeldt

## If You Can Eat... You Can Make Disciples

What does it mean to be a Christian and share our faith in a multi-faith and no-faith world?

In our complex post-Christian world, sharing our faith can seem equally complex. But consider how Jesus related to His multi-faith context, particularly His teaching in Luke 10:1-24. He engaged Jews, Samaritans, Roman gentiles, peasants, fishermen, urbanites, religious leaders, soldiers, merchants and others in spiritual discussions. His compassion, insights, authority and methodology left people amazed.

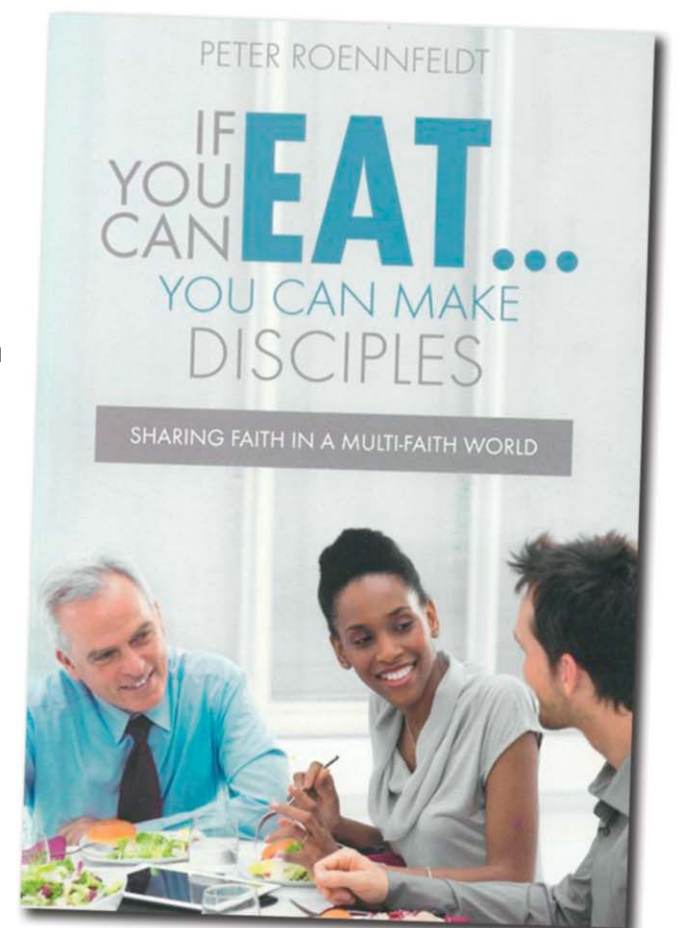
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# Our church – an agent for change or for comfort?

Today we talk with Ken Burton – choral and orchestral conductor, composer, performer, producer, presenter, arranger and competition judge. He's better known to *MESSENGER* readers as a son of Croydon Church, committed to Christ, a confident Adventist, and connected with the community.

In the first of a two-part interview, our conversation focuses on how we 'connect' with the community.

**DN:** About this time last year in a conversation with Victor Hulbert (for *TED News*), you mentioned the need for the way we worship God to also have the ability to connect with UK people, and to be continually looking outward. Is that an accurate summary?

**KB:** Yes, I've been a long-term advocate for understanding your demographic. I remember a powerful line from a sermon some years ago which has stuck with me ever since.

The preacher said, 'If your church does not look like your community, then you're doing something wrong.' While we need to be intentional in creating new congregations, I also think we need more thought about how we reach out, and how we become relevant. I know people are scared of this word 'relevant', and think it will mean we start ditching our doctrines – but doctrines have nothing to do with relevance. Relevance is to do with how we engage, how we understand our community – not just because we love people and want to see them in the kingdom.

Can I put it like this? The more cosmopolitan a church looks, the stronger the witness is before we ever utter a word. The response from the community is, 'Wow! Here is a place where there are no barriers, where people can be together.' I think that's a very important thing to do. The Worthing congregation, for example, where I worship, is

made up of 50 members, but with almost 25 language groups! I make it my aim to say 'hello' and 'thank you' in all the different language groups. I do it intentionally to make people feel welcome, and that they belong.

**DN:** The very reason for changing worship, then, is for the sake of the Gospel, so that it will connect with the person next door.

**KB:** That was Jesus' method. He was able to converse on a more intellectual and philosophical level, as John portrays in his gospel, or to have an everyday conversation with the woman at the well. We need to be intentional about this. We have talked about this and have been blessed with training – but I wonder how much more training we can do? I think to myself, 'When is this ship going to sail?' We can end up doing so much training, but we need to think how it translates into something. We can spend a lot of time talking about things, but then you have to ask, 'So what?' What is the meaning of the conversation we've just had? What does it lead to? What happens next? Otherwise we're just sitting around and having conversations.

Perhaps I need to be a bit patient, but I think as a church this is possible, because other churches are achieving it. We

mustn't look down our noses and say they're achieving it because they're requiring less of their people – people can come dressed in jeans and they can listen to any music. I think that's just too simplistic and naive. We've got to understand, when we look at Christ's method and how it happened: we can be adaptable; we don't have to be closed; and I think the 'Making Friends for God' series of Sabbath School lessons last year showed how, at one time, religion became so formal that it wasn't having an impact on the street.

**DN:** On the human level, is it possible that one reason why the ship hasn't sailed yet on this is because the church for many of us has become the 'safe place' – 'our fortress' from the hostile world? At work during the week I feel isolated, have been challenged by my boss for wanting Sabbath off – again, the

landlord is on my case about the rent, society is not the warmest to people like me, so when I come to church I am with my people. So is it not understandable that I am drawn to worship with 'safe' people like me and in our way?

**KB:** I know what you're saying. It's built into our belief that we are the remnant church. I think the key thing here is to find balance. I'm a strong believer and a passionate Adventist, a great believer in what we are and what we can be. But, rather than being an agent for change, the risk is that we become an agent for comfort. We're the remnant church; we feel nice and safe. You're quite right: it's our safe space. And if we try to do something differently, there is fear about what is brought into the safe place. What is being watered down? Are we not departing from who we are? No: we need to be

more outward-looking and understanding – that is our mission! We started as a movement, and, if my understanding of Adventist history is correct, we resisted becoming a denomination because we were too scared of being institutionalised and complacent. I think we've got to get back to that movement mentality of being agents of change and being relevant out there.

**DN:** What does it mean to be an ambassador for Christ?

**KB:** Being an ambassador for Christ means learning from Christ's pattern and method, understanding that His life was often filled with controversy and criticism. Many times in His ministry He faced the charge, 'You shouldn't be in that place; You shouldn't be doing this; You should be doing things that way.' So being an ambassador for Christ means that sometimes I might go into places where people might not necessarily always approve, but it also means that what I am doing is

looking at the long term.

There are some things I do as a musician which I call the sort of introduction or the hand-shaking. While I might not sing a song that causes the baptismal pool next week to be full (I wish it were, by God's grace), I am just making that first step – a stepping stone to something else. I might not even be doing something considered to be religious per se, but might just be an influence, able through my presence and attitude to help someone see Jesus in a different way. People often think it has to be about sharing some kind of formula – that unless you're banging them over the head with the three angels' messages and the 2,300-days prophecy, you're not really reaching them.

But people don't realise that actually this was Jesus' method. He was a strategist – for example, with Lazarus He purposely left it late. I think He could have arrived in Bethany earlier and prevented his death, but His timing was in order to show something. Sometimes we've got to think about the way God is leading and what the end

point is. On the way we might be an ambassador in many different capacities, and sometimes we might be the one to bring a person to Christ immediately. I always try, by God's grace, to say, 'Lord, use me in whatever way You want, even if it's just stage 1 of 10 for that person to come to a knowledge or acknowledgement of who You are.'

**DN:** I remember once watching the *BBC School Choir of the Year* competition (of which you were a judge), and one choir sang a spiritual about Daniel, performing it with technical excellence – which you affirmed in your appraisal. But you also turned that moment into a spiritual one as you invited the choir, and the viewers, to imagine the experience of Daniel. I don't know how spiritually aware the school was – clearly connected with the song – but their understanding of what it actually meant might have been quite small, and you managed in just a few sentences to encourage them to think about the spiritual

meaning of it. *My goodness, I thought; that's a gift, isn't it?*

**KB:** I think it's very important. I see the role that I have. I don't know how many years the Lord is going to give me on Planet Earth, and the opportunities that are given to share God. But where there is an open goal to share God on a programme like *Songs of Praise*, I now have permission to talk about Christ, who is the centre of the programme, so I felt at home being able to judge on that occasion because I was able to give it not just musical but spiritual focus. Sometimes I do competitions which are not spiritual, so I'm not able to do that, or share something as powerful as that. I might be able to say something in passing, but have to concentrate on the musical and technical aspects. But, on the occasion you mention, it was quite important to talk about the spiritual aspect, and I give God thanks for the opportunity.

*Next time we ask Ken about growing up in Croydon Church, reflections on hymn singing and singing well, and how choral work has been over the past year.*



©Darren PB Photography







# In search of mystery

by Pastor Adrian Peck

'Be careful you don't get abducted by aliens.' That was my wife's counsel after I sent her a selfie of me standing next to the Isle of Wight monolith. The beginnings of this 'encounter' can be traced back to 18 November last year, when a mysterious structure was discovered in the desert in Utah. Deserts are mysterious places as it is; but, of course, Utah is not that far, relatively speaking, from Area 51, the not-so-secret secret airbase where the US government allegedly keeps aliens and their spacecraft.

The Utah monolith generated much excitement. Bret Hutchings, who was piloting the helicopter from which the monolith was first spotted, told local news channel KSLTV, 'That's been about the strangest thing that I've come across out there in all my years of flying.' Hutchings continues, 'One of the biologists is the one who spotted it, and we just happened to fly directly over the top of it. He was like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, turn around, turn around!" And I was like, "What?" And he's like, "There's this thing back there – we've got to go look at it!"'<sup>1</sup>

It immediately spawned who, why and what questions. Who put it there? Why did they put it there? What does it mean? The consensus seemed to be that it was probably a work of art. The hunt was on to identify the artist or the artists' collective that had produced it. Speculation was rife as to their motivation. But the reason the monolith had caught attention and fired imagination was the hope there might just be more to it. This is especially so because we are a generation that has grown up with and been influenced by stories of aliens and extraterrestrials. As one person said, 'I love this. I imagine it's an art piece . . . but what if it isn't?'<sup>2</sup>

Out of nowhere, similar constructions appeared in Romania and California. Then, on 8 December, Alexia Fishwick reported a discovery she described as being 'really quite magical' – for, on Compton Beach on the Isle of Wight, of all places, was found our very own monolith. So, as I was passing one day, I parked up and wandered down to the shore in search of some mystery and something magical.

I can't locate it at first, but then I notice the people. As I look around I see a smattering of spectators hovering uncertainly around the edifice. I march towards it, driven by curiosity mixed with a smidge of excitement. Let's face it: pictures of this very thing have been seen

around the world, and here I am, about to get up close and personal with it. But the nearer I get, the more disappointed I become. Up close, it is chipped and cracked and has literally started to come apart at the seams. I can see inside, taking note of the plywood and screws that make up the framework upon which the mirrored Perspex is set. In a couple of places, there are some half-hearted attempts at graffiti. When I rap on it with my knuckles there is no reassuring, enigmatic solidity to it. Unlike the one in Utah, our one is barely 2 metres tall. My wife suggests jokingly that I ought to watch out for aliens. The reality is that I am more in danger of catching a cold on this chilly December day than joining ET at home.

Jeremiah suggested that the idols of his day and the gods they represented were 'like helpless scarecrows in a cucumber field'.<sup>3</sup> He goes on to point out that 'people who worship idols are stupid and foolish. The things they worship are made of wood!'<sup>4</sup> Here before me is a modern-day scarecrow in a cucumber field . . . an artefact fashioned by human hands out of materials you can buy at B&Q. There is no mystery, just something rather disappointing.

Soon other monoliths were found in the Netherlands, Poland, Belgium, Finland and Colombia. One commentator lamented this state of affairs because it was all becoming commonplace and mundane. He was moved to write, 'We've never needed mystery more. . . . And for a moment there, for all their faults when you scrutinise them as art, the sentinels were sublime. Please, whoever is responsible, stop now while there's still a shred of the marvellous in this diversion from our mundane apocalypse.'<sup>5</sup> I greeted that lot with a 'wow!'

The monoliths revealed a human craving for mystery. Materialists explain this yearning away as a survival mechanism that keeps us exploring. For us who are Christians, it reveals that we are on to something when we tap into the mysteries of our faith such as the incarnation and the Trinity. When we don't claim to have all the answers, this is not to say that our belief is independent of rational thought or evidence, but acknowledgement that we are part of something bigger than ourselves – something that is recognised as being necessary for well-being. It is tempting to have all the responses, reasons and explanations to hand, but are we in danger of making our faith seem commonplace and

mundane? Is there a way of reaching out to people even as we don't have all the answers? Is there an approach that communicates the mystery as well as the understanding our faith brings?

So here are just two more questions to ponder: 'Can you solve the mysteries of God? Can you discover everything about the Almighty?'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup><https://archaeology-world.com/metal-monolith-found-by-a-helicopter-crew-in-utah-desert/>  
<sup>2</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/nov/23/helicopter-pilot-finds-strange-monolith-in-remote-part-of-utah>  
<sup>3</sup>Jeremiah 10:5, NLT <sup>4</sup>Jeremiah 10:8, NLT  
<sup>5</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/dec/08/monolith-makers-strange-objects-aliens-reflective-wildernesses> <sup>6</sup>Job 11:7, NLT



# We must prevail

by Bert Smit, CEO, ADRA-UK

One of the greatest gifts one can give a child is to enable them to develop and grow through learning about the world. That is why we believe that every child, everywhere, has the right to attend school and get an education.

In South Sudan, ADRA-UK is helping more girls to attend school every day instead of staying at home to help their mothers cook, work at the family business or look after their younger brothers and sisters. To achieve this, ADRA runs radio programmes, and we ask the families to listen to the programmes in their village groups. We discuss the importance of education, especially for girls, and how this will benefit their future. ADRA also provides cash support to families so they can afford to send their girls to school. We continue to look for creative ways to keep girls in school, and help them to enjoy their school experience, which will give them a chance at a better life. This project is fully funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

*Thanks to your generosity we can continue to help people both here in the UK and overseas.*

Here in the UK, ADRA is blessed with a church community that for so many years has been phenomenal in supporting our work. Your help in going from door to door to collect and to organise church events to raise money for 'Ingathering', or the ADRA Appeal, has been instrumental in enabling ADRA to help so many people across the world. Even in 2020, while our income was down by 75%, we still helped 608,450 people in 11 countries, including the UK (and over 50% of these were women)!

Our planned 2021 Ingathering/Appeal period is set to start on 27 March. However, we have had to make the decision not to organise door-to-door fundraising in 2021, and the likelihood of face-to-face fundraising in churches is also now unrealistic. In spite of these challenges, our resilience must prevail.

Please know that your financial support is the reason ADRA exists. Without it there could be no ADRA. It is only when we put all our efforts *together* that we can help and change people's lives.

*'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'*  
 Matthew 25:40, NIV

Together we can feed people. Together we can clothe people. Together we can educate people. Together we can quench thirst. Together we can save the neediest people of the world.

Your financial support of ADRA's work is critical – especially now, as our normal way of fundraising is not possible. So, please, think about ADRA – look out for our upcoming ADRA Impact News, watch our upcoming Appeal video, and make a commitment to help!

Your gift will work hard to make a real difference in people's lives – not just overseas, but also here in the UK. Let's do this together! Because, only together, we can . . .

(Pictures by Frank Spangler/ADRA Norway)





# East London School of Music (ELSOM) stays strong during COVID-19



Terval John

Last April, the East London School of Music (ELSOM) celebrated five years of serving the community of Hackney and its environs as a Centre of Influence, becoming a successful music school – serving the community with excellence.

Under the visionary and innovative leadership of Fiona D. Pacquette, with Pastor N. Barrett chairing the management committee, ELSOM is able to report that during this past academic and pandemic year it was able to continue preparing students for the Trinity Guildhall music exams.

In 2019 there were 75 registered students, comprising children, youth and adults. However, with the pandemic crisis in 2020, the school roll fell to 50. Nevertheless, the teaching has remained constant – and so has the enthusiasm of the students, ever keen to learn.

- During 2020 the ELSOM team’s highlights included:
- Fiona Pacquette designing virtual platforms for Divine Service throughout 2020 at the Clapton Community church, as well as for the Hampstead church. ELSOM music students ably and competently led these inspired worship sessions, to God’s praise and for His glory.
  - Playing for the November SEC/Area 6a Day of Fellowship, with much commendation for their confidence and professionalism.
  - Following two years of restoration, the commissioning of the Nelson Pipe Organ, faithfully carried out by pipe organ specialist, Martin Renshaw. The pipe organ is another unique classical instrument being offered in the school’s music curriculum. Of such interest is this restoration that the Royal College of Organists (RCO) has shown great interest in the pipe organ, to the extent of offering a bursary for two years to each pipe organ student. In addition, they are providing ELSOM with a dynamic tutor – Mr Nicholas Morris (ARCO DipABRSM). Currently, twelve pipe organ students are learning this as their second or third instrument.
  - Zoom classrooms for the flute, violin and piano were able to function, while the music theory lessons were held in our dining room to comply with social distancing. On-site



Michael Asamoah



ELSOM violin group class



Ardina

- singing lessons were suspended following the government guidelines, but continued via Zoom.
- The annual Hampstead Adventist Choral Society (HACS) December Messiah Concert, held since December 2000, was delivered on a virtual platform, 12 December 2020. Even the pandemic did not preclude the Deputy Speaker of Hackney Council, Councillor Michael Desmond, from being in virtual attendance. To the choral society and the ELSOM students he gave a warmhearted and encouraging speech. The performance had ELSOM and HACS jointly delivering an outstanding virtual end-of-year concert. Each pipe organ student performed selected and polished classical pieces, not only showing their talent, but also inspiring the audience.

ELSOM students are known for their musical abilities and prowess; but in addition they are on a journey to becoming credible youth ambassadors and role models in the borough of Hackney. Perhaps the jewel in the crown of our success last year was for ELSOM to feature in the international Trinity Guildhall College 2020 promotional video.

DOREEN I. FRAY

Photos: KNT Photography

# Pathfinder Sara raises funds for ADRA with a bikeathon

**Congratulations and well done** to Stanborough Park Pathfinder Sara Renard for her initiative in organising a bikeathon on Sunday 20 September which raised **£795** for ADRA.

The ride, starting from Stanborough Park, covered a route of approximately 5.62 miles, most of it off-road. The event was so enjoyable that some even rode the course twice!

Mum Sunsiree explained the motivation behind the initiative in the following words: ‘Sara has a passion to help people in need. She was touched by her Sabbath School teacher, Zeny Cooper, who is an ADRA agent, and heard all the stories she shared. Therefore, she follows her in creating this event that will support families in need, disadvantaged children in the UK and overseas. She was so happy for the turnout on the day, and around 50 members of our church came to the bikeathon event, including children.’

After the event Sara said, ‘I would like to send my appreciation to everyone who collaborated, participated and donated towards my Bikeathon ADRA Family Event. I hope that everyone who came had a wonderful day. I am praying that all the donations, including sponsorship money, will help those families that are less fortunate.’

Sunsiree added, ‘Her objective was £1,000, but we we’re pleased anyhow and happy to see the blessing. Some children came with their sponsorship forms, and they helped Sara to raise more, like Akitunde Ayo-Paye and David Renard (my son), who went and collected with friends, neighbours and family. Sara was really touched to see that everyone contributed for this marvellous cause, and she wishes to carry on supporting ADRA in helping families in need.’

JUNE COOMBS



Adventist Risk Management  
Career Opportunity

## Customer Service Representative



As the official insurance and risk-management company for the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church, Adventist Risk Management,® Inc. (ARM) is devoted to finding professionals who are committed to the success of our clients and our organisation.

Working at ARM means you are joining a diverse global team of professionals who are focused on providing timely, real-world insurance products and innovative risk-management solutions for minimising risk within Adventist ministries. Beginning in 1936, our team has grown with the church and now serves over 21 million adult members, 86,000 churches, 8,515 schools, and 527 hospitals/clinics, as well as many other ministries. We also provide underwriting, claims, financial, and risk-management services for two captive insurance companies that collectively write over \$100 million in premium annually.

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**Full details about the role, and embarking on a career with Adventist Risk Management, can be found at the following link:**  
<https://adventist.uk/who-we-are/jobs/job/go/-/customer-service-representative>

The successful candidate will need to have permission to work in the UK. Interested applicants please email your curriculum vitae to [rfiddis@adventistrisk.org](mailto:rfiddis@adventistrisk.org).

**Closing date for applications:  
Monday 8 February 2021.**

Adventist Risk Management, Inc (ARM) is a 5013(c) religious nonprofit corporation based in Maryland. ARM is an equal opportunities employer.



# Nervous visitors make Bristol Lodge Causeway their spiritual home

Our story begins in the spring of 2019, a time when our lives seemed rosy, but something in our souls was missing. At first I could not figure out what it was exactly, because I believed I had every reason to be happy. I had come to England. I was in a relationship that one can only dream about. I had a job. I was travelling. I was doing what my heart desired, and I was free – at least I believed I was. What made me sad was being far away from my family, whom I could visit only once or twice a year, which for me was not enough.

This was my life, until one day my mum sent me a sermon to listen to. I had not listened to a sermon for a long time. Even though I had grown up as an Adventist, I left church when I was a teenager and forgot God. I tasted the cup of pleasure in the world, which at first seemed sweet – but at the end tasted bitter.

After listening to the sermon, I realised how much I thirsted for the living water our Lord Jesus Christ offers, He who came into this world to die for my sins – and, more specifically, for me! On the cross, He died a shameful death to make salvation possible. If only we would truly believe in Him!

My husband, Adi, had grown up in the Orthodox Christian Church, but his knowledge about Jesus, the Bible, the Law and the Commandments was very limited. I invited him to listen to sermons with me. As we listened to one sermon after another I shared with him what I knew about Jesus, about the truth, and about what the Bible has to say about the true day of rest, as affirmed by Jesus and the Ten Commandments. I started sharing with him all that I knew from attending Sabbath School as a child.

To my astonishment, Adi accepted the truth on the spot. One day he said to me: 'Let's find an Adventist church here in Bristol.' I could not believe my ears. So there we were, the next Sabbath, nicely dressed and on our way to the Lodge Causeway church.

On arrival we were so nervous! We had no idea what to expect or how it would be. Would anyone notice us? Would we understand anything or everything? Would we like it? But, to our joy, we felt welcomed by pleasant and warm-hearted people. The first person we met was Tudor: friendly, kind and approachable. When he heard us talking to each other in Romanian, he told us he was from Moldova and spoke the same language. You cannot imagine our sense of happiness! At the end of the service he introduced us to his wife, Ana,



and their little son, Jasper. In turn, many of the other members greeted us, and invited us to return the next Sabbath. We liked Lodge Causeway Church and decided to attend there every Sabbath.

We quickly befriended Ana and Tudor, and soon commenced Bible studies to prepare for baptism. With their help we discovered more about what it means to have faith in Christ, with the truth about Him as revealed in His Holy Scriptures becoming ever clearer.

After completing our series of Bible studies, we decided to get baptised and dedicate our lives to our Lord. We understood how big His sacrifice was when He came to this world and gave His life for us. He did this so that He can give life to all when He comes

Diana Malacea and her husband Adrian Prostire with their baby daughter, Jasmine, born November 2020.

DIANA MALACEA

# At a glance . . .

**Pastor Ervin González**, Publishing Ministries Director at the Inter-American Division Publishing Association, entered his rest due to COVID-19 on the last day of 2020, at the age of 59. His passion was for literature evangelists and their mission. He leaves behind his wife, Lilia, who is still fighting the virus. Our hearts go out to her, and to all the Inter-American Division.

**The Government does not require places of worship in England to close** as part of the current lockdown to combat the coronavirus, which started on Monday 4 January. According to the *Church Times*, this decision is meeting resistance among some of the English clergy. However, the same is not true of Scotland or Wales. The Catholic bishops of Scotland have criticised the Scottish government's decision to close churches in that part of the United Kingdom as arbitrary and unfair.

**We give thanks to God for the safe release of Pastor Elie Henry**, President of the Inter-American Division, and his adult daughter Irma, four days after being kidnapped in late December last year.

**More than a thousand people with disabilities benefited** from the 'You Are Not Alone!' project in December last year, one of several developed by the Rise and Walk Seventh-day Adventist ministry in Romania, which exists to meet the needs of those with disabilities.

**The General Conference Session has been postponed** due to COVID-19 once again. Instead of taking place on 20-25 May 2021, it will now (God willing!) take place on 6-11 June 2022.

**Rear Admiral Barry Black, 62<sup>nd</sup> chaplain of the United States Senate, offered the prayer** at the close of that senate's momentous and rudely interrupted session earlier this month, following the storming of the senate by an armed mob. He prayed, 'Lord . . . these tragedies have reminded us that words matter and that the power of life and death is in the tongue. . . . Use us to bring healing and unity to our divided nation and world.'

**At the age of 80, Cliff Richards' faith is stronger than ever.** In an interview with *Premier Christianity* he comments that when bad things happen, atheists

'immediately ask: "How can God allow this to happen?" So they're actually arguing with somebody they don't believe exists! But for me, He has always been there. . . . [When falsely accused of sexual assault,] prayers were vital for me surviving those years. I never felt devoid of God.'

**According to the website *faithsurvey.co.uk***, membership of Christian denominations in the UK fell from 10.6 million in 1930 to 5.5 million in 2010, and then to 5.4 million in 2013 (10.3% of the population). However, a poll by YouGov in 2016 found that 28% of UK residents believe in 'either God or a higher spiritual power', indicating that there may be many more people open to belief in God than just those who attend church. Sadly, a full 38% reject belief in any God or spiritual power, while 14% remain unsure.

*This is the first roundup of news in a new regular column for MESSENGER, keeping our readers informed of events in other Christian denominations in the UK and Ireland, as well as the wider Adventist Church across the globe.*

ANDREW PUCKERING

Newbold Diversity Centre

COVID-19 AND THE WILDING OF THE CHURCH  
WHAT SORT OF LEADERS DO WE NEED?

Tuesday  
9th February 2021  
7.30pm

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

Lecturer:  
Dr Steve Aisthorpe  
Mission Development Worker,  
Church of Scotland

As supplied, errors and omissions excepted



# General Conference statement on COVID-19 vaccination

General Conference Department of Health Ministries, General Conference Biblical Research Institute, and Loma Linda University School of Pharmacy and School of Public Health

There are rumours and conspiracy theories that use the COVID-19 vaccine as an interpretation and/or fulfilment of prophecy.



Seventh-day Adventists look to the coming of Christ as the great culmination of history and an end of all disease, suffering, and death. At the same time, we have been entrusted with the Adventist health message embodied in and expanded upon by the writings of Ellen White, summarising healthful living through practical and holistic healthy lifestyle behaviours.

We advocate all of these practices to maintain a healthy immune system, and in the pandemic even more is needed. Ellen White was not only an inspired conduit of health information much ahead of her time, but she modelled practical prevention in the face of the lethal disease in her era, smallpox, and took the immunisation herself, as did those close to her.<sup>1</sup> Today, smallpox has been eradicated across the globe.

We hope that this article will answer questions, allay fears, and resolve some of the prevalent myths and rumours, thereby bringing peace to the hearts of our members as they make health decisions guided by their healthcare providers.

There are rumours and conspiracy theories that use the COVID-19 vaccine as an interpretation and/or fulfilment of prophecy. We asked the General Conference Biblical Research Institute for comments in this

regard, and the response is as follows:

‘The global upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has generated considerable speculations related to end-time events and misinterpretations of the Bible. One recent view, propagated through social media and some internet websites, has put forward the theory that the upcoming vaccines produced to combat COVID-19 belong to a process of control that will lead to the application of the mark of the beast.

‘It should be noted, however, that Adventists hold to the conviction that the end-time controversy will centre on the law of God, and particularly on the fourth commandment (Rev. 14:12). Moreover, the third angel’s message will warn against the reception of the mark (Rev. 14:9-11) and will enlighten humankind as to the issues involved.

‘For this reason, it should be made clear that Seventh-day Adventists understand the “mark of the beast” to be not a literal mark, but a sign of allegiance that identifies the bearer as loyal to the power represented by the beast.

‘From a distinct perspective, another speculative view argues that vaccines make those who take them unclean because, supposedly, unclean substances

are used to produce them. In this regard, it should be clarified that the abiding biblical instructions forbidding the consumption of unclean food and blood (Lev. 11:1-47; 17:11, 12; Acts 15:20) do not apply to vaccines, for the obvious reason that vaccines are produced as medication to save lives, not to serve as food.

‘Speculations such as these bring the Word of God into disrepute and cause confusion among sincere but less-informed believers. Using the introduction of a vaccine to stir up an eschatological scenario of spiritual and cosmic proportions, or to oppose it on the basis of a faulty interpretation of Scripture, only distracts sincere believers from the real prophetic issues and the Adventist Church’s commitment to proclaim the Gospel.

‘Hopefully, an effective vaccine will help to bring the current pandemic to a halt. This will protect the lives of those who still need to know about the Gospel, as well as those who have already accepted the Gospel and are thus charged with the proclamation of God’s infinite love to a suffering world (John 3:16).’<sup>2</sup>

Adventist health ministries are firmly based on the Bible and the instruction of the Spirit of Prophecy through Ellen White, and are consonant with peer-reviewed, evidence-based health science. We rely on these foundations in formulating health approaches and advice. With millions infected, and many dead, and global infections on the increase, a number of vaccines have been developed in record time. There are numerous questions people are asking regarding the COVID-19 vaccine.

As a church, while we support evidence-based public health recommendations, we are also careful not to make pronouncements that may be construed as replacing national and international public health guidelines. For this reason, it is important for our comments to be understood within the framework of our official church position on immunisation:

‘The Seventh-day Adventist Church places strong emphasis on health and well-being. The Adventist health emphasis is based on biblical revelation, the inspired writing of E. G. White (co-founder of the Church), and peer-reviewed scientific literature. As such, we encourage responsible immunisation/vaccination, and have no religious or faith-based reason not to encourage our adherents to responsibly participate in protective and preventive immunisation programmes. We value the health and safety of the population, which includes the maintenance of “herd immunity”.

‘We are not the conscience of the individual church member, and recognise individual choices. These are exercised by the individual. The choice not to be immunised is not and should not be seen as the dogma nor the doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.’

There have been efforts to establish a reliable, evidence-based approach to treatment of COVID-19. Additionally, and within record time, vaccines have been produced which are now being used to help bring the pandemic under control. However, people do have concerns and questions regarding COVID-19 vaccines.

Emergency use authorisation (EUA) for the Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine was granted on

2 December, 2020, in the United Kingdom, and on 9 December in Canada. In the US, the Pfizer vaccine was reviewed by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and provisionally authorised on 11 December. The Moderna vaccine will follow.

In conversation with the Loma Linda University School of Public Health (LLUSPH), Michael Hogue, dean of the Loma Linda School of Pharmacy, who serves on the

US Centres for Disease Control (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunisation Practices Workgroup on COVID-19 Vaccines and on the San Bernardino County COVID-19 Vaccine Taskforce in California, shared the following insights regarding frequently asked questions on the Pfizer/BioNtech and Moderna vaccines. His insights and explanations of common questions appear below.



second day; and, in 24 hours, 50-60 percent reported feeling ‘achy’. There have so far been very few serious side effects with the Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine, including three cases of significant allergic reactions (unusually low; probably due to the non-use of preservatives).

Dr Hogue further commented that if a person has already tested COVID-19 positive in the past, that person can still get the vaccine; it will simply increase the person’s antibody levels. He also pointed out that taking the vaccine in the USA [as in the UK] is voluntary, not mandatory.

The efficacy of the Pfizer/BioNtech and Moderna vaccines is similar, but they are not interchangeable (if a person starts with one, the second dose has to be from the same brand). For the Pfizer vaccine, there is a 21-day interval between the two doses; it is reported that for the Moderna vaccine, the interval will be 28 days between doses. [In the UK, the current government policy is to space out the doses by 12 weeks in order to maximise the number of people able to receive the first dose.] The vaccine is not authorised for use during pregnancy or in those under 16 years of age.

## Questions and facts about the vaccine

### Does the mRNA (messenger RiboNucleic Acid) vaccine change your DNA?

**FACT:** Both referenced vaccines are based on mRNA, which is a first for vaccines, but the technology has been used in medical treatments for the past 15 years. The vaccine enters into a cell’s cytoplasm (the fluid within the cell), where it stimulates the production of antibodies to fight the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein. Since it does not enter the nucleus of the host cell, it does not change the DNA or genetic structure/function.

### Can it be safe and effective, as it was developed so quickly?

**FACT:** Due to current technology, the SARS-CoV-2 virus was sequenced within days of its being identified, and work on a vaccine was started right away. The sample size for the large study is 40,000 people (the average FDA vaccine study sample size is usually only 27,000). We are two months into a two-year study. Data is being carefully monitored.

The first dose showed a 50-percent immune response protection. The second dose reached 95-percent protection! (Only the hepatitis A vaccine is higher, at just about 100-percent protection.) The study was well designed and represented US demographics very closely, with the exception of Native Americans (and the ongoing study is working to rectify that). Efficacy and side effects were similar in all ethnic groups.

### Are the ingredients and preservatives in the vaccine dangerous?

**FACT:** There are no preservatives in these two COVID-19 vaccines, which is why they require deep freeze/freezer facilities for storage and transport. The vaccine is carefully purified.

### What are the side effects?

**FACT:** So far, 10 percent of subjects have reported fever by the

### Conclusion

Immunisation, along with sanitation and clean water, has been foundational to the improved longevity seen around the world where these interventions have been applied. Vaccines have long been used by Adventist church members throughout the world. Along with good health practices, they have provided protection against many infections and prevented illness and death.

As we witness the global magnitude of the pandemic, the deaths, disability, and long-term COVID-19 effects that are emerging in all age groups, we are encouraging our members to consider responsible immunisation and the promotion and facilitation of the development of what is commonly termed herd immunity (pre-existing community immunity of approximately 80 percent of individuals as a result of previous infection and/or vaccination).

### We reiterate:

THE DECISION TO BE IMMUNISED OR NOT IS THE CHOICE OF EACH INDIVIDUAL, AND SHOULD BE TAKEN IN CONSULTATION WITH ONE’S HEALTHCARE PROVIDER. PERSONAL RESEARCH ON THE SUBJECT IS IMPORTANT. WE ULTIMATELY RELY ON FOLLOWING BIBLICAL HEALTH PRACTICES AND THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, AND FOLLOWING GOD’S LEADING IN OUR LIVES, WHICH WILL BRING US PEACE AND ASSURANCE IN OUR DECISION-MAKING.

<sup>1</sup>Concerning vaccination against smallpox, D. E. Robinson, one of Ellen White’s secretaries, under the date of 12 June 1931, wrote as follows concerning Mrs White’s attitude towards vaccination: ‘You ask for definite and concise information regarding what Sister White wrote about vaccination and serum. This question can be answered very briefly, for, so far as we have any record, she did not refer to them in any of her writings. You will be interested to know, however, that at a time when there was an epidemic of smallpox in the vicinity, she herself was vaccinated and urged her helpers, those connected with her, to be vaccinated. In taking this step, Sister White recognised the fact that it has been proven that vaccination either renders one immune from smallpox or greatly lightens its effects if one does come down with it. She also recognised the danger of their exposing others if they failed to take this precaution. [Signed] D. E. Robinson’ (*Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 303)

<sup>2</sup>Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, December 2020

This article was first published on the *Adventist Review* website.





HEALTH  
by Sharon Platt-McDonald

# Hope that heals



In a *Psychology Today* article titled 'The Healing Power of Hope', journalist Carolyn A. Gazella asks the question, 'Can feeling hopeful help heal us?'<sup>1</sup>

She showcases various individuals' perspectives on hope to answer this question. Firstly, Gazella highlights a quotation from Nancy Snow, from the University of Chicago, in her Science of Virtues research project:

'People who lack hope seem to lack zest for life. . . . Hope in all of its complexity has been widely found to be beneficial to persons suffering from physical and mental illness.'

Next, Gazella quotes Jerry Groopman, MD, author of *The Anatomy of Hope*, whose evaluation concludes: 'For my patients, hope, true hope, has proved as important as any medication I might prescribe or any procedure I might perform.'

A CNN health article by Amanda Enayati (11 April 2013) carried the headline: 'How hope can help you heal'.<sup>2</sup> Enayati quotes Groopman's research conclusions:

'Researchers are learning that a change in mindset has the power to alter neurochemistry. Belief and expectation – the key elements of hope – can block pain by releasing the brain's endorphins and enkephalins, mimicking the effects of morphine. In some cases, hope can also have important effects on fundamental physiological processes like respiration, circulation and motor function.'

During the COVID-19 pandemic – as part of a Health Ministries convalescence project I initiated, to assist individuals suffering the aftermath of the virus – we gave out the publication, *The Power of Hope* to the community. We received much positive feedback. One grateful gentleman, having read the book, reported: 'This is one of the best reads I have enjoyed; and I read a lot. It has helped boost my mood, which was negatively impacted after I contracted COVID-19. I feel more hopeful now!'

*The Power of Hope: Overcoming depression, anxiety, guilt, and stress*<sup>3</sup> was authored by Julián Melgosa and Michelson Borges. In chapter 10, listing the essentials for developing a hope-filled life, to improve well-being, Melgosa and Borges suggest the following:

- Develop thoughts filled with hope (particularly when thinking about the future).
- Reject negative thoughts.
- Think about the past calmly.
- Change your routine (introduce something new if you are feeling stuck and despondent).
- Cultivate optimism.
- Read and reflect (using the gospels, Psalms and Proverbs for inspiration).
- Find a good social circle.
- Transmit encouragement and hope to others.
- Care for your physical well-being.
- Take a moment to read Romans 15:13, and embrace the God of hope as you go through 2021.

Good health!

<sup>1</sup>'The Healing Power of Hope', *Psychology Today* <sup>2</sup>'How hope can help you heal' – CNN <sup>3</sup>Additional copies of *The Power of Hope* can be purchased on the LifeSource website: <https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/power-of-hope/>

Join the BUC office for morning worship

Every weekday, at 8.30am, the British Union Conference office holds a morning worship by Zoom. It is also shared on the BUC's news and youth Facebook pages: [www.facebook.com/adventist.org.uk](http://www.facebook.com/adventist.org.uk) and [www.facebook.com/adventistyouthukandireland](http://www.facebook.com/adventistyouthukandireland). You are most welcome to join us by Facebook. We take prayer requests that are submitted on the Facebook pages or sent by email to [info@adventist.uk](mailto:info@adventist.uk), and we would love to hear from you.

2021 BUC Session notification

Notice is hereby given that, COVID-19 restrictions permitting, the ninth quinquennial session of the British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will take place at the Staverton De Vere Conference Centre, Daventry Road, Daventry NN11 6JT, on Thursday 8 and Friday 9 July 2021. Notice is also given that proposals to modify the constitution of the British Union Conference and the operating policies of the Missions in harmony with the General Conference models will also be presented. Delegates will receive documentation in advance of the session.

PASTOR JOHN SURRIDGE (EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, BRITISH UNION CONFERENCE)

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This is a new plan to help and support you in strange and challenging times. Recognising that membership records may not be fully up to date, if you know of any church members who do not receive their copy but would like to, please let us know. To find out more, go to: <https://adventist.uk/news/article/go/2021-01-07/the-messenger-coming-soon-direct-to-your-home/>

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# NEC and BUC vote new draft constitutions

by John Surridge (BUC executive secretary)

Constitutions are the documents which underpin all of our activities as a church. Because we are part of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church, our constitutions are based on models provided by the General Conference. This helps to ensure that, wherever you go in the world, our churches do things in a similar way. Those of you who have travelled a lot can probably testify to the remarkable unity of our churches, much of which is down to our shared constitutions.

Since the BUC, SEC and NEC became registered charities back in 1995, our constitutions have also had to comply with the requirements of the Charity Commission. In practice this isn't too difficult, as the Charity Commission was set up to guide and assist organisations like ours. It is in their interests for us to succeed as a church, because we provide a valuable service to the country. Following their rules stops us from getting sidetracked from our mission and helps us to be more transparent and accountable with our finances and activities.

Revising the constitution is an ongoing process. New changes to the model documents are voted every year at the General Conference Annual Council, and it is the job of the Union and Conference standing constitution committees to work these changes into a new document, which is then voted at our Union or Conference sessions.

Over the last two years the North England Conference Constitution Committee in particular has done an outstanding job of revising and updating the NEC constitution. There has been correspondence back and forth with the General Conference legal team, as well as extensive

dialogue with UK lawyers who specialise in charity documents. The resulting draft document was scrutinised very carefully by the NEC Executive Committee before finally being approved on Sunday 15 November 2020. This work done by the NEC was extremely helpful to the BUC Constitution Committee, as the two constitutions have many similarities, and the BUC Executive Committee was able to vote its draft constitution on Thursday 10 December 2020.

Of course, the new constitutions still have to be voted by the delegates at the BUC and NEC sessions, which are scheduled to take place later this year. Before we get to the sessions, however, we want to give all of our members the opportunity to read, understand, and ask questions about the new draft constitutions. There are still some sections that may be changed slightly, depending on the feedback we get, and we want to discuss these changes now, rather than wait until the session, where time for discussion is very limited.

So, this is where we need your help. You can find the new draft documents, along with lots of background information, on two different websites. For the NEC constitution, please go to:

<https://nec.adventist.uk/departments/executive-secretary/constitution/>.

For the BUC constitution, please go to our dedicated constitution website at: <http://bucsession.org.uk/constitution/>.

We hope you will like what you see. The new documents are right up to date, and, importantly, they make the provision for virtual sessions in the future. Please send us any questions that you might have, and we will add these to the websites so that we can share the answers with all of our members.

British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
Tithe Report - November 2020

This Month	2020	2019	Inc / -Dec	Variance %
South	£1,356,889	£1,309,492	£47,396	3.6
North	£559,216	£657,554	£-98,338	-15.0
Welsh	£39,614	£29,288	£10,326	35.3
Scottish	£35,023	£33,495	£1,528	4.6
Irish	£70,225	£81,205	£-10,980	-13.5
Total	£2,060,967	£2,111,034	£-50,067	-2.4%

Cumulative to Date	2020	2019	Inc / -Dec	Variance %
South	£12,798,464	£13,925,259	£-1,126,795	-8.1%
North	£5,408,224	£6,062,238	£-654,013	-10.8%
Welsh	£389,177	£362,172	£27,005	7.5%
Scottish	£405,282	£380,412	£24,870	6.5%
Irish	£762,072	£822,944	£-60,872	-7.4%
Total	£19,763,219	£21,553,025	£-1,789,806	-8.3%

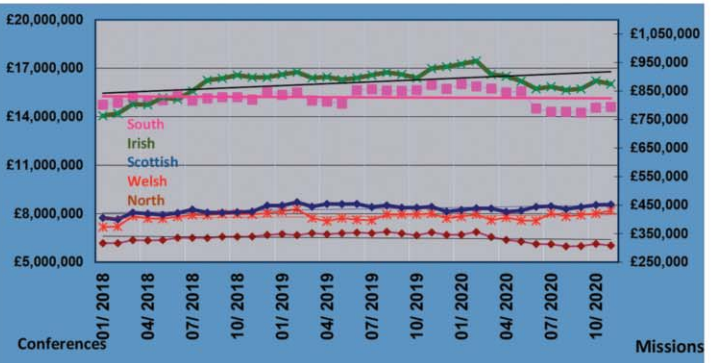
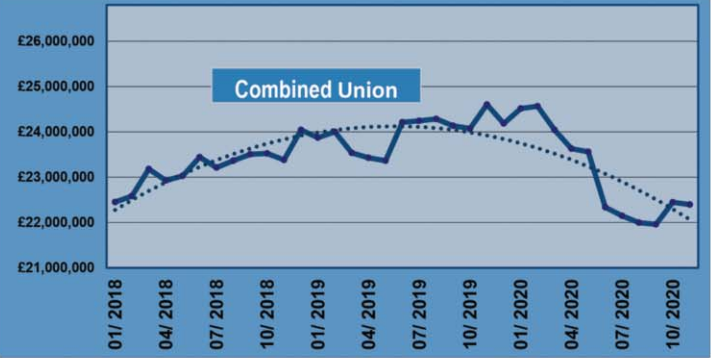
Budgets	Annual	To Date	Variance	%
South	£15,922,044	£14,595,207	£-1,326,837	-8.3%
North	£6,750,000	£6,187,500	£-562,500	-8.3%
Welsh	£426,000	£390,500	£-35,500	-8.3%
Scottish	£427,000	£391,417	£-35,583	-8.3%
Irish	£920,000	£843,333	£-76,667	-8.3%
Total	£24,445,044	£22,407,957	£-2,037,087	-8.3%
BUC	£2,379,967	£2,181,636	£-198,331	-8.3%

Notes from the British Union Conference Treasurer

Tiered restrictions pre-Christmas have now been replaced by full lockdown across the country.

- 1. BUC-wide tithe is down on 2019 by £1,789,806 (8.3%).
- 2. SEC and NEC tithe is down by £1.12m (8.1%) and £654k (10.8%) respectively on 2019.
- 3. Irish Mission tithe is down by 7.4%, but Scottish (+6.5%) and Welsh (+7.5%) Mission tithe continues to reflect positivity during COVID-19.
- 4. BUC projected budgeted tithe income is £205k below the expected level.
- 5. The SEC and NEC are £1.79m and £779k below their respective budgeted tithe income.

British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
Annualised Tithe Trends 2018 - 2020



6. BUC cashflow continues to fall in the nine months to December 2020.

'The year has started with many of the restrictions we faced in 2020. I want to encourage you to remain steadfast in your relationship with God. It is only through His guidance and with His wisdom that 2021 will be filled with blessings' (Pastor Jacques Venter).

Thank you all for your continued support and due diligence.

EARL RAMHARACKSINGH



# Thank you Joy

## Joy Bussey retires from Special Needs Camp

### A ministry to 'include'

Joy Bussey has been the backbone of Special Needs Camp (SNC). She was in at its conception and journeyed tenaciously to keep Camp running.

Yes, she had a large support team dedicated to the smooth running of Camp, but in the main she has lived Special Needs Camp. Always keen to be inclusive – and with a 'yes we can' mindset – rather than say 'no' to a new camper, she would go out of her way to see how they could be safely accommodated with their particular needs.

Over the years there have been several testimonies of successful integration of both staff and campers working together in a Christian spirit to share God's love for all abilities.

Joy's leadership skill was to involve staff and campers from non-Adventist traditions, enabling several repeat visits from people who had attended SNC and wanted to experience its unique fellowship again.

I believe that Joy worked with Pastor Martin Anthony at the beginning. Bill Beamish around that time was the North England Conference Treasurer – ensuring that time, space and funds were available to make SNC happen at Aberdaron. Victor Pilmoor provided sterling support while Treasurer at the British Union Conference, which has continued under Earl Ramharacksingh.

SNC had a particularly spiritual feel about it, with spectacular Camp concerts not only for campers and staff, but also for the Aberdaron community. After all the work of the week, Joy would often sing at both the Sabbath service and the concert, a quiet expression of thanks to God, perhaps, that the week had gone well.

While it would be impossible to single out particular members of staff who kept everything running smoothly, we could mention the medical staff, the kitchen staff, the padre and worship leaders, councillors,

recreational staff, and so on – alongside Joy's husband, Colin.

Colin tirelessly put his hand to whatever he was asked to do. He made the porridge when Bernard retired. He drove the minibus, taking campers and support staff to leisure centres and sandy beaches – and on numerous mini trips over the course of the week.

Joy leaves a very large 'footprint' as she passes the baton on to a team that has worked under her hand for the past decade or two.

With the many friends and families of Special Needs Camp, I want to wish her and Colin God's richest blessings as she steps down with a massive 'thank you'.

PASTOR CURTIS MURPHY

### A lasting legacy of care

For about 10 years, I had the great privilege of working with Joy at Special Needs Camp. I never failed to enjoy the experience, knowing that the overall running of the camp was in safe and sensible hands.

There was never a crisis that Joy could not sail through: she may have been worried about the weather, the failure of the veg man

to arrive, or some minor accident to a camper, but she was unfailingly unflappable, cheerful, and competent.

Over the years she trained many young volunteers to be good staff carers; and a testament to her training is that many returned year after year, and some of them chose to have careers in the caring profession.

Joy and her husband Colin were always the first on site; and, from the moment she began work, she made sure everything was safe and ready for the campers. She was always the last special needs staff member to leave, ensuring that everything was neatly packed away, ready for the next year. But her work did not end there: she was always recruiting the following year's staff, and, more importantly, following up on the campers' lives, their illnesses, and, sadly, their deaths. Such is her caring for the less fortunate.

She will leave a lasting legacy, and a large hole in the camp staff. Thank you, Joy, for all you have done – things that some people would balk at taking on.

PASTOR PAUL R. CLEE

### A gift of expertise

Joy was part of the initial Adventist Special Needs Association (ASNA) working group and was helpful in the very early stages of ASNA. We are grateful for the expertise and counsel she provided.

She has coordinated wonderful work in the area of supporting adults with special needs for many years. Joy has a wealth of experience, and her passion and commitment in this ministry are evident. ASNA wish Joy a restful retirement and God's blessings on her family.

SOPHIA NICHOLLS

### Special Needs Camp, thank you!

I would like to express my thanks to all of you who have served on the staff team of Special Needs Camp while I have been Senior Care Co-ordinator and then Camp Co-ordinator. I have been involved with this mission for over forty years, and it would have been impossible without those of you who have given a week of your summer – many of you on a regular basis. Unfortunately, because the Aberdaron site was closed in 2020 because of COVID-19, there was no camp then.

I am now having to pass on the leadership of this mission as my joint replacements have been delayed because of the pandemic, but I wanted to ensure that as many of you as possible are assured of my gratitude in ensuring that this mission continued. It is hoped that there will be another camp in 2021, and I know of some carers who are looking forward to their break! Campers are also hopeful of having their holiday with friends. If you would like to join the team in 2021, please make contact via our website – [specialneedscamp.co.uk](http://specialneedscamp.co.uk) – and support my successors.

Thank you again.



# Your Bible questions

with Julian Thompson

Acts chapter 2 records the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost when many people from diverse backgrounds were prompted to follow Christ. I have often heard it said that before Christ returns there will be a similar outpouring of the Holy Spirit, with many people coming to Christ. What does the Bible say about this?



The textual connection between the latter rain and the outpouring of God's Spirit occurs in Joel 2:23-32, where it forms a part of God's eschatological promise to restore His people (verse 23 is where the early and latter rains are mentioned specifically).<sup>4</sup> What's interesting is that the reference to the rains in verse 23 is followed by a ripening of the crops; we are told that *'the threshing floors shall be full of grain'* (Joel 2:24, ESV), and that the people *'shall eat in plenty and be satisfied'* (Joel 2:26, ESV). There is also a maturing of the people: God will pour out His Spirit *'on all flesh'*, and their sons and daughters will *'prophesy'* (Joel 2:28, ESV). References to portents *'in the heavens'* and the moon turning to *'blood'* further underline the fact that, in terms of chronology, the eschatological context of the passage frames it as something that occurs at the end of time, a period the Hebrew Bible often refers to as the *'day of the LORD'* (Joel 2:30-32, ESV).<sup>5</sup>

Finally, while Peter does proclaim that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit prophesied in Joel 2 was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21), the Book of Revelation's eschatological references to the moon turning to blood (Revelation 6:12), people reaching spiritual maturity (Rev. 14:1-5), and other events echoing Joel 2 do indicate that, Peter's sermon notwithstanding, the suggestion that the second coming of Christ will be preceded by another powerful outpouring of God's Spirit is not without biblical foundation.

Julian Thompson is a lecturer on the Hebrew Bible at Newbold College of Higher Education.

**Do you have a question about a text or passage that perplexes the mind? Send your question to the editor, editor@stanboroughpress.org.uk, and with Julian's help we'll try to find the answer.**

<sup>1</sup>Ellen Gould White, *The Acts of the Apostles in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (vol. 4 in the Conflict of the Ages series) (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), pp. 54-56 <sup>2</sup>Ibid. <sup>3</sup>John H. Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Old Testament): *The Minor Prophets, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), p. 47 <sup>4</sup>'Eschatology' refers to the Bible's teaching on what will occur at the end of time. <sup>5</sup>For more information on 'the day of the LORD', see Paul J. Achtemeier, Harper & Row and the Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 516.

The suggestion that the second coming of Christ will be preceded by a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit, similar to that which occurred in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost, is a commonly held view among Seventh-day Adventists. Oftentimes such discussions take place with reference to one or more Ellen White statements from *Acts of the Apostle*, where, in her discussion of Acts 2, she speaks about the 'former rain' and the 'latter rain'.<sup>1</sup> She describes the former rain as commencing with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the latter rain as a special bestowing of God's power that prepares the church

for the Second Coming.<sup>2</sup>

Reading Bible texts within their immediate context is one of the foundational pillars of healthy Bible study, and the fact that Acts 2 makes no mention of former rain, or even a second outpouring of the Holy Spirit, makes this an excellent question. So what does the Bible say about the former and latter rain? And in what sense is it connected to the second coming of Christ? We will address these questions in turn.

In the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), the sending of rain is often associated with God's favour (see Lev. 26:3, 4 and Deut. 11:13-15) and the withholding of rain with His displeasure (see Jer.

3:3 and Hos. 6:3). Though the rainy season in Palestine was notoriously unpredictable, it was often the case that more than two thirds of their annual rainfall would come between November and February. This was known as the early (or former) rain, and would soften the ground, making it easier to plough. A second period of rainfall would occur between March and April; this was known as the latter rain, and would help to bring the crops to maturity. For our purposes here, what's particularly important to note is the fact that 'for agricultural societies, it was not simply the rainfall that was crucial, but the timing (see Jer. 5:24).'<sup>3</sup>



Those weren't just any old rocks! Each had special meaning. They were stones of remembrance, stones of history. The rocks themselves were common enough, resembling millions of others on the hills of Palestine: but these twelve pointed to something. They looked back to God's leading in Israel's experience.

The Bible is a historical book based upon a series of events beginning with Creation and the entrance of sin, and flowing through God's covenant with Abraham, the Exodus, Israel's captivity and restoration, the incarnation and virgin birth of Jesus, His sinless life and death on the cross, the resurrection, and the Second Advent.

Thus the Bible is a book of remembrance of God's miraculous leading of His people. When churches lose the significance of those remembrances they are in trouble. Adrift from their mooring, they have lost their way. In the Judeo-Christian realm, losing the way begins with forgetting the past – more specifically, forgetting God's leading in the past.

When that happens, Christians lose their sense of identity . . . and with a lack of identity comes a vanishing mission and purpose. After all, if you don't know who you are in relation to God's plan, what do you have to tell the world?

Christian history is littered with religious bodies who have forgotten where they have come from, and, as a result, have no direction for the future. And that forgetting is a very

# Stones of remembrance

by George R. Knight

*'And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal. And he said to the people of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, 'What do these stones mean?' then you shall let your children know, 'Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.' " ' Joshua 4:20-22, RSV.*

real temptation for Adventism.

It was no accident that an ageing Ellen White alerted her readers to the topic. 'In reviewing our past history,' she penned, 'having travelled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history' (*Life Sketches*, p. 196).

When we consider Adventism's history, our church has its own stones of remembrance.

We neglect them at our peril.



*Lest We Forget* is a devotional and instructional reflection by Adventist historian, Dr George Knight, with the aim, as he describes, to 'bring each reader closer both to the church and to its Lord'. Originally published in the daily devotional, *Lest We Forget*, Dr Knight and Review and Herald have kindly given permission for *MESSANGER* to share an excerpt in each edition during 2021. This reflection was dated 1 January.

*Lest We Forget* is available from <https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk> or call 01476 591700

**John Stuart Wilcock (1945-2020) d. 9 November.**

John Wilcock was born in Sale, Greater Manchester, on 19 March 1945, and fell asleep on 9 November 2020 in Exeter following a major stroke. His funeral was held at the East Devon Crematorium on 27 November. The service was conducted by Pastor Weiers Coetser, who spoke about John's favourite scripture, Psalm 23. Pastor Coetser commented that the psalm is of great comfort to people, and is used for a variety of occasions. There is the assurance of God being with those walking



through the valley of the shadow of death, and there is hope for the future, when those who love God will dwell with Him eternally, following the resurrection day.

John's sons, Mark and Matthew, paid tribute to their father and recounted fond memories. They stressed that their father had not been a materialistic man, but had worked hard at a variety of jobs to provide for the family. He had also been a much-loved grandfather to Elodie and Maisie.

In 2002 John met his second wife, Elizabeth, who had come from Zimbabwe to live in England. They worked together, and Elizabeth introduced him to the Stockport Adventist church. He

was very enthusiastic, and asked to be baptised at the church.

Eventually the couple moved to Zimbabwe, and John loved his experiences there. John and Elizabeth returned to England to live and finally came to Devon to be near John's sister, who was unwell at the time. They became members of Exeter Church and endeared themselves to the congregation. John would amuse members with his stories of dramatic bus journeys to church. His sense of humour was something which was recalled at his funeral, when Pastor Coetser told how Elizabeth would always find John at work, when they were working at the same hospital. She only had to listen for the laughter

to know that John would be there, entertaining the nurses with his stories!

Family and friends from the north and south of England came to say goodbye to John. Highlands Church in Zimbabwe also had a farewell service with Elizabeth on Zoom, and she was very grateful for that. The hope of the second coming meant a lot to John, and all those who share that belief look forward to the day when we shall 'dwell in the house of the Lord for ever'. Until that day, we pray that Elizabeth and all the family will be sustained by their faith in the Good Shepherd.

STELLA JEFFERY

## Pastor Patrick Boyle (1935-2020) d. 29 December.

It is with deep sadness that we report the death of Pastor Patrick Boyle. He died on 29 December 2020.

He and his wife Rosemary joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Dublin in 1956. In 1960 he went to Newbold College to train for the ministry. In 1964 he returned to Ireland and began his ministry in Belfast. He went on to serve in Dublin, Hull, Scarborough, Halifax, Huddersfield, Moncton (Canada), the New Gallery Centre in London, Bromley, Croydon, the South England Conference as a departmental director, St Albans, and Stanborough Park.

Following a short illness, he is now sleeping, awaiting the Lord's return until He comes.

He leaves behind his loving wife Rosemary, daughters Amy and Audrey, granddaughter Alexandra and son-in-law John.

AUDREY ANDERSSON



Patrick's wife, Rosemary; his daughters, Amy and Audrey; granddaughter, Alexandra; and son-in-law, John, would like to express their thanks and appreciation for the many expressions of sympathy and support they have received.



## Letter to the Editor

### Recalling 'Mission-Driven Structure'

Dear Editor  
Johnson Wong's letter in the last issue of *MESSANGER* brings to mind the 2011 report

of former BUC president, Don MacFarlane, following the last major review of the BUC's church structure.<sup>1</sup> He said, 'Some have justified its structure by claiming that it was appointed by God and is necessary for global cohesion. However, others have concluded that the complex, layered and repetitive nature of the Church's structure has become a millstone around its neck and is consuming resources that ought to be used in the pursuit and fulfilment of its mission.'

Citing how the early church was organised in Acts 13, he says, 'It is at the local church level that the Gospel is proclaimed, where hearts are reached for the Kingdom of our Lord, and where the nature of this kingdom is demonstrated in the lives of members. If the church is to be the dynamic force that it ought to be, it is imperative that the local congregation is resourced for that purpose. Consequently, any change in structure that is likely to have a significant impact on Gospel fulfilment must of necessity strengthen the local church by increasing the resources that are available to it.'

From personal experience of managing successive public

service mergers and management re-structures, I can attest to the cost benefits of 'central administration and support services, but with local management, sensitive to local needs'.

Are the COVID-19 pandemic's financial consequences for the Church God's message that, 'now, more than ever, is the time'?

<sup>1</sup>'Mission-Driven Structure': Pastor Don MacFarlane, President, British Union Conference, 2011

JOHN WILBY

## Christian service

*'Peculiar and rapid changes will soon take place, and God's people are to be endowed with the Holy Spirit, so that with heavenly wisdom they may meet the emergencies of this age, and as far as possible counteract the demoralising movements of the world.'*

*'If the church is not asleep, if the followers of Christ watch and pray, they may have light to comprehend and appreciate the movements of the enemy.'*

ELLEN WHITE, TESTIMONIES FOR THE CHURCH, VOL. 6, P. 436



### 'They were the friendliest white people I had ever seen.'

Malcolm X is best known as a young American Muslim minister, human rights activist, and popular figure in the US Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. He eventually became the leading spokesperson for the Nation of Islam. At age 39 he was assassinated in New York. In his autobiography he reflects on an experience as a young teenager while living in Lansing, Michigan, probably some time between 1935 and 1940. It was during a time when America was racially segregated, when signs were used to indicate where African Americans could legally walk, talk, drink, rest or eat.

'About this time, my mother began to be visited by some Seventh-day Adventists who had moved into a house not too far down the road from us. They would talk to her for hours at a time, and leave booklets and leaflets and magazines for her to read. . . .

'We began to go with my mother to the Adventist meetings that were held further out in the country. For us children, I know that the major attraction was the good food they served. But we listened, too. There were a handful of Negroes from small towns in the area, but I would say it was ninety-nine percent white people (in that church).

'The Adventists felt that we were living at the end of time, that the world was coming to an end. But they were the friendliest white people I had ever seen.'

Cited in a sermon by Pastor Dwight Nelson, 'Love on the Move', 18 December 2020.

<https://www.pmchurch.org/service/2020/12/19/midnight-dark-star>

The grace of God – love that cares, stoops and rescues.

## Messenger

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### Sunset

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

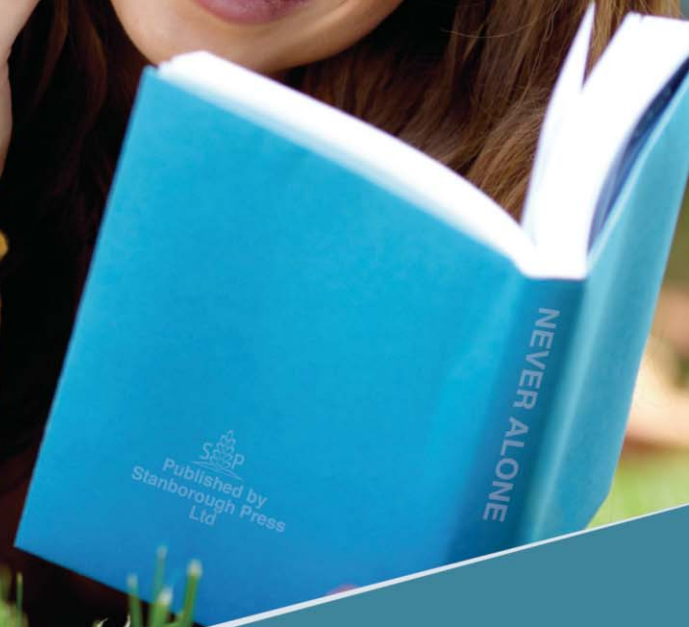
	Lon	Card	Nolt	Edin	Belf
Jan 29	4.45	4.57	4.44	4.40	4.57
Feb 5	4.58	5.10	4.57	4.55	5.11
12	5.11	5.23	5.11	5.11	5.26
19	5.23	5.36	5.24	5.26	5.40





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