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Is it time to leave the cities?

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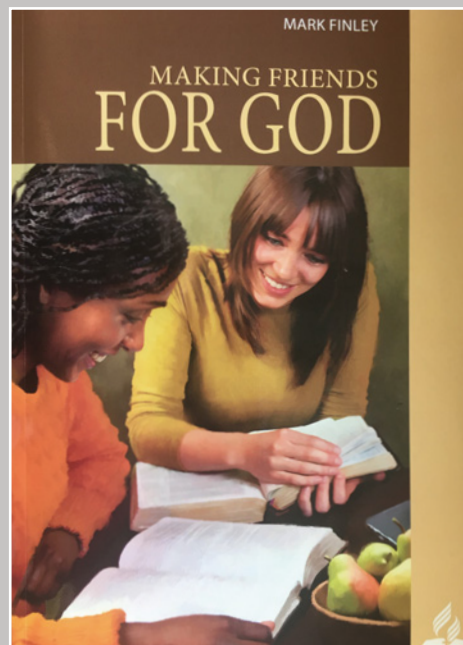


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- 'Make a list of those you are impressed to pray for. Follow the method of Jesus and pray for them aloud by name.
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Mark Finley, *Making Friends for God*, from the chapter 'Interceding for others', p. 43.



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David Neal, Editor

Have you checked how much you have in the bank?

There was a time when the only ways to check a bank account were either to wait for the statement to arrive through the post, or to visit the bank and request a copy. Nowadays, at the click of a mouse or the use of a smartphone app, instant 24/7 access is possible. When finances are stable, most leave the account unchecked, leaving the routine debits and credits to themselves; but when funds are short, or the balance gets closer to zero, we tend to check the account more often.

Over the last few months, some of us have been checking our account more than usual, because on our mind in these fragile times is the nagging 'what if'. What if my employer gives notice that I am to be made redundant? What if I'm unable to find another job before funds dry up? Do I have enough in the bank to keep going? These are questions that have crossed my mind, but also, I imagine, yours too. Sadly, it's no theoretical question because there's many a MESSENGER reader (including church employees) who are already facing this reality, and more who will.

Recently I had the privilege of officiating at the wedding of two wonderful young folk, thrilled to be at the altar to become husband and wife. In conversation with them over the prior 15 months, I naturally became acquainted with their hopes and dreams. They have plans: good plans, godly plans. As preparations for the wedding progressed, their organisation was impressive. Talking together online close to the wedding day, on the wall behind them was displayed a large wedding planner with three columns of post-it notes –

completed/to do/in progress – a necessary tool for any upcoming wedding. But, as you know, making a concrete plan for anything involving people getting together at the moment is near impossible. In short, plans changed!

It's my life experience that we can be as sincere, intentional and purpose-driven as we like, but experience shouts a loud reality with the motif: 'Plans change.' Even when we place our plans before the Lord, and seek His will – guess what? 'Plans change,' possibly because while we think they align with His will, they do not. Most challenging of all is the 'plans change' experience forced on us due to what a respected friend describes as an 'unwelcome interruption'.

In his letter to the Christians living in and around the city of Ephesus, Paul talks about the blessings of knowing Christ, not least how He 'lavished upon us' the 'riches of his grace' and how we are 'saved through faith' (Ephesians 1:7, 8 & 2:8, ESV). The letter includes two prayers, the first thanking God for their strong faith (Ephesians 1:15-23), and the second a prayer of intercession in which Paul pours out his soul to God (Ephesians 3:14-21). There's much I appreciate about Paul's letters, particularly how enthusiastic he is to explain the mystery of the Gospel: but his passion to explain is combined with a depth of personal feeling and concern for his readers. It is as if many of his letters are addressed not to 'readers', but to me, the reader.

We miss Paul's second prayer in this letter at our peril. He portrays a picture of a God who

is loving, caring, and approachable: so much so that He is called 'Father' (verse 14). It is a deeper and more intimate relationship than we can ever see between a human father and child. In addition, everything we know about Christ, as Paul has already expressed in verses 11-13, God the Father is. But in this intercessory prayer the 'request list' is very different from what is usually on ours.

Is your list something like mine? After thanking the Lord for caring for me, and requesting that He care for my personal well-being, I share with Him – that is, I 'list' – the needs of family and friends as their needs are drawn to my attention. Rightly so, I request that the Lord intervene in their lives. In contrast, this is what I read in Paul's prayer: I notice he's left out the type of specific requests I make, which makes me wonder. Even recognising this to be a general letter, I'm still a little mystified as to why he didn't pray for the physical well-being of the Ephesians? Why no request for the personal safety of his readers as a result of following Christ? Surely it must have been on his mind, writing, as he is, from a prison cell in Rome around AD 60.

Continuing to read his prayer, however, there's a request that goes far deeper than anything specific I usually raise in prayer. My prayer, says Paul, is that 'he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being' (verse 16, ESV). What is that about?

As Paul has tried to explain the meaning and consequence of the Gospel, above all he wants the reader to know what it means to be 'in Christ' – 'in Him'. The risen Christ is not a remote and distant power (like other gods in Ephesus), but close up, personal, accessible: so personal that He chooses to live in and take control of the life of the reader – if they will let Him – free and without charge! It is a gift that provides strength for living, to face whatever circumstance the reader faces or will face, including the 'unwelcome interruption'. What is the strength Paul is praying for? That Christ will take up *katoikein* (the Greek word Paul uses to describe 'permanent residence') in our lives, and be our Manager.¹

Ah, I forgot to mention a person that used to be associated with banking – 'the manager'. I can just about remember him – always 'someone to be kept happy', a door always open when my account was in credit – and at those times he found it 'a pleasure to do business' with me. But if my balance was negative, the door was closed.

In contrast, Christ is my Bank Manager, with the door permanently open. He is the reserve I call on to 'keep going' when faced with 'unwelcome interruptions'. It is He who gives me the inner peace when the future is uncertain – for whatever reason. It is He who reminds me constantly of how much I have in the bank, now and always!

'Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.'

(Ephesians 3:20, 21, ESV.)

What if my employer gives notice that I am to be made redundant? What if I'm unable to find another job before funds dry up?



¹The Daily Study Bible, William Barclay, Ephesians, in the commentary based on Ephesians 3:14-21

British Union Conference Member Survey:

views about online church during the COVID-19 pandemic church closures

by Pastor Richard Daly, BUC Communication Director

Churches within the British Union Conference (BUC) have been closed for the last five months during the COVID-19 pandemic. What have been the effects of church closures on the membership across the BUC? The BUC Communications Department wondered if online church can be used effectively in the future.

Purpose

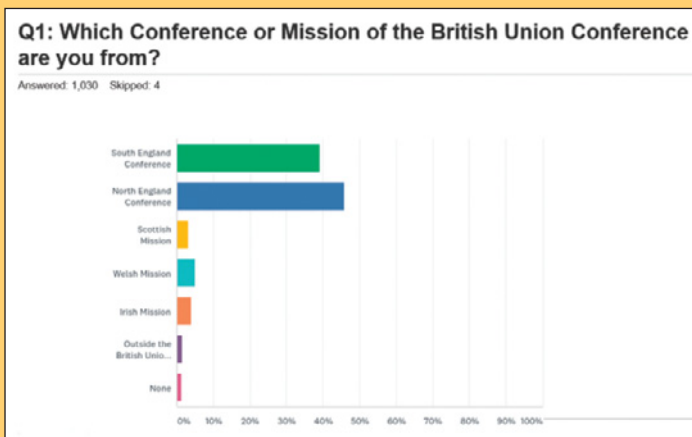
The purpose of the survey was to ascertain the scope, practice and impact of online church upon members within the BUC, now and in the future.

Method

Using SurveyMonkey, a 10-item questionnaire was sent electronically to members within the BUC territory, through *BUC News* and other social media platforms.

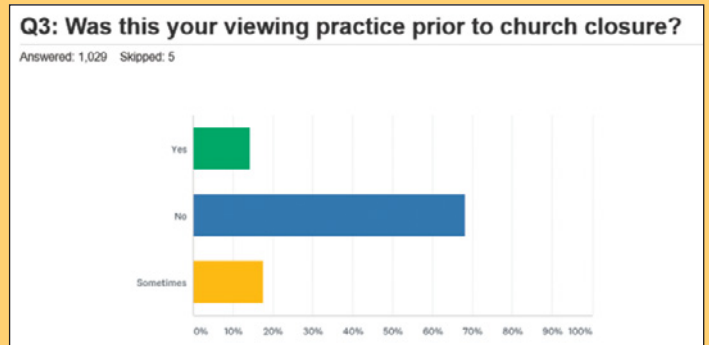
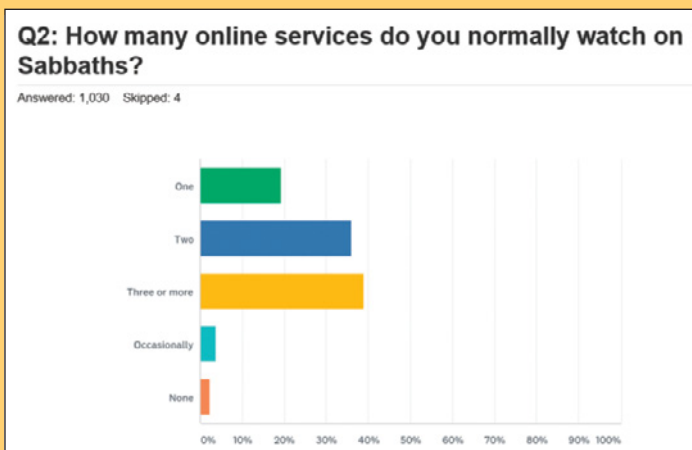
Results

With the largest number of responses to a BUC survey in any shape or form, 1,034 people completed the survey, approximately 2.5% of the membership. Most of the responses came from the North England Conference (NEC) (Q1).

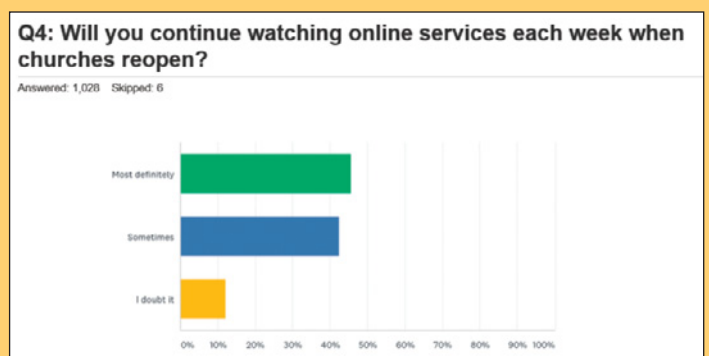


During church closure, there was a sudden influx of churches now adapting to this new way of reaching their members. Some churches were now entering into a new realm of digital competency.

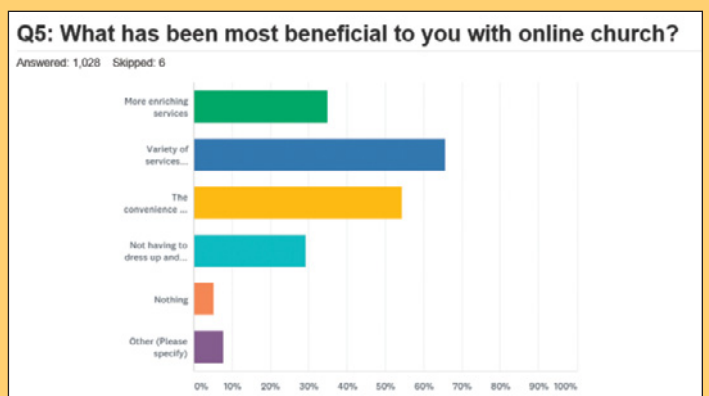
It did not take long to adjust, with a plethora of online church services being offered each week, not only within the BUC, but overseas



too (Q2 & Q3). Online church has become popular, to the point that two thirds of all those surveyed have made it a weekly practice to watch more than one service in a day.

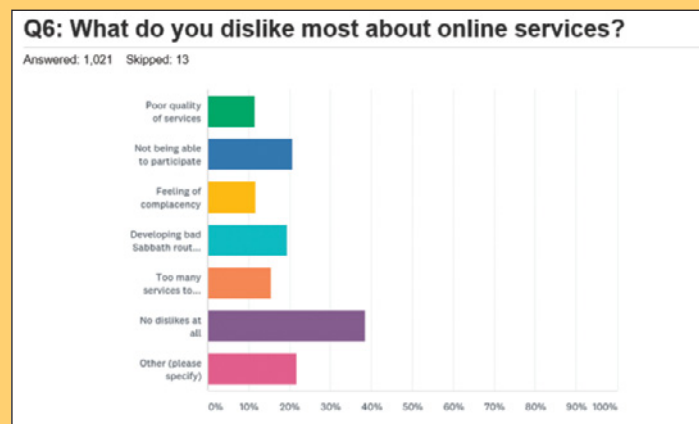


(Q4) With an increase in online presence, and members becoming more aware of the benefits of services being streamed, when asked if they would continue watching services online when churches reopen, 46% responded that they 'definitely will'.

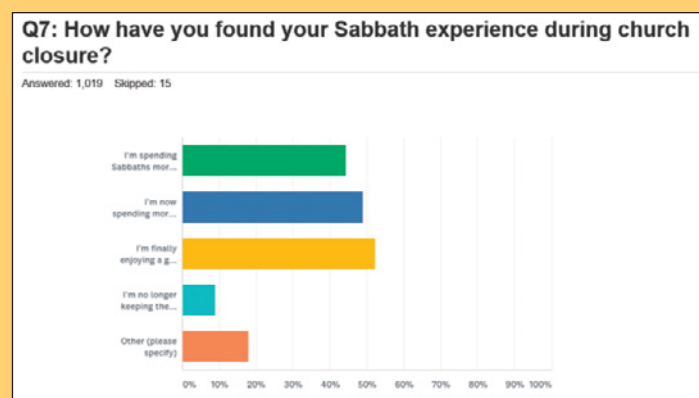


(Q5) When asked, 'What has been most beneficial to you with online church?' the most popular response was, 'Variety of services available'. Interestingly, 29% responded honestly that the most beneficial aspect of online church was 'not having to dress up and travel to church'.

Connected with that was the value of 'Having more time for the family and time in nature, with a far less stressful Sabbath'.

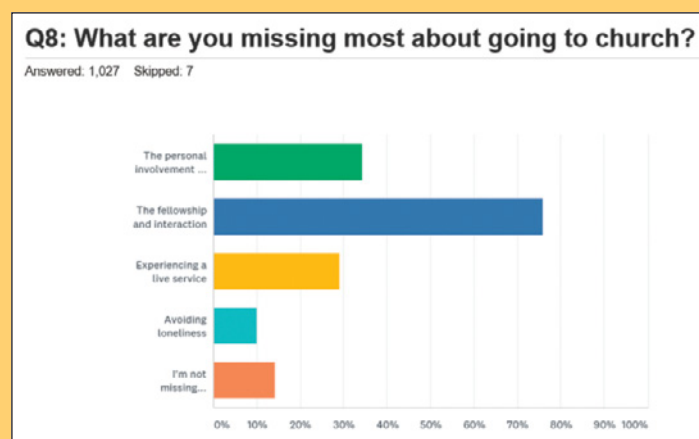


(Q6) When asked what the respondents disliked about having online church, the responses were varied, with the majority having no dislikes at all. But the point was made by one respondent that 'Not many of the elderly members understand how to use Zoom.'



(Q7) The next question asked was: 'How have you found your Sabbath experience during church closure?'

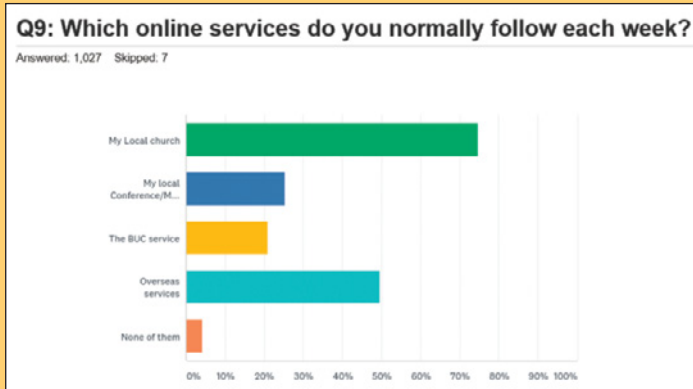
The answers were spread between three main responses – 52% said, 'I'm finally enjoying a good Sabbath day's rest.' Forty-nine percent responded, 'I'm now spending more time with the family,' and 44% said they were now 'spending Sabbaths more creatively'.



(Q8) Our next question was: 'What are you missing most about going to church?'

'Fellowship and interaction,' came the reply, missed by 77% of respondents, with one particular respondent noting, 'Congregational singing, praise and worship in a live environment is irreplaceable!'

With an array of online church services on offer, an outstanding 75% of those surveyed still followed their local church services each week: but members also watched their local conference/mission or BUC services. However, interestingly, 50% also watched overseas services.



(Q9) The last question provided a further opportunity for open comments. Here's just one of them:

- 'I feel that, instead of so much money being spent flying pastors over from places like America, we could do more services online and use the money for evangelism. We could get tablets for those who might not have them, like the elderly.'

Analysis

Having collated all the results and pored through reading over 1,000 different comments, the main points can be served as a general conclusion to the survey.

Online church has proved to be an immensely effective means of connecting with members and maintaining social and spiritual contact in the absence of a live church setting.

Members adapted quickly to using various methods of screening platforms, such as YouTube, Livestream and Apple TV, viewed on devices such as a mobile phone, laptop or TV.

With the array of various services offered, members settled into a routine of viewing more than two services on a Sabbath.

In some cases, reports revealed greater attendance at services such as prayer meetings and Bible studies. Further analysis suggests that lapsed members and new visitors were becoming more involved and were comfortable with the online experience.

Despite its advantages, online church fell short when it came to the need for a fuller fellowship and interaction with others . . . and as a result was not considered the ultimate alternative to church attendance.

The hypothesis some of us had raised before the survey – that, as a result of online church, members' expectation of how missional a church can be will change towards a positive embracing of an online church presence – proved to be consistent with the many comments expressing a combined approach to church services, both being live and continuing online, when churches finally reopen.

Conclusion

In a survey that has reached a significant number of people representing all areas of the BUC, the consensus remains that online church services and meetings are a very effective way to maintain a church experience, but also an evangelistic tool for reaching a new audience of people who otherwise would not attend a physical church building in person.

The survey challenges us to redefine what church really is . . . in reality, church never actually closed, just the doors to many of our buildings. As Christ's disciples we must learn to worship, pray, encourage, witness, disciple and serve in creative ways that still bring glory to God, without having to depend on a physical building to do this.

This period of church closure is a preparation for what will come in the near future when we will have to develop new ways of worship under a period of severe duress, when our faith will be sorely tested in the most trying and testing times.

For a full view of all the results, go to:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-JN7HSGXG7/>.

Is it time to leave the cities?

From economic hub to tranquillity

A conversation with Pastor Sam and Rowena Davis

On Sabbath 18 July, Pastor Sam Davis gave the sermon for the Sabbath-morning BUC online worship service. At one level, it was a Sabbath sermon with a prophetic call – in the widest sense of the term. The call is to consider a life change, relocating from urban city life to rural country life. In this interview with both Pastor Sam and Rowena Davis, we talked about why they transitioned from living in suburban London to rural Spain.



David Neal: Sam and Rowena, it is good to talk with you, and thank you, Sam, for your sermon a few weeks ago. As I listened to what you shared from the Word, and the guidance provided by Ellen White – it challenged my thinking. That's why I'd like to take time to unpack what you shared. First, though, can you share your story about your journey from London to Spain?

Sam Davis: It's no secret that working in ministry is high pressure. Serving in the role of South England Conference President only magnified that. Even though I believe the Lord called me and used me to help move the Conference forward, I did feel, guided by the Holy Spirit, that it was time to pass on the baton of leadership to others. It was only after leaving that I found

out that my previous lifestyle had been quite detrimental to my health. . . .

Rowena Davis: We both came from a rural background and had intentions of retiring to a quieter, sunnier place. I was very conscious of the fast pace of life, and wanted to make a change before I was too old to deal with the transition. We spent many years talking about retirement, and Sam was keen to go to Jamaica. However, we decided that a warmer place in Europe would be best for us. During our research we were reminded by the many admonitions by E. G. White regarding living in the country in these last days.

DN: You became convicted, then, that the advice given by Ellen White 120 years ago to exchange

urban for rural living is as relevant today as it was then.

SD: We always aspired to live in the country. We found our time at Newbold really enjoyable, and remember the Sabbath afternoons spent walking by the river in Henley or some other leisure pursuit in nature. Ministry in the city meant being away from all that. I believe the counsel Ellen White gave is a gift to steer the church and its members through the challenging times we face. Her principles of natural living and healing make sense. There is no doubt that city life is increasingly at odds with how real living should be. It is now the twenty-first century – and the air we breathe is still very polluted! The culture of crime, violence and social problems never seem far away, causing me to wonder about the obvious effects this has on our children. Ellen White has warned us that 'great destruction' is going to come upon cities. Not one Christian lost their life in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 because they heeded the prophetic warning.

DN: As you share, this is not a new idea to Seventh-day Adventists. During the late 1980s this very same call was brought to our attention by the 'Country Life' leadership, who ran the health-food restaurant in Regent Street, London. As they shared that story, my immediate reaction was, 'Do you really understand what you are asking?' How can

the many economically challenged Adventists in London, Birmingham, Manchester, and Leeds 'up sticks' and move?

SD: I understand what you are saying. It is not a decision a family takes lightly, and needs careful planning and much prayer before proceeding with caution. Rowena will tell you that we spent hours deliberating and praying, and planning about the matter. For us, it was a three-year process of careful research, weighing up the pros and cons, where to live, and ensuring that the change would be sustainable. I can't stress it enough: make a plan and think ahead about both the possibilities and the challenges.

Obviously, if you own property, the ability to move from the city with capital will make it a more viable proposition. But even if you currently rent, housing costs in the regions are much less than in the city areas. Sometimes, house exchanges are possible. However, the biggest thing to say here is that if God has laid this on your heart, He will make a way. The very first thing is listening to the call of God on your life, and He will make a way. Secular people have seen the writing on the wall and are leaving the cities, according to estate agents.

We live on a small farm that specialises in growing olives and almonds, and it is our intention to help people live healthier lives through lifestyle change: hence the name of our place is called 'Unochenta', meaning 180. We want to lead people to experience a 180-degree change in their lives.

DN: What about employment?

SD: At one time it would have been certain that you'd have to give up your city job; but, as we've seen over the last few months, working remotely may yet become the new normal. If your job is in a caring profession – where working remotely is not possible – in the regions they need people to care for them, too!

DN: Alright Sam, I get all that, and can understand it from the economic and personal level, but what about 'mission'? It seems to me to be the very opposite of what we believe 'incarnational

ministry' – living in and among city people – to be. Doesn't this negatively affect our ability to reach people in need of salvation?

SD: While we may live in a rural setting, our commitment of care and concern for the lost is not diminished. While we live outside of the city, we must still travel in to minister. We are intentional about staying connected and praying with and for the friends we have, and in making new friends for Christ. The digital age expands the possibility of creating new ministries and making new friends that do not always require being 'on location'.

I understand the point you are making. Moving out to the country is not an indication that God has given up on the city. He still loves the city and its people! That's why He gave His own Son for everyone, without exception. It's just the case that as the wickedness of the human race increases, leading up to the time before Christ returns, it is in urban city life that humanity will face its most difficult challenges and pressure points.

DN: You would agree, then, that what you are sharing is what might be called an 'outpost' ministry, even to the possible extent of providing a place of physical and spiritual refreshment for those living in the cities. At the same time, others may be called, and feel a missional need, to live full-time in the city. Whatever the method, the idea is to create centres of health and healing that will make a difference to lives for the better.

Rowena, can you share what life is like for you and Sam now?

RD: We live on a farm just outside a little village in the rural south of Spain. Here we grow a variety of fruits, vegetables and nuts. Life is interesting and challenging, with never a dull moment.

We have a good relationship with the villagers and local residents. We have conducted a nutrition class in the village with the help of volunteers and some of the members from our local church, and were hoping to run a stop-smoking seminar before COVID-19.

More than 80 people have

visited us in the past few months, and it has been such a pleasure hosting them, reaping the crops from the farm, learning new skills and a new language, and enjoying this rural life. At the moment we are very busy renovating and preparing for our new venture where we can serve the Lord in a new and dynamic way.

DN: As I come to the end of our conversation, can I ask you how you are both doing, as a result of losing your son, Andrew, due to his sudden illness?

SD/RD: Andrew's death came as a complete and utter shock to us, and it has been a difficult journey. Living on the Unochenta Farm in this tranquil and mind-renewing atmosphere has been a great source of comfort to us. Truly, God has been our refuge, and His everlasting arms are there through His word, His Holy Spirit and His many providential acts. We have learnt to trust Him, even when we don't understand. It has helped to draw us nearer to God, to each other and to His word. Our family members and good friends have been a great support

to us. Andrew's close ministerial friends have also been a constant source of encouragement.

We have also started a small group called Overcomers (those who have been recently bereaved), and it has been a tremendous source of mutual support to listen and share with fellow travellers.

Knowing who Andrew was, and the impact that he has had on the lives of many individuals and the legacy that he has left behind, has also been comforting to us.

DN: On behalf of *MESSENGER* readers, thank you for sharing with us, and at the same time challenging us. We offer our continued prayers for you both.

To view the entire sermon (beginning at 1:22:45) go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2DiAYdGFXM&feature=youtu.be>

For readers wanting to study further what Sam and Rowena have shared, go to:

Country Living, by Ellen White: <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/25.3#3>

'The Urgency of Urban Mission': <https://missiontothecities.org/duplicate-of-the-its-time-document.pdf>

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Haunted by Antioch

by Pastor David Cox

What might we learn, from this story of long ago, that could be helpful to the life and witness of the church in the twenty-first century?

Part 1

'Haunted' may not be the best word to use here, but the fact is, ever since we completed our Sabbath School study of the book of Acts back in September 2018, I have not been able to forget the extraordinary story of what happened at Antioch almost 2,000 years ago. It has returned, unbidden, to my thoughts again and again, as if demanding attention. For

me, it has become one of the most inspiring and challenging stories of the early church. I hope it inspires and challenges you too.

In New Testament times, Antioch (now Antakya in Turkey) was the capital of Syria and the third most important city in the Roman Empire, with an estimated cosmopolitan population of approximately

500,000. It stretched for five miles along the beautiful River Orontes, with a main colonnaded street over four miles long. Every home in Antioch had its own fresh water supply. It was a centre of trade, and a favourite holiday destination for the rich! But the believers who made the 300-mile journey from Jerusalem to that city in



AD 34/5 were not going there for a holiday.

As Luke explains in Acts 11:19-21, *'Meanwhile, the believers who had fled from Jerusalem during the persecution after Stephen's death traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. They preached the Good News, but only to Jews. However, some of the believers who went to Antioch from Cyprus and Cyrene [modern Libya] began preaching to Gentiles about the Lord Jesus. The power of the Lord was upon them, and large numbers of these Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord'* (NLT).

How many people make up 'large numbers'? Luke doesn't tell us, even though he records several numbers elsewhere. Maybe no one knew how many converts there were, or maybe it didn't matter. What Luke does tell us is that *'when the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch'* (vs. 22, NLT). By this time, seven or eight years had passed since the persecuted believers had left Jerusalem, and a lot can happen in that period of time in a city as large as Antioch, especially when 'the power of the Lord' is at work. It is quite possible that the new believers there numbered hundreds, if not thousands; some from the large Jewish community in the city, but most, it seems, from a non-Jewish background. Gentiles, pagans, and heathen men and women who now believed in Jesus were the predominant group in the growing church there; so the Jerusalem church 'sent Barnabas to Antioch'. Why? Were they worried that mass Gentile conversions could bring problems into the church? And why send Barnabas?

Barnabas – a nickname meaning 'son of encouragement' – was a Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) Jew from Cyprus, who may well have been acquainted with the Cypriot believers who had fled Jerusalem and were now sharing their faith in Antioch. He could understand the worldview of the Hellenists there, and was ideally suited to relate with those whose new-born faith and hope were possibly in question. We're told that he *'was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith'* (vs. 24, NLT): just the man to make the long-alienated and despised Gentiles feel at home in the family of Jesus Christ.

As it happens, there was no need for concern. *'When he arrived and saw this proof of God's favour, he was filled with joy, and he encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord. . . . And large numbers of people were brought to the Lord'* (vss. 23, 24, NLT). 'Large numbers' – again! People, people, people – they just kept coming to the Lord, with Barnabas or without him!

And this is where I have to pause for thought. Something wonderful was happening in Antioch. The church was growing fast! And yet none of the twelve apostles was there to provide pastoral oversight, training, or leadership, and there was no financial assistance provided from 'headquarters'. There's no record of any miracles that might have attracted the crowds. There were no

church buildings as such where people could gather for worship; the only written Scriptures in the city would have been portions of the Old Testament kept in the synagogues; and – note this – no mention is made of persecution. As Luke describes the three missionary journeys of Paul and his colleagues during the years that followed, the preaching of the Good News was met in almost every place with resistance and persecution: but not, apparently, in Antioch.

What can we make of all this? What might we learn from this story of long ago that could be helpful to the life and witness of the church in the twenty-first century? We surely live at a critical time in history when multiple crises make it clear that life cannot continue as normal indefinitely; and nowhere is that more obvious than in the life and mission of the church. From a human point of view, the challenge of mission in this country and other

parts of the world is greater now than it has ever been, and increases by the day. We still hear about 'finishing the work', but statistically we know that is still a dream. 'Normal' is no longer fit for purpose.

Over the past few months, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have actually been 'doing church differently', and some people have come to faith in Jesus for that reason alone. Will 'church' return to normal once a vaccine is found? The story of Antioch challenges us to look beyond the way we have been 'doing things' for many decades, to an understanding of 'church' closer to our roots and better fitted to meet the challenges of our day (or any day, for that matter). In part two, I want to take a closer look at some of the specific points of interest that I listed earlier.


David Cox, now retired in Grantham, formerly served as Church Growth Director for the British Union Conference.

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Communication is what happens when meaning is understood

by Pastor Randy Roberts



When it comes to conversations about race, a failure to understand what the other means to say can have serious ramifications. All too easily, when we share our position from the perspective of the other side, we are increasing rather than defusing the conflict. Anger is often aroused due to misunderstanding. There is frustration, and then comes the blame. In addition, blocking the communication process are three challenges – past experience, current emotions, and future uncertainty – and meaning is lost.

Randy Roberts, pastor of the Loma Linda University church, recognises this reality. In his 20 June sermon to his members, called ‘The Heart of Conversation’, Roberts concluded with very helpful guidance – rules of engagement – on how to communicate when it’s known that the conversation is going to be difficult. – David Neal

Isn’t there an easier way to communicate? I think there is.

It might take a little bit of work, a little bit of practice, but anything worth doing takes work and practice . . . right?

In my hand I have a piece of tiling – a piece left over from years ago, found in our garage from when we tiled part of our house. This tile represents the ‘floor’ in terms of permission to speak. Therapists for many years have used something called the speaker-listener technique. I’ve taught it and used it and learned from it. So here’s what a therapist

might do. John and Jean come in and sit down before the therapist, having a problem in communication; and so the therapist gives Jean the floor and says, ‘You have the floor; you can talk: not long, but brief. Express what it is that you’re feeling and thinking, and then hand the floor to John.’

So Jean does this; she expresses, hands the floor to John (handing the piece of tile over to John), and John now has the floor. All he can do is summarise what Jean said. ‘So, Jean, what you said is. . . .’

And then he hands the floor back to Jean and she either corrects or confirms. She might say, ‘No, no, no, that’s not what I said. This is what I said.’ She does it again and the floor goes back to John. Back and forth they go, sharing the floor, until what Jean says is summarised by John, and she says, ‘That’s it. Now you understand.’

Only then may John now have the floor to craft his response. And then the process reverses.

And you say, ‘Have mercy! How can you ever have a fight?’ Well, that’s the point. This

speaker-listener technique slows down the process to make certain that meaning is understood.

There is a conversation recorded in the Old Testament between Moses and the Reubenites and the Gadites. I wonder what would’ve happened if they had communicated more effectively between each other? A request is made by the Reubenites and the Gadites, and then Moses reflects it back, and they say, ‘No, no, no, Moses, that’s not what we’re saying’ – and then they repeat it, and he reflects it back. It takes two or three or four times, until finally Moses says, ‘OK, so this is what you’re saying.’ And they say, ‘That’s it.’ And then Moses says, ‘Well, that’s what you’re saying. Yeah, we can do that,’ because meaning has been understood. That’s the heart of communication.

It takes some practice, but it can ultimately become second nature – just like when I learned to drive a standard ‘manual’ car. My brother taught me how on an incline, and we’d jerk and shout and yell, trying for me to learn how to do it. I thought: *I’ll never master this*. You know, I owned several standard transmission cars, and it became so natural that I never gave it thought. That’s how we learn to communicate: making certain meaning is understood.

So is there a better way? I think there is. Remember the three challenges: past experience, current emotions, and future uncertainty. So, what if we communicate this way? Stick to the present; keep thinking in the driver’s seat; and place our trust in the God of the future, believing that people can change, and that with God all things are possible: even communication.

To hear the full sermon, ‘The Gift of the Gab’ (part 6), go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubjUGIC21rA>



Birmingham Law Society appoints first Adventist, female and black president in its 202-year history

The Birmingham Law Society made history on 28 July when it swore in its first Adventist president in the association's 202-year history. Seventh-day Adventist church member Inez Brown is a partner at Medical Accident Group, part of a West Midlands practice, Harrison Clark Rickerbys, and will now commence a one-year tenure as the society's president.

She began her career as a legal secretary before joining Anthony Collins in 2002 as a trainee, and then qualified in clinical negligence. After 11 years with the firm, Ms Brown moved to Harrison Clark Rickerbys to develop and expand its clinical negligence team, and now specialises in all types of claims, including birth and brain injuries, and is a member of Action for Victims of Medical Accidents.

When interviewed by the *Business Life* journal, Inez Brown said, 'The world is in a period of huge re-adjustment economically, politically and socially.' She also added, 'I'm excited to be taking over the presidency and supporting the continued growth and development of the Birmingham Law Society at this time. I'm also supremely proud to be the first black woman in this esteemed position in its 202-year history.'

In developing her strategic plans for the year ahead, Inez Brown said she would focus on three key themes during her presidency: 1) to keep flexible working at the top of the agenda among the society's membership, especially in relation to areas such as productivity, cyber security, and how 'agile working' means different things to different people; 2) to arrange meetings between technology companies and law firms which already have a tech team or wish to move into this field; 3) to set up a scheme to identify two talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds who might benefit from a programme to enter the legal profession.

In responding to her appointment, NEC President Pastor Richard Jackson said:

'The Seventh-day Adventist church in the British Isles is blessed to have members working within a plethora of industries at various levels. This week, however, I was honoured and proud to hear that Inez Brown, an NEC Executive Committee member, was appointed as the President of the Birmingham Law Society.

'This appointment is historic for two reasons: 1) this is the first time in the society's 200-year history that a black president has been appointed; 2) it cannot be ignored that Inez is also the first female black person to be appointed to this role. The legal profession has had a history of being a male-dominated profession, and so this appointment is ground-breaking for two reasons.

'As a formidable member of the NEC Executive Committee, Inez has provided us with invaluable advice and support in the context of her role, for which we are grateful. The committee joins with Inez's family and friends in celebrating this historic achievement. We know that this appointment will be a source of inspiration across the NEC.'

See here for the full article in the *Business Life*: https://www.business-live.co.uk/professional-services/birmingham-law-society-appoints-first-18668110?utm_source=whatsapp.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=sharebar



ADRA

Bert Smit, from ADRA-UK, appears in Leaders' Council podcast, alongside Lord Blunkett

The Leaders' Council of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is currently in the process of talking to leadership figures from across the nation in an attempt to understand this universal trait and what it means in Britain and Northern Ireland today.

Bert Smit from ADRA-UK was invited onto an episode of the podcast, which also included an interview with Lord Blunkett. Host Scott Challinor asked both guests a series of questions about leadership and the role it has played in their careers to date.

Scott Challinor commented, 'Hosting a show like this, where you speak to genuine leaders who have been there and done it, either on a national stage or within a crucial industry sector, is an absolute honour.'

Lord Blunkett, Chairman of the Leaders' Council of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, said, 'I think the most informative element of each episode is the first part, where Scott Challinor is able to sit down with someone who really gets how their industry works and knows how to make their organisation tick: someone who's there day in, day out, working hard and inspiring others. That's what leadership is all about.'

Reflecting on participating in the podcast, Bert said, 'It is always a pleasure to talk about the work that I so enjoy leading here in the UK. During this pandemic, ADRA-UK has adapted and become more agile, and has been utilising innovation in order to ensure the continuation of its strategic vision to serve the world's neediest people.'

You can listen to the podcast in full here: https://youtu.be/I_Ju1qZ0cMI.
You can also discover more about Bert Smit here:
<http://www.leaderscouncil.co.uk/members/bert-smith>.



ADRA Appeal

Dear Editor,

As readers will know, ADRA is in a spot of bother. Because of COVID-19 they haven't been able to run the usual Annual Appeal; and nobody has been doing sponsored walks or throwing themselves out of aeroplanes, or any of those other strange and wonderful things that people do in exchange for cash for ADRA. In short, ADRA is not raising enough money.

So, dear *MESSENGER* reader, can I encourage you to go and visit adra.org.uk and click on the big 'Give Now' button right there in the middle at the top? You'll be taken to justgiving.com, where you can help ADRA's 'Digital Annual Appeal'. They're trying to raise £150,000 between now and September (and that's still not really enough to keep all the programmes running).

As I calculate it, there are some nearly 40,000 Adventists in the UK and Ireland. So – do the maths – that's less than a fiver per person! For the price of two boxes of cornflakes we can help ADRA do great things.

Come on, good people; let's get this done . . .

To donate, go to <https://www.adra.org.uk/>.

Yours hopefully,

STEVE LOGAN, ADRA TRUSTEE

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- **Brenda Walsh** (Brenda Walsh Ministries)
- **Dr Willie & Elaine Oliver** (GC Family Min. Directors)
- **Pr Louis Torres** (internationally acclaimed speaker, author, trainer & musician)
- **Sharon Platt-McDonald** (BUC Health Min. Dir.)
- **Karen Holford** (TED Family Min. Director)
- **Dr Carlton Byrd** (Breath of Life Ministries Director & Senior Pastor of Oakwood University Church)
- **Dr David DeRose** (Medical Doctor)

more details to follow...



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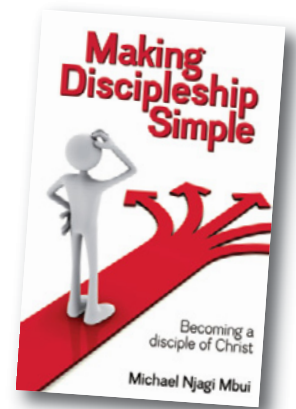
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The call for growth

by Pastor Michael Mbui



Are you 'stagnant' in your Christian experience? When you think about it deep down, it doesn't bear thinking about. How could such a thing happen to a genuine Christ-follower? In this excerpt of *Making Discipleship Simple*, Dr Michael Mbui explains how it was a problem in the early church, and the lessons we must learn.

'But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Peter 3:18, KJV).

Paul leads the charge with numerous appeals for members and congregations to grow. *'So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.'* (Colossians 2:6, 7, NIV.) To be 'rooted' is to be connected to the source of growth. For Paul, this means continuing to live our lives fully in Christ. Just as the disciples welcomed Christ into their lives at the start and allowed their relationship with Him to develop, so we must allow Christ to take on more and more of our lives every day.

Discipleship is not a one-off event, but a ceaseless process that leads to Christ having His way in every area of the disciple's life. To the Corinthians and Hebrews, Paul's call for the disciple to grow is more desperate, and indicates a feeling of disappointment.

'Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly – mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.' (1 Corinthians 3:1, 2, NIV.)

The disciples in Corinth were stagnant in the faith, and unable to experience the transforming reality of Christ's life. This alone could separate them from their past attitudes of division and competition. With the Hebrews, their lack of growth was holding them back from teaching others the message of Christ. *'In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.'* (Hebrews 5:12-14, NIV.) Just as the eating of food leads to growth, the truths of Christ's life and death will lead to a maturing discipleship.

In the Gospel, the theme of growth is revealed in Jesus' life and teachings. In Luke 2:52 it is stated that *'Jesus grew in wisdom*



and stature, and in favour with God and man' (NIV). Jesus increased in understanding, acceptance and adaptation to His mission in life and death. Jesus also taught about the growth of the Kingdom of God through parables such as the story of the sower and the parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:1-9, 31, 32). He also spoke about the need for growth in His disciples in the illustration of the vine and branches in John 15:1, 2 (NIV): *'I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.'* Jesus clearly expects that, due to the growth of the disciples, He will have more involvement in their lives.

Peter also appeals for disciples to grow by encouraging a steady assimilation of the attributes of Christ: *'... make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your*

knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' (2 Peter 1:5-8, NIV 1984.) Such growth comes with an increase in the knowledge and grace of Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Spiritual food is not an end in itself, but the means for growth and progress in the disciple's life.

The investment made by parents in creating new life is dependent on what contributions will be made to preserve and grow that life. For that reason, every new parent's greatest desire is for their newborn to love and appreciate the things that will foster their development. Every effort is put into encouraging, cajoling, and training children to love food, and into feeding them. In my community there is a common saying that parents repeat to their children: *'Mwana mwega no nda'* – 'A good child is the stomach.' Food is vital to preserve life, health and safety for the individual child and the society.

You can purchase this book online for £5.95 + p & p. To order, just click on the following link: <https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/making-discipleship-simple/>, or call our sales hotline: 01476 591700.



COVID-19 Church: from congregation to community

by Pastor John Surridge, BUC Executive Secretary

Let's face it, in the middle of a viral pandemic the last thing you need is a congregation. Banned by the

Government, dispersed by the police, and frowned upon by society, congregations of any kind are bad. Social distancing is good.

In the pre-COVID-19 era most good and upright church attenders equated 'church' with 'congregation'. Church was what happened every Sabbath when people congregated together. Those with a creative mindset may have conceded that church didn't necessarily have to happen in a traditional church building, but very few would have imagined a church where people didn't physically meet up at all.

COVID-19 changed all that. Fortuitously, the pandemic coincided with the emergence of several multi-user technologies which allowed people to 'meet' in a virtual space. Yes, these had been around for a few years, but better broadband – faster speeds, greater capacity, and wider availability – meant that such communication tools could now be used by the masses.

Some interesting things have happened. We've seen an explosion of creativity, with pastors narrowcasting church services to their former congregations from the comfort of their own homes. This is a major shift away from what went before, and it has generated a corresponding shift in mindset. The church family, just like the socially distanced biological family, is still a family, whether we meet physically or not.

Church services which are hosted on a video platform are obviously quite different. For example, group singing doesn't work well on a multi-user programme like Zoom. But the differences have led to some unexpected benefits. There is often more individual participation. Families can perform a song or a skit for the benefit of other church members. Children can tell stories or show what they have made. Others can do readings and share their lockdown poetry and anecdotes. With everyone looking at faces rather than the backs of heads, the dynamic changes. Rather than being dominated by a single pastor or elder with a handful of assistants, church is now democratised.

Of course, there have been a few disasters – hardware and software crashes; interruptions by hackers; families appearing in their pyjamas, forgetting that their cameras are switched on – but, generally, all of this has been taken in good humour and quickly dismissed as part of the learning curve.

These online services bear at least some resemblance to the pre-COVID-19 physical meetings, but there are other changes which

are perhaps more profound. Many online services are now 'broadcast' to a wider audience using channels like YouTube and Facebook, and in so doing they are picking up viewers from an entirely different demographic. While not yet ready to be participants, these new, mainly young people browse at times that suit them, watch a few

minutes here and there, and linger on the things that may catch their attention. With attention spans untrained by the rigours of church attendance, but with an ability to assimilate information at speeds unknown outside of the gaming fraternity, this may be the generation which will shape our understanding of church in the twenty-first century.

We will still have congregations after COVID-19, but an exciting future could lie in a new understanding of church as a community: real, virtual, physical, electronic, live or time-shifted, but all still, in some way, church.

The Mission in lockdown

by Elizabeth Elliott,

Communications Secretary

The Mission Seventh-day Adventist Church in Leamington Spa has always been a very active church, with all kinds of events and initiatives taking place both on Sabbaths and during the week. When lockdown began we were determined not to let this deter us from continuing with as many activities as possible.

Every Sabbath we meet on Zoom for Sabbath School, which includes time to chat, sing and hold an extended discussion. The youth also meet during their own Sabbath-morning Zoom session. We have had people joining us from as far away as Burundi and Australia.

During the week our Monday Smile programme is attended online by both church members and visitors from the community. Participants receive advice on health and well-being, learn about delicious and nutritious recipes and walk a mile together on the spot. There is also a Friday-evening Bible quiz night, prayer meeting, men's meeting and women's meeting – all facilitated by Zoom.

A list of regular Mission attendees who do not have access to Zoom are contacted regularly by phone or letter by a group of volunteers. The most innovative Zoom meetings, however, have been our CrafterZOOMs, which take place once a month. Read about the background to these and the first session in this report by our crafting maestro, Carolyn Schultz . . .

Creativity will not be locked down!

The last Sabbath of May saw the first CrafterZOOM as part of the continuing Creative Connections ministry at the Mission, Leamington Spa.

While it took more thought and a lot more time to prepare for creative activity to be presented over the Zoom platform, the members at the Mission were determined not to lose the momentum of their crafts ministry because of the lockdown restrictions.

Kits with the materials needed (except scissors and glue) were sent to members, friends in the community, and even as far away as a member living in Sweden.

Twenty people joined the Zoom session where Keila Souza demonstrated a few techniques, after which attendees were then able to design and create four greetings cards while chatting and sharing with each other. It was such fun meeting new people and getting to know each other a little bit more! Several people shared their creative passions from miniature rooms to crochet, and from knitted pillow covers to bottle lights! And, despite all the chatter, the resulting cards were gorgeous. It is amazing how many variations there were, even while using the same materials!

A full programme of future CrafterZOOMs is planned for the weeks and months to come, with different projects including paper crafts, painting, découpage, beading and bookfolding.

Maybe you would like to try something similar. If you have questions you can contact us at carolyn@schulz.co.uk.





Restoring lives during the COVID-19 pandemic

by Sharon Platt-McDonald,

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

'Your help has been lifesaving. Not sure what we

would have done without the wonderful meals you provide for us each day. We are so very grateful.' The gentleman's eyes filled with tears as he shared these words with us.

This was an individual from the community whose family members, he reports, 'had a rough time with the virus'. As a result, they had been left very unwell and unable to cater adequately for themselves.

Another grateful response, from a lady whose family members struggled through several months of illness following their COVID-19 diagnosis, enthused: 'Thank you so much for caring for us! We really appreciate the tasty hot meals you provide us each day. It has kept us going! We are extremely grateful and can't thank you enough!'

We have received accounts similar to these during the height of the pandemic, and even as we continue to emerge from lockdown.

In a previous report, I shared how God led me to launch this 'convalescence' type of initiative. This was primarily due to the level of continued distress, unresolved symptoms and challenges I noticed people were encountering as they struggled to recover from the coronavirus. I felt I needed to do something to reach out to try and support them. The individuals above, along with numerous other families, have been recipients of this initiative.

I titled the project 'restoration convalescence' in an attempt to meet the holistic needs and address the deficits individuals face during their recovery from the virus. The project has three aspects – revive, renew, and restore. Each of these segments uses different resources to meet physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs in practical ways.

Presently, with the assistance of One Vision, who are supporting the operational aspect of this project, we are now providing around 230 meals per day to the community.

Along with hot meals and essential shopping items, our publications have also been gratefully received, with individuals subsequently asking for more religious literature.

Each week we get positive feedback from people of all cultural and faith groups and those with no religious beliefs. Many have stated that once our churches reopen, they



We are so grateful to God for the opportunity to reach out to the diverse individuals in our communities during this pandemic.

There is much that we can do on a practical level to bring relief to those suffering in the aftermath of COVID-19. Our churches may have been closed for our regular services, but, thankfully, we were not closed to compassion and care, as God, through His divine leading, enabled

us to reach out in relevant ways to the community. May we continue to be 'open' to providing assistance in the restoration of lives.

Please pray for the BUC 'Restoration' Convalescence Project as we seek to be the hands and feet of Jesus to our communities in this time of great need and national crisis.

would like to visit and worship with us! Some are even requesting Bible studies as a result of the help they have received from our churches participating in the BUC Restoration Convalescence Project. We rejoice over these positive testimonies and pray for God's continued leading in the lives of these individuals.

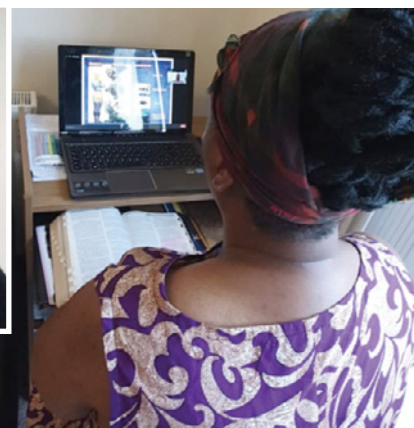
Zoom church – a moment in history or the new normal?

by Darell J. Philip,

Area 6C Communications Coordinator

When UK Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, enforced a national lockdown back in March, to reduce the spread of the coronavirus which has impacted the globe, many churches found themselves in uncharted territory. And then came Zoom. . . . While for many it has taken time to get used to what has often now been referred to as the 'new normal', one thing is for sure – God already knew that this would happen and prepared the way so that His message could continue to reach everyone. During a time where the normal church experience has been momentarily interrupted, it has dramatically forced us to change in order to ensure that the message is still accessible for all who need to hear it.

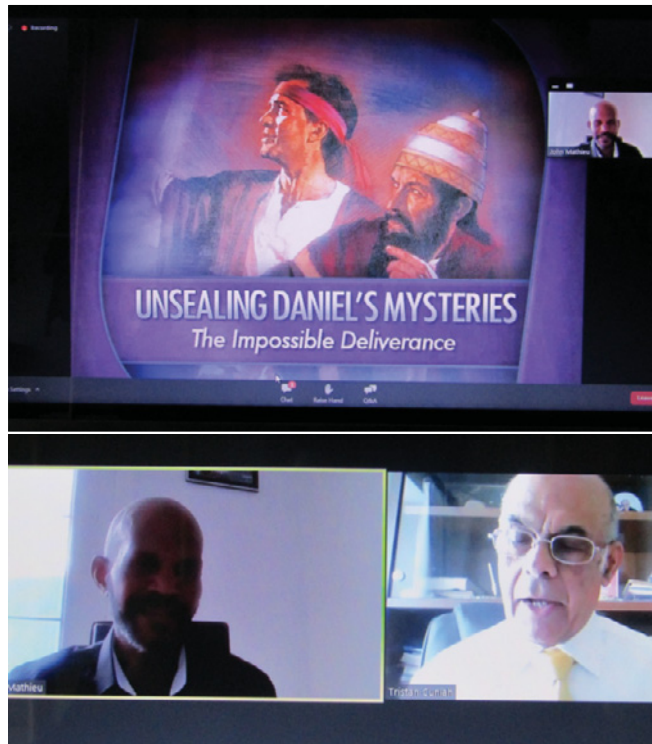
During May and June of this year, the Hackney and Wood Green churches, working in



partnership, presented a Daniel seminar online (16 May – 10 June). It proved to be highly successful, attracting up to 100 individuals during the week and over 200 each Sabbath. Many joined the seminar from different countries around the world, including America, Australia and the Caribbean islands. The Spirit-led, power-packed and informative messages were presented by two elders: John Mathieu (Hackney) and Tristan Cuniah (Wood Green). At the end of the series a few individuals indicated their desire to be baptised and have Bible studies.

On the church's response to making disciples and building communities, Hackney's first elder, John Mathieu, reflected: 'Hackney and Wood Green (both pastored by Joojo Bonnie) worked together during this time of crisis to reach out to our collective church members through the provision of daily Bible studies each evening, along with the vespers service on Friday Sabbaths featuring international guest speakers.' With regard to reaching out to the community during this time of crisis, Elder Mathieu said, 'Phone calls are made to those who for various reasons are housebound, while our foodbank has also been in operation to meet a vital need of the community during this time of lockdown and uncertainty.'

The experience, as shared by Elder Mathieu, is similar to those of other churches across the British Union Conference who have all had to find creative and innovative ways to reach out to both their members and the community. With 46% of those in a recent BUC survey stating that they would definitely continue to watch services online when church buildings are reopened, time will tell whether this moment in history will eventually be accepted as the 'new normal' that many are currently claiming it to be.



through various virtual church services where possible (Sabbath School, worship service, Bible study, vespers, children's activities). It's worth noting that we invited the community to join us in any of the listed meetings.

- Zoom was also used for various church meetings such as pastoral meetings, board meetings and so on.
- We went off to the 2020 SEC Camp Meeting together via Zoom.
- Several speakers from home and abroad have shared with us their understanding of the times we live in, and how best to evangelise.
- Staying connected with the wider church, the South England Conference, the British Union Conference, and of course the General Conference, has been essential. In one sense, this has helped provide a wider view of the church than we previously had.
- Our prayer ministry has taken on a new dimension, with teleconferences for regular morning and evening prayers.
- Many members belong to specific WhatsApp groups, used specifically to share and explain the Gospel.
- Through Ilford's dynamic Community Services Youth Department, during the lockdown we have intensified our efforts to distribute essentials, like food and other materials.

I cannot stress enough that all this was possible through organisation, putting a robust programme in place. The feedback we are getting is that members of the community continue to appreciate and positively regard the existence and impact of the church in their lives, despite the reality that the church has not yet reopened. We look forward to reopening, subject to the guidelines given by the South England Conference. However, when we do return, it is surely not going to be 'business as usual'!

Brothers and sisters, is the COVID-19 story a wake-up call, particularly as we read what Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 24? Do we not need, individually and collectively, to wake up from our slumber as believers and doers of the Gospel? *'For now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed'* (Romans 13:11, NKJV). Is there not a need to continue to pray, equip ourselves and continue as disciples to be teachable under the influence of the Holy Spirit? Are there not around us, even today, many people who are lost, who need to hear the call of the Gospel? Who knows what the future holds? Will we always have freedom to worship together, for whatever reason?

There is a text in Joshua that I am mindful of when faced with challenges: *'But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD'* (Joshua 24:15, KJV). I hold onto this in the light of the current pandemic, which I hope we will soon all be free of. At the same time, I recognise that the mother of all pandemics we face – the sin pandemic – has been defeated in the name of Jesus! The battle is won, but not yet over. I pray it will be soon.

In times like these

by Sam Adedayo (elder, Ilford Central Church)



'Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past'

(Isaiah 26:20, NKJV).

'And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows' (Matthew 24:6-8, KJV).

As the followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have been encouraged to be doers and not just hearers of the word alone, to paraphrase James 1:22. Hence, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, as Christians in these times, we

need to listen to Isaiah's call. As I understand this text, God's people during this time 'in exile' are to come together and plan, while the pandemic lasts, to be more effective when things get better. How can we maximise the resources that God has given us in order to make more disciples for the Master's Kingdom? With the coronavirus continuing to negatively impact our collective religious life, how can we make best use of this situation?

The book of Matthew indicates that 'pestilences' like COVID-19 will be a reality of life, bringing with them devastating destruction. This is, as Matthew describes, the beginning of the sorrows we are to expect prior to the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is His intention to take over and put an end to this *sin-pandemic* world. As the followers of Christ worldwide, we have a duty to make use of the available resources . . . and this is exactly what the Ilford church did.

- We encouraged camaraderie and fellowship



Welcome to Stanborough

Why would any parent choose to send their child to a private or fee-paying or independent school (choose one) when the United Kingdom has thousands of outstanding state schools that charge no school fees – that are free?

There are several reasons that parents could give; however, the best responses will come from their children. Parents are willing to make huge sacrifices to ensure that their children get a good education.

What is the response to this sacrifice? In today's edition, we look at it from the child's perspective. What has been the experience of Stanborough School pupils?

'When I first joined Stanborough School, I was nervous. However, the other students were kind and welcoming, so I quickly warmed up. The learning environment is very nurturing and loving, with the students in higher classes being great examples and giving us the opportunity to share a laugh with them.' Nicole O. (Year 8 in September 2020).

'I really like Stanborough Secondary School because it is a Christian school. To be precise, it is a Seventh-day Adventist school with a family atmosphere. It also has a friendly ethos with an emphasis on body, mind and spirit. God is at the centre of everything we do. We pray in every lesson and during assembly. The small class sizes ensure better learning and teaching, which makes you feel like you are the only student who has the teacher's full attention, even though they can be strict at times! The head teacher and the teachers are so dedicated that we did not miss school during the COVID-19 pandemic as we were having Google classes. I recommend this school to everyone.' – Daniella (Year 8 in September 2020).

'My name is Nathan and I am 13 years of age, which means I am currently in Year 8, moving to Year 9. I started attending Stanborough School in 2019 (8 January). Stanborough School has provided me with stability, not only educationally, but spiritually as well. The spiritual aspect of Stanborough allows us to focus on our spiritual lives and relationship with God. The school also offers us a good standard of education, which is taught by amazing teachers who are always willing to help with anything we need. Because of this, Stanborough has a good family aspect. Since we are a small school, we become closer to each other in many different ways. If you are on the school field, in the cafeteria, or even in the classrooms, you will never feel alone. This is the reason why I came to Stanborough. I will gladly take this time to invite you to this amazing school where you can take part in this life-changing experience, with Stanborough and me by your side. I hope to see you soon.' Nathan (Year 9 in September 2020).

'Stanborough School has teachers who work extremely hard to create a positive environment where we as students are inspired to learn. We have amazing interactive classes and our head teacher is always trying to get our opinions on how the school can improve. I look forward to having my lunch at the cafeteria every day, because on each day a different healthy meal is served. I like all the extracurricular activities that the school offers at the end of each school day. Lincoln O. (Year 10 in September 2020).

'My experience at Stanborough has been amazing, to say the least. I really enjoy the family aspect that comes as a perk of having small classes. All the teachers have a personal connection with you and make it their personal duty to make sure you achieve the best grades possible. Coming from a public school myself, I can testify that the change is not one you will regret. So, having said all this, I hope to see you on campus. God bless.' Andrew M. (Year 11 in September 2020).



Stanborough School, situated on the beautiful and serene Stanborough Park estate, provides a wonderful environment for learning. We invite applications for enrolment for September 2020. Please contact the school on info@spsch.org.

May God bless us all!

Diamond wedding anniversaries

When a couple complete sixty years of marriage – it's time to recognise, congratulate and celebrate. It's usual for children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, extended family and friends from near and far to join the celebration. But not this year. Nonetheless, we want to take the opportunity to congratulate a few couples to help mark this wonderful milestone in their lives. We give thanks to the Lord for their continuing commitment to Him and each other. They began their journey together back in 1960. Someone who witnessed their wedding put pen to paper (using an ink fountain pen), put the finished article in an envelope, and with great excitement walked to the post box, or post office, to let *MESSENGER* readers share in the joy!



**Robin and Lamorna Riches,
11 August, 1960.
Now living in Crieff,
Perthshire.**

Wedding Bells

RICHES-RODD.—In the spacious setting of the Salisbury Hall, Newbold College, Bracknell, Mr. Robin Riches, B.A., and Miss Lamorna Rodd exchanged nuptial vows on Thursday afternoon, August 11, 1960. A large congregation had gathered to witness the happy ceremony which was conducted by Pastors K. Lacey and R. E. Graham.

The bride, looking radiant in a gown of French Princess lace over pink slipper satin, and wearing a coronet head-dress, was given away by her stepfather, Mr. A. J. Clarke. She carried a bouquet of lilies of the valley, red and gold rosebuds, and carnations, and was attended by three bridesmaids.

Miss Olwen Ashman and Miss Vera Watson, college friends of the bride, were dressed in turquoise flock nylon, while the youngest bridesmaid, charming Sally Double, a cousin of the bridegroom, was dressed in white flock nylon.

Mr. Rex Riches, brother of the bridegroom, performed the duties of the best man with distinction. Mr. David Mansfield, L.G.S.M., was the organist, while Mr. Geoffrey Munson and Mr. Arthur Rodd served as ushers.

After the ceremony, the guests were entertained to a sumptuous reception in the romantic setting of the Moor Close Lounge. Miss Anne Smith and her helpers had excelled themselves in the preparations for this repast.

Robin is the youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. S. Riches of Holbrook, Suffolk, and a graduate of Newbold College. Lamorna is the only daughter of the late Pastor A. S. Rodd, for so many years an outstanding evangelist in Great Britain, and she also is a graduate of Newbold College, having served as a Bible instructor at the New Gallery Centre, London.

Robin and Lamorna met at Newbold and their lives are now linked in service for the Master whom they love. At the present time they are associated with the evangelistic team in Liverpool. We pray that God will continue to bless their mutual ministry and that the home which they have established may be indeed a miniature heaven upon earth.

ROY E. GRAHAM.

**Martin and Margaret Anthony,
10 August, 1960. Now living in
Bournemouth, Dorset.**



ANTHONY-EDWARDS.—August 10, 1960, was one of the few really warm days of the summer, and the sun shone brightly as, in the presence of a large number of relatives, friends and college associates, Martin L. Anthony, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. L. Anthony of Darley Abbey, Derby, and Margaret Edwards, only daughter of Pastor and Mrs. F. Edwards of Kettering, were united in marriage in the Derby church. Floral decorations, tastefully arranged, added to the atmosphere of the church and helped to provide a perfect setting for the pretty bridal party.

The bride, looking very happy and composed, came down the aisle on the arm of her father to the strains of the Bridal March. Her full-length flowing gown of white net over satin was of exquisite design, with a pearl coronet and short veil. She carried a bouquet of gold roses and white freesias. The two adult bridesmaids, Olwen Ashman and Vera Watson, college friends of the bride, looked charming in full length gowns of turquoise flock nylon and flowered head-dresses, and carrying pink rosebuds. The bridegroom's eight-year-old cousin, Monica Lockton, completed the bridal party, in a dress of lemon flock nylon with dainty matching circlet of flowers,

her posy of sweet peas and a carnation forming a delicate blend. A college friend, Arthur Rodd, performed the duties of best man in his own inimitable way.

The bridal pair exchanged their marriage vows clearly in response to the officiating minister, Pastor K. Lacey of the New Gallery Centre. There were two solos rendered by the bridegroom's brother, Colin. Mr. J. Stone assisted on the organ. Prayer, invoking God's blessing on the marriage, was offered by Pastor A. Norman, and Pastor Lacey brought a most fitting message from the Word of God.

The reception for the sixty guests was held in Darley Park Mansion. The happy couple then left for their honeymoon in North Devon, prior to taking up responsibilities in the Chiswick and Richmond churches. God bless you both, Margaret and Martin.

CHURCH CLERK.

**George and Betty Sisson,
3 August, 1960.
Now living in Dublin, Ireland.**



Wedding Bells

SISSON-FULHAM.—On August 3, 1960, the Dublin church witnessed the wedding of two of its young people, Mr. George Stanley Sisson and Miss Elizabeth Cathern (Betty) Fulham.

The bride, who wore a most becoming dress of white tulle, was attended by two bridesmaids who wore blue. They were Miss Mary Nix and Miss Amy Boyle. Mr. Patrick Boyle was best man.

The wedding ceremony was conducted by Pastor R. H. Bainbridge, assisted by Pastor E. B. Phillips. The reception was held in the church hall which was well filled with relatives and friends. We wish this young couple God's richest blessing as they set up another Christian home.

CHURCH CLERK.



**Roger and Marilyn Neal,
25 June, 1960. Now living in
Ellesmere, Shropshire.**

For their wedding ceremony, Roger and Marilyn married 'in uniform' as members of The Salvation Army at the Birmingham Sparkhill Corps. Salvationists wear a uniform as a symbol of their beliefs and commitment to God, and their promise to serve and love others. By April 1963, they had become convicted about the Adventist message and mission. For obvious reasons, there was no wedding reported in the *MESSENGER* at that time.

The five candidates were then baptized by Pastor J. H. Bayliss. One source of rejoicing was the predominance of youth among them. Three, Brother Massiah and Sister Katherine McIntosh, who both hail from the West Indies, and Nita, younger daughter of Brother and Sister W. Girling, joined the Oxford church, and two, Brother and Sister Neal, the Swindon group. Brother and Sister Neal, after a little contact with Adventists as members of the Salvation Army in a previous place of residence, had almost resolved, upon moving to Swindon, to forget about these new beliefs. Their intentions were changed, however, by a visit from a student colporteur from Mauritius. This led to Bible studies from Brother J. C. Collins and eventually baptism.

**Tony and Kate Welch, 9 August, 1960.
Now living in Kettering, Northants.**



WELCH-BARBER.—The wedding of Miss Kathleen Barber and Mr. Anthony Welch took place in the Coventry church on Tuesday afternoon, August 9, 1960. At the appointed time Kate, a very shy but happy bride, walked down the aisle on the arm of her father. The best man was Tony's brother, John, and the bridesmaids were Cynthia Handyside, Christine Peverley, Janet Sydenham, and Carole Sydenham.

Although rain began to fall as they came out of church, the bride looked radiant in a ballerina white flocked nylon gown. She carried a bouquet of red carnations and white rosebuds. The young attendants, Janet and Carole, really looked very gay in their pretty pink and white dresses, while Cynthia and Christine, in pink nylon dresses, looked very charming. The bridesmaids carried bouquets of sweet peas.

While Kate and Tony were signing the register, Violet Woodhead,

a friend of the bride, sang a beautiful solo. She had composed it specially for the occasion, giving it the title "Wedding Prayer." The organ was played by Mr. Welch, A.R.C.O., the bridegroom's father.

I understand that Kate first met Tony at camp. Tony is an S.R.N., working in the operating theatre in St. Luke's Hospital, Bradford. Kate is a school teacher and has taken a post in Bradford, so Coventry church is losing one of its best young people.

After the reception, the young couple left for somewhere in Devonshire for their honeymoon. Perhaps one day not too far distant we shall welcome both Kate and Tony back to Coventry, but wherever they make their home, we wish them the richest blessings of God as they begin their great adventure together.

W. PEACOCK.

Obituaries

**Gwen Mason (1918-2020)
d. 11 June.**

Gwendoline Grace Mason (née Wilmot) was born on 9 October 1918, and at age 13 was baptised in the Bournemouth church by Pastor O. M. Dorland. Her faith was challenged prior to that, as she was unable to sit for the 11+ examinations (then held on Saturdays). Even though her headmistress was willing to accommodate her to isolate her from the other students, it was not permitted by the Department of Education.

Gwen went on to serve the Lord faithfully in



several different churches around the country, starting in the High Wycombe church, where in due course she served as treasurer, Ingathering agent, pianist and librarian.

Following a move to Watford in 1958, Gwen served the Stanborough Park church as a Primary Sabbath School teacher, deaconess, and treasurer. At the same time Gwen entered denominational employment as the cashier for Stanborough School part-time until 1966. From 1973 to 1978 Gwen worked at the South England Conference in the Treasury Department, before retiring to Weymouth in Dorset in 1985. She continued to serve the local church as treasurer, Ingathering agent, Sabbath School superintendent, deaconess and pianist.

For family reasons Gwen moved to Llandrindod Wells, Wales, in 2000 and served as the church pianist. Further moves in the area to stay close to her daughter, Pauline, brought Gwen to the Cannock church in 2008. She celebrated her 100th birthday with family, friends, and local dignitaries at the Remington Drive Residential Home, where she was living. Gwen died on 11 June.

Due to the prevailing COVID-19 restrictions, Gwen's family were unable to have the funeral service that they would have liked for her, especially since she wished to be interred in Weymouth alongside her husband. Consequently, a short graveside committal was held for her in Weymouth on 17 July, conducted by the writer in the presence of a few of her dear and close friends. Gwen's faith remained strong through her nearly 102 years, and she looked forward to the return of The Blessed Hope.

PASTOR RICHARD J. B. WILLIS

Erma Lockham (1933-2020)

d. 2 July.

Erma Agnes Esther Lockham (née McMillan) was born on 2 October 1933 in Larne, Northern Ireland. She was the first child of Pastor John Alexander McMillan and his wife, Erma Georgina. As was the way back then, Adventist pastoral families did not stay in one place very long. After a spell



conducting evangelistic meetings in Belfast, the family were moved to Cork, where 'Evangelist J. Alexander McMillan' slowly drew together a group of approximately 38 interested people. Just 18 months after arriving in Cork the family were moved again, this time to northern England. Doncaster, Leeds and York all had series of meetings conducted by 'Evangelist J. A. McMillan'. It was in York, on 27 June 1938, that Erma's little sister Paulina was born. Weeks later the family were moved again, this time to Scotland, where J. A. McMillan was to serve as president for seven years.

Erma's early school years were in Edinburgh and Glasgow, but after the family moved to Watford, when J. A. McMillan was asked to lead the Voice of Prophecy and set up radio broadcasts, the rest of Erma's schooling took place at Stanborough Park School. After leaving school, Erma worked for a time at The Stanboroughs (the Adventist hospital/sanitarium on Stanborough Park) before she commenced nursing training at age 18.

As it did for many young Adventists, Erma's nurse training had its challenges concerning what she was expected to do on a Sabbath. Always polite, she would challenge the 'powers that be' regarding what she would and wouldn't do on a Sabbath. After completing her State Registered Nurse training at the Peace Memorial Hospital in Watford, Erma later trained as a midwife at Edgware.

While she was working as a general nurse at the Peace Memorial Hospital in Watford, a young patient, Ann Lockham, decided to play Cupid for her big brother and this kind and pretty nurse. Erma and Ron exchanged letters, prompted by Ann, and then photos. After an initial 'blind date', love blossomed and they were married. Following the birth of their first son, Paul, Erma worked as an occupational health nurse for Cox and Co in Watford. After the birth of their second son, Peter, Erma moved back to the Peace Memorial Hospital as the nurse who collected blood samples from patients for cross matching.

For many years Erma was active as a leader in Cradle Roll Sabbath School at the

Stanborough Park church, where she was also a deaconess. Erma loved people, and children and adults were 'nurtured' through her love, kindness and friendship. Later, Erma was to go on some mission trips as the group nurse.

When the Peace Memorial Hospital was closed, Erma moved to Shrodells Hospital (Watford General) and again worked in occupational health, a role she continued until she and Ron decided that life in Hertfordshire was getting far too stressful and hectic and moved to an idyllic rural setting near the village of Llangeitho, near Tregaron in the middle of Wales. Here Erma attended the fledgling Carmarthen church, got involved in playing the organ for a local chapel, and joined the Women's Institute (WI). The WI market in Lampeter regularly sold eggs and cakes that Erma took along – and, when Ron's bees had a good year, honey too.

Grandchildren loved to visit the 'farm', and each of them remembers 'helping' Grandma in the kitchen, or with the hens and ducks, or moving the sheep one time when Ron was away on a TED youth project.

In 2008 Erma became suddenly very ill, and, while hospitalised, the family prepared for the end. None of the family know quite when, nor how, but, after reaching a physical low point, Erma turned a corner and her health improved to the point when she was able to return home. Even the nurses who had looked after Erma referred to this outcome as a miracle. Some happy and joyous years followed, and Erma and Ron did things together they never seemed to have had time for before.

Sadly, the last few years saw Erma showing signs of dementia and at times poor physical health, but no one expected the return of cancer and its painful consequences in her last few months. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Ron was not able to visit when she was admitted to hospital, and all were happy when it was decided she could be cared for at home. Over the next few days Erma and Ron talked lots, often late into the night. Paulina was able to talk by phone, and Paul with her from Cyprus thanks to FaceTime. Peter visited at weekends and then stayed down as her health worsened.

The medication had to be increased, which meant that conversations became one-sided. On Thursday 2 July, Erma slipped into the final sleep, from which she will awake at the resurrection.

A family burial and memorial service were conducted by Pastors Paul Clee and John Surridge at North Watford Cemetery and Stanborough Park Church on Thursday 23 July.

While words cannot express how deeply she is missed by Ron; her sons, Paul & Peter; her sister, Paulina; and the grandchildren, great-grandchildren and the rest of the family, we live in the sure hope of Jesus' soon return and the grand reunion that will take place then.

PAUL LOCKHAM

Messenger

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Sunset

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	Lon	Card	Nott	Edin	Belf
Aug 14	8.24	8.36	8.33	8.51	8.57
21	8.10	8.22	8.18	8.34	8.41
28	7.55	8.07	8.02	8.16	8.24
Sept 4	7.39	7.52	7.45	7.58	8.07



Stanborough School

Vacancy: part-time sports teacher

Stanborough School, an independent Seventh-day Adventist Christian co-educational school with a strong and established academic tradition and family atmosphere, is looking to employ an experienced part-time sports teacher with experience in leading whole-school sports events. The ability to teach a second subject will be an added advantage.

The successful candidate will demonstrate an experienced, dynamic and creative approach to the teaching and learning of sports/games.

The post has a starting salary of £35,105 per annum pro rata (two days per week), and begins on 1 September 2020.

General responsibilities:

- Teach Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Provide learning support to all learners.
- Undertake form tutor responsibilities.
- Participate in all school activities.
- Undertake additional duties as required by the faculty leader and the head teacher.

Qualifications:

Applicants should have:

- A relevant degree,
- A teaching qualification,
- Relevant experience in teaching GCSE PE/BTEC sports, and
- Authorisation to work in the UK.

Stanborough School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expects all staff to share this commitment.

Interested applicants please contact the PA to the head teacher for an application pack.
Email: kgittens@spsch.org; telephone: 01923 673268.

Closing date: 21 August 2020.