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Adventist nurses on COVID-19 front line: 'If we do not go, they die.'

by Dr Paul Thompson

It seems like a decade ago that we sat comfortably around our Christmas tables enjoying time with friends and family, listening to the Queen's speech and making plans for 2020. It was time to exhale; Brexit was behind us, and the air was full of optimism: 2020 held the promise of a good year. No one could predict that the world would be faced with one of the greatest challenges of our lives: a challenge that will remain indelible in our hearts for a lifetime.

The first record of COVID-19 was recorded in December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province. A number of inhabitants were admitted to hospitals with complaints of fever, coughs, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle pain, diarrhoea, sore throat and loss of smell. As of 22 April 2020, more than two and a half million cases have been reported in more than 200 countries and territories, resulting in more than 178,000 deaths.

The outbreak of COVID-19 has proved to be stressful for people, and Seventh-day Adventists are not excluded. Fear and anxiety about the COVID-19 disease have been overwhelming, bringing out strong emotions in adults and children. People are alone, isolated, living in fear, hoping that they will not fall victim to the indiscriminate

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Wanted: people of vision

by Audrey Andersson,

Executive Secretary, Trans-European Division



Are there life events that define who we are and how we act? For the apostle Peter, the Passover weekend when Jesus was crucified was one such event. He fell asleep in Gethsemane. His initial violent bravado in cutting off the High Priest's servant's ear was followed by a cowardly denial, cursing and saying that he was not a follower of Jesus. His despair was all-consuming, but on the Sunday morning, when he heard the women say the tomb was empty, it gave way to hope. Only when Jesus appeared in the upper room did he begin to comprehend something of the reality of the resurrection.

After that meeting, when contemplating what to do next, he decided to resume his career as a fisherman. He was a man without a vision. He had no ambition, no clear direction in life. He returned to Galilee.

His return to fishing was not profitable. After a night's unsuccessful fishing, he meets Jesus again. Jesus confronts Peter with his denial. He is restored. He is assured of Jesus' forgiveness and commissioned to feed Jesus' followers. Despite this, change does not happen overnight.

Fast-forward fifty days to Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Gone is the cowardly, foul-mouthed fisherman. Peter is transformed. He stands up in Jerusalem, fearlessly proclaiming the

message of the risen Saviour. People who had been in the mob crying for Jesus to be crucified now asked, 'What shall we do?' What made the difference? The presence of the Holy Spirit gave Peter the vision.

If someone had suggested in January that the world would be on lockdown over Easter, no one would have believed them. The idea that the Pope would address an empty St Peter's Square, or that the Archbishop of Canterbury would deliver his Easter sermon from his kitchen, would have been seemed absurd. Yet COVID-19 has turned the world upside down in a matter of weeks. Lockdown, social distancing, quarantine and furloughs have all become part of our new normal life. People are afraid of what they cannot see and do not know how to fight. They are looking for answers, for people of vision to show the way forwards.

Pentecost reminds us that the church has a message of hope and healing. It has never been more relevant. There is a danger that, like Peter when he was in Galilee, we know the message, but there is no discernible change in our behaviour. The church needs leaders. The hour calls for those, from the local church to the General Conference, who will catch the vision. Who will take the message of salvation and hope to their neighbours, to the stranger in the street, whether it is convenient or not? This is not the time for the status quo. It is the time to be filled by the Holy Spirit, and to catch the vision of a living Saviour and spread the Good News throughout the British Isles.



David Neal, Editor

Letter to the church in Isolatia

The building is closed – but the church is still open

*'For much of the rest of the world, the nightmare is yet to start. And part of the horror is that many poorer countries won't have the means to do much about it. . . . Nothing like the coronavirus has ever overwhelmed so much of the world in such short order, or with such cataclysmic force. Yet it is dismaying that a danger that confronts the entire world, that is likely to hurt the entire global economy, has led to so little global cooperation and has been met with so little global leadership.'*²

On the same day this editorial was written, the United Nations food relief agency released a report that **'at least 265 million people are being pushed to the brink of starvation by the COVID-19 crisis, double the number under threat before the pandemic'**. To underline how serious things could be, they use that familiar phrase, *'of biblical proportions'*.

And, for the Adventist mind, there's much to reflect on and pray about. Whatever stirs, without question, there are tough times ahead for our nation and our world as we know it. Using the word 'unprecedented' now seems a weary and worn-out way to describe how things are.

How will the church respond? Maybe it's better to ask and pray about how you and I will respond. For the last few weeks I've been reading again Jesus' letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor (Revelation 2 & 3). At this time, the message of Sardis speaks the loudest to me. The problem with the Sardis church was that its members were Christ-followers in name only – 'pretend religion', some would call it. The solution, says John, is to **wake up!** When we meet together again next time, I want to dig deeper into Revelation 3. I'm not a pretend Christian, am I?

I'm sure you have heard it quite a few times now, as I have: 'When this is all over, we cannot go back to business as usual.' Could it be that the devil's virus is in fact the gift of our times, providing a new opportunity for the Spirit to speak and refresh us in ways we once would have thought unimaginable? Dare we pray that this situation might turn the hearts of UK and Irish citizens towards God? The direct command to the Sardis church was: 'Wake up!' For the sake of Christ and His kingdom, *'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches'* (Rev. 3:6, ESV).

¹The NHS, our national religion' – <https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/news-comment/the-nhs-our-national-religion-2/>

²The global coronavirus crisis is poised to get much, much worse' – <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/13/opinion/coronavirus-cases.html>

³Coronavirus pandemic "will cause famine of biblical proportions" – <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/apr/21/coronavirus-pandemic-will-cause-famine-of-biblical-proportions>

We need to pause here to remember those who have lost their lives because of COVID-19. For some MESSENGER readers it will be close family members. For the wider Adventist family in the UK and Ireland, we have unexpectedly lost brothers and sisters in Christ. The church family lifts up in prayer those who mourn.



'Zooming' together

It's 3pm on Sabbath afternoon, and Pastor Dejan Stojkovic (British Union Conference Youth Director) sits in front of his computer somewhere near Watford, and is joined online by children from all around the British Union. When I say 'all around', I mean just that. For children from Balham, Bristol, Belfast, Bolton, Crieff, Newport and even Tralee in the very south-west of Ireland (trust me, it doesn't get much more remote than Tralee), that's how it's been for Pathfinders and Adventurers over the last few weeks, 'Zooming' together to learn an honour. From what I have seen, I think they like it!

A friend sent me a note last Sabbath: 'We had a three-hour Sabbath School class today.' Are you serious? No doubt the experience of a Zoom Sabbath School, mid-week study group, or early-morning or late-night prayer meeting is now common for many, not forgetting the new way we meet for committees and boards. Have you noticed how Zoom informality actually seems to strengthen deep and rich fellowship (*koinonia*)?

For the moment, and for most, church online is a solo operation, with the pastor or elder leading worship and preaching from a chair in the study. Some larger churches have the equipment and people resources to prepare a professional media production, including an engaging story time for children. Whatever your experience, the message is – the church is still open!

And the church is still open in other ways too. The grace, compassion and kind-heartedness of Christ has been repeated a million times by His followers, and by those who don't recognise His promptings. If it

weren't for the devil's virus (yes, I'm calling it that) we could almost believe that with such innovation, caring, and connection between members, all is well with the world.

But it is not.

With you, I wish somebody somewhere could press the reset button and take us back to 1 January to start the year again! The world is scared, our neighbours are scared, and – if truth be known – we at times are scared too. If there is a moment that expresses our current national mood, it is Thursday evening at 8pm, which for me has become the most moving moment of the week.

Outside the front door we step to clap and cheer for carers, blow horns and bang drums (often improvised with saucepan lids). With neighbours we give heartfelt thanks to all our NHS staff, to first responders and all front-line workers. The word 'our' is significant, because they work sacrificially to save us; and, in a sense, we trust them like family. As our lead story tells, the front line is a dangerous place to be – to protect us. It's called sacrifice. It's called love.

As neighbours and friends are confronted with this health crisis, how, I wonder, do they manage to cope – most of them, without trust and faith in God? Linda Woodhead, professor of religion and society at Lancaster University, thinks our expression of gratitude reflects something much deeper.

'When faced with a biblical plague, the British turn not to God, but to the National Health Service. It is our national religion, the one thing sacred. It is here, rather than in our national churches, that we now affirm our shared values, reinforce a sense of collective identity, deal with evil and suffering, and reaffirm hope. . . . However much we may invoke the prestige of medical science, what we are really dealing with is faith.'¹

As I write, the conversation in the UK and Ireland is beginning to talk about the possibility of a phased return to schools, and some working environments may soon be deemed safe enough to reopen. Whenever this may be (sooner or later), who believes for a moment that we'll ever return to things as they were? As the 17 April *New York Times* editorial board noted:



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ELISABETH SANGUESA, GENERAL MANAGER

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tentacles of the COVID-19 disease. However, leading psychologists confirm that coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and the church community stronger. Stress during the COVID-19 disease outbreak can include:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Worsening of mental health conditions
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs

The reaction that COVID-19 brings has also led to a significant increase in domestic violence and abuse. UK domestic abuse helplines report a surge in calls during lockdown, with an increase in call traffic for advice by 125% for women and 42% for men. Children are also not excluded, with child abuse on a significant upward curve. Despite the fact that Seventh-day Adventists are renowned as solid end-time scholars and therefore should have expected COVID-19 – as underscored in Luke 21:11: ‘There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven’ (NIV) – many Adventists appear to have been caught unaware, surprised and overwhelmed by the disease and the significant social, economic and financial impact that COVID-19 brings.

The incontrovertible fact is that everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. How you respond to the COVID-19 outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in.

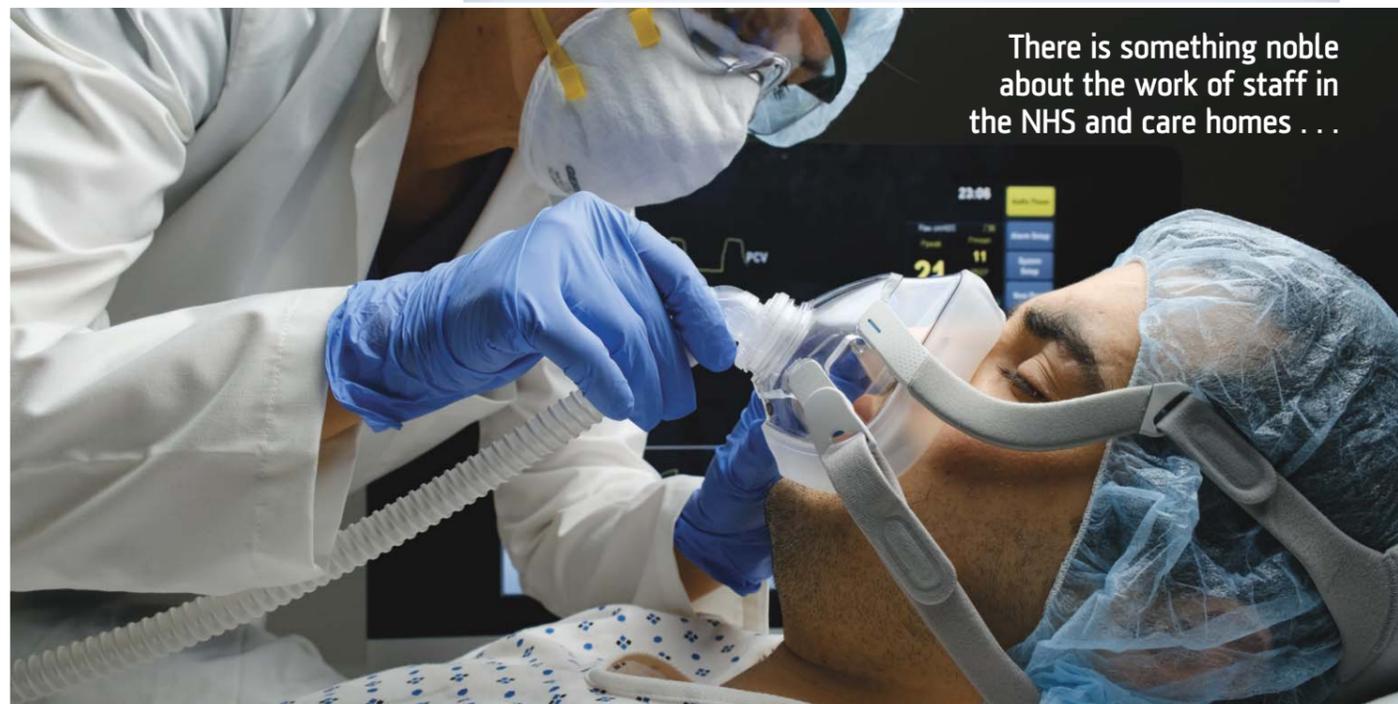
People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include:

- Older people and people with chronic diseases who are more vulnerable to COVID-19
- Children and teens
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, such as doctors, other healthcare providers, and first responders
- People who have mental health conditions, including problems with substance use

As bodies mount up in the morgues in the UK, and the US state of New York houses its dead in the back of HGV cold storage lorries before burying its dead in deep packed trenches on Potter’s Field Island, the doors of the church remain closed; remote pastoral care kicks in;

and the voice of the church is silent – afforded little air time among the systematic outpouring of grief across Britain. There is a looming feeling of something apocalyptic, sinister and eerie about the whole COVID-19 affair. People are left dying alone; loved ones are denied final goodbyes; and words that need to be said are being left unsaid, leaving emotions raw and bleeding. There is a mood of unrelenting helplessness, deep loss and sadness, whose tentacles reach out and touch every facet of society, irrespective of class, race, religion or creed. The power of COVID-19 has humbled us and brought mankind globally to its bended knee.

While many remain at home to stay safe and take the pressure off the NHS, as required by the British Government, Public Health



There is something noble about the work of staff in the NHS and care homes . . .



England, and a prime minister who openly admits that he only narrowly cheated death, many Adventist nurses, doctors and carers leave their homes daily, arrive at their place of work, change their clothes and suit up in specialised protective gear and face masks. They do it to save lives. They do it to make a difference. These saints go, because if they did not go, people would die alone and die angry and die not knowing Christ.

At a care and nursing agency 190-strong, with a mix of nationalities and religious groups, Adventist and Muslim staff were among the first volunteers to actively seek out COVID-19 patients and put their lives in danger to care for them, and their valour has caused a stir among the NHS and many care homes whose staff have not been able to cope. In some care homes, as much as 45% of staff are absent, with 65% of care staff opting out of working with COVID-19 residents.

Adventist nurses and carers report that there is a significant witnessing opportunity to spend time giving end-of-life care, sharing Christ with people who are frightened and lonely. One nurse commented that she cannot bring in a Bible, but when she leaves work she reads a few encouraging Bible texts and cites them from memory, and there is an incredible response from dying patients. Anger and fright are replaced by peace among people who know they are dying and cannot see their loved ones. In these last moments many have accepted Christ. They may not be able to speak, but they blink with their eyelids; or, where they are not too weak, they squeeze hands. The mission field is promising, and there is plenty of time to spend with end-of-life

patients who are in isolation. Adventist healthcare staff are guardian angels of these souls. Their work has led many to face death in a calm, dignified way. COVID-19 may be claiming lives, but Heaven will be rejoicing for some COVID-19 souls too.

The epic movie *The Guardian* is set against the backdrop of a coastal town that happens to be a training base and headquarters for the US Coast Guard. These trainees are equipped to rescue distressed ships and people in 100-foot waves. Swimmers jump into the ocean and pull out drowning people. The Coast Guard live by the following code: ‘When God Himself reaches down from heaven and rips houses from foundations and stirs the bowels of the sea with 100-foot waves, we go out. We go out because our job as rescue swimmers is to save souls. That is our job, and that’s what we do.’

There is something noble about the work of staff in the NHS and care homes, and our Adventist silent labourers who face death daily. As I give my nurses and carers daily client briefings on deaths and COVID-19 cases in the homes I contract with, some with four or five deaths overnight, I often expect them to say, ‘No; we have had enough.’ But, to my amazement, they never refuse: they go. They go because if they do not go, who will go? Who will take the opportunity to present Christ? This is the reason they go; they go with God. He has their back; this is how they find the courage to risk their lives. It is because of love.

Dr Paul Thompson studied Sociology and Management at the University of Reading and Henley Business School. He is CEO of a leading care agency and is also a member for The Stanborough Press board.

Will you let me be your servant?

Brother, Sister, let me serve you;
Let me be as Christ to you.
Pray that I may have the grace to
Let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
And companions on the road;
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
In the night time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
Speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
When you laugh I’ll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
Till we’ve seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven
We shall find such harmony,
Born of all we’ve known together
Of Christ’s love and agony.

Brother, Sister, let me serve you;
Let me be as Christ to you.
Pray that I may have the grace to
Let you be my servant too.

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Hope

One pulse of harmony and gladness
beats through the vast creation.
From Him who created all, flow life
and light and gladness, throughout
the realms of illimitable space.
From the minutest atom to the
greatest world, all things, animate
and inanimate, in their unshadowed
beauty and perfect joy, declare that
God is love.

The Great Controversy, p. 678

Coronavirus – fake news and conspiracy theories!

by Pastor Sam Davies, SEC Communication Director

One of the challenges of our day is the problem of 'fake news'. The expression has gained popularity in media circles because of its use by US President Donald Trump during the US presidential election campaign that propelled him to office. However, since the influx of the coronavirus (COVID-19), there has been an explosion of fake news that is enabled by our world of social media – and with it comes a host of conspiracy theories, disinformation, and misinformation. Unless you are not a social media user, each day, you are likely to be bombarded with countless coronavirus-related stories from both credible and untrustworthy sources.

At a time when the COVID-19 pandemic is causing anxieties, fear, and pain for many, some individuals are busy creating and distributing misleading information that is causing greater worries for many vulnerable persons.

You may have heard of the 5G Wi-Fi conspiracy, which is being attributed by some as the reason for the coronavirus. Another conspiracy theory is that the coronavirus symbol can be seen imprinted on the £20 note, meaning pre-knowledge of it by the government. Additionally, Bill Gates has been associated with the mark of the beast by some Christians.

The BBC has recently tried to counter the problem of 'fake news' by making a video clip to caution social media users about verifying the sources of messages they receive before sharing them with others. It is an attempt to help combat disinformation and misinformation.

I came across a Government website that has created a 'share checklist' to guard against false information sharing. The page begins with the following information:

'Disinformation is the deliberate creation or dissemination of false and/or manipulated information that is intended to deceive and mislead audiences. This can be for the purposes of causing harm, or for political, personal or financial gain. The inadvertent sharing of false information is referred to as misinformation.

'When shared, disinformation can take on a life of its own and have some serious consequences. It can lead to health scares, false accusations, and potentially damaging hoax stories. It's not always easy to spot, so using the SHARE checklist can help you make sure that you don't feed the beast.' – <https://sharechecklist.gov.uk/>.

As Seventh-day Adventists, many of us tend



to read far too much into things, sometimes without the appropriate guidance: hence inadvertently becoming channels of misinformation. As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, many are causing fear rather than promoting the God who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to deliver whosoever will believe in Him. Conspiracy theories are rife, and I have come across many messages shared among social media platforms by some of our brothers and sisters from obscure sources.

Use the SHARE checklist

Before you like, comment or share online, use the SHARE checklist to make sure you're not contributing to the spread of harmful content.

- **Source:** Make sure that the story is written by a source you trust, with a reputation for accuracy. If it's from an unfamiliar organisation, check for a website's 'About' section to learn more.
- **Headline:** Always read beyond the headline. If it sounds unbelievable, it very well might be. Be wary if something doesn't seem to add up.
- **Analyse:** Make sure you check the facts. The mere fact that you may have seen a story several times doesn't mean it's true. If you're not sure, look at fact-checking websites and other reliable sources to double-check.
- **Retouched:** Check whether the image looks like it has been or could have been manipulated. False news stories often contain retouched photos or re-edited clips. Sometimes they are authentic but have been taken out of context.
- **Error:** Many false news stories have phony or look-alike URLs. Look for misspellings, bad grammar or awkward layouts. – <https://sharechecklist.gov.uk/>.

Disinformation, misinformation, fake news, and conspiracy theories are not a recent

phenomenon – they have always been around since Eve listened to the serpent in the Garden of Eden. When Satan disguised himself as a serpent to disinform Eve, he was in the business of causing harm by creating fake news: 'You will not surely die,' he says; 'actually, you will become wiser.'

During the time of Jesus, there were many conspiracy theories and there was lots of fake news around as well. One example was the belief that any form of deformity was a curse inflicted by God.

John 9:1, 2 (NKJV) reads: 'Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"'

The interesting thing for me here is that Jesus' disciples were the ones who were holding and disseminating the fake news.

A few months ago, I attended a meeting in London for the Society of Editors, and one of the topics that emerged was the problem of fake news and how authentic news should continue to be promoted by the recognised news channels.

We must all verify the sources of information that are sent to us, especially if it is meant for our consumption.

Luke, the author of Acts, was aware of false information during his time, and he commended the Bereans for their ability to verify the information they had received.

During this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us are going to be vulnerable not just to the coronavirus infection, but to disinformation and misinformation. People tend to be attracted to obscure information when they are anxious and uncertain. This is the time to be deliberately critical with every piece of information that you receive.

Yes, this lockdown is unprecedented. COVID-19 is critical, but we have not been left without hope.

When the disciples asked Jesus about the reason for the blind man being born blind, Jesus answered them with a reassuring message.

'Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world"' (John 9:3-5, NKJV).

Is COVID-19 a curse from God? Some may see it as a curse from God. However, we know one thing: the enemy of our souls is the one seeks to destroy, as he did in the Garden of Eden. His business is to cause chaos, grief, and pain, but our business as people of God is not to spread fear, but to use the situation to reveal the works of God to save lives. We must work the works of the One who has chosen us to represent Him at this time, because He is the light of the world.

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In this excerpt of Values-led Lives, Pastor Llew Edwards takes us right to the core of who shapes our values and why.

Part 8: What's a man got to do?

There is some uncertainty about the origin of the line, 'A man's got to do what a man's got to do'. Some believe John Steinbeck penned it, but others say it is near enough to something that John Wayne rasps out in one of his gritty movies. Whoever said it first is uncertain, but there is no question about who lived it fully.

Jesus' first recorded words reveal a remarkable focus on what He came to do. His parents lost Him, and after three days they discovered Him in the temple. To His mother's distressed question, with its implied rebuke – 'Son, why have you treated us so?' (Luke 2:48, ESV) – the Boy Jesus responds with surprise, astonished that His parents did not know where He would be: 'Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' (Luke 2:49, ESV.)

Little is clearer in Jesus' focus of what He has to do than this commitment to doing His Father's will.

Early in His ministry Jesus is confronted with a public relations opportunity. It is a Sunday morning and 'everyone' from the town is early and eagerly seeking Him, but He has risen even earlier to find a place of prayer. The record says that 'Simon and

those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you" ' (Mark 1:36, 37, ESV). 'Apparently,' comments Vincent Taylor, 'they thought that Jesus was losing a great opportunity afforded by the healings and exorcisms at Capernaum.' To their surprise Jesus dismisses the opportunity, choosing rather to do what He came to do. 'And he saith unto them, Let us go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth' (Mark 1:38, RV). As someone once quipped, 'Jesus knew that the main thing is keeping the main thing the main thing.'

On one occasion, after feeding the multitude, the crowd and the disciples seek to make Jesus their king. It is a route to the Kingdom that is as unacceptable to Jesus as when the devil offered the world to Jesus during the wilderness temptations. He firmly orders the disciples to leave, and then 'commands the multitude to disperse; and His manner is so decisive that they dare not disobey. The words of praise and exaltation die on their lips. In the very act of advancing to seize Him their steps are stayed, and the glad, eager look fades from their countenances'

(Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 378). Jesus brooks no consideration of an alternative route to that which He has got to follow.

Each of the synoptic gospels refers to the determination of Jesus to go to Jerusalem to die. The phrase 'steadfastly set his face' in Luke's account (Luke 9:51, KJV) aptly captures His intentions. Mark (Mark 10:32) augments that with his picture of Jesus striding out towards Jerusalem while the disciples dally along behind, amazed and fearful. Peter's rebuke to Jesus' intentions in Matthew 16:21-23 elicits a powerful rejection by the Saviour of the satanic idea that He should avoid the things that God expects from Him.

Nowhere in the Word is there a stronger demonstration of Jesus' commitment to the Father's will than is found in the account of what happened between Gethsemane and His death on the cross: while the Father turns His face away, His human companions sleep while He needs their supporting prayers; while satanic agencies press in close to torment Him. His humanity is tested and He cries for escape from the dark horror that surrounds Him. It even seems that His Father has turned His face away . . . but bravely He

reaffirms His choice: 'Thy will be done!'

Why? Why this passionate determination? The apostle John answers it simply – love. It is the core value of the character of God (1 John 4:8). It is the value that most often evidences itself in His relationship to the world (John 3:16). It is the value upon which hangs His law (Matt. 22:40). It is the value that, when acted on and acted out, fulfils the law (Rom. 13:10). It is the guiding and defining value of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus chose to do what He did because He was driven by that core value of the Father. All of His life is a revelation of the Father's value-led character. But He does what He does, not simply because He is obeying an external rule of some sort, but because He shares the nature of the Godhead. It is an embedded and intentionally acted-on part of who He is. He does what His nature is – He is true to Himself. He is the Man who does what a man's got to do. Yet it is not only to Himself that He is true – in His humanity He submits Himself obediently to the Father, for in His life and death He 'proves God's great love for man' (Ellen White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 209).

When Jesus submitted

Himself to this life choice, two questions arose: 'why' and 'how'? These are questions we ask with every challenge we face. 'Analytics helps answer the "how question" – how to use resources efficiently, detect opportunities, compare costs, and so on. But to answer the "why question" – why this matters, why we care, why we value one goal over another – we turn to narrative. The why question is not why we think we ought to act, but rather, why we do act, that which actually moves us to act, our motivation, our values. Or, as St Augustine wrote, it is the difference between "knowing" the good, an ought, and "loving the good", a source of motivation.'

In the garden of Gethsemane, when His humanity cries for release from the cup, He

recognises the implications this has for the rest of humanity and submits Himself to drink its woe and trust His life into the hands of the Cup Holder. His other-centred, love-led heart chose to be true to His own values and those of Heaven, and to give Himself for the redemption of mankind. We are bought at a cost – the precious blood of Christ (1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Pet. 1:19). Why? He did what His nature's response was. He did what the Man's got to do.

Christ's example sets the values standard of those who claim to belong to that same Kingdom.

From the pen of Ellen White we read, 'It is the fragrance of our love for our fellow men that reveals our love for God' (*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 560).

'The children of the Heavenly

King should represent the character of the Ruler of the heavenly kingdom. They should cultivate unity and love for one another, each member of the royal family loyally representing the principles of the government of God. Jesus Christ was sent of God. In His character and life He represented every principle of the law of God. What are the two great principles of that law? Love to God and love to our neighbours. We are to cherish a warm, deep, abiding interest in one another, an unfeigned respect for our brethren and sisters. We are none of us to set ourselves up as critics, to discern defects in those with whom we associate, and then engage in a work of cannibalism, tearing to pieces the reputation of those who may be more precious in the sight of God

than we are. Evil thinking and evil speaking are a great offence in the sight of God, and those who do those things are not born of the Spirit but of the flesh' (Manuscript 19, 17 March 1894, par. 14).

Again, 'There can be no more conclusive evidence that we possess the spirit of Satan than the disposition to hurt and destroy those who do not appreciate our work, or who act contrary to our ideas' (*The Desire of Ages*, page 487).

It is time for the men (and women) of the Kingdom to do what 'a man (or woman) has got to do'.

¹ Marshall Ganz, 'Leading Change: Leadership, Organisation, and Social Movements', chapter 19 in Nitin Nohria and Rekish Khurana, Editors: *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice*, 26 January, 2010

An unexpected storm

by Pastor Eglan Brooks, Ministerial Association Secretary for the British Union Conference

'Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"' (Mark 4:38, NIV)

I have an underlying condition. When it comes to travel, I have motion sickness. If I am driving I am fine. However, if you drive me – that is another problem. While someone else is driving, just let me sleep in the back of the car!

My wife and I decided we would go to Brussels for the day by ferry from Ramsgate to Ostend. I took all the precautions: took a tablet, abstained from fizzy drinks, and even kept away from cheese to make sure I would be sickness-free. The outward journey to Brussels was uneventful, and I actually wondered if I really had travel sickness: but on the return journey, from Ostend to Ramsgate, I thought the gates of hell had opened! A storm arose! The crossing was so rough that as people walked around the boat, they were thrown from side to side. Even the canteen on the ship stopped selling food, and people were

projecting in the bathrooms and over the side of the boat. It was a mess!

My wife was fine, enjoying every moment of the troubled crossing: but I felt sick, isolated in my sickness and afraid that at any moment I would project. I found a space on the floor in the middle of the boat, prayed and tried my best to sleep.

Think about the freak Galilean storm of our text. The disciples on that boat must have felt the same fear, isolation and sense of doom engulfing them as we do today. They had enjoyed the blessings of fruitful times in ministry; but now an unexpected storm changed everything.

One theme that is prevalent in the book of Mark is that Jesus is the Compassionate Servant Leader. He is the Master of all things, and the miracles He performs – for example, casting out the unclean spirit (Mark 1:21-28), healing the leper (Mark 1:40-43), and healing the paralytic (Mark 2:1-11) and the man with the withered hand (Mark 3:1-6) – serve to illustrate this. Now our compassionate Saviour must deal with nature itself.

Exhausted as a result of teaching souls hungry for 'the Living Word', He charged His disciples to

cross over to the other side of the sea. Jesus took this opportunity to rest. As He was relaxing, sleeping on a cushion in the back of the boat, all hell broke loose around His troubled disciples as a freak storm arose!

Storms have a unique way of changing our perspective on life. Storms have the capacity to reveal our true location. Storms have the power to reveal who we really are. We are all survivors of past storms; but how we handle the storms we go through in life is a significant indicator of our level of spiritual maturity.

Currently, we're all experiencing an unexpected storm. Even if we're not among the individuals with underlying conditions or a fearful nature, is it not blowing our minds to see loved ones, people we know, the elderly and even children devastated by the destructive storm of this coronavirus pandemic? The text gives us three things to remember in a crisis.

First, they had the presence of Jesus with them. The best thing we can do is always to remember that Jesus is present with us.

Second, they woke Jesus up. If we could just arouse the power of God in our lives daily, then what an awesome peace we could have in the midst of life's storms!

And third, they became vulnerable to Jesus; they told Jesus about their fears. Our prayers of confession, faith, hope and intercession still have the power to change the course of life and this ungodly pandemic. Our vulnerability in God's service can still do something in this difficult storm.

As we seek to accomplish important tasks in this unexpected storm, let's always remember that the presence of God is with us, and wake up to what Jesus can do in us. Let us make ourselves vulnerable before God and before our fellow travellers, so that someone else might find hope: our Saviour in this unexpected storm.



British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

British Isles Headquarters

Office of the President, Public Affairs & Religious Liberty

9th April 2020

By Post & Email: rishi.sunak.mp@parliament.uk

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
The Chancellor of the Exchequer,
HM Treasury
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Chancellor,

REQUEST TO CONSIDER AND SUPPORT THE CLERGY AS KEY WORKERS IN THE WAR AGAINST COVID-19

I begin by commending you and the British Government led by Prime-Minister Boris Johnson for your tireless efforts in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for the various strategies that you have put in place to save lives and protect our economy.

I appreciate that clergy are considered as crucial frontline workers in the war against the COVID-19 pandemic and faith groups such as ours appreciate the timely Job Retention Scheme. However, the condition that comes with the scheme to furlough workers poses a hindrance in our service delivery.

With congregations unable to meet, revenue is severely depleted and so my plea to you is that you make an exemption that will allow charity faith groups with clergy/religious leaders to access the government's Job Retention Scheme but also allow them to continue working for their faith group charity whilst on furlough. In our church, we would like to keep all our clergy in active employment so that they can continue to provide vital social services.

The clergy's social role is very critical in the current situation. They are much needed alongside other key workers. While the Coronavirus is causing thousands of deaths, it is creating mental and emotional needs for those that are left behind. The clergy play an important role in meeting the needs of the British people. While normal church activities that require contact and social gatherings are currently suspended, the community support work of the clergy has not ceased. They are busy using social media to provide counselling, and supporting parents, their children and young people with creative online activities.

Hope is the most essential tool that every community needs to go through, overcome and survive a crisis. That is one of the critical roles the clergy play in this crisis. While thousands of volunteers have kindly responded to the government's appeal, the role played by the clergy in the British community still stands. They are critical workers who support the public with their emotional, mental and spiritual health.

I would kindly ask that you support faith groups by giving an exemption so that they can continue to access the Job Retention Scheme and allow clergy and spiritual leaders to continue their work of community support. The needs are overwhelming.

Thank you for your consideration. I would also share that our prayers are with you and the Prime Minister as he recovers in hospital.

Yours faithfully

Ian Sweeney
President



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Adventist Risk Management, Inc. is the official insurance and risk-management company for the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Adventist ministries around the world, providing timely, real-world insurance products and innovative risk-management solutions for minimising risk with Adventist ministries at all levels. We recommend best practices to eliminate oversights that can lead to costly accidents.

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HEALTH

by Sharon Platt-McDonald



Safeguarding mental well-being during times of crisis

part 1: overview

'World will face a mental health crisis after coronavirus pandemic, experts warn' – this was the alarming headline of an online *Independent* newspaper article by health correspondent Shaun Lintern (April 2020).¹

The scale of the potential problem was highlighted in a collaborative report of several health professionals and scientists. The *Independent* states: 'Two dozen mental health scientists, including neuroscientists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and public health experts, have warned of the long-term impact of the virus on people's mental health and demanded governments prioritise research to come up with evidence-based treatments.'

Published in the journal *Lancet Psychiatry*, the report echoes warnings from an Ipsos Mori survey undertaken in March 2020. The poll of 1,099 members of the public revealed increased levels of anxiety and fear as a result of the COVID-19 coronavirus lockdown.²

The poll of 1,099 members of the public found increased levels of anxiety and fear of suffering mentally as a result of the coronavirus. Over half of the responses about mental illness were about anxiety.

One of the *Lancet* report authors, Professor Rory O'Connor, from the University of Glasgow, states: 'Increased social isolation, loneliness, health anxiety, stress and an economic downturn are a perfect storm to harm people's mental health and well-being.' He further explains: 'If we do nothing, we risk seeing an increase in mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, and a rise in problem behaviours such as alcohol and drug addiction, gambling, cyberbullying or social consequences such as homelessness and relationship breakdown. The scale of this problem is too serious to ignore, both in terms of every human life that may be affected, and in terms of the wider impact on society.'

So how can we manage our mental well-being during this current global crisis?

Among the list of safeguards, NHS *Every Mind Matters*³ provides the following pointers:

- Find out about your employment and benefits rights (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-support-for-employees-benefit-claimants-and-businesses>).
- Plan practical things (www.carersuk.org).
- Stay connected with others.
- Talk about your worries (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/>).
- Look after your body – try a 10-minute home workout (<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-body/move-more/home-workout-videos/>).
- Stay on top of difficult feelings – watch the 'reframing unhelpful thoughts' video (<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/>).
- Do not stay glued to the news (brief, useful COVID-19 tips can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>).
- Carry on doing things you enjoy.
- Take time to relax.
- Think about your new daily routine.
- Look after your sleep (<https://www.beautifulchristianlife.com/blog/10-3-2017-a-recipe-for-a-good-nights-sleep/>).
- Keep your mind active.

Good health!

¹<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-mental-health-research-anxiety-a9466466.html> ²[https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanpsy/PIIS2215-0366\(20\)30168-1.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanpsy/PIIS2215-0366(20)30168-1.pdf) ³<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/>

COVID-19 and the law of the leper

by Julian Thompson*

One of the most striking realities of the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown has been the worldwide recognition that sometimes, in order to protect the ones we love, we have to stay away from them. Whereas, under normal circumstances, significant life events would be occasions for communal gatherings and expressions of love and support, now, birthdays can only be celebrated within households, weddings and baptisms have had to be suspended, and funerals cannot be attended by anyone other than immediate family. As the total death toll surges ever higher, one can't help but recognise the fact that not only has COVID-19 robbed us of our loved ones, jobs, and freedom, but COVID-19 has also taken away something of our humanity as well.

As seen in the lives of figures such as Florence Nightingale, after whom one of the UK Government's emergency field hospitals has been named, Christianity, when practised correctly, is a religion of compassion. Jesus Himself was often moved at the sight of human grief and suffering (John 11:35); so, for many Christians, the admonition of governments to 'stay home', close physical worship spaces, and temporarily cease the administration of religious ordinances, when people are suffering and dying, is challenging, because under such circumstances the admonition to 'stay home' appears to strike against the very heart of what it means to be a Christian. What would Florence Nightingale do? Or, more significantly, what would Jesus do? Of course, as the founder of modern nursing, Florence Nightingale, like many healthcare workers and caregivers, would be courageously battling the coronavirus on the front lines; and Jesus – well, He's always

been in the healing business. But what about the rest of us, who are not key workers? At such a time as this, is it really biblical to 'stay home', not attend church, not visit the sick, not hold the hands of the dying, and stay away from the funerals of close friends and colleagues? Is it possible that following such guidelines could lead us as Christians to fall under the same condemnation as those who overlooked the hungry, the thirsty, the naked and the strangers in Matthew 25:31-46? While such questions have led some to choose to ignore medical advice, travel for non-essential reasons, and suggest that the dangers of COVID-19 have been overstated, the truth is that many of the principles we are being asked to act on today are not without precedent in Hebrew Bible.

In Leviticus 14, we find an obscure but interesting regulation known as 'the law of the leper'. While most Bible translations refer to the disease mentioned in Leviticus as 'leprosy', it is highly unlikely that the writer was describing 'modern leprosy', the bacteria-induced condition known today as Hansen's disease. In fact, a close reading of Leviticus suggests that the word translated as 'leprosy' is in fact used to refer to a number of different conditions. What is clear, however, is that these 'leprosy' appear to have been highly communicable contagions that not only infected people (Lev. 13:1-46), but could also contaminate homes (Lev. 14:33-57) and items of clothing (Lev. 13:47-59). Those who were thought to have one of these leprosy would have their symptoms reviewed by a priest, and, once confirmed, would have to live 'outside' of the Israelite camp (Lev. 13:9; 14:3). After their symptoms had passed, former lepers would have to go through an

extensive eight-day process in order to be safely re-admitted into the community. Having received news that a leper had been healed, a priest would travel out of the camp to meet them (Lev. 14:3). Once satisfied that healing had indeed taken place, the priest would conduct a cleansing ritual, after which the former leper would shave off all their hair, bathe, and return to the camp (Lev. 14:4-8). Once back in the camp, the former leper was not immediately permitted to return home; instead, they were required to live outside their tent in the sight of the community for seven more days (Lev. 14:8). On the seventh day, the former leper would again shave off all their hair (even their eyebrows!), wash their clothes, and bathe in fresh water (Lev. 14:9). On the eighth day, after being presented before the Lord, offering sacrifices, and being anointed, the former leper would finally be considered 'clean' and would be admitted back into full membership of the community (Lev. 14:10-20).

When you read the law of the leper in Leviticus 14, you can't help but be struck by the forensic nature of this ancient regulation. God took infectious disease very seriously, and at a time when medical interventions were rudimentary He went to extraordinary lengths in order to protect the Israelite community. One of the interesting features of the book of Leviticus is the fact that its regulations were given directly by God to Moses (Lev. 1:1, 2; 4:1, 2; 5:14; 6:19; 11:1, 2; 12:1, 2; 13:1), which was also the case for the law of the leper (Lev. 14:1). Not only does this suggest that God had a deep interest in Israel's health and well-being, but, quite profoundly, it shows that God introduced this ancient infection-control system even though

He, the divine Healer, was still dwelling in the camp. This is significant because it suggests that God's presence in the camp was no guarantee of freedom from disease. Stated differently, even though God was in the camp, there was still a need for the practical implementation of cleanliness and healthful practices. Sadly, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been too many examples of Christians and faith leaders who, believing that their faith would render them immune, ignored medical advice and subsequently succumbed to the virus. While I am not suggesting that faith doesn't play an important role in our battle against the coronavirus, what I am saying is that we must not be presumptuous. If ancient Israel applied such stringent measures, even though God was manifest among them in cloud and fire (Ex. 40:34-38), how much more should we as Christians apply similarly healthful practices today?

Now, to be clear, I'm not suggesting that the cure for COVID-19 involves slaughtering a bird over fresh water (Lev. 14:5), or that those who've been cured need to shave twice and have their eyebrows clipped! One thing we're not short of today is fake news, so please don't promote Leviticus 14 as the latest COVID-19 cure in your WhatsApp groups! What I am saying is that the law of the leper in Leviticus 14 contains a number of important principles that we as Christians would do well to consider when seeking to develop a biblical response to the current pandemic:

1. Don't be presumptuous: a strong faith does not equal a strong immune system. Leviticus 14 implies that belief in God doesn't mean that we won't ever get sick. Now more than ever, it is important for us to follow healthful practices.

2. Support your church and wider community. It is clear from Leviticus that the religious

community played a central role in responding to infectious disease. In many ways, the Levitical priests functioned as first responders, providing guidance to both the healthy and the symptomatic. However, they were only effective in the roles to which they had been called because, along with God's blessing, they had the support of the wider religious community. While our faith community today looks very different to how it looked then, the need to pull together and support those called to lead in times of crisis remains the same. Pray for your Conference leaders, pastors, elders, local church leaders, and one another. In fact, while praying for them, remember to pray for our prime minister and other politicians too.

3. Support our key workers.

In order for this ancient infection-control system to be effective, it needed specialised input from the wider community. Those living outside of the camp would have still needed essential items such as food, clothing, and shelter. Furthermore, it would also have required individuals to act as go-betweens between the priests and the lepers. All of this suggests the presence of a wider support network outside of the priesthood. Today, support for those affected by COVID-19 comes not only from the religious community, but also from a wide range of people, from doctors, nurses and caregivers to delivery drivers, cashiers and fruit pickers. Pray for them, encourage them, and don't make a fuss if they skip ahead of you in the queue at the supermarket.

4. Respect quarantine and social distancing guidelines.

While Leviticus makes it clear that the community was responsible for looking after the symptomatic, there was also a

clear onus on those displaying symptoms to behave responsibly towards the rest of the community. Sometimes, in order to protect the ones we love, we do have to stay away from them. If you become unwell, seek help and quarantine yourself – don't put others at risk. Likewise, if you are not symptomatic, respect quarantine guidelines and social distancing. Don't forget that even while on lockdown we can still look out for one another in socially distant ways.

In light of the current pandemic, Leviticus provides much food for thought; however, as a regulation in ancient Israel it called not only for thought, but also for tangible, love-centred action. Let's be honest: Leviticus is not the sexiest book in the Bible! It is well known that the book of Leviticus is the place where many well-meaning attempts to read the Bible from cover to cover falter. Leviticus has never been known for its pithy slogans or slick marketing – it hasn't had the benefit of the insight of multi-million-pound PR agencies, audience analytics, or Dominic Cummings – but I suspect that if the law of the leper were written today, it would read something like this: 'Stay Home; Protect the NHS; Save Lives.' So, in following the UK Government's current advice to 'stay home', are we violating the principles of Matthew 25:31-46? A reading of Leviticus would suggest, 'No.' But, if we choose to leave our homes unnecessarily, violate quarantine and social distancing guidelines, and ignore healthful practices, we might be, especially if it leads to the infection of others. I like the comment recently made by Romanian theologian Constantin Necula that we should stay home not for 'fear of death', but for 'love of life'. Certainly, in the wake of COVID-19, the Levitical command to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Lev. 19:18, ESV) has taken on new levels of meaning.

*Julian Thompson is a lecturer in Old Testament at Newbold College.

Florence Nightingale, like many healthcare workers and caregivers, would be courageously battling the coronavirus on the front lines . . .



Joy in troubled times

We have to admit that COVID-19 has had a bad effect on the mood of the Balham church. Recently it was a relief for the church family to experience joy in troubled times. A week before all churches were called to shut down, we celebrated with three people experiencing new life in Christ.

Tesho Surunmu was raised in the USA with no Christian background and only occasionally attended church. Back in 2017, he came to England and connected with his uncle, Robert, who himself had been recently baptised. Robert encouraged him to attend church. As Tesho's interest in spiritual matters increased, he started studying the Bible, joined a youth group – and, through the evidence of how God had changed the lives of his uncle and cousins, decided to give God a chance.

Alty Woodburn was raised in the Church of God and baptised at the age of 15. He came to this country in 1960. In August 1994, he married Dell Guthrie, a member of the Church of God (Seventh Day). At the time, many of her family were Adventists, which she later joined, but Alty wasn't attending any church at the time.

But, little by little, Alty became ever more closely associated with the Balham church family. It was seven years ago that Alty attended the Autumn Rose Seniors' Club, and occasionally joined Dell for Sabbath worship. Having been baptised at age 15, why ever be baptised again? With time, however, as he began to recognise the signs of the times and the nearness of Christ's coming, he felt the promptings of the Holy Spirit to be rebaptised.

Cella Bolvin arrived in England from France in 2003 and started



Left to right: candidates and pastor, Cella, Tesho, Alty, Pastor Akakpo

attending Balham Church not long afterwards. In 2010 she returned to France, but found herself drifting from church and God, and ended up making wrong decisions in her life. It was during this time that she fell pregnant with her first child. In 2017, on returning to England, she felt a prompting to attend church now and again, but not on a regular basis. It was not until early 2019 that she started to attend church a little more often, but then fell pregnant again. She was due to get married to the father of her child, but this fell through. As she reflected on her life, she felt a growing confidence that God was with her. It was time to give her life to the Lord again through baptism.

There is nothing like beautiful people recognising their need for the Lord. What a wonderful way of lifting the Balham mood in troubled times!

ERROL ANDERSON, COMMUNICATION LEADER – BALHAM CHURCH

Health is a big thing at a small church!

(This report was written before the UK lockdown commenced.)

Sometimes it's tempting to think small when you are literally small. This, however, is not the philosophy of Ebenezer Church in Battersea, South London. Earlier this year, a very small group met each Sabbath to prepare for a big venture with a 14-session medical missionary programme on Sundays (currently on hold). The presenters and students came from churches far and near, such as Battersea, Balham, Bethel, Basildon, Birmingham, Hackbridge, Lewisham, Wimbledon and West Croydon.

Battersea Church has an ongoing

community programme. For example, on Sundays they run vegetarian cookery classes as well as giving health lectures. Every first Sunday they hold a community breakfast, and sometimes they take the breakfast to people who cannot come to them. They are also involved in door-to-door witnessing. As they meet people, they invite them to share in their vegetarian lunch on Sabbaths. They also make sympathy cards for bereaved families, and for the sick in the community and hospitals.

With this mandate the Ebenezer members decided to move forwards in faith, knowing that the medical missionary ministry is of God, and that He will provide. While such courses are usually expensive, they ran the Medical Missionary Course for FREE, trusting the Lord to provide. Their trust was not without foundation, as students made

voluntary contributions, along with others, including the church family, who gave sacrificially to the project.

Ellen White's philosophy of medical missionary work was their driving force.

'We have come to a time when every member of the church should take hold of medical missionary work' (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 62).

'Medical missionary work should be a part of the work of every church in our land.

Disconnected from the church it would soon become a strange medley of disorganised atoms' (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 289).

Ten students prepared for graduation. On Sunday 2 February, nine students gathered in the Balham church hall, where they were

recognised as successfully completing the medical missionary course, supported by family, friends and other church members. Savrina Joseph from Basildon graduated in absentia. Pastor Bernard Akakpo (the Balham minister) presented the keynote message with a reminder that God commissions us not only to preach, but also to heal and to encourage healthy living. He continued, 'Although medical missionary work is often neglected, it is of divine origin and should go hand-in-hand with the preaching of the Gospel.'

ERROL ANDERSON – BALHAM COMMUNICATIONS



Students, course directors and Pastor Akakpo (photo by John Noel)

Fifth anniversary of Salisbury Church Plant

On 18 January 2020 we celebrated the fifth anniversary of the establishment of Salisbury Church Plant. It was attended by Pastor Emmanuel Osei, Pastor Wayne Erasmus, and our former pastor, Rudi Puskas. During the Divine Service Dr Osei delivered a sermon entitled 'You Haven't Seen Anything Yet', in which he reminded us of the limitless capabilities of God. In the afternoon Pastor Wayne preached a sermon entitled 'All In'. He spoke about the great value of the pearl of great price.



During the celebration we were reminded of how the Salisbury church was planted, took root, and started to flourish to become what it is today. The establishment of this church can only be attributed to the Lord's leading, which became evident as we honoured the Lord on this Sabbath. In this historic cathedral city, could there ever be an Adventist presence? With the assistance of Bath members back in January 2015, it was decided to plant a church in Salisbury, gathering members from across Wiltshire with a special interest in our Reformation and Adventist heritage. Our collective ambition is to share the authentic Gospel of Christ in the context of present truth.

Also acknowledged on this occasion was the end of an era with Pastor Rudi as our pastor. For five years he has given us his unstinting support and accommodated our peculiar needs as a church plant, for which we are most thankful.

Our commemoration and celebration together featured songs from members and guests, with powerful personal testimonies of the love and guiding hand of our God. People from Africa, the Caribbean islands, Eastern Europe, the Philippines, and many other places have felt guided to this fellowship in the heart of southern England. We acknowledged that we are in the city of Salisbury for the purpose of mission! The stories contained in the testimonies were an encouraging reminder that God has a purpose for the Salisbury church plant.

We give all the glory to our Lord Jesus Christ, whose love is central and foremost in the success of this growing and flourishing church.

IAN MAW



All-night prayer held at Stanborough School

Much prayer, praise in hymns, testimonies, exhortations and sermonettes took place at the all-night prayer organised by the SEC Prayer Coordinator, Linda Mukwada Nyamhunga, in conjunction with the Stanborough Secondary School Parents and Teachers Association. It was held back in February, from 9.30pm on Saturday 22 February to 5am on the following day, at Stanborough School, with an emphasis on praying for the success of the school, the salvation of its pupils, and the welfare of all children and youth.

Gathered together were parents from both the primary and the secondary school, staff, and individuals from as far as Nottingham, Milton Keynes, Slough and parts of London. There were also a number of speakers, including Pastor Simba Muhau, Clarence Jackson, Samuel Semakula, Brenda Edwards and Linda Mukwada Nyamhunga.

Samuel spoke on John 11, stressing that God is able to deliver and heal us today. He reminded us that God is not limited by our 'ifs' and 'buts', and that God is beyond our limitations. He also informed us that God has a thousand different ways to answer every problem we have.

Simba gave a sermonette derived from Luke 17:11-19, talking about faith in Jesus – faith that has the audacity to call on Jesus for help, to call on the Lord alone, and that trusts Jesus in the absence of evidence, taking Him at His word.

Clarence's sermonette, based on Luke 8:40 and 41, focused on Jairus and his issues, and how he found help in God – just as we should, trusting that God knows how to deal with our issues, be they challenges pertaining to family, work, mental health or finances.

Brenda Edwards' humorous, thought-provoking discourse highlighted that God answers every prayer. However, should we expect answers to our prayers if we regard iniquity in our hearts and refuse to confess to those we have wronged? 'Live right in God's eyes,' was the encouragement.

Finally, Linda encouraged all attendees with a very clear message. The Lord is the great Problem-Solver. Together, our objective was realised: giving praise to Him for His goodness and interest in our lives.

SEC PRAYER MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT, WORKING WITH STANBOUROUGH SECONDARY SCHOOL PTA

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We can choose to engage with a hurting world

Youth and Pathfinder ministries keeping one step ahead!

Soon after a highly successful Adventurer and Pathfinder Bible Experience Union Final (ABE), which took place entirely online via the Zoom platform on Sabbath 14 March 2020, the news came through that the worsening coronavirus situation meant the end of physical gatherings, church closures and meeting shutdowns. Families across the Union found themselves in lockdown with no opportunity to meet for Sabbath schools, AY programmes, Adventurer or Pathfinder clubs or church services.

With this in mind, the Conference youth departments stepped up a gear and moved as much as they could to digital platforms. Within just one week, Pastors Adam Ramdin (North England Conference Youth Director) and Anthony Fuller (South England Conference Youth Director) both held very successful Youth Week of Prayer events on Facebook from 21 to 28 March. Regional directors also took part in online streamed talks for local churches, such as the Stanborough Park Church nightly talks for youth, which featured Pastor Clifford Herman (SEC Pathfinder Director) and Pastor Dejan Stojkovic (Union Youth Ministries Director), among others. Hundreds of youth logged in, watching and contributing to the online discussions, talks and studies. Not content just to run the programmes only for the Youth Week of Prayer, the online forums have continued with almost daily programmes, including health & well-being slots, Bible studies, book clubs and more. Youth in these territories are being well ministered to during these uncertain times.

Knowing that youth are being well looked after, the British Union Youth Ministries Department is working to make sure that the Adventurers and Pathfinders are not forgotten. As clubs are no longer able to meet, and with children falling behind in their class curricula, after an urgent meeting with the regional Pathfinder directors, Pastor Dejan Stojkovic introduced the e-club Pathfinder tutorials on Sunday 29 March. Using the BUC Facebook page live and the Zoom platform trialled so successfully for the ABE and PBE testing, hundreds of Pathfinders and their leaders linked in for the inaugural session at 10am. Paula Carillo, BUC IT Director and previous club director at Stanborough Park Church, taught the basics of British Sign Language and had an enthusiastic audience signing and singing along with her. This was followed by Clifford Herman presenting the Peacemaker e-honour. Finally, but not least, there was a very informative and well-presented Fire Safety e-honour from Jason Edwards. Jason is a firefighter employed by the Avon Fire & Rescue Service. He was thoughtful enough to take those present on a 'virtual' tour of his fire station, since a real tour would not be possible under the lockdown circumstances.

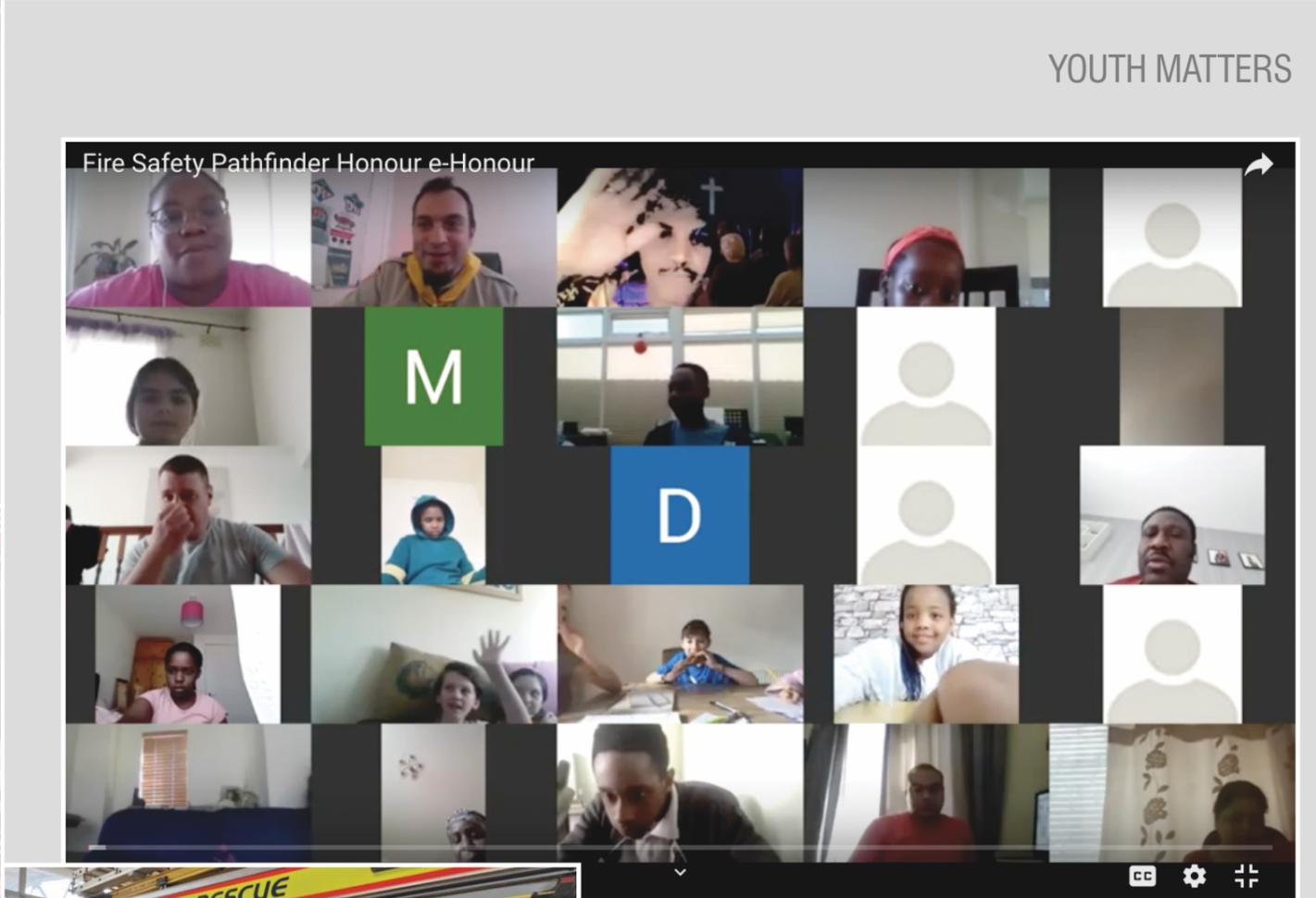
Pastor Clifford is encouraging the SEC Pathfinders to study for their honours at home as well, by introducing a set of honours which can be achieved in their own time. The details are all on the SEC Pathfinder website and include pre-recorded video sessions, worksheets and tests. He has kindly agreed to be a regular presenter for the live BUC e-honours.

The community spirit on Zoom was so encouraging, and it was as if the children, sitting in their living rooms with their families nearby, had gathered for an extended club meeting. Messages were flooding in during the live sessions via Facebook, Zoom and WhatsApp, contributing encouraging comments and valid questions about each subject, with club leaders sharing their joy on Facebook for this opportunity to join a ready-made programme for the Pathfinders unable to attend club meetings and see each other. One father of three from Worcester in the North England Conference said that it was the best morning his children have spent since the isolation period began.

Pastor Dejan said after the first session: 'Despite the country being locked down, we are still able to encourage the children to develop their skills and maintain their relationships with each other during these trying times. There was a real connection element to the event on Sunday – it was like an online club which is promoting the spiritual, social and group-learning experience they would usually have had in their regular clubs.'



Jason Edwards



Pastor Clifford Herman

details are posted on the BUC Youth Ministries website. Most honours involve some homework elements, which the students need to complete in their own time before filing everything in their club folder for assessment when clubs do finally resume.

Even in these troubled times, when we are not able to meet in person, the e-club online programme for the Adventurers and Pathfinders and the youth Facebook/Zoom forum each evening are proving to be vital links for the children, youth, their parents and leaders too. May God continue to bless and guide us as we navigate these uncharted times together.

NATALIE DAVISON
PHOTOS BY DEJAN STOJKOVIC

The enthusiasm was so great for this large-scale e-club premiere that not only were there participants from both North and South England Conferences, and the Irish, Scottish and Welsh Missions, but there were also people who joined in from many countries around the world, including Dubai, the Netherlands, Bosnia & Herzegovina, the Virgin Islands, Australia, Serbia, South Africa, the UAE, Montserrat, St Vincent, Norway, and the USA. The Trans-European Division and General Conference Pathfinder directors have both shared the event on their social media platforms and encouraged their readership to join in. Pastor Gary Blanchard, General Conference Youth Ministries Director, will be teaching an honour next month too. Even though the timings were not ideal for those from the USA and Caribbean, we still had many participants from those areas who woke up in the early hours of the morning to join in!

With interest growing daily, and a loud call from Adventurers and their leaders to provide an online programme for them also, Sabbath, 4 April, saw the launch of the Adventurer e-club with the Rainbow and Ants e-awards, the very first to be taught live.

Those who miss the live sessions needn't fret, as they can catch up using the YouTube links and download the worksheets and tests. Full

Quotes from the Pathfinder e-club online sessions (Facebook quotes):

- Isah Nkomo-Nyathi – **'Brilliant. Amazing work, BUC.'**
- Nana Tuffour – **'Go high, BUC!'**
- Joe Sword – **'That was awesome. Thank you, Jason. God bless. Watching from Dubai.'**
- Montealegre Samir – **'Hello from Phoenix, AZ, USA.'**
- Ayesha Tuitt-Walters – **'Thank you for making this video available for us even though the live event has ended!'**
- Sherry-Ann Archibald – **'I thoroughly enjoyed it and will be back next week. This time earlier, haha, but the presentation was very informative. Thank you.'**
- Mandela Thyoka – **'Thanks for the e-honours today; this was a really great start. See you next week.'**
- Sophia Lewis, Alexandria, Virginia, USA – **'Pastor Dejan, I am excited about what you are doing in the UK and Ireland. First you managed to complete your Union PBE – congratulations. Now you are hosting honours online – truly Pathfinders.'**
- Sue Ndlovu – **'The Bible experience has been a testimony for us in Sheffield. As an assistant Children's Sabbath School leader, we have noticed transferable skills from the Bible experience – that is to say, the kids involved are able to recite all 13 memory verses for Children's Sabbath School. Also, feedback from their schools says their level of achievement is above expected level. So, for us, we have gained more than just being part of this programme: the kids are thriving in all areas, and we praise God for that. Also, since Union-level finals, I have adopted your idea of Zoom. We meet every Sabbath morning for our virtual Sabbath School lesson studies, and kids just enjoy it so much. Thanks to you and the team for these ideas, especially during these times.'**

Returning tithes and giving offerings under lockdown

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Returning by card payment: call the SEC office on **01923 232728**.

*To assign your donation to your local church, write the name of your church on the back of the cheque, and include your Gift Aid number if you're a Gift Aider.

Weekly local church text giving

70100 – £1 | 70300 – £3 | 70500 – £5 | 70575 – £10

To give £20, text 70750 as a one-off donation, NOT weekly. The donation will be added to your monthly bill or deducted from your pay-as-you-go balance.

'I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your faithfulness and generosity in supporting the church during this very difficult time. Please rest assured, the coronavirus will pass. May the Lord bless you and keep you safe.'

Emmanuel Osei, President

North England Conference

Account details

Sort code: 60-80-09/Account number: 84598816

Returning by cheque: cheques are payable to North England Conference.*

Returning by card payment: call the NEC office on **01623 361156**.

*To assign your donation to your local church, write the name of your church on the back of the cheque, and include your Gift Aid number if you're a Gift Aider.

Online donations can be made via the Conference's own website: <https://nec.adventist.uk/contact-us/donate/>. Simply follow the instructions given on each area of the page, and ensure that the North England Conference is your choice for where the donation should go.

'In seeking to fulfil the commission of Matthew 28, it is my desire that each congregation within the North England Conference should be an integral part of its community. Our congregations should be the place that our communities look to in times of storm, in times of crisis, in times of happiness and in times of celebration. Our congregations should be the place where refuge can be found, because we have demonstrated to them that all it takes to bring calm to a situation is a word from the Master, who never sleeps. Thank you for your continued faithfulness.'

Richard Jackson, President

Irish Mission

Northern Ireland account details

Sort code: 40-45-28/Account number: 60476188

Republic of Ireland account details

Sort code: 93-32-95/Account number: 14012054

IBAN: 1E74 AIBK 9332 9514 0120 54

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'This crisis has taken us by surprise, but not God; He's still in control, and, at this time, may we all continue to entrust our lives and means into His care. Thank you all for your faithfulness and support in ensuring that the Church continues to fulfil her mission and carry out her ministry of care, nurture, and love. Blessings and good health to you all.'

Dan Serb, President

Scottish Mission

Account details

Sort code: 16-33-45/Account number: 12318997

Returning by cheque: cheques are payable to Scottish Mission.*

Returning by card payment: call the Scottish Mission treasury office on **01923 672251**.

*To assign your donation to your local church, write the name of your church on the back of the cheque, and include your Gift Aid number if you're a Gift Aider.

'Thank you to all our members for making God first a way of life for all times and in all circumstances. I think for all of us this is a non-negotiable and irreducible minimum of our Christian faith. He is faithful and remains our "Jehovah Jireh" – the Lord our Provider.'

Paul Tompkins, President

Welsh Mission

Account details

Sort code: 40-45-28/Account number: 70854085

Returning by cheque: cheques are payable to Welsh Mission.*

Returning by card payment: call the Welsh Mission treasury office on **01923 672251**.

*To assign your donation to your local church, write the name of your church on the back of the cheque, and include your Gift Aid number if you're a Gift Aider.

'Often, it is in times of great anguish that we are able to see more clearly the goodness of God. Let us continue to be faithful and true, for we are confident that even though we walk through the darkest valley, God is with us; He will never leave us and never forsake us.'

Emanuel Bran, President

For returning tithes & giving offerings in the **Irish, Scottish or Welsh Missions**, email: abarki@adventist.uk, including the breakdown of T & O, the name of the church, and your Gift Aid number. The local budget offering will be credited into the church deposit (trust) account and later transferred to the local church bank account, upon the request of the treasurer.

Edmonton Church's first COVID-19 death

by Trevor Johnson

Nancy Morgan

Born: 29 November 1942

Passed: 26 March 2020

Today we laid to rest one of our beloved members who was the first victim of COVID-19 at Edmonton Church. In the virtual service, 97 households joined online. Family members, friends

and church members gathered together to watch tributes paid to a fallen soldier, Nancy (Sarah) Ann Priscilla Morgan. The service was conducted by Pastor Steve Roberts and First Elder Manley Murray. The Zoom service was managed by Elder Malcolm Martin.

She was a committed member of the Edmonton church and an NHS nurse, and numerous special tributes were given by family members. Her husband, Winston Morgan, tearfully recounted loving memories of her which were echoed by her son, Lloyd, and grandchildren alike. As

an active member, Nancy had been an efficient church clerk and made a significant difference to the life of the church. Although conducted virtually, the emotion and sense of loss were palpable and felt by all.

In these unprecedented times only 10 family members and church staff were able to attend the physical service, but on Zoom all were able to be at the graveside for the final words. She was committed to her resting place and leaves behind her husband, her son, one grandson, and two granddaughters.

A full obituary will follow.

Frank Hugh Blewitt

On Thursday 2 April, Frank Hugh Blewitt passed away. Frank was born on 29 January 1935 in Allahabad, India. On 29 October 1961 Frank married Edna (Ruth) Brennan. They were blessed with two children, Paula and Dawn. Frank joined the teaching staff of the former John Loughborough School in September 1986. In September 1993 he accepted a call to Stanborough Secondary School, where he continued to teach until his retirement in 2000. We look forward to Christ's return, and a glorious resurrection day.

A full obituary will follow.

Pastor Vivian Llewellyn

On Easter Sunday, 12 April, Pastor Vivian Llewellyn passed away. From 1962 to 1998 he served for 36 years as a pastor in the South England Conference. In 1958 Viv married Anne Smith. They were blessed with two children, Stephanie and Elisabeth. As a result of Christ's resurrection, we too look forward to Christ's return, and a glorious resurrection day.

A full obituary will follow.

Acts of kindness

by Ellen G. White

'Wherever there is an impulse of love and sympathy, wherever the heart reaches out to bless and uplift others, there is revealed the working of God's Holy Spirit. . . .

'The glory of heaven is in lifting up the fallen, comforting the distressed. And wherever Christ abides in human hearts, He will be revealed in the same way. Wherever it acts, the religion of Christ will bless. Wherever it works, there is brightness' (*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 385, 386).

'Christ . . . identifies Himself with every child of humanity. That we might become members of the

heavenly family, He became a member of the earthly family. He is the Son of man, and thus a brother to every son and daughter of Adam. His followers are not to feel themselves detached from the perishing world around them. They are a part of the great web of humanity; and Heaven looks upon them as brothers to sinners as well as to saints. The fallen, the erring, and the sinful, Christ's love embraces; and every deed of kindness done to uplift a fallen soul, every act of mercy, is accepted as done to Him' (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 638).



Letter to the editor

Jesus unrecognised

Dear Editor

In your latest editorial, writing about Cleopas and his friend's meeting with Jesus, you mentioned how you've always wondered why they didn't recognise Him. I have, too.

What's more, this wasn't the only time after His resurrection that this happened: Mary, on that first Easter Sunday, Thomas in the upper room, the disciples that morning as they approached the shore of Galilee.

Then suddenly, just recently, what I believe to be the answer dawned on me. Isn't it reasonable to believe that when He was resurrected, He would be given the same sort of resurrection body that all the saints have been promised at the second coming? No blemishes, no defects, physically perfect – in His case, just the scars to confirm His identity. We get the impression that during His lifetime He wasn't a particularly handsome man (despite the way all the artists depict Him!) – but now! No wonder they didn't know Him. I think we'll have the same problem recognising acquaintances, friends and even relatives at first, when we get to heaven!

Regards and God bless,

GARTH TILL

Messenger

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|--------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Apr 24 | 8.13 | 8.25 | 8.21 | 8.39 | 8.45 |
| May 1 | 8.25 | 8.37 | 8.34 | 8.53 | 5.58 |
| 8 | 8.36 | 8.48 | 8.46 | 9.07 | 9.11 |
| 15 | 8.47 | 8.59 | 8.57 | 9.20 | 9.24 |



‘Connect’: highlights from Hackney youth retreat

As we made our way on the M25 into Tonbridge, Kent, no one fully knew exactly what to expect of the weekend ahead of us. We arrived on a Friday evening, unloading a 23-seater minibus and two cars full of people and food into our designated Caroty Wood residence. We settled in, ate and opened the Sabbath together. The theme of the weekend was ‘Connect’. The Hackney youth team were inspired to kick off the new year and decade by facilitating a youth retreat to help us focus on connecting with each other, ourselves and God. We got to learn about our leadership styles, distinguishing the socialites from the analytic personality types, and the diplomatic from the competitive, as we reflected on what it means to draw on each other’s strengths in our shared mission.

Sabbath morning was windy, with ominous clouds that hinted of rain. But straight after breakfast we all assembled in a circle outside, jumping up and down, stretching our hamstrings and triceps in unison during a

morning ‘wake up, shake up’ activity. I think that in different ways each of us was pushed out of our comfort zone during the weekend: some more than others! But we were all in it together. As it began to drizzle, we hurried back inside the residence to commence worship.

Being out of our usual church building gave an opportunity to share a programme that allowed more interaction with each other; so we used this time to learn more about each other and the people we hold close to our hearts. We reflected on relationships with family, friends and God. A vibrant debate on expectations within a romantic relationship in our current age of sharing unrepresentative snapshots of our lives on social media also took place. We prayed over and with each other.

Later, we stood around a bonfire and exchanged words of affirmation. There was something powerful about being in nature, watching the flames burn and slowly dwindle. It sparked minds to reflect on how fleeting life is. In such moments we’re encouraged, knowing that God has a plan for each of us. This was also echoed in the encouraging words we shared with one another – about how we are kings and queens, and that, no matter what the world says, we must hold up our heads because we are called and destined for greatness. A few of us stayed back at the bonfire and answered the question, ‘How do you want to be remembered?’ As we shared together, what stood out as the common thread was the thought that how we will be remembered depends on how connected we are – to our community, to our family and friends, and to God.

As the weekend ended, people who’d only seen each other once a week over a period of years had struck up not only conversations, but also friendships. Older youth and teens broke barriers through heart-to-heart conversations, all testifying of the Holy Spirit who was among us, working to bring and keep us together. Something special is happening at Hackney Church, and we’re excited by what God has in store for us this year as we continue with our theme of ‘Connect’.

THEMBE MVULA

Teens ministry is born in Newcastle

The Teens Ministry Department was introduced in Newcastle Church earlier this year. During the 2019 elections for officers, the nominating committee elected a young person to lead the Teens Department, and it officially became a recognised department in the church for the first time.

The teens, their ages ranging from 13 to 17 years of age, met at the start of the year to discuss and plan for 2020. The first task was to find a name for their group. They settled on the name ANTHEM, an acronym that stands for Adventist Newcastle Teens Helping Each other Minister. Plans for the year include forming a choir, leading a prayer band every Sabbath afternoon, and an online Bible study. On the social side, going bowling, visiting other churches to present programmes, and meeting up with friends for fellowship is key.

On the afternoon of 14 March, the teens at Newcastle Church led out in their first afternoon programme. Their focus was on studying and discussing passages from the book *Messages to Young People* by Ellen G. White, which in turn stimulated many questions. Providing written anonymous questions, peers attempted to provide answers, supported by adults who then gave advice and guidance on the different questions the teens had asked.

During the morning service the teens also led out in worship. The teens are looking forward to participating in further programmes

and leading out in worship. Their wish is to grow in confidence and serve God to the best of their ability.

Supported by their mentors, parents and the whole church family, it is a picture of the church family working together. And, should the world be in a better place by June, ANTHEM, as we should rightly call them, are looking forward to an NEC Teens Day event planned by North England Conference Youth Ministries to take place in Newcastle. However, if not in June (due to the



UK lockdown), we hope it will take place later in the year.

LYNNE SESINYE-SAMWINGA

New Addington Pathfinder and Adventurer clubs: God-led and person-centred

On Sabbath 7 March 2020 the New Addington church held its induction service for the Adventurer and Pathfinder clubs. During the programme, led by club director Brenda Nurse, members of both clubs were led to recite their club’s pledge and law, and sang both the Pathfinder and Adventurer club songs to begin proceedings. The Scripture reading focused on Psalm 23:1, 2. Director Nurse and Master Guide Patience Chandiwana led the induction service of new members to both clubs, in which parents and guardians affirmed their children. Michael Marriott (church elder) gave a word of encouragement to the children, counsellors and parents, emphasising that the movement of both clubs is God-led and person-centred. Time was given for prayer to request God to lead and direct the plans and activities. On behalf of Director Nurse, counsellors, parents and children connected to the club, I invite you, please pray that through this club the New Addington community will come to know the true and living God.



EDWY CHANDLER