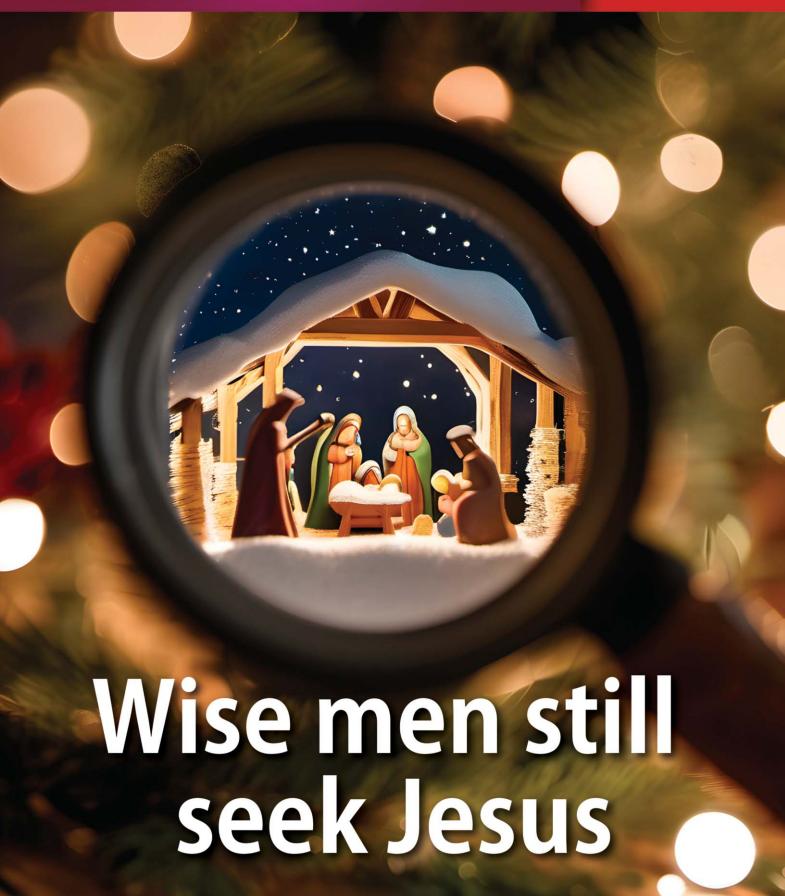


Seasonal messages
from our field leaders
Praying the Psalms
We are 'Reflecting Hope' . . .
or are we reflecting hope?
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Strategic Priority (12) – Evolving strategic priority

What do you think?

by Pastor Eglan Brooks,
President of the British Union Conference

ver the past year, I have addressed eleven of the twelve priorities in the British Union Conference (BUC) Strategic Plan. As we end the year, we will address the final strategic priority, which we have named 'the evolving strategic priority'. In preparing for this article, I considered leaving this page blank.

However, to explore this, we have conducted two focus groups that would enlighten our understanding of the subjects and matters that require attention and development. The first focus group, *The State of the Union: the townhall meeting,* was held in July 2023. Former and current trustees/Executive Committee members and institution representatives from entities within the BUC territory were invited to contribute through structured dialogue and facilitation on an online platform. Details of the results of this

meeting will be shared with our BUC Executive Committee at a specially designated meeting.

The second was held at the *Reflecting Hope* training retreat, Hinckley, in November, with more than 250 people in attendance, including 220 who participated in the focus group exercise. The results are published as a word cloud below.

Over the next few months, the officers of the BUC, along with the Board of Trustees, will be addressing this strategic priority based on the feedback of the two focus groups and the pressing needs of the organisation as a church, charity and corporation.

Please continue to pray that 2024 will be a year of mission, meaningful impact, guidance and good governance for the BUC as we reflect the hope of Jesus Christ in these challenging days of earth's history.

What should Strategic Priority 12 be? 220 responses



Please note: the larger the word on the page, the more people suggested this idea.





by Dusanka Rancic,



'You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.'

Jeremiah 29:13, NKJV

Dear Reader,

Life is a journey of searching: searching for purpose, love, forgiveness, understanding, and hope. Hope is what we all want and need.

We hope for a brighter day, for a better future, for a loving family, and for a peaceful world. We search for hope. We long for it. Yet, at the present time, it seems so difficult to find it.

But all is not lost, since Christmas offers Real Hope to all who seek it. While you are running through the stores and hear carols here and there, do they bring back some happy memories from your childhood? Does the smell of mince pies or mulled wine in the shopping mall remind you of your grandparents telling you stories from the Bible? While rushing through the day and through your life, do you pause to think that Real Hope was once lying in a manger? As He lay there, God announced the hope of His presence with us. In a lowly stable, God became one of us.

Shepherds were kneeling. Angels were singing. The creation was in awe. God left His throne and came to earth to save and bring hope to all of humanity.

Some time ago, I heard an anecdote about a young boy who was praying in his bedroom a few days before Christmas. While his mum sat by him, his dad and grandma were downstairs. He prayed, 'Lord, I pray for a train set, a remote-controlled car, and A NEW BICYCLE!'

'You don't have to shout, dear,' said his mum; 'God is not deaf.'

'I know,' replied the little boy, 'but Grandma is.'

For many, Christmas is about receiving gifts. But, for me, Christmas is about accepting the Gift . . . the unspeakable gift! Jesus Christ, the precious gift from God, was given to all of us so that we could have hope.

True Christmas hope does not depend on our current circumstances or the presence and quantity of sparkles. Rather, it is a hope based on the assurance that a Saviour lived among us, freed us from sin, and will return to make all things new.

So, this Christmas, we can place our hope in the perfect family gathering, the perfect decorations, and the perfect gifts . . . or we can bow and worship the Living Hope who fulfils His promises. Even more, we can reflect the Real

At the end, what will you search for this Christmas?

What are you hoping to find?





Seasonal messages from our field leaders



A pause by Pastor Eglan Brooks, President of the British

hristmas Eve, 1914, found the soldiers of the

Union Conference

British and German armies locked in a muddy, gory, unforgiving war -World War One. The two armies were senselessly captured by the trenches that they had dug. Separated by a place called 'no man's land', both sides regularly battled to try to win the upper hand.

An extraordinary thing happened that night: messages were exchanged between the British and German armies to implement a temporary cease-fire, a pause on Christmas Day. After months of fighting in a war that no one expected to last so long, both sides pressed pause on the

They used Christmas Day to celebrate Christmas, to drink together and even play football together. They picked up their dead, fixed their fences, and for 24 hours they connected with each other's humanity.

If some soldiers facing death on the front line can do that, then surely we who are outside the gory tragedy of war can pause for a few moments and tend to someone else's needs?

Emerging from COVID-19, in shock over the Ukraine crisis, the tragedy of Israel and Palestine and the countless daily disasters, it is hard to pause. It is hard to pause when the cost of living contributes to making you homeless, when your home is a battlefield, when you are the only one cheering yourself to go on.

As Seventh-day Adventists we have an opportunity to pause every week and celebrate the Sabbath. The Sabbath is described as 'a foretaste of our eternal future in God's Kingdom'.1

When we talk about 'a pause', we mean exactly that – seeing time for what it really should be, moments filled with opportunities to draw closer to God, our Heavenly Father. We must also be mindful of people around us who are alone, who are facing their own tragedy, who are emotionally broken – those who just need somebody to help them navigate this difficult festive season.

How can we hit the pause button

for ourselves, our family, church, and community?

In Psalm 46:10 (NKJV), we are invited to 'be still, and know that I am God'. As the festive season unfolds with merriment, why not take time to be still and recognise the sovereignty of the Creator? This may encourage us not only to worship through our hymns and prayers, but also to be a catalyst for connecting with others and demonstrating God's love for them.

¹Fundamental Belief number 20, The Sabbath: https://www.adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ADV-28Beliefs2020.pdf (page 9)

Do you hear what I hear?

by Pastor George Kumi, President of the North England Conference

he carol 'Do You Hear What I Hear?' was written by Noël Regney and Gloria Shane in 1962 as a call for peace during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Loosely based on the birth of Jesus as told in Matthew's gospel, it speaks of the role of the shepherds, the magi, and the star that led them to Bethlehem.



Currently, Bethlehem is not a place for a visit. The recent conflict between Israel and Palestine has closed that part of the world for tourists.

'Do you hear what I hear?' echoes the thunder of bombs and the ceaseless drone of gunfire; the closure of the main hospital in the Gaza strip; the haunting screams of the injured; the silent cries of the bereaved.

'Do you hear what I hear?' is the sound of freedom protests worldwide. It is the noise of debates in Parliament; divided opinions on social media; and the threat of violence to those who support one side over the other.

'Do you hear what I hear?' is the acoustic undertone of conflicts in farflung parts of the globe, and also at home. The recent government reshuffle resulted from the outcry over the inflammatory speech of a senior frontbench politician regarding the Middle East crisis.

As Seventh-day Adventists, what will people hear from us this season? What conversations will spring from our lips? What sentiments will we deliver to a world that is in turmoil?

> 'The Child, the Child, sleeping in the night. He will bring us goodness and light.'

May this be our message during this Advent season.



all seasons

by Dr Kirk Thomas, President of the South England Conference

uring the festive holidays and the upcoming close of the year, we often reflect on the past year and what might be expected in the one to come. Despite increased secularism, for many, the joy and wonder of the birth of Jesus Christ is still the predominant thought. The God who once came to us as a baby will be with us forevermore. Let's pause to reflect and respond to this mind-boggling thought.

born into a human family that, like those today, faced many challenges. The social context of Luke 2 reads like ours today. There was Roman oppression, so Jesus' family were familiar with the huge difference governments can make. His parents, Joseph and the heavily pregnant Mary, were turned away from an inn in Bethlehem in an example of temporary homelessness caused by the unavailability of suitable housing: the plight of many today. They were familiar with poverty and looming tax bills, like those of us trying to navigate the challenges of the cost of living. They knew the very real threat of violence and unrest,

understood the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity of life, because, in every aspect of the human experience. He was 'with us'.

Are we filled with gratitude at this thought? We may condemn the innkeeper who had no room for Jesus' birth on his property, but have we left room for Him in our lives? Do we believe that He is with us when it comes to the things in life that challenge us the most? On a personal level, we will have had our ups and downs in 2023, but do our lives ultimately testify to the hope that is available to all?

Parents Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, the wise kings from abroad, the expectant mother Elizabeth, Simeon the lay person, and Anna, the prophetess serving at the temple, represent people of all walks of life, young and old, rich and poor, of all ethnicities, who responded to Jesus. When we allow God's Spirit to inspire us, amazing things can happen.

I wish everyone a blessed holiday season and a prosperous, productive, Holy Spirit-filled 2024. Let Jesus' first coming remind us of the bigger picture: His second coming is just as sure as the first. Human problems are 'birth pains' until, in 'the fullness of the time', Jesus will return. He truly is a God for all seasons who has promised to be with us always, even until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). He is coming back to gather His people to Himself. Together, let us thank God for His love for us, which can be traced from Bethlehem to Calvary and will be with us throughout eternity.



A clear vision

by Pastor Jimmy Botha, President of the Scottish Mission

s we stand at the threshold of a new year, I am grateful for our remarkable journey together. We face trials and tribulations that test our faith in these challenging times. Yet, during such moments, our faith shines as a beacon of hope, reminding us of God's unwavering presence. Even as we

confront the storms of life, His comforting and strengthening hand is always with us.

As we approach the end of yet another year, we find inspiration and hope in the timeless words of Scripture. Proverbs 3:5, 6 teaches us to trust in the Lord with all our heart and not to lean on our own understanding. In Isaiah 41:10, we are reminded not to fear, for God is with us, strengthening and upholding us.

My personal vision remains clear – to see as many souls saved for the kingdom of God as possible. It is not merely a numerical goal, but a spiritual mission. Our purpose is to foster our members' spiritual well-being and share God's love with all we encounter. Let our actions, driven by the teachings of Christ, become a beacon of hope and inspiration to those who seek meaning.

Remember that the hope we find in Christ transcends our current challenges. By sharing this hope, we can collectively inspire a brighter future for ourselves and all we encounter on our journey of faith.

May the season's joy fill your hearts, and may God's presence be your constant companion. Wishing you a blessed Christmas season and a hopeful new year, anchored in the wisdom and inspiration of God's word.





Fear not! God is still in control!

by Pastor Dan Serb, President of the Irish Mission

I grew up during the Communist regime in Romania, when much of the agricultural produce was harvested within the villages' co-ops. The collectives had been formed by force when the state seized people's private lands for the 'common good' of the community. This model of 'wealth redistribution' was not favoured by the farmers; and, when Communism fell, most people took their lands back. Today we witness another failed model of collectivisation: we live in an age of information overload, with one of its consequences being the collectivisation of pain and hurt. Mass media and social media bombard us with news of wars and rumours of wars, where nations rise against nations, and kingdoms against kingdoms, and where there are famines, and pestilences, and pandemics, and earthquakes, and social injustice (Matthew 24:6, 7).

This flood of information raises much awareness; but,

as we scroll from images of war to football scores, and then some meme, we are washed over with indifference. Our sense of active Christian duty has been numbed. Within the collective of hurt, we share a sigh and maybe utter a prayer, but then we move on, thus transferring personal responsibility to some virtual, distant, impersonal, even ethereal 'other' to deal with it.

As we come, yet again, to the end of another year full of troubles, we may experience some sense of relief. This sense of relief is usually tied to the hope for a better tomorrow – but how can we be truly hopeful when we hold the belief that things will get even worse as time swirls on (2 Timothy 3:1)? When perplexed, Christians seek biblical wisdom. Therefore, let us not be troubled, but rather trust in a sovereign, loving, and fullyimmersed-in-our-business God who has still got it all under control.

How can we do that? By watching, and understanding, and being aware of the prophetic times we are part of, and by acting, and working, and taking personal responsibility for the plot allotted to us within the sin-imposed collective of hurt.

Reflecting Christ's light

by Pastor Graham Allcock, President of the Welsh Mission



s we think during this season of how Jesus immersed Himself in incarnational ministry in this world. the members of the Welsh Mission have embodied Christ's example, connecting with their communities in ways that meet our strategic objectives to be 'Revived, Empowered Disciple-Makers'.

Training in intergenerational worship with Karen Holford (TED) enabled our members to see how the church can be more inclusive and

appealing to all age groups. Discipleship training from Pastor Michael Mbui (SEC) energised and inspired the Telford and mid-Wales church members, who continued to reach out to their communities through health expos, a family fun day, seminars, and a holiday Bible school as part of the Reflecting Hope initiative.

Members were given another opportunity to devise and enlarge their discipleship plans for 2024 when Pastor Anthony WagenerSmith (TED) led an interactive discipleship workshop for our Welsh Mission Day of Fellowship.

The Port Talbot community team were part of discussions with other local charities and faith groups and received a grant of £7,000 for their

community project. Specially focused seminars for the children of Telford Ghana Church, along with the Pathfinder clubs, have helped children discover God, deepen their love for Him, and be of service to others. Friendship clubs have begun in some churches, and Welsh people, led by the Holy Spirit to study the Bible, have found friendly welcomes and been baptised.

Jesus' birth brought light into this dark and dismal world. His ministry connected Him to all kinds of people who needed spiritual, physical, and mental healing. As we enter 2024, may we become even more united as we seek ways and opportunities to bring Christ's light and the good news of His soon coming to a world that desperately needs hope.

Balancing faith and fitness: navigating health and exercise during the festive season and new year

by Hezron Ottey

s Adventists, our faith is deeply rooted in Scripture, and our Christian belief embodies holistic restoration, encompassing physical, mental, spiritual, and social dimensions. Ellen G. White's transformative vision, shortly after the church's establishment in 1863, solidified the intrinsic connection between the Adventist faith and health, highlighting the central role of faith and fitness in maintaining physical well-being. Within Adventism, faith stands as the cornerstone of a holistic health commitment, championing the seamless interconnection of body and spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). This abiding intersection epitomises the church's distinctive approach to comprehensive well-being.

Amid the festivities of this holiday season and the promise of a new year, maintaining a physically active and healthy lifestyle remains paramount. In the Adventist tradition, where faith and fitness are intertwined, this commitment to holistic well-being persists. The turning of the calendar offers an opportunity to revitalise our physical, mental, and spiritual health. As we set resolutions or simply embrace new beginnings, it is vital to integrate exercise into our daily routines and align our fitness goals with our spiritual values. Determine to embark on this journey, striving for a harmonious existence where faith and wellness co-exist, not just during the holidays, but throughout the year.

As an Adventist, I understand the unique challenges we often face in maintaining an active lifestyle during the Christmas season while continuing to observe our religious practices. My study, conducted among Adventists in the UK,

revealed a notable disconnect between physical activity (PA) and spirituality, despite the Adventist health message emphasising the importance of a healthy lifestyle as an integral part of the Gospel. It is essential to address this disparity (future discourse) and find ways to bridge the gap between faith and fitness.

A practical tip is to incorporate exercise into the holiday season. Whether it's organising group walks after church services, participating in charity runs to support the less fortunate, or engaging in physically active charity work, we can find ways to stay active while honouring the spirit of giving that characterises not just the season, but a Christ-like life. Additionally, promoting churchwide fitness challenges or encouraging the use of fitness apps that align with our beliefs can help keep our congregation motivated. By integrating faith and fitness in this holiday season, we can enrich our spiritual journey and inspire others to do the same.

Aligning fitness goals with our spiritual values centres on stewardship and self-discipline. As Adventists, we see our body as a divine gift, emphasising regular exercise, a healthy diet, and the avoidance of harmful habits as acts of worship. Self-discipline is another pillar of our faith, encouraging consistent exercise as a demonstration of strong will and honouring God in our body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Community and service, integral Adventist values, motivate participation in group exercise or charity events, aligning fitness with the principles of service and community involvement. This

alignment improves physical and spiritual well-being and promotes holistic health.

Setting realistic and sustainable fitness goals in the context of our beliefs is paramount. As Adventists, we embrace long-term commitment, reflecting our enduring faith. Recognising that lasting change aligns with dedication to stewardship and self-discipline, realistic goals are in harmony with the spirit of humility and moderation present in our doctrinal beliefs. Such objectives, tied to regular PA, resonate with our commitment to honouring and glorifying God in our body, which is a divine gift. Globally, Adventists are motivated by faith and service, aligning fitness aspirations with principles. These goals offer holistic well-being, acknowledging that physical and spiritual health are intertwined, fostering a lifetime of devotion to God's mission.

Within the context of the Adventist Church, faith and spirituality emerge as potent catalysts for the pursuit of physical well-being. There is firm belief in the sanctity of the human body as a divine bestowment; which, coupled with the connection we establish between physical and spiritual health, forges a formidable motivational framework. This synthesis of core theological tenets and health-consciousness inspires Adventists to elevate the quest for physical well-being as a sacred duty, demonstrating the profound interplay of faith and fitness.



Praying the Psalms: how biblical prayers can enrich personal and communal prayer lives

Dragoslava Santrac, PhD, is Managing Editor of the Encyclopedia of Seventhday Adventists (encyclopedia.adventist.org), General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

From an early age I was taught Bible stories, right moral choices, and biblical doctrines. I later realised that no one had taught me to pray. Yes, I witnessed the prayers of my parents and church members, and understood I should pray with words coming from my heart. Yet, in my view, some church prayers tended to be too long and saturated with superficiality. There were also times in my life when no proper words were found in my heart, and I was speechless before God. Here I share some thoughts on how the Psalms could transform our individual and communal prayers.

Unjustly dismissed borrowed oil

Rolf Jacobson shares an interesting anecdote. An evangelist visited his friend's home, and, as they were sitting down for dinner, her father began the meal with a prayer that consisted of reciting Psalm 145:15, 16: 'The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.' The evangelist interrupted the prayer: 'We thank You, God, that we do not have to burn our lamps with borrowed oil.' Jacobson rightly remarks that with this pejorative critique the evangelist dismissed the irreplaceable value of prayer uses of the Psalms.2

A belief that only spontaneous, unlearned prayer is real prayer appears to be prevalent among many Christians. However, God placed a

prayer book, Psalms, at the heart of the Bible not simply to inform us about how people of ancient times prayed, but to teach us to pray today.

Praying the Psalms articulates our experience

While thanksgiving psalms can be heard from pulpits quite often (for example, Psalms 8; 23; 147-150), other psalms, with complaints and laments, seem to be inappropriate for public worship. For example, many would argue that Psalm 44 does not fit a worship service: 'Our hearts had not turned back; our feet had not strayed from your path. But you crushed us and made us a haunt for jackals; you covered us over with deep darkness' (verses 18, 19). Thus, the selectiveness of Psalms in liturgy reflects the exclusiveness of moods and words that we express in our communal prayers.

Some contemporary worship services attempt to create 'a sense of "false happiness" as the normal state of the Christian Church and of individual Christian lives'.3 Such restrictiveness may be a sign of our inability or uneasiness to engage with the dark realities of life and worship, and could cause us to miss the point of worship. Though we may sometimes feel that God treats us unfairly when suffering hits us, we do not find it appropriate to express our thoughts in liturgy or even in private prayer. The failure to openly express our feelings and views in prayer often leaves us in bondage to our own emotions and sin. This also denies us confidence and trust in approaching God. Praying the Psalms gives 'an assurance to us that when we pray and worship, we are not expected to censure or deny the deepness of our own human pilgrimage'.4 Psalm 44, for example,

can help worshippers articulate their experiences of innocent suffering freely and adequately. The Psalms give us words that we cannot find or do not dare to speak.

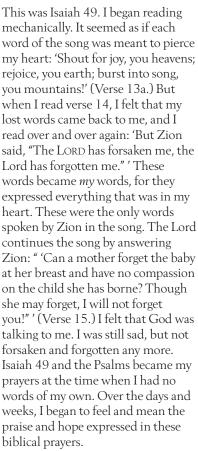
Praying the Psalms supervises our experience

Praying the Psalms does more than enable worshippers to freely articulate their experience. The Psalms supervise the experience according to God's standards that make it bearable and, hopefully, meaningful in the community.

Sometimes, there will be a dissonance between the emotions of the Psalms and the worshipper's emotions. Imagine a worshipper who learns that he is dying of cancer. The lamenting words of Psalm 22:1 will help him express his grief and sense of loneliness: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?' However, he will also read in the same psalm: 'I will declare your name to my people: in the assembly I will praise you' (verse 22). These words may not coincide with his present experience, and they may even drive him to despair; however, letting the Psalms introduce new cognitions and attitudes will help the worshipper resolve the spiritual discomfort. By giving us words to pray, the Psalms teach us that we pray first, and later feel what we pray.

When my husband and I lost our first child due to some complications at delivery, I was left without any spiritual oil in my reservoir. As I was lying alone in my hospital room that Friday evening, I reached for my Bible to begin the Sabbath. I could not pray; I had no words to say. The Bible opened at the place where the marker was placed the day before.

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Praying the Psalms supervises the experience by taking the worshippers to new spiritual horizons. Worshippers are led to abandon their burdens before God and adopt new understanding and eventually healing. In the same way, praying the Psalms provides a joyful, grateful heart with inspired ways to experience new dimensions of praise and thanksgiving.

Praying the Psalms transforms our experience

When 'we read the Psalms with faith, we come away changed and not simply informed'. ⁵ The Psalms are the word of God by which a believer is transformed into, for example, a person with a broken and contrite heart, as described in Psalm 51:17. The believer is enabled through the Holy Spirit to act in the way demanded by the psalm.

However, a mere repetition of the words of the Psalms with only a slight comprehension of their meaning may not produce the authentic transformation intended by their use. The words of the Psalms may become empty and perverted if they are spoken without an understanding of the distinctive



1st Quarter The Book of Psalms

by: Dragoslava Santrac



2nd Quarter The Great Controversy

by: Mark Finley

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faith of the Psalms. 'We must by means of the Psalms enter and live in that particular world if praise and prayer with their words are to be authentic.'6

Praying the Psalms broadens our experience

Here are two reasons why praying a lament psalm is beneficial to the worshippers who are not in distress. First, it prepares them for a time of trouble that may come and makes them aware that suffering is part of general human experience and happens to the righteous, not just to the wicked. The Psalms give the assurance that God is in control and provides strength and solutions. Second, praying the lament psalms teaches the worshippers compassion towards the sufferers. Introducing a psalm of praise to sufferers can transform their suffering by creating hope.7

Praying the Psalms has helped many believers establish and maintain regular and fulfilling prayer lives. As divine-human prayers, the Psalms bring the believing community to the centre of God's powerful healing grace while empowering the worshippers to share the deepest impressions of their hearts.

References:

All Scripture references throughout this article have been taken from the New International Version. ²Rolf Jacobson, 'Burning Our Lamps With Borrowed Oil', in Psalms and Practice: Worship, Virtue, and Authority, ed. Stephen Breck Reid (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), p. 90 Beth LaNeel Tanner, 'How Long, O Lord! Will Your

People Suffer in Silence Forever?' in ibid., p. 144 ⁴Walter Brueggemann, Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2007), p. 14

Tremper Longman III, How to Read the Psalms (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), p. 13 James Luther Mays, The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), p. 6 ⁷Jacobson, 'Burning Our Lamps', pp. 94-97

We are 'Reflecting Hope'... or are we reflecting hope?

by Catherine Jane Wells, née Phillips, Bethania SDA Chapel, Welsh Mission



The title of this article was the key question for the meeting of church pastors and lay leaders from around the BUC, held in Hinkley, Leicester, on the weekend of 3-5 November. 'Reflecting Hope' is an initiative prayed over and developed by the British Union Conference in response to the General Conference's 'Total Member Involvement' and 'Christ for Europe' initiatives. It is a Bible-based. organised and detailed evangelism cycle programme which takes the analogy of the seed as its inspiration. The aim of this training retreat was to challenge, inspire, equip and

refocus us in order for us to reach our communities with the message of hope.

The first evening challenged all attending through Isaiah chapter six - 'Chosen' was the theme. Verse eight (TLB) reads: 'Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to my people? Who will go?" And I said, "Lord, I'll go! Send me." ' Although we may often ask, 'Are you talking to me?' in his session, 'I Saw the Lord', Gifford Rhamie reminded us that it is God who calls us at a particular time ('for such a time as this' - Esther 4:14, NKJV). Furthermore, the great





commission of Matthew 28:18-20 follows the pattern of Isaiah's call. It leaves no doubt that all who know Jesus are called – we are a priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:4, 5).

Pastor Ian Sweeney took up the theme of Isaiah 6 in his session, entitled 'The King Is Dead! Long Live the King'. After looking at earthly circumstances, Isaiah's eyes are lifted to the Heavenly King. Through a personal encounter with Jesus, our eyes are lifted and God is able to push us beyond our capabilities. We look upward to see God, inward to see ourselves as God works His transforming grace in our lives, and outward to see a world in need of hope.

Sabbath and Sunday were filled with a mix of worship, devotions, presentations and interactive sessions, all of which were uplifting, vibrant, thoughtful and warm. Ganoune Diop, Director of the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department at the General Conference, spoke twice: firstly sharing the message 'The Gospel the Good News of Total Freedom', in which he implored us to share the everlasting Gospel, and secondly directing us to 'The Imperative of Hope'.

There was a wealth of practical sessions, showcasing events and outreach initiatives throughout the missions and conferences, with many testimonies recounting what the Lord is doing. Gifford Rhamie presented his second session, which centred on delivering effective Bible studies, proposing a 'Hook, Book, Look, Took' method. We were reminded that many people are unchurched, and that the understanding of Christian things is non-existent in some communities.

The ADC has factored this into the excellent leaflets, study booklets, HOPE acronym handout, Focus magazines and The Innkeeper, an outreach gift booklet. Michael Garkov proposed making connections through digital evangelism, highlighting prayer ministry using smartphones.

We did not just sit and listen. Over the course of the weekend, we were given opportunity to participate in planning our own church outreach initiative using the 'Church Planner: Input, Process, Output' format, as explained by Aftab Barki. This plan, along with YouTube recordings of sessions, podcasts, workbooks, presentations, links and resources, can be found on the Reflecting Hope website.

But did the training weekend meet its aims? Here are a few statements from participants:

The presenters believed in what they were talking about and were enthusiastic about sharing hope.' -Byron, Welsh Mission

'It's been very informative, with very varied information given for the process of evangelism. It is a process over a long term, and requires the total involvement of all.' - Avis Frank and Mum

'At first, I felt inadequate: "I'm here, Lord – but, if You can, please send someone else." That was Friday. By today (Sunday), it's: "I'm here, Lord – send me." That's what this weekend has done for me, through the Holy Spirit. Thank you, BUC. Thank you, Lord. I will go.' – Tracy Edinborough (NEC, Birmingham)

Many readers may have already heard about this training weekend, as I am sure all who attended have been inspired to share the message of hope with their church families. I am also certain that this training will be the basis for many God-ordained outreach programmes in the future. We are 'Reflecting Hope'.

All the presentations can be found on the Reflecting Hope website: www.reflectinghope.org/training





Budgeting: a buzzword, or a blueprint for financial success?

by Wederly Aguiar, BUC Treasurer

t this time of the year, the gears start grinding in preparation for a new year. A new year signals the need for fresh financial planning; and, inevitably, you will have heard this buzzword in the context of your church, conference or union.

With the cost-of-living crisis at an all-time high since the 1950s, along with high inflation rates leading to increases in the cost of staffing, energy costs and vital provisions, charities across the UK are facing struggles as the demand for their services is increasing while funding is on the decline.

Many charities have not recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic, and are now having to make difficult decisions as they consider the future.

In the midst of the pandemic, the Treasury Department was able to pause for a moment to reflect on how it could adapt to the needs of people, which increased over the pandemic.

It gave the department time to reflect on what had been working well, where improvements could be made, and what new ideas could be implemented. As a charity, it gave us a chance to evaluate which of our services we could make more accessible to our members, enabling us to put our money where our values were.

In these turbulent financial times, the importance of having a welldefined reserves policy becomes paramount. Thankfully for the BUC and its entities, denominational

policy requires the minimum level of working capital to be based on six months of core expenses (plus the value of donor-restricted funds) and a minimum level of liquidity to be based on three months of core expenses. Working capital measures an organisation's ability to generate cash to pay for its short-term daily operations; it is the difference between the organisation's current assets (those that are expected to be used up within twelve months, such as cash) and its current liabilities (such as debts or bills owed by the company within the next twelve

Working capital provides insight into the overall financial health of an organisation by analysing whether it would be able to cover its current liabilities with its current assets.

This has been crucial for surviving during the pandemic. This has also given the BUC an opportunity to reassess the level of working capital, which has now been set at twelve months, should a situation like the pandemic occur again. Currently, the BUC's working capital rests at nine months as of the time of writing, and we are slowly rebuilding our reserves to ensure we are able to meet the twelve-month working capital benchmark.

Rebuilding our reserves has also meant that the budgeting process has taken a prudent approach, and the BUC has also actively sought to diversify our assets through ethical investments. We are currently in the process of creating an asset management advisory, which will enable us to achieve this goal. The search for individuals who possess the relevant skills in this area is underway, and we hope that the group will be fully operational in 2024.

In the meantime, the budgeting

process is a way of using the assets we have to further the causes we care about. This begins every October with the Compensation Review Committee (CRC), which is made up of church members like yourself, who are tasked with assessing factors of the wider economy, such as the standard of living, mortgage rates, public sector wages, and so on to recommend yearly salary levels across the BUC.

The BUC Finance Committee, which is a subcommittee of the Executive Committee, then reviews the recommendations made by the CRC in order to recommend action to the BUC Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee then carefully deliberates over these recommendations and finally takes a vote in the maximum rates for the year ahead.

You might remember that in our first article we mentioned the importance of transparency, and how there are internal and external controls in place to ensure that every last penny that we spend is spent in line with our values and beliefs – this is a prime example of how that happens, whether it be in our daily practices or in big-picture decisions like this.

Once the BUC Executive Committee has voted the maximum rates, it is up to the various finance and executive committees of the conferences, missions, schools and so on to adopt these rates, going through the same stringent analysis that the BUC goes through when assessing this in the context of their own mission-driven goals.

The budget not only sets the stage for strategic priorities in the upcoming year, but also serves as a blueprint for achieving these objectives, while ensuring that the necessary funds are available to



maximise their impact.

With this in mind, in 2022, the Treasury took the initiative to set up a mission board whose purpose it is to review funding requests from various projects across its field. This year, the BUC contributed towards several impactful projects in the diverse communities we serve. Of the many projects that were supported, here are some of the highlights:

1. Cornerstone Counselling Service (CCS)

Recognising the pressing need for mental health services and the disparity Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people face in receiving these services, the BUC wanted to assist the CCS's initiative to provide support to BAME communities, specifically women and young children.

2. Chiswick Homeless Project

To address the ongoing cost-ofliving crisis, which has adversely affected so many people's lives, the BUC provided funding to the Chiswick Homeless Project to provide meals, toiletries and clothing to the homeless.

3. Special Needs Camp

The BUC continues to provide annual funding for the Special Needs Camp, which runs every July, providing a safe place for people with disabilities to enjoy a holiday. It gives their carers a week of respite, provides support for families who care for disabled people, and allows trained and qualified people to share their skills and knowledge.

4. Global Mission Pioneers in the Irish and Scottish Missions

This is an initiative to establish an Adventist presence where it does not yet exist. The BUC assists with funding to ensure that the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to 'go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded vou' (Matthew 28:19, 20, ESV) is being actioned.

5. Reflecting Hope

This is a nationwide campaign that focuses on using outreach to reach people in our local communities who need Jesus. It uses the various tools and techniques, including but not limited to community events, digital platforms, social media, and traditional forms of communication. This synergistic approach ensures that we can effectively engage with people from all walks of life, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries.

As we prayerfully commit to another

round of budgeting for the year ahead, we want to thank you for your faithful donations throughout this time, without which we would be very limited in what we are able to

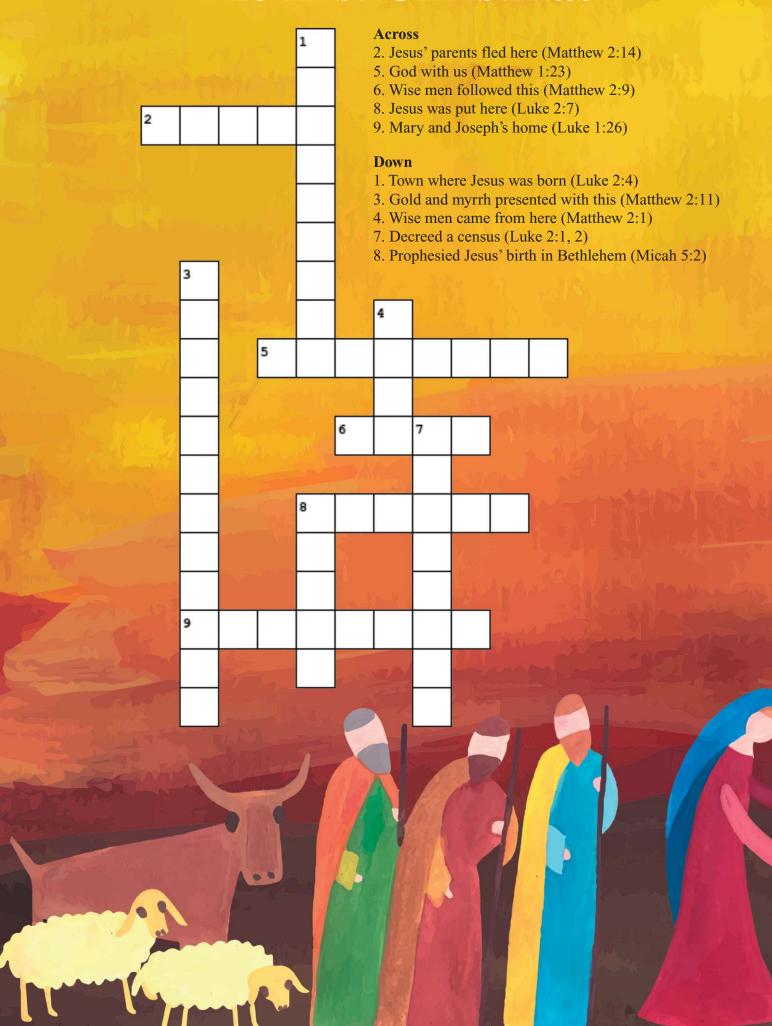
We take seriously our responsibility to use each penny given to us in a responsible manner, never taking for granted the hard work gone into it, and in many instances the sacrifice in returning it despite the economic climate.

Our aim is to continue supporting causes like the ones above in the course of the new year, to support communities that are disadvantaged and most affected by the circumstances we are facing, while sharing the love of Jesus.

With Christmas now upon us. we urge you to reflect on the lasting impact of your generous contributions. Your support ensures that vital initiatives like the Chiswick Homeless Project thrive.

Amid this season of joy and togetherness, it's crucial to acknowledge the selfless commitment of volunteers who willingly sacrifice moments with their own families to serve these noble causes. Your contributions not only provide vital support, but also amplify the impact of their dedicated efforts, ensuring that every precious moment they give resonates even more powerfully with those in need. Your generosity multiplies the blessings of the season, enriching lives and spreading the spirit of giving.

The first Christmas



BIRTH OF JESUS — MATTHEW 2

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BORN EAST
BETHLEHEM WORSHIP
JUDEA HEROD
WISE MEN CHIEF PRIESTS
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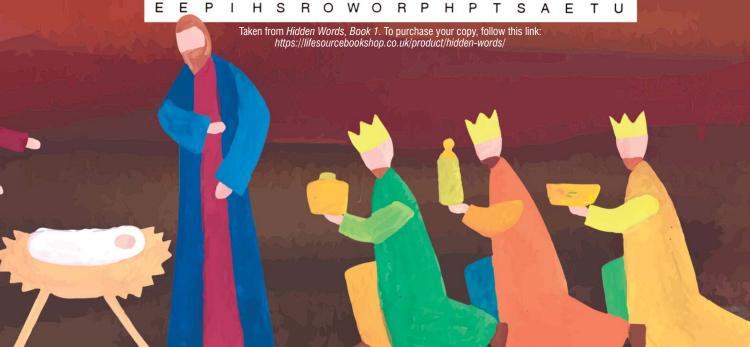
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Cancer: reducing risks

Part 4 – environmental impact

by Sharon Platt-McDonald,

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

In this final mini-series instalment on reducing cancer risks, we take a look at environmental impact.

The European Environment Agency, in an article titled 'Beating Cancer – the role of Europe's environment', states: 'Some of the known risk factors for cancer, such as age, sex and family history, are intrinsic to the individual and cannot be modified. . . . The risk factors that can be modified account for around 40% of cancer cases in Europe (Couespel and Price, 2020). These exogenous risk factors include lifestyle-related ones (for example, tobacco use, obesity, diet and alcohol consumption), some infections, environmental and occupational exposure to cancer-causing chemicals, UV radiation, indoor radon and air pollution.'1

Environmental triggers

In an article titled: 'Cancer-causing substances in the environment', 2 the National Cancer Institute reports: 'Cancer is caused by changes to certain genes that alter the way our cells function. Some of these genetic changes occur naturally when DNA is replicated during the process of cell division. But others are the result of environmental exposures that damage DNA. These exposures may include substances, such as the chemicals in tobacco smoke, or radiation, such as ultraviolet rays from the sun.'

In a further explanation, the National Cancer Institute states: 'Any substance that causes cancer is known as a carcinogen. . . . Many factors influence whether a person exposed to a carcinogen will develop cancer, including the amount and duration of the exposure and the individual's genetic background. Cancers caused by involuntary exposures to environmental carcinogens are most likely to occur in subgroups of the population, such as workers . . . exposed to carcinogens on the job.'3

Environmental and occupational exposure

The Cancer Atlas, in a global depiction of environmental toxins and their associated cancer sites, lists specific toxins and areas of the body that are impacted. See: https://canceratlas.cancer.org/risk-factors/environment/.

Air pollution

The Healthy Air Coalition reports: 'Air pollution is the UK's most dangerous environmental threat' (https://www.healthyair.org.uk/).

Echoing this risk, the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) says: 'Air pollution is . . . contributing to the rise of the number of cancer diagnoses each year – cancers that are preventable.' Having raised the alarm, the UICC also offers potential solutions: 'increased green spaces, cleaner energy sources, and active transportation (walking and cycling) also lead to a range of health benefits, including healthier diet, increased physical activity and lower rates of other non-communicable diseases and co-morbidities – which can reduce the likelihood of developing other cancers.'4

Indoor air pollution

Cancer Research UK, in its article 'How can air pollution cause cancer?'5 reports: 'Indoor air pollution can have many sources. A key source of indoor air pollution in the UK is second-hand smoke from cigarettes. But burning of wood and coal to heat homes and cook with can also add to indoor air pollution. Passive smoking is breathing in second-hand smoke from cigarettes. It can cause lung cancer and other health problems like heart disease.'



Preventable actions

The UICC, in its article cited above, lists the recommendations from the World Health Organisation's new Global Air Quality Guidelines, assisting the development of effective government policies, such as prioritising the reduction of air pollution in urban areas; promoting active transport (for example, cycling and walking); reducing vehicle emissions; transitioning to cleaner energy sources; addressing indoor air pollution, particularly in households that rely on solid fuels for cooking and heating; developing national air quality standards and regulations; and establishing air quality monitoring systems to track progress towards meeting these standards.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency, in a comprehensive document titled: 'EPA efforts to reduce exposure to carcinogens and prevent cancer', provides a comprehensive list of precautions and resolutions. These include pesticides, toxic chemicals, solutions to reducing air pollution, water and land safety, disposal and emergency response, plus safety guidelines for children.6

Good health!

1https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/environmentalburden-of-cancer 2https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/ causes-prevention/risk/substances 3https://www.cance gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/substances/ carcinogens 4https://www.uicc.org/what-we-do/areasfocus/cancer-and-air-pollution 5 https://www.cancer researchuk.org/about-cancer/causes-of-cancer/air pollution-radon-gas-and-cancer/how-can-air-pollutioncause-cancer 6https://www.epa.gov/environmental-topics/ epa-efforts-reduce-exposure-carcinogens-and-prevent

ADRA-UK appoints interim CEO

by Catherine Anthony Boldeau

business and financial management, having worked for the European Commission and ADRA in Belgium, Burkina Faso, Madagascar and the UK. She holds a BA in Economics, an MA in Controllership, and a Licence in Theology from Newbold College of Higher Education. She is married to Pastor James Shepley, the associate pastor of Stanborough Park Church, and together they have three daughters.

'We welcome Hélia as our interim CEO,' said Pastor Eglan Brooks, Chair of the ADRA-UK Board, 'and, as trustees, believe that her wealth of experience will help to maintain the organisation's values of justice, compassion and love, while stabilising the organisation through changing times.'



ollowing the recent retirement announcement of longstanding ADRA-UK CEO Pastor Bert Smit, the Board of Trustees voted to appoint Hélia Mateus, current CFO, as the interim CEO while a full recruitment process is started.

Hélia has twenty-five years of experience in international relations,

Advent with ADRA by Catherine Anthony Boldeau

Ceventh-day Adventists understand that the Christmas story is a crucial part of the story of redemption: God sending His Son to rescue lost humanity.

But threads of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus are woven into an elaborate tapestry throughout the narrative. Jesus is born under challenging circumstances. The young family are displaced and become asylum seekers in Egypt, fleeing from Herod, who seeks the young child's life. 'There seemed to be no place of rest or safety for the infant

Redeemer.' The angels sang 'On earth peace, goodwill toward men' (Luke 2:14, NKJV) as they announced His birth; and we are given an insight into the development aspect of His ministry in John 1:14 as 'the Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood . . . generous inside and out' (The Message).

This year, we invite you to join ADRA-UK during this special season and reflect on the narrative of Jesus' birth and early life. We also encourage you to think of some of the world's most vulnerable people today. The Israel-Palestine conflict, the recent earthquakes in Morocco, Afghanistan and Nepal, and the continuing crisis in Ukraine are just a few of the humanitarian challenges that are faced by many.

By donating to ADRA this Advent season, you have the opportunity to assist those who are suffering under terrible circumstances. You can donate to this work by using the QR code on the poster; by telephoning our office, Monday to Wednesday, between 10am and 2pm, using the phone number +44 (0) 30 30 40 10 17; by giving a card donation online, using the web address www.adra.org.uk/donate; or by sending us a personal cheque.

Donate today to help those who are suffering at this Advent season.

Christmas isn't the same for everyone

¹Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 67



GAiN Europe 2023: breaking down barriers for the Gospel

by Vanesa Pizzuto, TED Communication and Media Associate Director

from 20 to 24 October, more than 250 Communication and Personal Ministries leaders from across the Trans-European Division (TED) and Inter-European Division (EUD) gathered in Budva, Montenegro, for GAiN (Global Adventist Innovation Network) Europe 2023. Against the stunning backdrop of the turquoise-blue Adriatic Sea, participants from more than forty-one nationalities converged with a common purpose: to receive training, find inspiration, and foster collaboration, effectively dismantling the barriers that have separated them in their collective mission to share the Gospel digitally.

The atmosphere at GAiN Europe 2023 was moving and palpable, fuelled by the worshipful melodies led by Dario Bratic and the sharing of powerful testimonies. Attendees couldn't help but notice the sense of something profoundly special in the air. Even the devotionals became deeply personal experiences, with leaders such as Billy Biaggi, General

Vice President of the General Conference (GC), Mário Brito, EUD President, and Daniel Duda, TED President, sharing their own faith journeys. The Sabbath programme left a profound impact. Daniel Duda, drawing from his own experiences growing up in a Communist country, spoke of open doors, and drew inspiration from Revelation 3:8. He shared how he felt 'scared to death' when he was invited, as a young pastor, to lead the largest church in his region. However, Duda encouraged the audience to view their present challenges as potential opportunities. He poignantly declared, 'Life is lived forwards but understood backwards - imagine the possibilities!

GAiN Europe also provided a platform to honour and celebrate communication leaders whose commitment and passion are truly inspiring. Catalin Claudiu Barbulescu, General Manager of Speranta TV, and Andre Brink, CEO of True South Media, were recognised for their lifelong commitment to communication and media. Griselda Rosales also received a plaque for her pioneering work in Iceland. David Neal, TED Communication Director, presented her with the award, acknowledging her 'exceptional dedication, unwavering commitment, and extraordinary efforts in pioneering the establishment of Hope Channel in Iceland'.

In addition to spiritual and professional encouragement, GAiN Europe offered a wealth of training opportunities. Five workshop tracks – Institutional Communication, Social Media, Technology, Filmmaking, and Ministry – provided attendees with a range of training sessions. Workshop presenters came from Europe, the Americas, and even Australia.

Beyond the enriching sessions, there was also time for networking and camaraderie at GAiN Europe. On a Sunday afternoon, participants had the chance to visit the picturesque Old Town of Kotor, a UNESCO-listed cultural heritage site. The more adventurous among them embarked on a steep 1,200-metre ascent to the top of the walls, providing breath-taking views of the town and the Bay of Boka. In contrast, others savoured artisanal ice cream in the beautifully preserved medieval town.

GAiN Europe 2023 was a unique event where communication and mission leaders came together to collaborate. To encapsulate the experiences of GAiN Europe is a daunting task, but the words of Helen Priis, Social Media Manager of the Heroes App, during the closing programme resonate deeply. As a digital nomad, she thanked GAiN Europe for 'rekindling her love for the Seventh-day Adventist Church' and demonstrating what a community can truly look like.





Retreat for pastors of the Scottish, Irish, and Welsh Missions: strengthening the pastoral network

estled in the breath-taking countryside of Newcastleton, Whithaugh Park stands as a haven for those seeking spiritual renewal. Pastors from the Scottish, Irish, and Welsh Missions gathered there for a four-day retreat from 16 to 19 October 2023, along with the BUC Ministerial Secretary, Pastor Sam Ouadjo. The retreat allowed these faithful pastors to re-energise, share experiences and deepen their commitment to ministry, while promoting a spirit of unity.

The mornings were initiated by inspiring devotionals led by the three presidents of the missions: Pastors Dan Serb, Graham Allcock, and Jimmy Botha. The guest speaker for this special event was Pastor Bill Knott, the Associate Director of the General Conference's Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department. He is responsible for the Church's interface with the US Congress, the White House, and the international diplomatic corps. Before joining the PARL team, he was the Editor and Executive Publisher of the Adventist Review and Adventist World.

Pastor Bill Knott's presentations during the retreat were a blend of personal anecdotes and challenging case studies, shedding light on the difficult moral and ethical dilemmas often encountered in pastoral ministry and offering valuable insights and practical solutions to navigate these challenges effectively. He encouraged pastors to participate actively, comment on the case studies, and engage in group discussions. This allowed the pastors to share their own experiences, insights and solutions to the complex dilemmas they face in their daily

A central theme of the retreat was to encourage pastors to develop support mechanisms and networks, transforming ministry into a collaborative and cooperative endeavour. The event was structured to foster openness, allowing pastors to share their experiences, challenges and ideas as a pastoral community. By creating a network

of shared experiences and collective wisdom, pastors can better serve their congregations, grow as spiritual leaders, and find solace among their allies in their faith

In addition to the enriching discussions and learning opportunities, the retreat also featured various activities. The pastors mingled during basketball, badminton and orienteering, promoting comradeship and instilling teamwork and cooperation, which are essential in ministry. The pastors learnt the importance of working together, supporting one another, and uniting as a team to overcome obstacles.

Beyond formal sessions and activities, the retreat provided the perfect environment to form new friendships and deepen existing ones. The four days of praying, learning, dining, and socialising together facilitated bonds that extend beyond the retreat itself.

In the serene surroundings of Whithaugh Park, pastoral leaders connected on a personal level, shared stories, and offered mutual support, which not only strengthened bonds within the pastoral community, but also fostered a sense of belonging to the greater mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The retreat was a resounding success. It provided a unique opportunity for pastoral leaders to refresh their spirits, deepen their commitment to ministry, and create a network of support that will undoubtedly enrich their future service. Pastor Bill Knott's insightful presentations, the engaging discussions on ethical dilemmas, and the collaborative learning environment were instrumental in equipping pastors with the knowledge and tools they need. The bonds formed and deepened will undoubtedly have a lasting impact on the pastors, their respective congregations, and the communities they serve as they continue their important work of spreading love, peace and faith.

PASTOR WILFRED MASIH

Renewed Marriage Enrichment Weekend

The Marriage Enrichment Weekend (8 to 10 September 2023) brought together couples from across the North England Conference. Hosted at the Leonardo Hotel in Leicestershire, attendees spent the weekend reflecting, laughing and learning with their spouses.

The Family Ministries Director, Pastor John Francis, led the event, assisted by his wife, Delivon, sharing presentations such as 'Effective Communication', 'Communication With Love', 'Crucial Conversation', 'Conflict Resolution' and 'Money Talk', supported by Joanne and Glenville Daniels, who shared about how we can develop healthy attachments and learn to understand what has shaped us as people. One attendee said, 'I've learnt a lot from the presentations. They've given us something to think about.'

On Saturday evening, the couples were treated to a beautiful banquet. Everyone dressed up, the food was delicious, the games were fun, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed it. On Sunday afternoon, many continued fellowshipping and used the excellent hotel facilities (pool, sauna, jacuzzi and gym).

Reflecting on the weekend, Pastor Francis said, 'We were blessed to have a time of fun, fellowship and renewal. The theme for our retreat focused on essential keys to effective communication. We had seventeen couples in attendance, at this our first physical weekend in the NEC since COVID-19. One couple remarked in their review that "this saved our marriage." Another shared how "the communication sessions provided practical techniques to improve and enhance our interactions, enabling us to have difficult discussions without heated conversations leading to conflict." Overall, the reviews were positive, and this was a relaxed, enjoyable time for all. I was most impressed by the couples' openness in the sessions and willingness to share.





This came about as a result of us creating an open, safe place for them. My simple prayer is that all our couples who attended may continue to grow and strengthen their relationships, using some of the tools we have given them, and claim the promise of our theme text, Isaiah 43:19 (CSB): "Look, I am about to do something new; even now it is coming. Do you not see it? Indeed, I will make a way in the wilderness, rivers in the desert."

Have you thought about coming to a marriage enrichment weekend? Couples have spoken about their marriage being saved, restored and improved. Invest in your relationship and consider coming to the next event. MRS NORDIA PHILPOTT

99 years and counting!

Gertrude Morgan (née Henry) was born on 26 September 1924 in the Kelleman Hill District of Somerset, St Andrew's Parish, Jamaica, the youngest of twelve children. She celebrated her 99th birthday at Camp Hill Church on 30 September 2023, surrounded by family and friends.

The first stage of her schooling in Jamaica began when she was 7 years old at the local Methodist church hall. She enjoyed those days. Her whole household traditionally attended the district Baptist church, but she was not baptised as a member of that church. She regularly attended the Seventh-day Adventist campaigns in the area when they took place, and excitedly recalls always winning the Bible and sermon guizzes.

Her thorough Bible studies led her to be baptised as a Seventh-day Adventist. As a young woman, Gertrude made friends in the church, including her future husband, Levi Benjamin Morgan, whom she married when she was 24 years old in 1948. She raised her family as Adventists, and her favourite scripture is Psalm 27, especially verse 1.

Sister Morgan and her family are well known for singing, and her favourite hymn is 'Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine'. She gives God thanks for many things on her journey, especially her health. She has only spent one night in hospital in all her 99 years! Her advice is to 'eat well, do good, and enjoy the goodness God provides'. She says these words with conviction, as she knows He blesses her.

She says, 'God has kept my life to this day. I have a good family, and He has answered my prayers. The Almighty has allowed me to help others along the way, so I must continue to praise and worship my Lord for the things He has done.'

Sister Gertrude's testimony reminds us all to praise God and give glory to Him! DR JACQUIE HALLIDAY-BELL



Reformation tour by Manchester Southern Asia Church

Embarking on a voyage into the past, delving into the thoughts and feelings of historical figures who significantly impacted the course of history, is a captivating journey. This experience came alive for members of Manchester Southern Asia Seventh-day Adventist Church, organised by the Pathfinder Department CREW (Christians Ready, Equipped and Willing), during their five-day tour in July. Starting from Manchester and travelling through Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and France, this pilgrimage allowed participants to experience the historical landmarks of the Reformation while creating an atmosphere of discipleship, unity, and worship along the way.

As the group strolled through the historical sites associated with the Reformation, they were reminded of the fortitude, tenacity and vision of those who spearheaded this transformative movement. The Reformation trip became a timeless experience, deepening the participants' understanding of its ongoing legacy and its profound influence on the contemporary world. Standing in awe and inspiration at these historical sites, they kept in mind the sacrifices made by the reformers. The courage and conviction of the reformers were vividly evident as they gazed at artefacts and sites, recognising the Reformation's lasting influence in shaping the diverse and dynamic Europe we know today.

The tour represented a dividing line between Catholic territories and the developing Protestant districts. Despite religious conflicts and persecution, the spirit of the

reformers has persisted in many parts of Europe. The cultural heritage of Interlaken still reflects the impact of the Reformation, with historical buildings, churches, and landmarks showcasing both Catholic and Protestant architectural styles. Members prayed that as they learnt about the lives of the reformers, and the sacrifices they made to uphold the Word of God, they would be inspired by how God led His children to preserve the truth for the

The group's journey through these historic sites was not just a bonding experience among its members, but also an opportunity to pay homage to the reformers who gave their lives in defence of their faith. Places like the Black Forest, Lake Titisee, the Rhine Falls, Interlaken and Mt Titlis, and iconic landmarks like the Eiffel Tower, provided a window into the past, offering insights into the lives of martyrs and the effects of war and peace.

However, the tour's most profound moment came when they stood before the Reformation Wall in Geneva. an awe-inspiring monument that served as a reminder of the courage, determination, and vision of the Reformation leaders. It was an experience that transcended time, leaving the participants with a deeper appreciation for the enduring legacy of the Reformation and its impact on the modern world. This wall stands as a beacon of unity and cooperation rooted in the spirit of the Reformation.

As the members of Manchester Southern Asia Seventh-day Adventist Church returned home, they carried with them the timeless lessons of the Reformation and a renewed sense of unity and purpose. This pilgrimage reminded us of the courage and conviction required to shape the world for the better.

SHILPA KATE, DIRECTOR FOR THE CREW PATHFINDER DEPARTMENT



*These summaries were prepared with assistance from Darell J. Philip and Precious Chitwa.



'Who Am I?' Welsh Mission men's retreat

On 18 November 2022, the Welsh Mission Family Ministries team invited the men of the Welsh Mission to join them for a weekend retreat at Pentrenant Hall Christian Centre. It is sometimes said that there's a stigma around men talking about their personal experiences, so two burning questions were at the back of our minds: can men talk, and will they talk? The theme was 'Who Am I? A Reality Check'. It challenged us to take a sobering look at ourselves.

One highlight was the Saturday night after closing Sabbath. We settled in our time together with a questionand-answer session. As time commenced, we shared together, laughed together, and encouraged one another. In this process, the Holy Spirit intervened in a way we did not expect. We experienced an intimate moment we could not have planned for, even if we had tried. In that moment, I believe a bond was created that will be with us for a long time to come. Men can talk when the Spirit creates the right environment for His power to be made manifest. The men would like to do this more often. This weekend was a real blessing to all who attended.

KENROY MCKENZIE. WELSH MISSION FAMILY MINISTRIES

Area 6C Women's Ministries bring festive cheer to local care home

While for some people Christmas is joyously celebrated with family and loved ones, for others, such as the elderly, the homeless, or those who have been bereaved, it can be isolating and emotionally upsetting; so it was with great joy that the Area 6C Women's Ministries



team reached out to residents of the Summerdale Court Care Home based in Newham, East London, on Sabbath 17 December 2022.

The visit was just one of many outreach endeavours involving the Area 6C Women's Ministries team. The team coordinator, Gina Boamah, said: 'As we begin a new year, I am looking forward to working with all pastors, church leadership and women in making disciples for Christ. It is also my prayer that we all prepare for Jesus' second coming while we seek to make Him known to the world.'

DARELL J. PHILIP



Baptisms at Manchester Southern Asia Church

Praise God for His lovingkindness! Manchester Southern Asia Church was blessed with a beautiful service of baptism on 3 December 2022, when Aaron and Angel Kaatay, along with Memoona Akhter (from Manchester South), declared their allegiance to God publicly through baptism, witnessed by Dr Daniel Duda (TED President), Pastor Ikwisa Mwasumbi (NEC Pathfinder Director), and Pastor Dejan Stojkovic (TED Youth Ministries Director), as well as a large group of friends and family from near and far. The baptisms were conducted by Pastor Joseph Philpott and Pastor Micah Campbell. Two candidates who had previously been baptised, Jhansi J. and Edna Supriya G., were also officially welcomed into our membership by profession of faith.

All were blessed by the programme. Manchester Southern Asia Church has been blessed with numerous baptisms in the last couple of years – all glory to God! We humbly request your prayers for these precious souls who have given their lives to Christ!

SUSHMA MORAPUDI, CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS, MANCHESTER SOUTHERN ASIA CHURCH



Object lessons from the Master Teacher

How many of us attend churches where you not only say, 'Welcome,' but also 'Salaam alaikum' (peace be upon you) because you have Muslim brothers and sisters sitting in the congregation? At Tottenham Lighthouse this happens quite often. Fadeema, a Turkish Muslim who has lost many relatives in the earthquake in Turkey, finds solace in coming to the church because of the prayers and care she receives from members and Pastor Jude Jeanville. Isaiah's words ring true here: 'Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people' (Isaiah 56:7, KJV).

On Sabbath 8 April 2023 the church was full to capacity as two important events took place - the Communion Service and the dedication of two of our younger members, Micaiah Josiah George Kwesi Akrasi (age 3) and Teagan-Reice Williams (age 5). These, along with all the other events organised by the church to serve the community, further demonstrated object lessons of serving others from the Master Teacher.

MAXINE DONOVAN, COMMUNICATIONS & PRAYER MINISTRIES



Tottenham Lighthouse 'cooks up a storm' on Mother's Day!

On Sunday 19 March, Tottenham Lighthouse organised a special event to serve a three-course take-away meal to more than sixty women in the local community. Pathfinders presented roses to the delighted attendees, fostering community interaction and reflecting the love of Christ. Despite the cold weather, some chose to eat at the tables set up outside. The gesture was greatly appreciated, with people expressing gratitude for the meal and the social interaction it provided. Tottenham Lighthouse remains committed to community outreach and continues to seek new ways to spread the love of Christ. COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT



Stratford Youth Week of Prayer – 'Love is a verb'

From 11 to 18 March, Stratford Church's Youth Department led a week-long global Youth Week of Prayer event focused on the challenges faced by young people. Stefan Taylor and his team conducted daily readings on the concept of love as a verb that requires action. The week concluded with a message from Timotheous Kakouri on the importance of sacrificial love. He asked thought-provoking questions about using our gifts to show God's love, and emphasised the significance of sacrifice. The message left the church with introspection and a call to demonstrate love both within and outside the church. MONIQUE FRANCOIS

Stewardship Day

Camp Hill held its Stewardship Day on Sabbath 13 May 2023, when members were encouraged to put God first. Pastor John Francis (NEC Stewardship and Family Ministries



Director), accompanied by his wife, Delivon, was the

invited guest speaker for the day. 'Stewardship,' Pastor Francis emphasised, 'is important in identifying the relationship between man and God. It is His method of bestowing His riches upon us. Many of us are blessed with life, talents, jobs and finances, but God created everything, and we owe Him a partnership, serving as co-workers, and we need to be commissioned to make disciples of all people.'

Pastor Francis then reminded the congregation of the need to change their thinking through making it a habit to put God first. 'We need to become new creations in Christ in all aspects of our lives by putting Him first,' he said. All congregants and those watching online were given a clear message of hope and joy to strengthen their relationship with God. JACQUIE HALLIDAY-BELL



Hampstead social evening

Hampstead Seventh-day Adventist Church had their first social of the year on Saturday evening, 14 January 2023, in keeping with the church's vision for Hampstead Church to be the place of 'true worship, fellowship

and witnessing'. The event was attended by members and visitors of various backgrounds, cultures and age groups. This was also reflected in the variety of foods, music and games. Our 'DJ', Sabbath School Superintendent Oliver Terrelonge, enhanced the occasion with wholesome music from all genres! It was a beautiful, relaxing evening, and dominoes featured prominently. Our thanks go out to Pastor Mohan Abbadasari and the Hampstead eldership; Sister Mishael Terrelonge and her team; and the Hampstead church and visitors for their support. May we continue to grow in grace, fellowship and harmony. CLAUDIA WELSH, HAMPSTEAD CHURCH COMMUNICATION

'Women's Seasons of Life'

Women from the Stratford and Rainham Fellowship churches joined in fellowship during the SEC Women's Ministries Week of Prayer, held from Wednesday 1 March to Sabbath 4 March



2023. Topics included singleness, courting, preparing for marriage, health and its challenges, and the loss of children, with prayers offered for those going through those seasons. The evening Zoom sessions attracted participants from Africa, America, Canada and the UK.

The Sabbath keynote speaker, Gail Masondo from South Africa, encouraged the women not to be afraid, since Christ has promised to be with them, while Dr Edith Samambwa Ncube gave practical tips to promote physical and mental well-being. Stratford and Rainham Fellowship were extremely grateful to both organisers and participants.

MONIQUE FRANCOIS, STRATFORD COMMUNICATIONS LEAD

Tottenham Lighthouse: 'Sharing the Love' Outreach Centre

Inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Tottenham Lighthouse seeks to meet the needs of its community. We help our community through our twice-weekly Food Hub, our quarterly community event 'Sharing the Love', which provides professional and other services, and our sacrificial gifts (including cash) to those in need, locally and overseas.

In addition, on 2 March 2023 Tottenham Lighthouse launched the 'Sharing the Love' Outreach Centre at the former Lighthouse Church building. A week before its opening, we became aware that the building might not be available after six weeks. Undeterred, we proceeded with our plans, being confident that it was the Lord who had called us to be 'light' and 'salt' in this section of His vineyard. Seven months on, we are still there.

The outreach centre is open every Thursday. We cater to the needs of the homeless, elderly and mothers with children by providing them with food, clothing, social activities, Christian literature, spiritual discussions and

It is with awe that we watch God at work. There are many stories to tell, but I will share two. One Thursday, Neculai, who is homeless, asked for a warm coat and a size 11 pair of shoes. I mentioned it to our 5am prayer team on Friday, and on Sabbath someone brought a pair of size 12 shoes to church for him. A request was made at church during the announcements. In less than an hour after the appeal was made, a couple watching the service online drove to church and dropped off a nearly new jacket and a pair of size 11 trainers. When Neculai received his gifts, he was overjoyed. The size 11 trainers were too small for his feet, but we had the size 12 shoes to give to him. The size 11 trainers were the right fit for a friend who came with him that day. Next Sabbath, Neculai visited our Tottenham Lighthouse church wearing his coat and shoes, accompanied by his friend Ioan. Later on, Ioan got some new pots and pans, and both of them received toiletries and brand-new pairs of Adidas sneakers.

One Thursday, we were told that Ioan was outside, lying on the pavement. He was drunk. He had received his medical test results that day, and was diagnosed with a serious illness. Despite the state that he was in, he received a big hug and a reminder that he was special to God. We helped him sort out his online hospital

appointments, which he was unable to access. He continued coming to the centre and showed interest in our Bible discussions. We watched him change. One Thursday he walked through the doors, telling everyone who would listen, 'I have not had a drink in nine days!' We were ecstatic. About two weeks later, he informed us that he had a job offer but he had to do some online training first. Unfortunately, he had lost his phone. Again an appeal was made at church on the Sabbath, and the following day we were given a phone for him. When he received his gift, he was overjoyed and just kept looking at it. Since then he has asked for an electric table-top hotplate to cook his meals. Rather than giving him a second-hand one, a brand-new hotplate was purchased for him. It made him feel extra special and loved. The following week he was even more receptive to God's Word and was given a Bible and prayed for. We thank God for the transformation He has made in Ioan's life and the lives of others who visit the centre. We also thank Him for the team of dedicated volunteers.

At Tottenham Lighthouse Church we are propelled by the love of Jesus and His sacrifice for us. If for any reason our church should no longer exist, we are confident that we would be missed by the community. We are a lighthouse, shining our light for all to see and to be guided to our loving Saviour. As we occupy until the Master returns, we do so with joy as we wait to hear from His lips, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me' (Matthew 25:40, KJV).

MAXINE DONOVAN, COMMUNICATIONS & PRAYER MINISTRIES



Share Your Story

Have you encountered God's extraordinary touch in your ordinary life? Have you found hope in unexpected ways through His grace?

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Deadline for Submissions: 30 June 2024

Don't let your story stay silent. Your testimony is a gift, not just for you, but also for the whole world to glorify the Lord.

"Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story..." Psalm 107:2 (NIV)

Together let us share the good news of Jesus to the whole world, one story at a time.





ADRA-UK is looking for a new Chief Executive Officer!

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) position at ADRA-UK offers an exciting opportunity to lead a UK-based humanitarian organisation affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As CEO you will play a pivotal role in ensuring that ADRA-UK fulfils its mission of creating positive change and empowering partnerships through compassionate action.

To apply, you would need at least five years of NGO work experience in humanitarian development, tertiary qualifications in a relevant field, and proven leadership and strategic management skills in the NGO context. Networking abilities and a strong understanding of international development and the humanitarian NGO sector are also crucial. Proficiency in English, both spoken and written, is required.

You should be a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (occupational requirement) with a deep commitment to its mission, prior experience in ADRA or another NGO, social enterprise development experience, strong leadership and coaching capabilities, and a willingness to pursue further professional development.

The CEO position offers an opportunity to make a positive impact in the lives of beneficiaries and lead ADRA-UK to fulfil its humanitarian goals. You should align with ADRA-UK's purpose and values and possess the necessary skills and experience to excel in this leadership role.

For more information, download our application pack on our website: https://adra.org.uk/get-involved/join-our-team/

Applications close 31 January 2024.

Stanborough Secondary School: volunteers required

Stanborough Secondary School is seeking volunteers who wish to give 12-24 months in missionary service. This is the only Seventh-day Adventist secondary school in the British Union Conference. Last year eight of our students were baptised, and we hope that you can join us on the journey of educating for eternity.

Librarians 12-24 months, volunteer, full-time or part-time Admin Assistants 12-24 months, volunteer, full-time or part-time Garden and Maintenance Assistants 12-24 months, volunteer, full-time or part-time Cleaner full-time or part-time

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God is the Master of our school.



LifeSource book sales

DATE SEC Evangelism Expo, Newbold College 7 Jan

TIME 10am-4pm



'Why do we go to church on Sunday?'

Brought up in the Church of England, while still a child, Joan questioned why she went to church on Sunday instead of Saturday, the day God had made holy. Nobody could answer her questions, and it troubled her. As she read her Bible, she kept finding other things to question, but the only answer she ever got was, 'This is what we do.'

Joan worshipped and served faithfully in her church all her life, but she continued to be troubled by the unanswered questions. Finally, she asked God to find her a church that observed the seventh-day Sabbath. . . .

Joan's prayers were answered; God pointed her to a church just 7 miles from her home – Grantham Seventh-day Adventist Church. Joan was full of joy to find a church that studies and follows Bible teachings, and when she heard there was a baptism planned, she asked to be included.

Following a crash course on what Seventh-day Adventists believe, Joan Lees was baptised alongside two candidates from Newark Seventh-day Adventist Church on 9 September 2023.

Welcome, Joan, to your new church family. ELISABETH CARNELL



The spectacle of that touch!

Climaxing what had been an exhilarating campaign in September 2023, Pastor Alanzo Smith, President of the Greater New York Conference, chimed enthusiastically to his audience, 'He is real!'

In a highly technological and scientific-oriented world, miracles



our imagination. He can change your life. What a mighty God we serve!' As he described an extremely eerie hospitalisation back in April 2020, when absolutely no one was allowed to touch him for four consecutive days due to fear of contracting a virus which hadn't been fully understood, with no vaccine available at the time, a deafening silence engulfed the church building in East London as onlookers relived what had been a tragic state of affairs when COVID-19 arrived.

The extent of the breathlessness that had consumed his body, according to Pastor Smith, nearly resulted in him being placed on a ventilator, but he firmly believes that only the intervention of prayer warriors in his immediate family, as well as a variety of believers praying across America, the UK and the West Indies, pumped oxygen into his lungs in the space of three hours, to the amazement of the medical team, who had watched him struggle to breathe for nine days. He'd been gasping for air, his blood pressure shooting through the roof, coupled with pneumonia in his blood – a hopeless situation, which had made him question whether he could ever preach again – but it dissipated with one touch.

Among the attending audience during the course of Pastor Smith's campaign were individuals from all walks of life, of different ages and backgrounds – but, notably, the number of young people under the age of 18 who chose to get baptised at the end of the campaign was rather captivating, to say the least.

Joel is a 13-year-old Pathfinder who chose to get baptised after listening to the inspirational messages shared by Pastor Smith. Freshly out of the water, Joel couldn't hide his excitement about being born again. 'I had been thinking of getting baptised for some time, but I kept postponing it until I was sitting on the train a couple of days before the campaign ended and I heard that someone had jumped off the train. It made me think about how short life is, and I'm so happy that I got the chance to get baptised before anything bad happened to me.'

Hilary (16) is also a vibrant young person who is buzzing about her decision to receive a special touch from God through baptism. 'My life was going in all sorts of directions, and I felt that I had no purpose. . . . God is upgrading me!' Joel and Hilary were joined by twenty-four other people who also got baptised, including Reece, Hilary's younger brother, who had been moved by the Holy Spirit to join his sister after Pastor Smith delivered his heartfelt testimony about that touch.

Despite being at risk of missing his return flight to New York, Pastor Smith made every effort to witness as many as possible of the young people walk into the baptismal pool before dashing off to the airport, a crescendo to the reality of God's powerful, unstoppable touch! RUBINA FOSUA ARTHUR



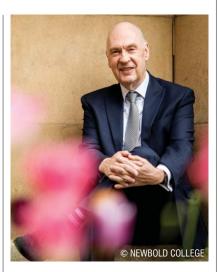
Dr John Baildam: a life of contrasts and enthusiasm (1950-2023) d. 22 August.

ohn Baildam was born on 9 May 1950 into an Adventist ministerial family. He was the older son of Denys and Jean Baildam, and, from his first years in Scotland, his early life was characterised by frequent moves. John and his brother Andrew were academically gifted, and John's true strengths emerged in the realm of languages. He excelled in language-related subjects: firstly achieving a BA in German, followed by an MA in German Literature and Thought, and later a PhD comparing and analysing Herder and Luther's German translations of the Song of Songs with the Hebrew text. His gift for languages enabled him to read, write and converse fluently in German, and his time spent in Austria and Germany, as a student and then a teacher, kindled a lifelong love for music.

Upon returning to England in 1975, John began an enjoyable seven vears at Stanborough Secondary School, Watford – firstly as Preceptor in the boarding school, and then as a teacher of French and German. It was here also that he met Lynda, who would later become his wife. They celebrated forty-one years of marriage in July 2023, just before his untimely passing. John fully participated in school life, enjoying the staff vs students cricket matches. and taking groups of students on exchange trips to Europe.

In 1982 John began working at Newbold College of Higher Education. During this time, he continued to develop his career and took on various roles in the college. He started as a teacher in the School of English, and just a year later he became its director. In 1990 he became the Director of Admissions & Records, then Director of Academic Affairs. In 2011 he became Deputy Principal, and three years later, in 2014, he became Principal and also served as Secretary to the Board of Governors. At Newbold, John's commitment to academic quality and fostering a memorable campus experience left an enduring legacy.

Beyond his immediate academic



sphere, John was an influential figure on various examination boards and advisory councils, where his expertise in quality assurance was much appreciated. He also forged academic networks and partnerships, including his involvement with Leo Baeck College in London.

John's zeal for learning persisted into retirement, as he embarked on courses in editing and proof-reading, opera studies, biblical Hebrew, and art appreciation. He was an exemplary student, relishing the opportunity to expand his knowledge.

John's interests extended beyond academia and the arts, and he was an active member of Reading Football Club. He also loved cricket, and, when he no longer played, he studied to be and qualified as an umpire and

John was a perfectionist in his academic and professional life, maintaining a high standard for linguistic accuracy and professional good practice. His attention to detail was also appreciated during his service on the British Union Conference Executive Committee.

However, beneath John's sophisticated exterior lay a warmth and sociability that endeared him to everyone he met. He had an unwavering zest for life, a mischievous sense of humour, and an incredible ability to bring people together. He was particularly fond of his wider family, and went to

considerable lengths to keep in touch with his nephews and nieces, and, later, their growing families.

One of John's close friends described his life as a study in contrasts. His boundless curiosity, transparent honesty, love of people and creative use of language made him a captivating individual.

John passed away on 22 August 2023, following a short and unexpected illness. For all who had the privilege of knowing him, his loss is deeply felt, and he leaves behind a tapestry of memories. His life will be remembered as a celebration of curiosity, kindness, enthusiasm, and the unceasing quest for knowledge. PASTOR JOHN SURRIDGE

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