Ten thousand tickets may have been oversold for synchronised swimming at the 2012 London Olympics but the 10,000+ members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the London area are gearing themselves up to synchronise their witnessing and community activities to coincide with the greatest sporting event that London will have ever seen.

Among the Adventists already committed to volunteer during the Olympics is Pastor Richard Daly of the Croydon church. As part of the chaplaincy team his role will involve working with the athletes, stewards and other volunteers of a Christian faith to provide worship services, prayer and Bible study in the Olympic Village and other venues in the Olympic Arena. He told BUC News, "As a former athlete and one who competed at national level, it is a privilege to combine my joy of sports and my calling as a minister. Above all it is a privilege to represent my Church." He adds that he is delighted to know that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is represented along with the usual mainstream churches of the UK in this position.

Pastor Colin Stewart is the Adventist representative on the 'Going for Gold' organising committee. He states that there are many ways that churches and individuals can get involved. You can find out more in his Olympic Outreach newsletter.

Many churches, particularly in the London area are gearing up for evangelism that will complement the Olympic spirit, as well as opening their church halls during the event so that the communities surrounding their churches can enjoy the Olympic spirit without the kind of spirit to be found in their local pub! Choir performances, drama and street witnessing are all part of the preparations.
South England Conference President, Pastor Sam Davis is encouraging church leaders and members to attend the SEC Evangelism Expo at Newbold College on Sunday, 15 January where ideas and resources will be shared. He states, "We cannot go through 2012 and miss the largest cultural party right on our doorstep – the 2012 London Olympics. Not all of us may be interested in sport, but we are ideally situated to make the most of this cultural celebration." He adds, "I urge you to be intentional in planning your outreach for July and August," noting that the diversity of our Church, and the many languages represented may be an asset to witness during the Olympic period.

**THE MOST DIFFICULT PRAYER FOR 2012**

"Operation Global Rain may be a worldwide initiative, but it is only when it takes place in my heart and life that it makes a difference," states Pastor Victor Hulbert, Communication and Media director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the UK and Ireland. He is not alone in those sentiments. Thousands of church members across the country, and millions around the world, are joining an initiative that helps focus our minds for the year ahead. Many churches are opening nightly for special times of prayer, but more importantly, individual members are spending time praying for themselves, their families, and specific neighbours or work colleagues who need to know Jesus.

Vili Costescu of Newbold church states, "We had our regular prayer meeting tonight and it was such a blessing. I expect great things to happen during these 10 days!" Pastor Weiers Coetser has been coordinating a prayer initiative across the whole of Ireland with different pastors contributing to a daily prayer blog. A young lady on Facebook shared how she is not only praying but is restricting her diet during the period, 4 - 14 January in order to focus more intentionally on the things of God.

In his New Year video message to church members, BUC President Pastor Ian Sweeney states, "We want the focus on prayer to be very much on reaching those who do not know Jesus Christ." Personalising it he adds, "The most difficult prayers I have to pray are not for the 65 million people (who make up the population of the British Isles), my most difficult prayers are for Gillian and Vlad, Roger and Alison, Kevin and Yvette. They are my next door neighbours…. Why I pray, use me, use Jennifer (my wife), to be a witness to our next door neighbours, that's the most difficult prayer because right there and then that opens me up to being made available to be used by God to reach them."

Heather Haworth includes Prayer Ministries among her responsibilities at the BUC and is benefiting from the Global Rain initiative as part of her personal devotions. She testifies, "My heart was touched yesterday morning as I listened to Day 1's presentation. My prayer today is that we all will be spiritually encouraged by these 10 special days of Global Rain." She also notes that the BUC now has a prayer webpage within the departmental section of the website. This page is still under development and we would like to include a section sharing about the prayer events going on in the BUC. She says, "Please let me know if you want yours included."

Will Operation Global Rain make a difference? That depends on me! While guidelines and resources are available on the Global Rain website, <http://adventistinfo.org.uk/globalrain>, it is ultimately me, as an individual, making a choice that will add to many thousands of other choices that will make an exciting difference for me, for my church, and for many individuals who will discover Jesus in 2012.
MESSIAH BRIGHTENS HAMPSTEAD  [Anthony Roberts]

It was a cold yet pleasant Saturday evening, the sun had set and there was a chill in the air. Meanwhile, in the warmth and tranquil setting of the Hampstead Seventh-day Adventist church, drums were being hoisted into position; the tubes of the horns were being slotted into their groove; the trumpeters were judging the distance; whilst the string section were limbering up.

The date is 10 December 2011 and persons derived from all walks of life and a wide spectrum of cultural diversity, gathered for the main event organised by the Hampstead Adventist Choral Society and Millennium Orchestra. A bee like hum of voices, instruments and resounding anticipation hovered overhead. For what was about to take place was nearing its commencement. Excellence was at the heart of what happened next as praise to God was at the root of everything that took place.

The proceedings commenced with the angelic sound of the orchestra followed swiftly by the choir that took hold of each song as though their lives depended on it. The soloists added a different but complete dynamic to whole performance. It was said at the beginning that we were to follow tradition by holding the applause until the end of the last chorus but appreciation and sheer excitement on the night created a new precedence. Rapturous applause fuelled by emotion won the day.

After such a performance it is almost impossible to try and summarise what we heard but I will be impartial and give you the thoughts of some of those that attended: "An ambitious feat by HACS which comprised of a blend of musical talent from both ends of the spectrum." "An ambitious feat, hailed as a success in more ways than one." [Mr Victor Pilmoor] "A fabulous, even brilliant annual event where talented young people can play traditional music to the glory God." [Pastor Eglan Brooks]

Hampstead pastor, Humphrey Walters, has always supported and encouraged HACS. He states, "It was most fitting we should have had a musical performance such as Handel's Messiah in the run-up to Christmas. The musicianship was of a very high standard. Folk who've often declined our invitations to other church programmes came to this production, resulting in one of our biggest attendances ever. As a church, Hampstead is very proud of Fiona Pacquette and Edison Weekes, two of our leading lights behind this year's special event."

This is now an annual event that is first and foremost an evangelistic tool that allows the community, including the unchurched and non-religious to be immersed in music that offers praise to our God.

Photos and video excerpts from the performance and be found on the HACS Facebook and Twitter pages.

MOVING IN: BLESSED HOPE CHURCH RELOCATES TO PRIORY HILL, DARTFORD  [Ayobola Chike-Michael]

A cool grey painted building on the outside, on the inside, soft music filled the air, worship songs breaking forth one after the other, and members reverently entered the new sanctuary, filled with gratitude. Various expressions spread across faces, some stared in wide-eyed amazement while others waved their hands to God in adoration. Children went up and down the gallery, glancing into every room, touching the walls to make sure it surely was not a dream.
Blessed Hope Seventh-day Adventist church had worshipped for over ten years in rented school premises in East London but now...yes! Blessed Hope Nigerian church worshipped for the very first time in their own property at Priory Hill, Dartford, Kent. It was Sabbath, 3 December 2011 and a day much longed and prayed for. Standing in the well-furnished auditorium it truly was an answered prayer.

On entering the former Baptist Church, now Blessed Hope Adventist church, one could describe the atmosphere as a warm and endearing haven. There is a foyer as one enters, on the right is the communication room and ahead is the mother & baby room. A stairway curves upwards just by the left leading to a brief expanse of gallery. The church opens up nicely on the ground level with the altar slightly raised for all to see. The pews are well cushioned providing comfortable seating for members. There is a petite room for the minister on the left of the church hall and a kitchenette immediately behind. Conveniences are located just outside of the building adjacent to the basement which is intended to house the children's department once refurbished.

The first Sabbath service began with worship songs from the praise team and the entire programme was full of testimonies and praise. One of the serving elders, Dayo Dare, presented a wonderful tribute of God's goodness: going down memory lane, he thanked faithful members who supported the church building initiative that the lay pastor, Ayodeji Adesina, had started in May 2006. He told of how Pastor Ayo (as he is fondly called) had worked tirelessly from the beginning of the project to the present day. Elder Dayo spoke of the challenges the church had faced during different phases of the search for a suitable property, and also hurdles that had to be overcome even when the property had been purchased given the listed building status of the property. He stressed that this day had been made possible by the kind contributions of every member and friends (home and abroad) of the church. Elder Dayo proclaimed that history was being made and it was a privilege to be part of that history. Blessed Hope Adventist church is the first Nigerian Adventist church in Europe and it is hoped that this will be the beginning of greater things ahead!

During the Divine Service, Ayodeji Adesina ushered the congregation into God's presence as he fell on his knees in thanks to God. He sang and declared, 'All the glory must be to the Lord'. In his sermon titled, 'The Place of the Altar', Pastor Ayo preached about how God's Sanctuary is a place of progress, preservation, promise, protection, prayer and power. The atmosphere was much charged after this sermon of assurance and love. Following the sermon, a special prayer was said by Pastor Abioye, a visiting pastor from Nigeria, to dedicate the altar. The service felt very much like when Solomon dedicated the Temple of the Lord. The presence and the anointing of the Lord filled Blessed Hope, Dartford on this day and all worshipped and adored the Almighty God who only could have ordained this place for His people.

THE REAL NATIVITY! [Anesha West]
"T'was the night before Christmas" and Holloway was packed with over 300 people waiting in anticipation for 'The Real Nativity' musical to start.
Rumbidzai Sithole had already started the programme with a rousing song service in full costume! This was a free musical production with the intention of witnessing to non-Adventist friends and family at a time when people are receptive to both Jesus and Christianity. Excitement was building both backstage and in the audience.

The musical cast consisted of people of all ages from a baby to a senior pastor creating a family ambience. Approximately 24 children, teens, youth, elders and a pastor were transformed into characters of Biblical times as they were kitted out in full costumes; provided by parents, cast members and costume team (Elizabeth Castor and Valencia Guishard-Riley).

The musical not only focussed on the birth of Jesus as most nativity plays do, but incorporated the death and resurrection of Christ. The message was not only that Jesus was born to die but that He would return one day soon.

The musical script was written by Tracy Castor, Ranette Prime, Michael Edwards and James Castor. The production featured obscure songs along with refreshing arrangements of familiar carols, taking the audience on a journey through a variety of musical genres thanks to Roger Baptiste and the band. The audience was pleasantly surprised when King Herod, played by our very own Pastor Holder, sang the original song 'I am your king' (written by Michael Edwards). They cheered as some cast members gave their debut solo performances such as Anesha West, who played our elegant Mary. Nile Philip playing Joseph gave a brilliant and emotive rendition of the song 'Is she still my Mary?' (written by Tracy Castor). The children were among the highlights of the performance. Dressed as farmyard animals their adorable solos warmed the heart. Jeremiah Lo was one of the little stars of the production being the best behaved Baby Jesus and smiling throughout.

The musical mixed comedy, drama, action and romance. Co-director Towelah Phiri really helped bring the scenes to life and made cast members think deeply about their roles. Fantastic props and sets (by Elizabeth and James Castor) captured the bustling market, tomb, stable and Herod's palace scenes.

Some attendees said that it was the best programme they had been to all year! The musical was a tremendous success and the positive feedback was overwhelming! Well done to all those involved. God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think and He did so that night.

MAY YOUR BEST PRESENT OF ALL BE JESUS! [Vivienne Peacock]

This year the Children's Christmas Play at Loughborough church, held on Sabbath, 17 December was more than a simple retelling of the Nativity story. Instead, our musical play had a very clear message which challenged our young actors and singers and their audience to really engage with the story of Jesus' birth on a personal level.

The performance followed the story of a group of children as they worked together to put on a Christmas play. Each of the characters in the play brought a gift to give to the Baby Jesus as if they were the wise men. Four-year-old Eliana played the role of a little girl who had made a paper heart to give as a present to Jesus but was worried because it was only a piece of paper. During the play she learnt that all Jesus wants from us is our love and that because her piece of paper represented her heart, she was giving the best gift she could possibly offer to Jesus.
The children had worked hard to learn their parts and sang with great enthusiasm. Three of our children sang solo parts for the first time and even 3-year-old Anja knew the words to all of the songs. The song "May Your Best Present of all be Jesus" conveyed our wish for all those present – that they may know and understand the true meaning of Christmas and its relevance to us today.

Twenty-four non-Adventist visitors joined us for the play, some from the local community and some friends. We were able to enjoy more time with our visitors whilst we shared lunch together and were delighted that some also returned for our Carol Service the following Sabbath. We hope the message that Jesus is the best present they could possibly have is one that will remain with them, for life, not just for Christmas!

**ADVENTISTS IN THE NEWS**

From changing date lines, to the top health stories of 2011, along with a host of local stories, the name Adventist has appeared in hundreds of local and national newspapers and media throughout the Christmas period.

The news that gained the most prominence on a national level, including reports in almost every national newspaper, including the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Mail on Sunday* and *ITV* news was that of the small island of Samoa where their government voted to change the boundary of the international date line. This caused concern for Seventh-day Adventists on the island as the change meant, that for Samoans, Friday, 30 December disappeared and the weekly, seven-day cycle was broken. In addition to all the reports in the secular press, the *Australian Record* posted an explanation of the Adventist dilemma and the Church's solution on their website. The event has provoked thoughtful debate among Adventists and even among Jews – the one Jew on the island of Samoa claiming he is often mistaken for a Seventh-day Adventist!

Given wider coverage on a local level, but also in a number of national newspapers was the slightly quirky year-end headline, 'Strangest health stories of 2011'. As just one example, the *Littlehampton Gazette* lists a number of quirky stories where the journalist may not really have got the real truth behind a piece of scientific research. Adventists come in because of the section on 'Beans and lentils' where it states, "Although this claim used strong science that examined the effect of a vegetarian diet on bowel cancer, it did not directly link beans and lentils with bowel cancer. The study also drew its participants from Californian Seventh Day Adventists, who tend to avoid alcohol and smoking, and often limit their meat intake. This is likely to have contributed to their reduced risk compared to the general population."

On a more local level, Gloucester Adventists provided music as part of a festive treat for the homeless – according to 'This is Gloucestershire', while Middlesbrough Adventist church featured in BBC local news, *Look North* on Wednesday, 21 December for its part on the Open Doors initiative for asylum seekers. Following the report, Judy Hamilton of the Middlesbrough church told BUC News that in November Middlesbrough church was approached by a local organization, Open Door North East, and asked to help out with asylum seekers and refugees who have nowhere to go. She says, "The opportunity to help was seized, and we opted to open up the church on Thursday evenings. The refugees arrive at 8:30 pm, are given a hot freshly prepared meal and sleep overnight in the church with sleeping bags provided by ODNE. A breakfast is provided the next morning and after getting a
wash and shave the refugees leave the church around 8:30 am on Friday. Two volunteers from our church stay overnight to attend any needs that might arise and also to do the cooking."

The Look North report showed church elder, Jill Geldart, greeting the arrivals at the church hall entrance, the food being served and preparations for the overnight stay.

Norwich Adventist church also made it into the local newspaper as a Christian blogger reported on a visit to their church on a special Sabbath. This then appeared in the Network Norwich and Norfolk church review.

Finally, Lee Ferrigon finds himself as one of the '12 Stars of Christmas' in the Yorkshire Star where he is honoured by the paper for the way he turned the tragedy of the loss of his 32-year-old wife to cancer into something positive as he launched the Keisha Ferrigon Foundation and donated one of his kidneys to a friend who could now come off dialysis after a 30 year hunt for a donor. Lee told the Yorkshire Star, "I am just a normal man – I don't feel as though I have done anything special," adding, "Keisha taught me a lot about helping other people – I am just trying to carry on her work and celebrate her life."

**NEW SERIES FOR REVELATION TV** [SEC Communications]

Viewers to the Monday night slot on Revelation TV last Monday will already have noted a refreshing new series to hit the airwaves. "Searching for a God to Love" mixes presentation with discussion, aiming to encourage viewers to reflect on God, matters of faith and religious realities. Author and Professor, Chris Blake, speaks to the 'believing unbelievers' who believe in God but not in the picture they have been presented of God.

Each episode in this televised series links to Chris Blake's book of the same title. He presents to us the loving, caring God that many have forgotten or misinterpreted in a relaxed yet striking presentation. The 13-week series alternates weekly between presentation in week one followed by discussion of the subject in week two. Each episode sees Blake's talk followed by discussion between Blake and Pastor Patrick Johnson, senior pastor of Newbold Seventh-day Adventist church in Binfield, Berks.

Host for the series, Kirsten Øster-Lundqvist states that "the series maintains a balance between creative teaching, ingenious comedy, deep soul-searching and resolute faith."

'Searching for a God to Love' airs Monday nights on Revelation TV (Sky Channel 581 or Freesat 692) and, if you miss an episode, catch up on the dedicated 'Searching for a God to Love' website. The programmes were filmed on location by the SEC Media team in a cooperative venture between SEC Media, BUC Media and the Newbold church media team. Appreciation also goes to the college and church who both helped to make this series a success.

**NEW YEAR MESSENGER ONLINE**

The 6 January 2012 edition of MESSENGER may have come into your church even before New Year, but it is worth a read with leadership of the Church in every area of the British Isles sharing their vision for the New Year. In his editorial, Julian Hibbert emphasises that "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day," while on the following page David Marshall takes rebuke from a nine-year-old niece when asked, "Why were you angry when you preached the sermon?" Also, find out about Cyber-news, catch up with pages of positive news and Pastor
Islwyn Rees adds more to the debate on Foot-washing and Communion for children. Available online now or in a church near you.

MEMORIAL SERVICE: PASTOR ROBERT SURRIDGE

Following the passing of Pastor Robert Surridge as announced in BUC News #761 (23 December 2011), we can now inform you that there will be a memorial service this side of the Atlantic for all his friends, family and former colleagues from his time serving as a minister in the South England Conference. The service will be held at Newbold Church Centre on Sunday, 5 February 2012 at 2:00 pm.

PROGRAMMES TO WATCH THIS WEEK

A choice of UK produced Adventist programmes are available for you to watch this coming week.

On Revelation TV (Sky 581 or Freesat 692) watch the following two programmes:

Searching for a God to Love, Monday, 9 January, 8:30 pm. A new series of presentations and discussion with Chris Blake filmed during the Newbold College Week of Prayer last autumn. Part 2: 'The Centre of Existence'.

'Adventists In Conversation', Thursday 12 January, 8:30 pm. Terrence Blackman. A finance director in the City of London, Terrence Blackman says "if there's anywhere we need God, it's in the City." He reflects on God's leading in his own life, and how the birth of his seriously ill daughter led him to give up everything in life he had worked for.

On Hope TV you can watch a wide variety of programmes on the satellite and website. Listed below are some of the UK produced programmes:

- Friday 6 January: 8:00 pm: Viewpoint: Christians and Finance, how do we face up to the challenges?
- Sabbath 7 January: 12:30 am, 9:00 am & 8:00 pm: Viewpoint: Christians and Finance
- Monday 9 January: 12:30 and 9:30 pm: Kresho Senjaric – Living for more than music
- Wednesday 11 January: 8:00 am: Freddie Russell – Success is due to prayer,
- 12:00 midnight: Jacqui Grant – Unexpected church planter
- Friday 13 January: 8:00 pm: Viewpoint: Is Violence ever acceptable?
- Sabbath 14 January: 12:00 am, 9:00 am & 8:00 pm: Viewpoint: Is Violence ever acceptable?

COMING EVENTS

OPERATION GLOBAL RAIN. Continuing to Sabbath, 14 January. Operation Global Rain is a worldwide lay-led initiative to start the New Year intentionally involved in prayer. To find out more and get involved visit http://adventistinfo.org.uk/globalrain/. For a video message from BUC President, Pastor Ian Sweeney visit http://www.hopetv.org.uk/content/media-library/media-story/ml/buc-news-media-archive/new-year-call-to-prayer/ Contact: Victor Hulbert <vhulbert@adventist.org.uk>. Phone: 01923 672251.

NOTTINGHAM CENTRAL BRICKS & MORTAR FUND PROMO DAY. Sabbath, 14 January. Calling Friends and Families of Nottingham Central Seventh-day Adventist church and surrounding regions. We are serious about raising funds for refurbishment or relocation. Come to our 2nd Bricks & Mortar Fund Promotion Day on Sabbath, 14 January and help us raise funds with your sacrificial
offerings. On our 1st Bricks and Mortar Fund Promotion Day in September, we raised £10,600. Together we can do Better! Contact: Pastoral Team <pastoral_team@nottinghamadventist.org.uk>. Phone: 0115 7270271.

SEC EVANGELISM EXPO. Sunday, 15 January. Pastors and members from all South England Conference churches are invited to this special ONE DAY ONLY training event at Newbold College, St Mark's Road, Binfield, Berks, RG42 4AN. Great choice of materials and ideas to explore and purchase! Contact: Ruth Stewart <rstewart@secadventist.org.uk>. Phone: 01923 232728.

SEC TEENS DAY OF FELLOWSHIP. Sabbath, 28 January. I would like to encourage you to join our South England Conference Teens Day of Fellowship that will take place on 28 January 2012 at St Mary's Church, 245 Old Maryleborne Road, London, NW1 5QT. See you there. Contact: Dejan Stojkovic <dejan@secadventist.org.uk>. Phone: 07919172176.

SCOTTISH MISSION CHURCH OFFICERS' TRAINING DAY. Sunday, 29 January. 10:30 – 4:00 pm, at Crieff Adventist Church, Gwydyr Road, Crieff, PH7 4BS. Open to all church members, not just church officers, this is a day of workshops for everyone who is interested in the work of the church, and witnessing. Workshops planned so far include: Leadership, Prayer Ministries, Outreach, Children's Ministries, Family Ministries, Women's Ministries, Health Ministries and Communications. Guest trainers Pastor Egilan Brooks and Pastor Victor Hulbert. Lunch of soup, rolls and drinks provided. Please email Carole at office@sdascotland.com, or phone 01764 653257 if you plan to attend, so we have some idea of numbers attending, and can provide enough food.

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SMALL ADS

JOB VACANCIES at Newbold College: 2 Lecturers in Pastoral Studies; a College Chaplain; and College Relations Officer all needed to help the college thrive. Closing dates for all positions: 24 February 2012. At BUC Office: Receptionist/s needed, closing date, 31 January 2012. At Stanborough Boarding School: Domestic Cleaner required. For full details visit: http://www.adventistnews.org.uk/vacancies.php.

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