DO YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE GIFTS? [Godwin Benjamin & Sandra Golding]

"Do you like to receive gifts?" This was the question asked to thousands of schoolchildren in Burkina Faso.

Godwin Benjamin, ADRA-UK Annual Appeal Coordinator, along with three volunteers: Claudette Brown from Bristol, Sarah Etudor from London and Sandra Golding from Luton, had the privilege of distributing ADRA's annual shoebox appeal boxes to schools, churches and orphanages in Burkina Faso from 11 - 18 February 2013.

This was the first time that ADRA has taken volunteers to assist in the distribution of the shoeboxes or to assist in any of their projects.

In association with ADRA Burkina Faso, the 12,000 shoeboxes were distributed to over 30 schools and six orphanages in the capital Ouagadougou and surrounding rural villages near Kombissiri, Sapano, and other areas over a 6 day period. The volunteers worked hard in the hot piercing sun for over ten hours each day.

It was an amazing experience for the volunteers seeing the smiles, laughter and joy on the faces of the children as they opened the shoeboxes.

Sarah Etudor said "it was a truly amazing experience. The opportunity to bless young lives that are less fortunate was a lifelong dream for me and I was honoured and very privileged to be a part."

"Although many children lived in abject poverty, they conducted themselves with such dignity, greeted us with such enthusiasm and thanked us with such sincerity, that on several occasions we were moved almost to tears", commented Claudette Brown.
At the Adventist High School in Pissy, three students from each class were chosen to say thank you for the gifts. It was a tremendous blessing in the way that they articulated their thanks and touched our hearts in a special way.

Whilst distributing the shoeboxes in the rural villages the word soon got out that there were 'strangers in town' giving away gifts and soon we would be surrounded by other children and the mothers with young babies.

At one of the primary schools the students showed their thanks by singing a thank you song. At another school they shared their version of 'It is well with my soul'.

Burkina Faso is a French speaking country and by the end of the week the volunteers were brushing up on their French and delivering the message to the students in French and Moorè (the local language also spoken).

Playing with the children and helping them to open up their shoeboxes and showing them how to use their toys and gifts was an awesome experience.

On the Sabbath shoeboxes were distributed to the children at Pissy Adventist church and the Mission church in Ouagadougou. One little girl was so overwhelmed with the gifts that she kept saying "we will be getting more gifts tomorrow!"

On behalf of all these children we would like to thank church members, schools, and the general public across the UK who gave the shoeboxes to make a small but significant difference in the lives of the children. Your love has touched someone else and has helped to spread God's love to those who are in need.

A selection of photos and videos can be seen on the Adventist Church website.

LIFE BEFORE DEATH [Carlton Le Willows Academy students with BUC News]

Students from Carlton Le Willows Academy, Nottingham, now have a very different picture of Adventist beliefs following a visit to an Adventist pastor as part of their A-level Religious Studies project.

In early February several students from the Academy contacted the Seventh-day Adventist head office in Watford via the website to enquire about the Adventist view of life after death. Rather than responding with an impersonal email it was suggested that the students met up with an Adventist pastor in their area. The result was a meeting with Pastor Peter Jeynes, pastor of Nottingham's Upper Room church and NEC Communication director.

The visit obviously made an impression on the three students, Alex Beavis, Ella Greenwood and Joss Hollingworth. Joss sent this report of the meeting:

On the 14th of February 2013, after some friendly contact with Pastor Peter Jeynes, we decided to visit the office for Seventh-day Adventists in the North of England, to support our research into the nature and purpose of life after death for our A2 Religious Studies exam.

Suffice to say, we were at best vaguely informed of the values of Seventh-day Adventists and, on the subject of the nature and purpose of life after death, we were confused and sceptical from our own light research.
On arrival we were warmly greeted by Pastor Jeynes and his colleagues and when we sat down to discuss the matter we were confronted with a style we perhaps did not expect. Pastor Jeynes spoke to us as an evangelist, not as a lecturer as we may have expected. The session was well prepared, after all evangelism is a major part of his profession, so instead of presenting us with a list of facts and scripture we instead found ourselves involved in a complete back to basics explanation of the core beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, an angle fairly symbolic of the Church and its nature to return to core writings rather than follow the teachings of later scholars whose opinions are often too imposing.

Upon entering the office we had heard of the Seventh-day Adventist idea that after death a person sleeps until the return of Christ, an idea we thought perhaps obscure and very distinct from typical Christian and Jewish views. However, by the time we left the idea seemed perfectly reasonable, supported and comfortable.

Pastor Jeynes also directed us to a website that offers a free Bible to anyone committed enough to complete a short quiz. We came simply seeking knowledge but we left with a refreshing view on the Biblical text.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and left completely satisfied with the information we received. Pastor Jeynes' approach was both inviting but serious and we are very grateful for his time.

Pastor Jeynes responds, "We may think our message is not palatable. We may think nobody will listen to us. The backstory to the article is, 'we have something to be proud of. A God who gave us a message and a mission'."

LONDON WOMEN TAKE TO THE STREETS [Kamima Chipongo]

Prayer can often be an 'in-house' experience, but for the young ladies of the London Youth Federation an International Women's Day of Prayer became a chance to unite with the larger community.

On Sabbath, 2 March, women around the globe came together to unite in prayer. Many programmes took place for this special day, but the LYF Women's Ministries department decided to celebrate in a different way and connect with the community. As young women we wanted to give back and reach out. We wanted to unite with the women of Stratford city and let them know there was a body praying for them, recognising and appreciating them as women.

The Women's Ministries department team along with the Federation president and area coordinators distributed pink roses with a tag attached, sharing a short message emphasising how special each woman was to God, regardless of their colour, nationality or age. Each message written on the tags sought to remind every single woman in receipt of a rose how unique and valuable they are in God's eyes.

The reaction was really positive. People wanted to know who we were and what we were doing. Another Pentecostal church that had set up to do some outreach and consisted of mostly men, joined forces with us and supported in distributing the roses. Double the witness!

Literature on prayer, health and healing was also given out. Many women, pleasantly surprised at the small tokens given out, were very appreciative. Some asked for prayer. Others were just pleased to be acknowledged but most importantly seeds were sown and lives were touched with the Gospel.
Upon reflection, we agreed as a team that we cannot sow seeds and not follow it up, so we decided that whether it is International Women's Day of Prayer or not, we intend to go out into the community at least once a quarter and reach out. It emphasised to us that people in the community are hungry for a word of prayer, to know that somebody cares for them and is willing to take time out to pray with them.

**IRELAND'S SMALLEST DAY OF FELLOWSHIP MAKES HISTORY**

Pastor Weiers Coetser reports on the longest car journey for the smallest Day of Fellowship he has ever attended. Would he do it again? He responds with a resounding "Yes!":

The old seven-seater car, hired from a small car hire firm, sputtered and coughed as I turned the ignition. It seemed reluctant to leave its resting place in the driveway in the familiar surrounds of Banbridge; almost as though it had a foreboding of a long trip to come. It was an earlier start than usual for a Sabbath morning as I was headed across the island to attend the first ever Day of Fellowship in the far western town of Sligo.

Any further west and the car would have to convert into a boat and America would be the next stop. I quickly shelved that thought though, as I worried that the ancient Volkswagen Sharon could read minds and choose not to go a step further. I had a few stops to make.

Michael, who is always up for an adventure, was first. A cheerful smile greeted me as I picked him up. Walking stick in the one hand and a bag with peanut butter sandwiches in the other; a Bible over the shoulder. What more do you need for a cross country adventure! We set off for our next stop, Monaghan. After 45 minutes of twisting and turning through what is known as 'bandit country' the change in road markings heralded our arrival in the South and 10 minutes later we 'sailed' in to the St Patrick's Centre on tranquil farmland outside Monaghan where the Irish government houses about 200 refugees.

There Rachael (from Uganda) waited for us and eagerly sent a message with her new WhatsApp Messenger to alert Polite, Sibongikhosi and their two kids (from Zimbabwe) that their transport has arrived. This was an exciting outing for them. They have lived in the Monaghan refugee centre for more than four years and only recently made contact with other Seventh-day Adventists in Ireland.

Monaghan is a difficult place to travel from, and it is made even more difficult by travel restrictions that are placed on refugees in Ireland. They may not enter Northern Ireland, even though the closest Seventh-day Adventist church is in Banbridge, 50 miles across the border. Today was a day to break the isolation, and the kids were eagerly strapped into their seats and after a prayer we were on the road again.

Finding our way to Sligo was going to pose a bit of a challenge. The shortest route would take us back across the border into the heart of County Fermanagh, which would technically be illegal. So we set the satnav to direct us to Ballyconnell instead. The conversation in the car made the kilometres tick away rapidly and before we knew it we were driving through Clones. Only Michael had heard of Clones before. It was the home town of the world featherweight champion boxer Barry McGuigan. Since the partition of Ireland in 1922, Clones has struggled to maintain economic viability as a small border town.
Just after Clones the driver noted, with some trepidation, that the lines on the road had turned from yellow to white and traffic signs were marked out in miles again. He quietly prayed that nothing was going to happen on this stretch of the journey, but soon the miles turned into kilometres and this happened several times along the journey as we cut across County Cavan in the hinterland of Ireland.

Interesting little towns popped up out of nowhere. Ballyturbet seemed to be a beautiful town on the banks of the River Erne which carried water traffic between the loughs in the centre of Ireland. We sailed across the bridge and found ourselves riding through remote mountainous terrain in County Leitrim that resembled the beautiful mountains of Donegal or the Sperrins of County Tyrone.

The difference today was that every farmer in this area was out on the road with their trailers full of cattle. It was 'auction day' in Glenfarne. We must have passed 15 of these vehicles in the next hour and we even encountered a traffic jam in the middle of this little village which has a population of 774.

We made it through, fought off the road sickness from the winding roads and finally arrived in Sligo three and a half hours after setting off, just on time for the Sabbath School lesson.

Usually when you think of a Day of Fellowship you imagine a hall with 200 people or more. Today there were no more than 30 people. They came from Banbridge, Coleraine, Londonderry, Enniskillen, and Dublin. Most of their journeys would not have been much different from the one described above. But faces were beaming. The Sligo members had never seen their church so full!

Shupai Matewa, the leader of the Sligo church kept saying that "this is very special! Never before have we had so many people together. Sabbath, the 2nd of March, 2013 will go down in history as one of the most significant gatherings of Seventh-day Adventists in this part of Ireland."

On a typical Sabbath seven people arrive for worship in Sligo (four adults and three children). Today the hall of the Presbyterian church resounded with sounds of wholehearted singing. Pastor Mart de Groot's sermon, 'Conquer the land' appropriately challenged the Adventists scattered across the West of Ireland to not be afraid of the giant obstacles before them, but to bravely take on God's armour and God's cause.

"It was an inspiring day, so wonderful to meet new friends and to feel a little bit less alone", remarked Rachael.

In anticipation of the event the Sligo members had prepared a veritable feast for their visitors. Michael's peanut butter sandwiches lay forgotten in the car as we filled our plates with all kinds of colourful food, both traditional vegetables and some special treats, like a bowl full of cooked cassava from Africa.

The Sligo group has its origins in the presence of Seventh-day Adventist refugees who were housed in the accommodation centre in Sligo. Shupai Matewa, their leader, only recently received right of settlement. Her heart is passionately burning for the work in Sligo and the West of Ireland.

The passengers of the hired Volkswagen Sharon left that afternoon with several more friends' names on their WhatsApp Messengers. We arrived safely home at 8:00 pm that evening and the hire car was grateful to go to sleep again having traversed Counties Down, Armagh, Monaghan, Fermanagh, Cavan, Leitrim, and Sligo, seven counties of Ireland, twice on the same day. We can't wait to do the journey again in the not too distant future.
Sadly there are no photos of the journey – but there are plenty of the Day of Fellowship in the Adventist Church picture gallery.

FOODBANK FUTURE SECURED [Elisabeth Carnell]

A Grantham foodbank is secure for a further year, thanks to the generous support of church members.

On Sabbath, 23 February, Brian Hanbury, Coordinator for the Grantham Foodbank (Trussell Trust) visited Grantham Adventist church to receive a cheque donation of £2000.

A few weeks previously, Brian, in an interview on local radio, raised the possibility that the Foodbank would have to close due to a shortfall in funds. Arriving at Grantham church, he exclaimed that he was 'blown away' by the gift. In a thank you email he stated, "This provides the final amount to give us the longevity we require for the next year."

The Grantham church congregation and Dudley House Adventist School have supported the Grantham Foodbank since its inception in July 2011 with volunteers and donations. We are one of ten churches in the community that are classed as 'members' of the Foodbank and our regular gifts of food and toiletries, as well as a fast response to specific appeals, is clearly appreciated.

FROM HONG KONG WITH LOVE [Stanborough School PRO]

Between 13 - 26 February, a group of students from Stanborough Secondary School visited Hong Kong in the framework of a long-standing annual cultural exchange.

Since 2006, Stanborough Secondary School and Tai Po Sam Yuk Secondary School (TPSY) have had a reciprocal exchange that allows students from both schools to explore another culture and experience a different education system. On Sunday, 3 February Stanborough welcomed a party of students from TPSY for 12 days. And on Wednesday 13 February it was the turn of Stanborough students to fly to Hong Kong and enjoy a fun-packed programme.

Students had the opportunity to visit some of Hong Kong's most famous and culturally important sites, such as Victoria Harbour, The Peak, The Big Buddha, Tai Po Lin Monastery, Tai O Fishermen Village, Macau Island and Clearwater Bay Beach. Sarah, a Year 7 student, enthused, "What I liked the most about Hong Kong was Ocean Park (a theme park) and the Big Buddha…. The Big Buddha (a 26m stature on a hilltop in Ngong Pi) was really big. It is very important to Buddhist people… and we saw them praying when we got to the top."

It wasn't just sightseeing though. Students also attended lessons at TPSY where they reported particularly enjoying Mathematics and English. Additionally, they experienced China's rich culinary culture and appreciated the opportunity to make new friends.

"Our students are privileged to have such an opportunity to develop as global citizens", says Vanessa Pizzuto, one of the accompanying teachers. "Trips like this provide them with first-hand experience about other cultures and educational systems. Additionally, it teaches them tolerance and responsibility towards each other and the wider world."
GHANA ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP – A FIRST IN WELSH MISSION  [Collins Amofah & John Surridge]

On Sabbath, 2 March some 200 guests, most of them Ghanaian and many of them wearing traditional dress, packed the Donnington Methodist church for the inauguration of the Telford Ghana Seventh-day Adventist Fellowship.

Many of the guests were surprised to learn that Telford, despite being just 18 miles from Wolverhampton, is in fact in the territory of the Welsh Mission. The reasons for this are practical rather than political, with Hereford, Telford and Shrewsbury forming a convenient link between the north and the south of Wales.

There is another Adventist church in Telford and the Ghanaian Adventists have been worshipping with them for a number of years. However the Ghanaian members realised that there was a need for services in their native language, both for the purposes of fellowship and outreach. The initial response has borne this out, with a number of visitors and former members now attending regularly.

Providing a pastor for the new fellowship is a challenge acknowledged by Welsh Mission President Pastor John Surridge. "We have new groups starting up all over the Welsh Mission and it's a real problem trying to fit them in to our current district plan. We only have a limited number of ministers and it doesn't make sense to spread them too thinly. In the case of a Ghanaian congregation, whose members speak Twi, our options are even more limited. Fortunately we are blessed with a Ghanaian pastor in the south and he is willing to incorporate the new fellowship into his district – even though it is over 100 miles away!"

The event was planned and coordinated by Pastor George Asiamah, together with Daniel Appoh and other local Ghanaian members who will make up the core of the new fellowship, in conjunction with EGACCOM, the Euro-Ghanaian Community of Seventh-day Adventist Churches, and CCC, the Central Coordinating Committee of Ghanaian churches in the UK. Most of the proceedings were carried out in the Twi language, with interpretation provided by EGACCOM pastor, Collins Amofah, from the London Ghana church. However, there was one English Sabbath School class, led by Kingsley Asare Bediako. Other EGACCOM and CCC representatives included K T Abbequaye, Jason Essel, and Daniel Atakora.

Simon Ampabeng from the Birmingham Ghana fellowship coordinated the Sabbath School programme which included a solo by Nana Amankwah Tiah of the Elephant and Castle church in London, and a Twi class led by Solomon Donkor.

During the Divine Service K T Abbequaye, who as well as serving as the EGACCOM Executive Treasurer is also a member of the BUC Executive Committee, welcomed the new Telford fellowship into the international Ghanaian Adventist community. He also spoke about the wider activities of EGACCOM and read messages of encouragement from Pastor Charles Bediako, EGACCOM chairman, and Pastor George Dadey, CCC chairman.

The formal part of the service began with Pastor Surridge charging those present to give their full support to the fledging Telford community, and Daniel Larbi, elder of the Coventry Henley Green church, praying for all of those
Pastor Surridge chose as his topic, 'Faithful in a Strange Land', based on Daniel chapter one. Wearing a traditional Ghanaian 'Fugu' outfit Pastor Surridge initially pointed out that although he was not a Ghanaian national he did feel a strong affinity with the Ghanaian Adventist community as he had spent some years of his childhood in Accra. Also, his wife was born in Ghana, providing a further bond. However, using the biblical story of Daniel and his friends, he went on to highlight some of the pitfalls of trying to be faithful to God when you are living in a strange land. "Cultural and religious practices differ and it's sometimes difficult to work out what is right and wrong in your new setting", he said. "Like Daniel and his friends we will have to use every means at our disposal – Biblical knowledge, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and our own intelligence – to make these difficult decisions."

Excellent music was provided throughout the day by the Telford Ghana Choir, the Birmingham Ghana Choir, the Reading and Slough Youth Choir, and soloists Nana Amankwah Tiah and Bro Delefield (from Burundi) and many others.

More than 100 photos from the day can be seen on the Welsh Mission website.

JOHN ARTHUR'S NEW BOOK

Adventure never stops for Pastor John Arthur OBE. Despite being confined to a wheelchair and completely paralysed down his left side, he has just published a book chronicling his experiences across Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Balkans with ADRA-UK, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency.

"I spent two years writing the book," John states, "as I could only tap away on my laptop with one finger." The result is, 'Man on a Mission', which, according to ADRA-UK CEO, Bert Smit is "a vivid picture of the work of a senior ADRA director during the formative years of the agency. In a changing world ADRA became a deliverer of hope often in difficult circumstances."

The highlight of John's achievements, as recounted in the book, was his mission to Albania. Primrose Peacock, both a book author and ecumenical journalist, has had long association with the country. In reviewing the book she writes: "ADRA-Albania is still there long after the majority of other humanitarian organisations have left. The early years were very difficult. The initial ADRA warehouse was looted and destroyed. John and other members of his team were frequently held up, sometimes at gunpoint, by bandits, corrupt police or hooligans.... ADRA-Albania became the envy of some other less well organised charities. ADRA personnel kept a low profile, slept in the warehouse or in modest accommodation, did not use flashy vehicles or eat in expensive venues. After the initial 'aid-delivery' period, ADRA concentrated on useful projects such as the renovation of village clinics, rural schools, under resourced hospitals, professional training, counselling and community welfare. John's book demonstrates that ADRA was and is Christianity in action."

Smit adds, "John is a fabulous storyteller and the reader will be entertained by the book which preserves some of the best stories of ADRA."

Tapping away with his one, good finger, John writes, "God has been very good to me all through life. In particular, I received so many blessings during my years with ADRA that I thought it would be
good to share some of these experiences. My hope is that the book will inspire others to participate in a ministry about which I am passionate."

'Man on a Mission' is available from the Adventist Book Centre (ABC) for £5.99 plus £2.99 postage and packing. Phone: 01476 591 700 or email <sales@stanboroughpress.org.uk>. All royalties from the sale of this book will be donated to ADRA-Albania for further refurbishment of rural schools and clinics.

LATEST MESSENGER ONLINE

The 8 March 2013 MESSENGER highlights 'International development: it's our responsibility'; encourages us to "Hear the other side too" before we make judgement; asks 'How much worse can it get?' – but only as a way of cheering us up, and asks, 'By chance or Intelligence: What does science really say?' Pick up a copy from your local church or read it online.

PROGRAMMES TO WATCH THIS WEEK

Our programme highlights for the coming week:

On Revelation TV (Sky 581 or Freesat 692): Faith Talks returns with discussion and debate surrounding issues central to the Christian faith. Join the debate Thursdays 8:30 pm, repeated Sunday lunchtime, 1:00 pm.

On Hope TV you can watch a wide variety of programmes on the satellite and website. Next week's schedule includes the following UK produced programmes among its much larger international output:

Friday 8 March: 8:00 pm: The Journey: What kind of God?,
8:30 pm: Faith Talks: Why religion is good for children,
Midnight: The Journey: What kind of God?
Sabbath 9 March: 9:00 am & 7:00 pm: The Journey: What kind of God?,
7:30 pm: Faith Talks: Why religion is good for children
Monday 11 March: 12:30 pm: In Conversation: Michael Lattibadare – Growing from abuse,
9:30 pm: Viewpoint: Is violence ever acceptable?
Wednesday 13 March: 8:00 am: Viewpoint: What is truth?,
11:00 pm: In Conversation: Sophia Nicholls – Dealing with disability
Friday 15 March: 8:00 pm: The Journey: Why did Jesus have to die?,
8:30 pm: Faith Talks: Teens and Faith,
Midnight: The Journey: Why did Jesus have to die?
Sabbath 16 March: 9:00 am & 7:00 pm: The Journey: Why did Jesus have to die?,
7:30 pm: Faith Talks: Teens and Faith

COMING EVENTS  For a full listing of Coming Events please visit http://adventist.org.uk/events

Due to changing formats on our website, the possible inclusion of posters, and the increase in the numbers of Coming Events, this section of the newsletter will now be fully updated online and is the best source of events either in your own area, or in another part of the country. Please note: The Coming Events web page is still under some development and date order is still a bit of an
issue. However, this should be resolved over the next few days. Select your region for events nearest to you.

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SMALL ADS

CAN YOU HELP 'SCHOOL BY THE SEA'? An Adventist language school known affectionately as School By The Sea in Kołobrzeg, Poland, urgently requires somebody who can teach conversational English for a period of 3 months, for approximately 20 hours per week, commencing immediately. Housing is provided together with a stipend. There are two other student missionaries, so you will not be alone. The students are great! The local church is fine, too. Unfortunately, the School is unable to cover the cost of a plane ticket. Check out the School's website: www.schoolbythesea.pl. If you are interested, or require additional information, please contact the School's director, Tom Sulej or apply via the Adventist Volunteer Centre.

THE GREAT HOPE VIDEO PROJECT Evangelistic project bridging the age gap between 14 to 70+. The Stanborough Park church AV team undertook this task as a way of promoting the Great Hope project – a GC-led initiative for the world Divisions to promote/distribute copies of the Great Hope (abridged version of Great Controversy) in any format of their own choice. Church members and friends were invited to take part in reading a portion of the book and be filmed doing so. In the end, more than 50 people took part – not all church members – with an age range of 14 to 70+. Videos are now available to the general public on http://Vimeo.com/stanborough/videos. Please contact the AV team at spcavteam@gmail.com if you would like to request these videos on a DVD format or you have a query. This product is not available for sale.

A LIVE-IN CHILD MINDER needed immediately in the Binfield area, Berkshire to look after our 3-year-old son. He starts nursery at Newbold School (a walking distance from the house) this April. For more details please contact Oster on 07825270057 or milambo@btinternet.com.

NEC FAMILY CAMP: 26 July - 4 August. Venue: North England Conference Campsite, Aberdaron. This is the ideal place to have a holiday, introduce your non-member spouse to the Church, watch your children enjoy crafts and outdoor pursuits, enjoy good food, and listen to some thought-provoking worships by Pastor Mick Smart. Come and meet new friends, and see old ones! You may either camp in your own tent or caravan, or rent a tent. Places are limited, so respond immediately to Pastor Paul Clee by phone 01923 677883 or preferably email: paulrclee@gmail.com.

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