PASTORS’ MEETINGS: How to reach secular people

by John Arthur, Publishing director, Trans-European Division

DeBron, the Netherlands’ largest Christian residential centre, was the venue for a European Pastors’ Council arranged by the TED Ministerial Association. Delegates and spouses—more than 900—travelled from all over Europe and beyond. One pastor from England even undertook a return trip of 500 miles by bicycle!

Peter Roennfeldt, organizer-in-chief of the five-day event from 11-16 September, stated that the focus was on several factors which related to the spiritual strength and vitality of the Church. Day 1 was dedicated to personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the enhancement of professional pastoral skills. Day 2 dealt with the development of healthy churches, while Day 3 was directed to more effective evangelism and church planting. Sabbath meetings on Day 4 provided fresh insights into meaningful, God-glorying worship.

Three hours before the opening of the council came news of the horrific events in the USA. Obviously, the thoughts of all delegates were directed towards the thousands of grieving relatives of those whose lives came to such an abrupt end. Special prayers were not only offered at the opening meeting but during the early morning moments for meditation, and throughout each day of the gathering. Attendees experienced much inspiration during the plenary and workshop sessions, only to be overwhelmed by disbelief and sorrow as CNN images from New York and Washington were flashed onto a giant screen regularly.

Right at the outset, Bertil Wiklander, the TED president, emphasized that ‘Growing Together’ was the theme of the Division’s strategic plan. ‘An ongoing process of growth must be experienced by each field, each church, and each individual,’ he stated. This theme was well amplified through an attractively-printed 69-page booklet which was distributed to all the delegates. Wiklander also highlighted the TED mission statement, which is ‘to help our fields achieve substantial, long-term growth by providing exceptional service and witness.’ At the end of his presentation a newly-produced TED video was watched during intervals and at the end of each day’s programme by a majority of the delegates.

Russell Burill:
‘Jesus’ passion for the lost made church people feel uncomfortable.’
‘It is more comfortable to sit in a church pew than to call at doors.’
‘During our early days, local churches cared for themselves, thus leaving the pastors to evangelize.’

Hamilton Williams:
‘Ezekiel was assigned to the worst district in the country — the valley of dry bones!’
Paul Lee song causes record hits on website

On Friday 21 September the BUC website received a record number of visits. Over 960 visits were recorded in one hour, topping the previous week’s peak hour. The average number of visits to the website during September has been just under 200 a day and, according to BUC Communication director and webmaster John Surridge, the spectacular increase was due to a number of factors. One of which he says, really caught people’s interest was a new song which we put on the website in a number of different formats,” he said. ‘Written jointly by Paul Lee and Ken Burton, the song entitled Growing Together was used as the theme song for the Euro Pastor’s Council in Dalriot, Holland, where it went down very well with the international audience of nearly 900 pastors and other Church workers. Following its success in Holland Paul Lee and Ken Burton agreed to allow us to promote the song on the BUC website so that it could be used in Adventist churches throughout the UK and Ireland. Over the weekend of 21-23 September the song was downloaded around 140 times – hope this was also sung in a number of our churches.”

In addition to the song, the BUC is also extending its ‘gallery’ section recently. Altogether, more than 1,500 images are available on the site, covering a wide range of events such as: Camp Meetings, the National Teens’ Day, The Stan- ton Green Press and the Euro Pastors’ Outreach. Photographs of the new ‘gallery’ images in the BUC’s weekly email news-letter, BUC News, could also have contributed to the record number of hits, said Pastor Surridge. The BUC website is located at: www.adventist.org.uk and anyone with email facilities can join the over 10,000 people who already receive weekly copies of BUC News. Simply send your name and email address to: bucrews@adventist.org.uk.

The Peace of the Potter

In one of those years, like this one, when there was war – jihad, infidela, whatever they were calling it – I stood on a hill outside Hebron. I was watching an old Arab farmer at work, and had one foot in his shop and one foot outside. I could hear death-dealing machinery down below. From the hills there was the occasional crack of rifle fire.

Down in the town where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were buried, factions were fighting it out over some new Israeli apartment block which had been built in the wrong place. Town planning is high politics over there. People were fighting and dying, and siren-sounding ambulance were removing the blood-drenched human body parts. They preferred to look back to the potter. He worked intently at the wheel. The fast pace of his work knew no change and no delay. He was by no means oblivious to the conflict below him but it did not deflect him from his central purpose: producing vessels of every conceivable shape and size.

Down in the valley the protagonists in the conflict took no account of the potter. Had they been aware of his work they would have considered it far more important than their conflict and their killing.

When the potter paused in his work, I engaged him in conversation. He shared his vision with me. He is memory was long and he vocalized his perceptions of the past as a future, for he looked back to a time when his benign spirit would be shared by all the ‘youthful potentates’ of the valley. As he spoke of his wish for ethnic and religious groups to learn to live in peace side by side, I quizzed him about his political ideology. He had none! The ideas for which he stood would not, he admitted, win votes for any political party. The peaceful society for which he prayed would never be brought into being by politicians or diplomats.

The potter, you see, was a revolutionary. And the revolution he believed in was total. He believed in a revolution within the individual. Only if individuals were reformed – not so much, completely, from the inside – and as self was smashed could there be any hope for Hebron or anywhere else.

Looking back at my interview with the Hebron potter, I recall God’s words to Jeremiah. ‘Go down to the potter’s house, and there I shall tell you what I have to say.’ I went down to the potter’s house, where I found him working at the wheel. Now and then a vessel he was making from the clay would be spoilt in his hands, and he would remould it into another vessel to his liking. ‘Jeremiah 18:2-4, R.E.B’ I read. Both Isaiah and Paul saw God as the potter and humans as the clay in His hands. (Isaiah 64:8; Romans 9:22, R.E.B.) ‘Inspired by the picture of the potter, George C. Stebbings (1846-1945) wrote a hymn which begins with the words, “A’w him awne own, L’or! A’w him awne own way! H’tou art the potter; I am the clay! A’ould me and make me after thy will! H’i’ll H’m I am waiting, yielded and still.” ’

From the mud-flats of Babylon, Ezekiel the slave – moving mud into the mouth of the river, coming from the north. With the storm came a sight he could not understand: stabs of lightning, a heart of fire, a vast engine of complex technology. The scene was so complicated – there was so much going on – that it appeared to total confusion (Ezekiel chapter 1).

On the mud-flats B of Babylon, Ezekiel the slave – the moving mud at fifty buckets an hour – was finding life particularly confusing. The country from which he came had been flattened by a ferocious enemy. The very idea of ‘home’ was lost to him for ever. He was a thousand miles from the comfortable and familiar. Suddenly, in the midst of the startling vision of lighting, fire and wheels, Ezekiel saw something and understood something that put everything else in its place. God was on H Is throne and God’s hand was guiding the apparent confusion of the times.

Behind the confusion of today the Eternal One would have us catch the vision of Ezekiel’s Persian throne and would have us understand that His hand is still on the wheel. Even now may we know the peace of the Potter.

Death by postcode

We have known for years that household insurance is based on postcode, but may have been unaware that the ‘Grime Reaper’ has had access to the same data?

The Office for National Statistics has recently published its report, Geographic Variations in Health, which shows that where you live can make a difference to your health and the way that you might die. Various factors are involved, ranging from access to services to the weather. Personal and popula-

dation behaviours are still the prime deciding factors, however secondary circumstances are involved.

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The date for next year’s Camp Meeting will be announced shortly.

‘BEST CAMP MEETING EVER’

A report on the NEC Camp Meeting, 3-9 September

by Des Rafferty, NEC Communication sponsor, and Trevor Thomas

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Pastor Henry Wright: ‘Best camp meeting ever,’ was the verdict of those who attended the North England Conference Camp Meeting in Southport.

Over 750 people gathered on Monday 3 September at the Pontins Holiday Park near Liverpool, a figure which increased to approximately 1,500 by the weekend.

Two speakers. Some came for the preaching, some for the fellowship, others were uncertain, but all were introduced to Jesus under the banner of ‘Let’s talk Jesus.’

Pastors Henry Wright and John Lomacang exhibited a re-freshing unity of spirit and purpose as they preached the story of Jesus. The messages were further reinforced as Pastor Lomacang’s mellifluous tones re-echoed the story of Jesus in song.

Like a modern Paul and Timothy, in song and in the spoken word our guest speakers lifted up Jesus.

Henry Wright, Pastor Henry Wright will always be dear to the N E C, he was the speaker at the first two NEC Camp M eetings in Scarborough back in 1986 and 1987. So to welcome him this year was like a homecoming, a reuniting of old friends.

The day started with this the sweet experience of making new friends with John and Angela Lomacang. ‘Pastor Lomacang’s professional, confident style and Christ-centred messages have made his meetings compelling to all. His warm manner draws his listeners into his messages, and his use of language, illustration and application makes them relevant to everyday life,’ said one observer.

Lear ning opportunities. Camp Meeting also provided a wealth of learning opportunities. Workshops, health lectures and Bible studies enriched our daily experience. There were workshops on areas such as marriage relationships, women’s issues, vibrant personal ministries, young people in post-modern culture, and radio ministry; to name only a few.

A first this year was a Debt Management seminar presented by Angela Purkiss, NEC assistant treasurer, who said, ‘It was an opportunity to share the financial freedom that God desires for us.’ One participant commented afterwards, ‘It is reassuring to know that the church cares enough to discuss an old taboo and empower us with debt management solutions. Thank you.’

Children and Youth. While the adults were enjoying a spiritual feast, the many children on site were provided with a challenge of their own. Every day an army of volunteers catered for their needs with a variety of arts and crafts while the children expressed their love for, and hope in, Jesus.

Friday evening’s singing of the theme song, ‘More about Jesus I Would Know,’ was particularly memorable as over one thousand people gathered around the table of the Lord, reaching out for reassurance, yearning for forgiveness. They received their hearts’ desire as they took the emblems, the bread and the wine.

Sabbath celebration. The Sabbath celebration proved to be a wonderful occasion of back-to-back preaching, singing, that lifted us to the very courts of Heaven, and fellowship that no amount of money could ever buy. One member echoed the words of the hymn we know so well, ‘Who can cheer the heart like Jesus, by His presence all divine.’

Pastor John Lomacang invited everyone to hear his testimony on Sabbath afternoon. In a concert-style programme he mingled his testimony with songs of deliverance and assurance. He told of his experience as a child of an upbringing that knowing his natural mother was forbidden and seemingly rejected – and how, over the years, the desire to be united grew stronger and stronger until, at last, guided by the hand of God, he had the pleasure of being reconciled with his mother. The greatest pleasure, however, was to witness her reconciliation with Jesus before she died. Now there is the hope of joy, endless joy, when they are reunited in the Earth made new.

Song and Story. A former member of the Heritage Singers, Pastor Lomacang’s pedigree was evident. One church member, with all the passion and fervour he could muster, said, ‘He really sings great.’ Beside Pastor Lomacang (actually in the sound engineers’ box) stood his British-born wife Angela, herself an accomplished sound engineer, their synchronized ministry having a profound effect on everyone. If any were moved to tears by the telling of his experience.

In the final evening meeting of the camp, one last appeal was made. A piebal throughout the week had not been laboured but were simple and extremely effective. Night after night, men, women and children had come forward in large numbers after they had seen and heard Jesus. But the last night was different; in response to an invitation from Jesus eloquently expressed by His messenger Pastor Wright, some hundred people filled the front of the auditorium in answer to Heaven’s call.

The event is of spiritual value and importance and that it continues to excel year on year, this now being the best Camp Meeting ever. It further more indicates that when the members come to Camp Meeting they love and enjoy the experience.

Newport Investiture

Sabbath evening 14 July was an exciting time for Juniors and Pathfinders. Resplendent in spotless uniforms and ready to give of their best, they demonstrated what they had learned in the past year. The hymns were chosen by the youth, and the Scripture (John 3:16) was presented in M orse code by Etian Schoonraad.

Daniel, Luke and Joshua repeated the Adventure Law and Pledge, and Darren Hanson recited Psalm 23. The seniors gave a sketch depicting the controversy between Satan and Christians.

Following the investiture, a vote of thanks was given to Susan Hanson and M arrick Schoonraad by Helen Luckham, Pathfinder leader.

Six-year-old Luke Allman delivered the annual sermon for courageously taking his part in the programme with a black eye and a stolen jaw as the result of a fall from his bicycle.

Awards were as follows: Luke Allman, Daniel Hamblin – Sunbeam; Joshua Allman – Builder. In each of these two groups honours were earned: Bible 1, Bible 2, Art, Spotter, Fitness Fun, Media Critic, Swimming 1, Friends of Nature, Temperance, Road Safety and Wine Steward. Darren Hanson – Friend; David Hamblin – Companion, E Taliban Schoonraad, Robert Hanson – Rangers; Leandi Schoonraad – Voyager; Matthew Luckham – Wilderness Ranger and Guide. These earned the following honours between them: Brading, Soapcraft, Dogs, Shrubs, Campcraft, Artisan Master, Naturalist Master, Mammals, Marine Mammals, and Small Mammals.

VERA MACHELL

Greenwich Women’s Ministries

On 9 June a packed Greenwich church was spellbound by a message presented by a young person, Shirley Grant. Her topic was ‘A Woman with a Mission’.

JOYCE CERES

Corrigendum

Missouri 106/20 page 8. Lattner on church planting. For Paul Gray read Paula Gray. I have not had a sex change. Paula Gray.

JOHN

New Teens’ club to start in Yeovil

Do you have any second-hand instruments – guitars, recorders, tambourines, etc? Also second-hand snooker tables, table-tennis table or other leisure equipment, this year being the best? Dana or Leslie King, Yeovil, (01935) 45953 or email: Ldsgking@aol.com. Many thanks.
The Growth of the Ghanaian work in Britain

by Dr E. Sackey

The political unrest, socio-economic instability and educational or academic uncertainties in Britain, especially the long distance from the Ghanaian churches, resulted in many people migrating to the developed world to seek political asylum, work or education. Ghanaians are no exception to this trend. Many Ghanaians have found themselves almost everywhere on the globe, including the United Kingdom.

London Ghana Adventist Church

Included in the first wave of Ghanaians who came to London in 1968 were very active Adventists from all walks of life. Unfortunately, most of them were dispersed in a rather cold welcome and were classed as perpetual visitors to the churches where they worshipped. Consequently, most of them, if not all, stopped attending church altogether.

Within the last twelve months we have seen the birth of a Bulgarian group and a Russian church (not yet organized), the planting of four more churches in London, Slough, Bracknell, Reading, and Ascot, and the establishment of a separate community/area-based church in the south of London. Soon, they will be separated into separate churches.

South West London Ghana congregation

In about 1965, six of them came together and started a prayer group, moving from house to house. They were: Pastor George Okumu-Camerra of the Central church in North London, Pastors George Sekyi Dadey, Jun, and Ivan Sackey due to the growing membership, which increased to over seventy. In January 1968, the leadership mantle was passed on to George S. Dadey, jun, a quiet young man who had just finished Woodhouse College. At that time the Fellowship was meeting once a month. The introduction of the New Church Manual as the yardstick of the Fellowship’s contribution, which resulted in a split. More than half the membership left the group, leaving about thirty. But the following February, the Centenary Anniversary was celebrated at the John Loughborough School, where the first meeting was held, and with Pastor Dr. Paul Acheampong from America as the guest speaker. That marked the beginning of the present group.

The Fellowship, the membership of which increased to about sixty, held another meeting in 1971. This was the beginning of the present group. It was at this meeting that the idea of organizing the Fellowship into the London Ghana church was born. At an Easter Sabbath in 1973, the New Church Manual was adopted, the new church was organized, and the leader, Brother Dadey, was asked to appoint a new team to meet with Pastor McFarlane, SEC president. In February 1974, we met as the church president to present our request, which was accepted by the Executive Committee. The response was not favourable, the Executive Committee proposed that we should be organized into a Branch Sabbath School. This proposal was rejected outright, and our progress towards church organization was held up. On October that year, when at the B.U.C. Convention, elected B.U.C. president and, subsequently, Pastor D. W. M. Sackey became president of SEC.

Soon afterwards, the delegation from London was asked to congratulate him and to submit our request. Again it was rejected outright, and a smaller delegation was asked to explain our case. The Executive Committee proposed that we should be organized into a Branch Sabbath School. This proposal was rejected outright, and our progress towards church organization was held up. On October that year, when at the B.U.C. Convention, elected B.U.C. president and, subsequently, Pastor D. W. M. Sackey became president of SEC.

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The Epsom church plant was the birth of the Epsom Community Fellowship, the vision of the church to reach people of all races and background as an effective means of spreading the Gospel. We believe that these new churches will be a seed to reach people of all races and background as an effective means of spreading the Gospel.
George Knight, another lecturer from Andreas, covered the topic, ‘Adventist Identity and Pastoral Confidence’. One of the major themes for the church was plant growth. No doubt every delegate present would love to have a large and present a serious of evangelistic lectures climaxing in a baptism. However, the current reality throughout most of Europe is that this method no longer works. Different tactics are called for if a post-Christian generation is to be reached with the Gospel. To this end, Russell Berrill, director of the North American Evangelism Institute and chair of the Christian Missionary department of Andreas University Seminary, gave several talks. God is passionate about reaching lost people, and we must share that passion,’ was one of his many punchlines. Caring for existing Christians should not consume so much of the Church’s resources. Most of the lost may not look like us, or speak like us, but we have the means to reach them. More of our time, talents and treasures must be devoted to prioritizing the harvest.

The welcoming of the Sabbath at Friday evening vespers was a memorable experience. Richard Ellef, president of the Israel Field, together with seven other delegates from that region dressed in appropriate attire, portrayed a typical Jewish celebration of the Sabbath. Following the sound of a soprano saxophone, two candles were lit to signify the presence of God. Bread and wine were then consumed by the participants in harmony with Jewish custom (not connected with the communion service), and a special prayer was offered in Hebrew for the Creator God to manifest His presence on this Holy day.

A delightful feature of the council was the music. Words of hymns old and new were beamed onto three large screens, and those from many language groups joined in with full heart and voice. Each evening the theme was directed towards ‘Cutting Edge Ministries’, when testimonies and visual presentations were given regarding some of the current outreach projects and experiments which are taking place. Lack of space will not permit more than the mention of church plantings programmes in Greece which were reported on the Sabbath morning by Mission President Apostolis Maglis. For many years there were only six churches in the whole country, and enormous difficulties were experienced in connection with evangelism because of the negative influence of the Orthodox Church towards other religious persuasions. However, since 1997, seven more groups have been established. Delegates rejoiced over this good news, and the offering for the day was donated to a new church initiative at Zaharo in western Greece.

Dr Willander then continued his theme of church growth. Using a somewhat humorous but pertinent illustration, he referred to the English football team which won the World Cup in 1966 then did virtually nothing for the next thirty-five years other than build its former glory. Recently, however, the team had become more focused (under Swedish management) and a very notable victory had just been achieved on German soil. ‘Is it possible,’ questioned Willander, ‘that the Mormon Church just thinks in terms of past performance rather than wholeheartedly addressing the challenges of today?’

During the final meeting Monday Pujic, TED Communication director, launched a new Life Development package consisting of videos, CDs, and printed materials specifically designed to reach secular people in a non-threatening manner. A prayer of recommitment to God was responded to by Pastor Cecil Perry, president of the British Union.

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