In his book, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, Thomas Keneally describes Ireland as 'a little island at the edge of Europe'. And so it was on this little island on 6 and 7 November, in the Belfast Adventist church, that members came together to rejoice in all that the Lord had done.

The theme for the weekend was 'Rejoicing in His Fellowship', and the guest speaker was Pastor Llew Edwards, the Scottish Mission president. On the Sabbath morning Pastor Edwards spoke of the Power of Grace. He painted for us a courtroom scene that came to us by Douglas McCormac from Zechariah and described the various characters who were present: God the Judge, Joshua the High Priest and Satan the prosecuting attorney. He shared a vision of a God who accepts sinners for who they are and said that the business of the Church is to be a channel of God's grace.

In the afternoon after everyone had had their fill of food and caught up with old friends, we came together once again to hear from each of the churches around the mission. We heard from four churches in the North and South about their experiences in connection with the stands they have organised at agricultural shows. We learned of efforts to reach the unchurched youth around the Larme church in Club Seven. We listened to Aralon as he shared how inmates from the local prison had worked hard at renovating the Derry church and how their building was being used for various community initiatives. Ashley shared one experience in which he witnessed to a small group of Brazilian believers, through a casual introduction over a petrol pump. We heard stories from all over the mission, and Pastor Cecil Perry closed the programme with a devotional from 1 John 1.

The Mission Session was formally opened at 5pm on Saturday night with the singing of the great hymn 'Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee'. Mission president Pastor Curtis Murphy then introduced Councillor Ruth Patterson, High Sheriff of Belfast and DUP councillor. She welcomed the members and
Hope may have been the only thing left for many at the end of 2004. The ground had shifted from under their feet. Human and natural disasters had left them a legacy of bad memories, hardship and destitution. Many of us can identify with the hundreds of Christians who have lost loved ones and possessions and are living through the realisation of the hope of Christ's coming to usher in a new order of things.

Nevertheless, we have every reason to thank God for the outpouring of his blessings in the world – imperfect as it is – and more so on his church.

The churches in the British Union Conference have experienced growth in membership and financial support through the faithfulness in witness and stewardship of its members.

Bold ventures

The launch of the LIFEdevelopment.info evangelical initiative was one of our bold ventures into the world of secular postmodernism. This long-term outreach series has already engaged the minds of many in our Union and others throughout the Trans-European Division.

The availability of the Hope Channel to broaden our witness has moved us into a new era of communications. The broadcast of the ‘Evidence’ series with Dwight Nelson as host speaker and Gillian (Joseph IBC) as co-host opened up for us unlimited possibilities to reach a wider audience.

The physical growth of the church has been enhanced by the ebdb and flow of immigrants who have added new vitality to some of our churches and buoyed seams to others. The challenge of accommodating this expanding diversity in our churches gives us more room for developing our spiritual maturity and outreach as to the inclusiveness of the Gospel.

Outlook

The outlook for 2005, half a decade into the twenty-first century, comes stamped with God's promise: ‘For I know the thoughts [plans] that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope’. (Jeremiah 29:11, NKJV)

Therefore we can afford to be optimistic of another New Year knowing that we are in God's thoughts or plans. In a world of growingly restrictive industrial legislation, broadening linguistic culture and a hardening, unforgiving and uncompromising lifestyle, the church must carry out its God-given mission.

The New Year provides us with another opportunity for spiritual growth and togetherness. It can be a time when we can use the momentum to focus on the main reason why the church exists, that is 'to seek and save the lost'. This we can do through establishing small groups, personal and public evangelism, literature/prayer ministries, engaging in the initiatives of LIFEdevelopment.info, conducting Bible Seminars and Correspondence Schools, and media evangelism.

Choose your ministry

As you think about your New Year commitment to God's plan for your life and your church please choose one ministry that harmonizes with your spiritual gift. God promises to empower and enable those who are hungry and thirsting to give the bread of life to their neighbours.

As the New Year opens may I request that you pay attention to the many special events and offerings for 2005, the year of the General Conference Session and penultimate year of the BUC's. Join the world church in praying for the church living in hostile areas of the world where religious freedom is limited or denied. The membership of our church has passed the thirteen million mark. Contingent on this growth are more so on his church.

Recommitment

Let the dawn of 2005 be a time of recommitment. Let us recommit to the Christian values which have characterised our mission to the world over the years. Meaningful mission involves service and sacrifice. It is a service which is acceptable and holy to God and one that demonstrates itself in meaningful worship and meeting human needs, whether through mission work or projects.

Living in 2005 can be exciting for all of us, if we see it through the eyes of Jesus and our role in God's unfolding drama to reconcile the world to himself. See it through the eyes of Jesus and our role in God's unfolding drama to reconcile the world to himself.

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Newbold Pathfinders send Christmas gifts

Children at the Newbold church had to make an early start for Christmas, wrapping their first gifts in late October. Those gifts had a long way to travel. The thirty-one packages that the church’s Pathfinders packed left on a journey of more than 1,000 miles to an orphanage in Serbia.

Money to buy the gifts and packing materials came from an anonymous donation of £400 to the mother of the Pathfinder group’s leader, according to area co-ordinator Pat Drydock.

Most of the children at the Newbold Pathfinders packed for are between the ages of 8 and 16. Ana Plank, 11, a Year 10 student at St Crispin’s, wrapped up a box with gloves, a scarf and a mini-spa pack with health and beauty items for a girl aged 14-16.

‘Being 15, it’s what I would want for Christmas,’ Ana said.

There are more than forty students in the Newbold Pathfinder group that meets every other Sunday at Salisbury Hall on the campus of Newbold College in Binfield.

Tea with the Queen

Frank Horne, an 89-year-old ex-army cook, was baptised into the Adventist Church, Manchester, donal on 9 October 2003, in his wife Ann’s 40th year of breast cancer. He continued to live in the Manchester area, but his health caused him to move to Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, to be near his one-year-old granddaughter. It was a terrible blow to Frank when he found out that his daughter too had breast cancer, and in November 2003 the worst.

Frank first knew about the invitation to Tea with the Queen from the Deaf/Blind Society in Peterborough in March last year. Although he knew about it, he still couldn’t believe it when the invitation came. He said he called his friend and neighbour Sheila, and told her that the invitation had arrived. She came over straight away, read the invitation, and said, ‘Yes, Frank, you are going to the Palace.’ The members of Wesfield were so happy for Frank, whose membership was transferred from Sale church in 1991.

The big day came and Sharon Taylor, a carer from the Deaf/Blind Society, accompanied Frank, travelling by train to Euston Station, London, then by taxi to the Palace, arriving at 2pm. They had two hours to tour the Palace and were excelled with all they saw.

At 4pm the national anthem was played, announcing the arrival of the Queen and other members of the royal family. The Queen did a presentation before a large gathering, then thirty people were invited into the royal tea tent, including Frank, to have tea with the Queen. Frank informed me that the Duke of Edinburgh and Prince Charles smiled at him, and Prince Edward shook his hand. The Queen sat about three feet away from him and, while they ate, two bands played beautifully.

Frank said, ‘This day was one of the best days of my life, but my only regret was that my daughter wasn’t alive to share this wonderful experience.’

Prayer & Bible Conference

Over the weekend of 22-24 October ninety-six people spent their time at Stanborough School, praying, studying and praising God together. The conference was hosted by the Youth Department in response to the growing demand for more Bible-focused retreats.

The Prayer & Bible Conference was oversubscribed and, if the accommodation had allowed, could have had 140 people stay for the whole weekend. Even so, many people came down just for the Sabbath to catch a taste. The tranquil surroundings of Stanborough School lent to this experience.

Pastor Steve Peter, former youth director for the North Church and instigator of Prayer Worries, was guest speaker. The London Youth Fellowship Praise Team and Band gracefully led us into worship. ‘The team was out- standing,’ and they were ‘a real blessing to have around’, were the thoughts of two attendees. The conference aimed to introduce young people to the joys of personal Bible study and teach them how to pray with power. To this end the small group studies and the worship services highlighted and taught these elements. One attendee, Narraser, said ‘Thank you for a great weekend. It has brought me closer to God.’

This conference-wide event had people attending from Kent, Bristol, Milton Keynes, London, Newbold, Watford, Surry, Cambridge, Wiltshire and Essex. We also had people attend from the NEC – Birmingham and Nottingham. The mix of people was so refreshing! It was a positive weekend because young people were able to study the Bible with like-minded young people, and it was encouraging to have the assistance of the older members. The small group studies were focused on the life and times of Elisha. The theme for the weekend was ‘Upholding the Flame’ and there was a real sense that the power that accompanied this mighty prophet of God was there for us all.

The next Prayer & Bible Conference is planned for 25-27 February 2005. Please contact Pastor Robert Hines at the SEC Youth: Minister department for more details - rhines@secadventist.org.uk

Leamington baptism

Two young people were baptised by father and grandfather.

On Sabbath 23 October the Leamington Spa Mission was packed to the doors, and praise was even more joyous than usual. It was the baptism of two young people, David Harlin and James Watson. Friends and family from far and near joined them in their special day as they made a public declaration to follow Jesus.

Both were joyfully privileged to be baptised by someone special. David was baptised by his grandfather Roy Burgess and James by his father Malcolm Weston. The service was an uplifting and encouraging one and the Leamington church is proud and pleased to welcome James and David.

Peckham baptism

October 9 was a high day in Peckham. Two more people had decided to give their lives to Christ. Our pastor, Wilfred Blake, baptised both candidates. They were Vernon Clements, whose wife Annette Clements was a member of the Willesden church but had decided to transfer her membership to Peckham on the same day as her husband’s baptism! The other candidate was Margaret Byame who had been regularly attending Peckham but decided the time was now.

The church was full and there was rejoicing, not only in heaven but here in Peckham.

Margaret said: ‘Lord, I thank you that you have called me with a holy calling to your purpose and grace, which was given in Christ Jesus. I know that your plan for me existed before I knew you.’

Vernon said: ‘Lord, I thank you for bringing me back into the fold. I was lost but now I am found.’

Bournemouth baptism

On Sabbath 6 November, Bournemouth church celebrated the baptism of Cassia Albina da Souza. Along with her new church family, Cassia’s circle of close friends came to witness her commitment to Christ.

Her close friend Junior told us how his earnest prayers had been answered.
Newbold hosts lecture on race in the British Union 1950-70

by Helen Pearson

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two years after completing a visit as the first black female president of the Newbold Student Association and graduating from Newbold with a degree in Humanities (see photo), Anthea Keough delivered to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Britain between 1950 and 1960. Her lecture presented just a small part of that research. She began with a description of the negative reception given to West Indians in the wider society during the early 1950s. Then followed her question: ‘In what ways was the Seventh-day Adventist Church different from the rest of society, in its attitude to West Indian immigrants?’ The answer ‘from folklore and memory’ was ‘while the number of immigrants migration was small, the welcome was warm’. But as the numbers grew, so did signs of tension and antagonism between the administration of the Adventist Church and the immigrants over such things as wages, religious beliefs, and so on. Anthea cited corresponding documentation proving powers along racial lines over the holding of church offices, the distribution of social welfare resources, and the admission of West Indian students into the college. Her account distinguished between racism among some administrators, and the more pervasive personal relationships between immigrants and local congregations and parishes.

The lecture also addressed the effect of West Indian immigration on the evangelistic outreach of the Adventist Church in the British Union, and the suggestion that West Indian immigration prevented the Church from gaining the indigenous population of the UK. Anthea cited a study which showed falling membership figures in churches during the 1960s and 70s, and figures from Americans and the British Union Missions which showed that even where predominant numbers of members were white, none of the Missions had grown by more than 100 members between 1950 and 1970.

A quotation from a Church leader in the early 50s suggested that the indigenous membership was in decline before the West Indian influx. ‘Our evangelistic efforts were far more successful in the West Indian community than with the local society at large’, he said, ‘we can only say if this is the church that I love, then what is it? ’ Dr David Trim, lecturer in history at Newbold, said: ‘There has been a long unwillingness in the Church to confront the problem of racism. All of that has to be looked at, not just today, but how can we move forward? ’

The entire service was such a great opportunity, with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus.

Sady the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad the goal, Sylvia and Adrian to be with my wonderful Saviour who is our Lord and Jesus. I am sad.
Driven by Grace
degrees of the Adventist Church in Belfast, then spoke of the vibrancy and energy that could be found in the wonderful city of Belfast and how over the years the city had changed despite the troubles and the fragility of the place. She thanked Pastor Murphy for his invitation and he, in turn, presented Councillor Patterson with a small token of gratitude.
Pastor Edwards then gave the keynote address entitled ‘Wonderful Grace’. Taking the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, he explored what made up the church, and asked what was its DNA and what was it that motivated the members. He took the experience of Paul’s storing at Lystra and asked what it was that motivated him to get up despite the hardship – and to keep preaching Christ. He told us that ‘Paul was driven by grace’ and he challenged us to consider what was driving us.
After the preliminaries on Saturday evening it was time for Pastor Murphy to give the President’s Report, which began with an impressive video presentation skillfully put together by Chris Riley a student missionary from Tasmania. Pastor Murphy thanked all those who had worked so hard over the past three years. Special appreciation was recorded for the support of the Emerald Foundation which raises funds to maintain Granacre House School in Galway, and to those who had been a part of the mission over the years but had moved on to new pastures.
Over the remainder of the weekend we heard from each of the various departments and how God had blessed the work in Ireland. Many took the opportunity to ask questions and explore a little further what had been happening and to make suggestions for the future.
As we look to the future we pray that God will continue to be the guiding influence that he has been over the years and that the Adventist Church in Ireland will continue to flourish and grow.