It dropped through my letterbox the other day, not the pearl, just the promise of some inside information that might lead me to a pearl or two. As one of their valued customers I had been selected to receive information about a special investment plan.

Dear Mr . . .

With our uncertain economy, it is more important than ever not only to prepare for coming years, but to choose investment wisely. That’s why XXXX has been designed with three distinct advantages for the careful investor.

First, this XXXX can offer you the opportunity of real growth on your regular savings because your investments are linked to stocks, shares and other securities.

Second, the XXXX offers returns that are free from all personal liability to income and capital gains tax for those who are basic rate taxpayers. So money realised from your account, money that rightfully belongs to you, won’t end up going to the taxman instead!

Finally, this XXXX offers you a high degree of flexibility, as you’ll read below, because it enables you to take advantage of a wide variety of valuable features and options.

But, just in case this wide variety of valuable features and options was insufficient to persuade me that I was on the trail to my pearl of great price, I was reminded that a free plastic alarm radio with auto wake music or buzzer, snooze facility and 2-wave-band radio was mine for the taking if I applied before the deadline. Why wait?

Now I know there are grave dangers in thinking about life in investment terms—the worst extremes of which have been highlighted among the televangelists on the other side of the pond—although most of us know that these dangers are not unique to just one side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Nevertheless it was the Master himself who said: ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’ (Matthew 6:20, 21.)

God is the greatest Investor this planet has ever seen. Think of the investment he has made in this one little world tucked away in the corner of his limitless universe. Think of his initial personal investment in terms of planning and resources. Think of his tremendous injection of further capital and personnel to meet emergency after emergency created by man’s rebellion. Yes, God is a great investor!

But more than that, he offers us the invitation to share in his investment. His multinational set-up has always been a stakeholder society.

It was the same Master who told the story of the ‘rich fool’ in response to someone who tried to persuade him to get involved in securing him a greater share of his late father’s estate. The story ends with the punch line: ‘This is how it is with those who pile up riches for themselves, but are not rich towards God!’ (See Luke 12:21.)

What a privilege! Being a shareholder in the most audacious project in the universe!

God’s call to ministry. ‘It is encouraging to hear the variety of experiences in being attracted into ministry these days. That technical language.’ said Irwin Larrier, a postgraduate theology student from Newbold. ‘I would describe it as “testing our vision” but that would be more technical language.

“We hear so much that young people are not being attracted into ministry these days. That perception has been denied by the people we have heard today,” said Pastor Evan Lowe, secretary of the British Union Conference. ‘It has been very encouraging to hear the experiences in young people’s lives which lead them to sense God’s call to ministry.”

Acknowledgement

The treasurer of the North England Conference acknowledges that payments for advertisements should be paid to: Harald Wollan, Executive Secretary, Trans-Atlantic Division, c/o the addresses of two referees should be sent to: Harald Wollan, Executive Secretary, Trans-Atlantic Division, 1002 South Euclid Avenue, St. Albans, AL1 3EY.

Job Opportunity – Senior Management Accountant

The British Union Conference in conjunction with the Trans-Atlantic Division is seeking a Senior Management Accountant. The position is based at the main office in London. The successful candidate will have a professional qualification in accounting and be able to meet deadlines and work under pressure. A good cross-cultural understanding is required.

The duties include:

- The preparation of monthly financial statements and reports
- The preparation of annual budgets
- The preparation of annual financial statements
- The preparation of annual financial budgets

The successful candidate will have experience in the religious or social service sector.

Willing Spirits

10th Anniversary Celebration

St Albans, Ullswater Alexander & Reunion

7pm, Saturday 19 March

Lytham Thesaur, Birmingham & Radcliffe Institute,
5 Margaret Street, Birmingham B3 1AA

Call Deanne Jackson, Harper Bell Church, 0121 693 7442 (office hours)

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Not just any old party

Friday 14 January was a day of celebration shared with the residents of The Dell in Quilton Broad. There were 102 reasons why all were gathered in the lounge, cameras clicking and faces smiling. It was the occasion of Irene Osborne’s birthday, but not just any birthday as you may have guessed. Irene was born in 1903 and it was her 102nd birthday.

We were reminded that she was born before we had polo jobs or pensilins, radios or refrigerators, television or the Internet, and before men walked on the moon. We listened with pleasure to poems and songs performed by members of the Waveney Singers, a popular local group invited for the occasion by Alan Soper, the managing director of The Dell. Irene was thrilled to receive flowers, a mountain of cards, and a special box of mint chocolates from the Houses of Parliament, given to her by the local MP Bob Blizzard, who came in person and helped her cut her birthday cake.

Irene told us that she gave her heart to Jesus when she was 8 and has never regretted it as she has led her all her life. We were glad to rejoice with her and praise the Lord that her life continues to blossom and encourage others to this day.

F. PEARCE

Four baptised at Walthamstow

On 29 January four young ladies were baptised by Pastor Leslie Ackle. They were Rebecca Bodkin, Hannah Linto, Le-Jheal Williams, and Monica Nicole.

Three of the candidates have grown up in Walthamstow church and have all been using their gifts and talents already in teen ministry, singing, puppet ministry, playing the clarinet, acting, public speaking, and encouraging. All are endowed with warm personalities. The candidates are already looking forward to serving in their new roles, including teaching and singing in the children’s services, youth department and Communication assistant.

The families and friends of the candidates came as far away as Wales for this special day.

The elders who conducted the Bible studies with the young ladies spoke candidly about the challenging questions they had been asked during their studies. It was an emotion\al occasion with many tears of joy being shed by families, friends and candidates.

In 2004 many of you wondered where they were. In 2003 many of you sent shoeboxes to Latvia. How did so many of you who were unaware of one another but same church join forces to do this? The pastors, elders, their wives, church experts and experts from local organisations. First Aid, good manners, cooking skills, profanity, blasphemy, etc. Pastor Jude Jeanville – one of many ministers from various denominations – thought about the new inmates Jerry Springer TV programme. While other ministers pointed out the obvious in terms of profoundly, democracy, Jeanville focused on the underlying message of the programme that there is no you or I that was just sides of the same coin.

The reporters were impressed, stating that this was an act that everyone else had missed.

Conclusions should go to Pastor Jeanville, as it is more likely than not that this statement will be published rather than the usual comments about the programme, which will once again highlight the positive message of our faith.

SITUATIONS VACANT

STANBOROUGH PRIMARY SCHOOL

The post of Nursery Manager will be available from September 2005. If you would like to join our team and be enthusiastic, innovative and committed to quality learning, experience, a Minimum Level 2 in Early Years, and a good understanding of health and safety, then we can provide the best possible support. Please send CV to: The Headteacher, Stanborough Primary School, Ashington Road, Colchester, Essex.

BRITISH UNION CONFERENCE

Full-time vacancy for a Graduate for Stanborough Park Estate, from May 2005. Applicants will have a relevant degree and experience in estate management, and be familiar with the ethos and principles of the Adventist Church. Application forms from: BUC, Suite 3, Stanborough Park, Watford, Herts, WD25 0DQ.

York Silver Weddings

Just before Pastor Roger Neal, following a five-and-a-half-year pastorate, left for Shrewsbury, he officiated at a thanksgiving service for two couples who were celebrating their silver weddings – Maurice and Dawn Frost, and Geoff and Sharon Pickering. The two couples were unaware of one another but the Lord blessed us by raising £1,239. June Williams has a special gift of baking delicious Christmas cakes. She donated 21 beautifully-decorated works of art which were sold to raise just under £400 for International’s 2005 orphanage project.

The Board of Trustees would like to say a big thank you to all International’s supporter and would welcome any enquires regarding the Project 2005. Please write to the following email address: kishpoddar@onetel.com.
Arlene Senior reports from Hikkaduwa, Sri Lanka

Just after 7am on the morning of Tuesday 8 February Arla Obenaus, our project director, Damith our driver, Krishan our translator, and I left Colombo and drove down the west coast of Sri Lanka to Hikkaduwa, one of the areas that ADRA-Sri Lanka is providing relief to in the wake of the tsunami. We drove for almost three hours on rough and smooth roads – the after-effects of the tsunami very evident. Fishermen’s boats lay destroyed and abandoned, their owners’ livelihoods ruined. Most of the buildings close to the sea had been damaged, some partially, some completely. The railway line which we used to carry people down from the west to the south was a tangled mess, but at last it is being repaired by workmen. A lot of debris has also been removed, but in its place you see tents – donated by various charities and other organisations. We met up with our project director, Damith our driver, Krishan our translator and our translator told us that they thought we had also come to give out aid. Apparently their names were not on the list and they were not receiving anything. They needed this aid and other household items. Some of them had babies, but there was nothing we could do. It was heart breaking.

On a more positive note, as I looked around the camps I saw that they were extremely clean and well maintained. Each tent bore the name of the organisation that had donated it and a number so that the family could be identified. Every now and again a child would be brave enough to look out smile at us, and wave. I felt as if I was a tourist coming to stay intrusively at these people in their time of need. I discretely took photos, necessary for my communication work, but we did not stay long enough to speak to anyone. Later we spoke to some of the government officials and were shown around other camps. Common complaints, we were told, included the fact that ants were getting into the tents, there were cobras around, and there was no lighting at night. Back at the office in Colombo we had to deal with logistic issues. ADRA-Sri Lanka will be providing 600 tents to one of these camps for Internally Displaced People: our reason for being in Hikkaduwa. On this particular day we were to assess the situation, attend meetings, sort out the priority families, and have the lists and procedures ready for the arrival of the tents.

While we were visiting one particular camp we saw that another relief organisation was busy distributing household items. They had a list of numbers called the families’ names out on one piece to receive their items. A group of ladies approached us, all talking at once, and our translator told us that they thought they had also come to give out aid. Apparently their names were not on the list and they were not receiving anything. They needed aid and other household items. Some of them had babies, but there was nothing we could do. It was heart breaking.

Galway Mayor at Grianach House School

The Mayor of Galway, Councillor Catherine Connolly, was the special guest at the annual lunch held in the Grianach House School. Councillor Connolly stayed for the entire performance and afterwards told the audience how the play had helped remind her of the innocence of Christmas. All the students of the school partook in the play which was largely researched and written by the students of fifth and sixth class. The play involved songs and readings based on five topics: the story of the Christmas tree, the story of Christmas cards, information about Holy, Ivy and mistletoe, the story of Santa Claus and information about giving, singing, and it finished with the dramatisation of the nativity story and the singing of such carols as ‘Away in a Manger’, ‘Dicle Chün’ (‘Silent Night’ in Irish) and ‘Joy to the World’. School principal Esther Robertson thanked all who had performed, Gerry Gough who had helped so much with rehearsal and the music on the night, and all the students’ parents, relatives and friends who had turned up to watch a reminder of the true spirit of Christmas.
Over the last eleven years ADRA, in partnership with the Scheer Adventist Memorial Hospital in Banepa, has been able to run mobile health clinics in Nepal. The mobile clinics offer general health check-ups, gynaecological services, family planning, birthing assistance, screening and checking for breast cancer, immunisation, cervical cancer screening, dental care, and laboratory services. In parallel with the mobile clinics there is a strong emphasis on health education. Whole communities are given education in primary and child health care, oral hygiene, family planning, sanitation, anti-smoking, nutrition, and other essential health basics. The education is backed up with brochures, posters, and some innovative tools such as videos to show while patients are waiting for services.

ADRA-UK director Raafat Kamal visited the area in November last year and was very pleased with what he found. “One of the things I was really pleased about with this project was the way that ADRA has been able to work in partnership, with our Adventist hospital. We get skilled Adventist volunteers coming from as far away as Australia so labour costs are kept low. It was also good to see with my own eyes the way that the project leaders have converted former buses into rugged mobile clinic vans with the ability to reach the remotest parts of the country. Altogether it was very obvious that this project is working well and the local people are really getting the help they need.”

ADRA-UK Annual Appeal 2005!

Did you know that although this is half as much again of what we have traditionally raised, it is not as impossible as it seems. Our church membership in the UK is just over 8,000 people who have the challenge of raising £750,000 to lend to God, but if each of those 8,000 people raised just £100 we would more than reach that target.

Let’s join together in making the ADRA-UK Appeal 2005 the greatest investment in God’s precious gemstones.