Valerie Pearce has served as executive secretary to five presidents. By office staff and visitors she is seen as a warm and helpful presence in the office. For new recruits she is a mother and a guide. Starting as a shorthand typist in 1955, Valerie Pearce has been the longest-serving member of the support team in the history of the British Union Conference. Allowing for a thirteen-year break to raise her sons Julian and Simon, she had given forty years of service to the BUC office when she retired on 31 December 2007.

In 1981 she became secretary to the first of the five presidents for whom she worked. He was Pastor Harold Calkins (1981-86). Speaking from retirement in 2007, Pastor Calkins described her as a committed, considerate, confidential and excellent secretary. Three of her presidential bosses were able to join with office staff at a reception in her honour on Thursday 29 November. Pastor John Arthur (1986-90) spoke highly of her skills and motivation, adding another two “Cs”, “conscientiousness and a caring spirit”.

It is that caring spirit that brought tears to the eyes of a number of those at the reception. While working under pressure she always had time to make sure staff were OK, and took particular concern during times of sickness or stress. Pastor Cecil Perry (1991-2006) could not be at the reception due to overseas appointments, but shared her concern for “the little things” in a long and humorous letter in which he reminded Valerie of the times she ensured that he had some lunch before a long committee or a journey. Pastor Martin Anthony (1990-91) recounted how he had taken over the leadership at a difficult time in the Union’s history and said that it was only the unfailing support from Valerie that enabled him to deal with issues such as the development of the new Stanborough Secondary School. Since the last BUC Session in 2006, Valerie has worked for the current BUC president, Pastor Don McFarlane. He states that “the quality that has made Valerie such an outstanding servant of the Church is her love for people”. She also loves her job and finds that there is nothing better than serving the Church.

Valerie is an unassuming soul, happy to work in the background. Her memories, stretching back over the years, are happy ones. She just loves to serve. Sadly the office will make our office poorer. Some will lose a mother, some a confidante, some a sister, some a listening ear, one outstanding secretary, and all a wonderful friend and a kind Christian woman.”

Above: Donovan receiving a parting gift from Victor Pilmoor. Below: Donovan and Jolita E, president with whom she served, left to right: John Arthur, Valerie, D. W. McFarlane and Martin L. Anthony.

A joyful and blessed New Year to all our readers.
Hope for the New Year

It’s a new year! Don’t you love this season? The days are getting longer, spring will soon be here. There is a feeling of newness and possibility in the air. Is it going too far to say that there could even be a heightened sense of hopefulness in early January?

‘Lift up Jesus, you that teach the people, true; but there has been something of bad religion – that there is such a thing as controversial figure. There can be no “middle way” – such as, “He was simply a great teacher” – with Jesus. He was mad or bad or God; and no one is saying he was mad or bad.

Applying these simple techniques will help to lower stress:
- Maintain a consistent and healthy diet.
- Avoid caffeine, as it aggravates the stress response.
- Don’t use alcohol.
- Establish a routine bedtime and get adequate sleep every night.
- Moderate exercise helps to reduce stress.
- Set realistic goals.
- Increase your prayer life.
- Talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling.
- Get a massage.

The London Adventist Chorale’s Open Day

The London Adventist Chorale is now recruiting in particular for the following voice parts: Females only: 1st and 2nd Sopranos, 1st and 2nd Altos.

For further information please do not hesitate to contact: Trevor Johnson, Projects and Promotions, mobile: 07776-617151.

Email: musicdean@london adventistchorale.com

The London Adventist Chorale is one recording in particular for the following voice parts: Females only: 1st and 2nd Sopranos, 1st and 2nd Altos. Can you volunteer two Sundays in each month, weekend and occasional weekday performances? Do you enjoy learning music and thrive on sharing a busy schedule with other committed musicians? If you do, we definitely want you to hear from you!

We look forward to hearing from you over 27 years of professional music ministry services. The vision is to offer regular, high-quality performances to meet the spiritual needs of the community. Come and join us this Christmas season as we look to the future of our ministry.

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We can lower cortisol by reducing stress. If you reduce your stress, you lengthen your life.

GOOD HEALTH!
Once again, Willesden church contributed to the Black History Month, with programmes from both the music and the Sabbath School departments. The Sabbath School event took place on the last weekend of October and adopted ‘Telling Our Story’ as its theme. There were sermons, an interview and a question and answer session.

Many organisations and churches across the UK focused their Black History event around the slave trade and its legacy, the celebration of the Abolition Act and the contributions and achievements of black people in a variety of fields. We decided to pause and think: ‘What is our story?’ We wanted to hear the voice of God, for his voice was not heard among all the other celebrations. What had he done for black people that they should shout about? Was there a parallel with the Bible’s Exodus story? The Scripture reading from Deuteronomy 6 provided the foundation as we read the Lord’s command to the people of Israel to remind them of how the Lord had led their parents the meaning of the testimonies. ‘We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. We reflected on our responsibility to tell our children down the generations what the Lord has done for us. Knowing where we came from would tell them where they were going. Our children will know that Black History is not just about slavery and suffering but more about a loving God who stretched out his hand to save a wretched people whom he has nurtured and strengthened. Our story is both spiritual and temporal,’ we learned.

In a year which saw even the Pope complaining about falling church attendances, Leicester Central has found its voice. Early on in the year the Community department, headed by Stephen Halliday, organised a thanksgiving service to honour the work of the local emergency services with awards on 7 April. The service, which received extensive coverage by the local media, was attended by the British Union Conference president, Pastor Don McFarlane.

The church invited the Lord Mayor, Paul Westley, and 102 representatives from other faiths, and the general public to join them in celebrating the unsung work of the emergency services at a time when the ever-increasing demands made on them seem almost unattainable.

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Lectures on Friday evening, 16 November, and a Day of Fellowship on Sabbath were followed by a service at Glasgow Cathedral on Sunday evening.

The London SDA Male Voice Choir (LSDMVC) was very privileged and honoured to be invited by the High Commissioner of Jamaica to participate in the Service of Praise and Thanksgiving on the occasion of the 45th Anniversary of Jamaica’s Independence of Southwark Cathedral on 4 August 2007. The theme was ‘Unity, Peace, and Justice’. The choir performed two songs, ‘Steal Away to Jesus’ and ‘Xenon’ as their opening pieces to over a thousand attendees. ‘Xenon’, the bishop, Dr Joe Aldred, delivered the sermonette on the theme of ‘Honour thy father and mother’. After the sermonette the choir sang, ‘It May Be At Home’ and ‘What a Day That Will Be’.

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**The F-Word**

‘Forgiveness is a process and a repetitive process. Seventy times seven may not be different events. It may be the same event.’ These were the words of a mother whose daughter was killed in a bomb attack. Her story was part of the Forgiveness Project exhibition at Crieff church and was told on BBC Radio 4’s Midweek programme with Libby Purves. Ginu Foro and Letlapa Mphahlele shared a story of forgiveness following the murder of Ginn’s daughter by the Azanian People’s Liberation Army in those countries. ‘The Christian churches have been slow to respond to the issue of child slavery and the manipulation of humanism and as weapons of Islamisation’, she said. ‘Western democracy and Christianism have been asleep at the switch.’

In Newbold’s newest conference space – The Smith Centre – forty participants from around the UK heard and questioned the various speakers and each other.

Participants included pastors and lay people, teachers and students. They used words like ‘informative’, ‘practical’, and ‘thought-provoking’ to describe the course. Cynthia Lewis from Westminster said: ‘The conference covered a wide variety of topics. The lecturers were approachable. There was a lot of time for questions and good interaction between participants.’

Newbold’s vice-principal and director of the Centre for Religious and Cultural Diversity said: ‘The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a diverse family whose members often know what it feels like to live on the margins of society. This conference demonstrated our insights into issues of religious and cultural diversity and encouraged us to continue to champion the cause of freedom.’

Pastor Don McFarlane, president of the British Union, reflected: ‘What encouraged me about the day was to see a varied group of Adventists – both professionals and members from different countries – all concerned about religious freedom. Seventh-day Adventists have a history of taking the lead in this subject and we should continue to do so.’

For more information and pictures visit the Newbold website.

**Black History Weekend: Telling Our Story**

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More on Stanborough School’s high achievers

Under the heading ‘Stanborough Secondary ‘Top among mixed ability schools’’ we reported Speech Night on page 4 of Messenger, 7 December. At the time no pictures had come to hand. Thanks to Andrew Leonie they have now arrived. Once again we quote from the original report: ‘Stanborough’s highest academic performers achieved admirable grades, warranting the school’s top position among mixed ability schools and exceeding the GCSE national average by some 30%. Subjects such as Religious Studies, English and the sciences reaching 100% at A* to C.’

Bournemouth’s Shoebox Appeal

For eight years now, Bournemouth church has been a collecting point for shoeboxes bound for Romania, through Link Romania, an inter-denominational organisation based in Worting. Our own church members, mothers who attend our Mother & Toddler Group and various local groups, companies and churches, bring their boxes to the church, filled with goodies for a whole family. They are then transported to one of the poorest towns and villages where often there is no water, heating or lighting in a miserable dwelling in which many of them have to live. Imagine their joy in receiving a Christmas present from a friend in England!

We were shown a video presentation in which many of the recipients stick the pretty Christmas wrapping paper on the wall – often the only bright spot in the room. Also, once the boxes are emptied, they are flattened out and serve as floor covering for part of the earth floor!

This year we exceeded all previous records and finished up with 380 boxes in the church. A team of willing helpers came to the church on Sunday afternoon, 19 November, and packed all the boxes into black bin liners, ready for collection by Link Romania the following day.

We have got to know these fine gentlemen who gave up such a lot of their time to this wonderful work and they are always pleased to chat with us around the delivery truck and their gifts are handed out. I have witnessed that all of us will have a part in ensuring that children who have never received a present before will have a very happy time to celebrate Christmas in Europe).

November as, from all parts of the UK, gifts for the very poor children of Madagascar came flooding in to us here at the church. As soon as the boxes were unpacked and a specialist sports training machine, all of which have been dispatched to Madagascar along with the shoeboxes.

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The ADRA Shoebox Gift Appeal 2007 by David Balderstone, ADRA Volunteer transport driver

What an exciting time we had in November as, from all parts of the UK, gifts for the very poor children of Madagascar came flooding in to us here at the Stanborough Park collection point. Towards the end of October I started to get telephone calls from people telling me that they had 90, 160 and in some cases 500 gifts or more! Sometimes it was the same people contacting me in various locations and then, on the appointed Sunday, cars and vans started to arrive to do so over the next seven days. It was exciting to see the numbers quickly rise and Boycott’s figure of total of 4,400 was reached and exceeded. I never imagined, however, that our total would reach the amazing sum of 7,164! It is humbling to realise that all of us will have a part in ensuring that children who have never received a present before will have a very happy time to celebrate Christmas in Europe.

The first, drawn from Matthew 22:27, encourages Pathfinders to pursue relationships above all others – ‘Honor your father and your mother’ (Respect + Nourishment) = 10 (commandments).

The third, from John 6:35, invites Pathfinders to ‘come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest’ (Rest + Strength + Fulfillment) = 13 (relationships).

I want to thank all of you most sincerely for your generosity. In particular I would like to thank the local organisers for all their support and hard work for this very special appeal. Thank you also to those who contributed £1 per box towards the transportation costs. You will be pleased to know that these gift boxes are distributed to children in orphanages and socially deprived areas where ADRA is working. What a great combination this is: teaching people how to grow better crops; teaching about fertilisers, irrigation, sanitation and the benefits of clean water – and then giving gifts to orphaned children.

Christmas reminds us of the gift of Christ to this world. Thank you for helping disadvantaged children capture the thrill and excitement of Christ’s gift. Thank you for helping disadvantaged children capture the thrill and excitement of Christ’s gift. Thank you for helping disadvantaged children capture the thrill and excitement of Christ’s gift. Thank you for helping disadvantaged children capture the thrill and excitement of Christ’s gift.

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By Bert Smit, Executive Director, ADRA-UK

For two days ADRA-UK’s executive director, Bert Smit, was a special guest in the village of Suldonde in the Bazega district of Burkina Faso in November. Village chief Zoando and his two wives, both coincidentally called Mariam, and family permitted him to spend two days living their daily routine. We observed how all their daily work centres around the objective of having food to eat for the family. Not an easy feat in this dry and barren land that has to survive long hot seasons on a few weeks of rainfall in the wet season.

ADRA followed chief Zoando from harvesting to composting to creating cordon dykes to gather rain-water. We observed his first wife getting water at this remote hamlet in Burkina Faso had changed little in probably hundreds of years. A thirty-minute feature presentation will be produced to showcase the hard existence in a Sahel country.

ADRA-UK is here to help create opportunities for the local population in providing access to drinking and irrigation water, to teach locals how to set up market gardens, introduce composting, literacy training and help with reforestation. These simple things can help the locals to combat poverty and its consequences.

This summer ADRA-UK is organising a development experience trip for young people aged 18-35 to this area. For three days participants will stay in a village and work with villagers like chief Zoando. It will be a time spent away from all modern commodities, helping the young people realise that many on this planet still have to fight daily for survival. Participants will also work to improve the facilities of the agricultural school ADRA runs nearby. A 4x4 safari to Touargue country in the north will complete this rewarding trip. For more details see our website adra.org.uk or contact us on 01923-681743.

Colchester Farewell

On Communion Sabbath in November Pastor Paul R. Smith shook hands with and embraced our minister Pastor Fernand Lombart who, after a brief period with us, was leaving for Australia. As part of his farewell, Pastor Lombart played a guitar solo, ‘No matter what happens I’ll never let go of your hand.’

Full-time Secretarial Vacancy at the NEC Office

An exciting and demanding role is open for an energetic person with good secretarial skills and a commitment to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The responsibilities will include routine secretarial and data entry tasks, preparation of workshop/seminar materials, and will require competency in the use of Microsoft Office or comparable software packages and desktop publishing.

Salary and terms of employment will be in keeping with denominational policies and are available on request.

Interested individuals are invited to send a CV and a request for an application form to: Paul Haworth, Executive Secretary, North England Conference, 22 Zulla Road, Mapperley Park, Nottingham, NG3 5DB. Tel: 0115 960 6312

Closing Date for Applications: Monday 14 January 2008

Sue Ingram

Is ‘OK’ as good as it gets? Is this all there is? When the last party popper has popped – what then?

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them...’

For the rest, read Revelation chapter 21 beginning with verse 2.

Outstanding servant of the Church

British Union Conference staff also said farewell to Donovan Clairy, the associate treasurer, at a reception on Thursday 29 November. Donovan has served for the last two years both as associate treasurer and as the director for the Church’s legal entity, the Seventh-day Adventist Association Ltd.

From January 2008 he will take responsibility as secretary-treasurer of the East Mediterranean Field, based in Lebanon. Union treasurer, Victor Pilmor, thanked Donovan for his good and conscientious work and noted that, while the Union were willing to ‘lend’ Donovan to the Middle East for a time, they would look for opportunities for him to come back in the future. ‘He is an excellent, efficient and friendly employee,’ Victor stated. BUC president, Pastor Don McFarlane, added that Donovan is ‘courteous, helpful, gentle, considerate and a very pleasant person. He has served the British Union with commitment and conviction.’ The British Union Conference wish Donovan, his wife Lizette, and baby Christopher well as they head for their new life and responsibilities.