The Seventh-day Adventist Church is set to set up a review following the jailing of three of its members in a £3.2 million fraud case. "The trust of our members has been abused," Pastor Don McFarlane, president of the Adventist Church in the UK and Ireland, told members of the BUC Executive Committee on Thursday 13 March. Recognising that this kind of affinity fraud can happen in any trusting community, it was nevertheless of concern to the committee that so many church members were affected by the case, some losing many thousands of pounds. While the details of the review are still to be confirmed, it is expected that it will look back over four years at all aspects of how the fraud developed and will seek positive ways of helping church members to avoid such scams in the future.

The fraud case climaxed at Southwark Crown Court on Friday 7 March when the jury returned a guilty verdict on three of the four defendants. They were remanded in custody over the weekend and sentenced on Monday 11 March to a total of almost ten years in prison. The young men were all members of Adventist churches in the London area, as were most of the victims. Following a two-month trial, Lindani Mangena was convicted of fraudulent trading between 31 July 2003 and 1 March 2004, money laundering and carrying on an unauthorised investment business. Dean Hinkson and Curtis Powell were found guilty of "communicating an invitation or inducement to engage in investment activity". Mangena is to serve a seven-year jail term and the other two will serve fifteen months each.

The three men, who had no financial expertise and were not registered with the Financial Services Authority, principally targeted members of the Adventist Church. Stephen Winberg, prosecuting, stated, "The victims were much more ready to believe what they were told because it came from members of the same tight-knit religious community." Up to 1,000 people are estimated to have been affected by the scheme which promised high returns for investments over a short period of time. Many lost substantial sums of money. One man, who lost £70,000, was widely reported in the papers as saying, "We thought Lindani Mangena was like a modern-day Moses. I thought the Lord had blessed him!" However, he felt devastated when the truth emerged, stating, "This caused a lot of people a great deal of financial difficulty and hardship." The jury could not reach a verdict against a fourth defendant, and on Friday 14 March the Crown Prosecution Service decided not to pursue the case against him any further.

Victor Hulbert, spokesperson for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, said: "We are obviously saddened when the trust of our members has been taken advantage of like this. It is a cautionary tale that people from all communities need to be careful and take sound financial advice.'

As a church we uphold the values of integrity, honesty and transparency. We regret that on this occasion some of our members have fallen short of the mark. We are a forgiving church and as such we will continue to pray for and provide spiritual support to all those who have been convicted or affected, along with their families, as they are a part of our church family. The doors of the church are always open to all.

£3.2 million fraud case conviction

by Victor Hulbert and Richard DeLisser

Dealing with the aftermath

by Victor Hulbert, Communication director , BUC

It was October 2001. People were still reeling from the aftermath of planes crashing into the Pentagon and New York’s Twin Towers. International travel was disrupted. The world was changed. And so was Junior Sabbath School. I was leading out in prayer ... 'Please pray for Grandma. She's not well.' Then an 11-year-old girl put her hand up: 'Please pray for Osama bin Laden.'

That brought me up short. I certainly hadn’t been praying for him. That morning was the first time. But I have been praying for him since. I mentioned it in a sermon a couple of weeks later. I was a visiting preacher. A woman in the congregation screamed. I had never had that reaction to my preaching before. The challenge of praying for a man who orchestrated so much death and destruction was more than she could handle. I had a long talk with her afterwards. A middle-aged woman who had only recently started attending church, she was slowly coming to faith. But as we talked she came to the realisation that if there is one person in the whole world who really needs praying for it is Osama. As we grow in grace with God and our community, surely we would want that same grace to extend to others, including those who consider themselves our enemy.

The thought is not without biblical precedent. Manasseh was an incredibly evil king. The Bible records that the streets of Jerusalem flowed with the blood of the innocent. (2 Kings 21:16.) Yet,
Dealing with the aftermath later in life, and after being dragged off into captivity by the Assyrians, Manasseh came to his senses. He found God, or rather, God found him. (2 Chronicles 33:12-17.) Later in life, and after being dragged off into captivity by the Assyrians, Manasseh came to his senses. He found God, or rather, God found him. (2 Chronicles 33:12-17.)

There are stories like that. David, adulterer and murderer, wrote, ‘Create in me a pure heart, O God.’ (Psalm 51:10.) Samson, after a life ignoring God, fell deeply and was led to enter into a relationship with Delilah. ‘What can I do for you tonight, Delilah? I haven’t cut my hair yet!’ (Judges 16:28.) And Saul, persecutor of the early church, was transformed into a mighty apostle of Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:9-10.)

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Willesden: Three church baptism

Three churches – Romanian, Portuguese and Afro-Caribbean – came together as one on Sabbath 9 February for a special baptism. Willesden church welcomed the presence of two non-English-speaking churches. Each pastor presented his candidates. While the candidates and the pastors were getting ready, the mixed multitude of 250 sang in their own languages such hymns as ‘Bedeemed, I now love to proclaim it’.

Two women and a young man decided to give their lives to Jesus. First was Marion Herbert, a Guyanese-born woman whose son Mahlon came to support her. After growing up in the church and giving her life to Jesus back home, Marion went away from the Lord for a number of years. In 1976 she was baptised in the Pentecostal church. While in Brussels, she received an email from her brother which started her on her journey back to the Lord. She witnessed Patricia’s baptism.

Evelyn Waugh and because we thought it was a good idea, or even because we thought it would be a great way to publicise the church on the cards attached to the flowers, or because we thought it was about time we got involved in some evangelism! Well, all of the above, but the overriding reason is Jesus. If only one person out of the three hundred who received a flower this Mother’s Day was touched by our actions, and gave their life to Christ, then it would be worth it.

UNION SESSION RESTRUCTURING PROPOSAL

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The two schools on Stanborough Park serve some 260 pupils 100 in the secondary and 100 in the primary. With just under half the pupils from a non-Adventist background the school has just recruited a new chaplain. In addition, a recent OFSTED inspection commended the school for its spiritual and moral achievements.

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When many Adventist institutions around the world are struggling it was good to hear from Stanborough Press manager, Paul Hammond, that the Press achieved an increase in sales of almost £330,000 over the previous year. The Press provides and develops materials both for this country and for a number of African nations. A number of new books have been produced over the last year and there is a particular drive towards improving children’s resources.

JOHN LOUGHBOROUGH SCHOOL

The committee took considerable time to look at the current situation at the John Loughborough School. As a Seventh-day Adventist Secondary School, it has a number of auspicies from the South England Conference and Haringey Council. Recently Haynes improved the Intern Executive Board and is investing additional money into the school to improve standards. The SEC and BUC have together agreed to ask the Trans-European Division to head a commission that will independently look at the school, reviewing circumstances that led up to Haynes’s intervention, but also more importantly, looking at steps that will help build and move the school forward and gain recognition that can be used for future reference.

BUC MEMBERSHIP PASSES 28,000

We need to develop the kind of churches where children can bring their friends, and members can bring their neighbours. British Union Conference president, Pastor Don McFarlane, emphasised to committed member: ‘The comment arose from the good news that member- ship across the UK and Ireland reached 28,110 as of 31 December 2007. This was a net growth of 1,215 members. The full statistics are available on the Secretariat page of the BUC website: www.adventist.org.uk. Dr Bertil Wiklander, president of the Trans-European Division of the Adventist Church, praised God, noting that ‘an increase of 1,215 is unique growth in this part of the world’. He equated the enthusiasm of this increase in giving in 2007 to that which was seen in the recovery year of 1999 which saw a net growth of 2,045 members. The current increase is equivalent to a growth in membership of 4.5% in a year in this part of the world. The increase is a measure of the recovery we are making from the economic recession of the mid-1990s which hit us hard. At that time, as you know, the adventist church in this region lost over 3,500 members in 1994. Now we have recovered over 5,500.’

The biggest challenge for Stanborough is finance. Fees are low compared to most of the private sector but some parents struggle, even with the support of the local churches. Currently around 50% of all fees are paid and the school is looking at ways to reduce bad debt. The committee voted an additional grant of £150,000 to help secure financial stability.

STANBOROUGH SCHOOL

Concern and praise came in equal amounts for Stanborough School. Head teacher, Mr Roger Murphy, reported excellent SATS results with 81% of Key Stage 3 pupils achieving level 5 and above, and all of them achieving level 5 and above for English. Stanborough’s pass rate is almost double that of other mixed ability maintained schools in the area. Last year 81% of pupils gained five or more A-C grades, with a 100% success rate in RE, biology, chemistry and physics.

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The March BUC Committee

by Victor Huibert, Communication director

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The committee decided to give their lives to Jesus. First was Marion Herbert, a Guyanese-born woman whose son Mahlon came to support her. After growing up in the church and giving her life to Jesus back home, Marion went away from the Lord for a number of years. In 1976 she was baptised in the Pentecostal church. While in Brussels, she received an email from her brother which started her on her journey back to the Lord. She was present at the baptism of Patricia’s twin daughters.

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JOHN WILBY involved them in practical CradleRoll activities. Karin Edwards, SMPrayer sponsor, introduced ‘PrayerLab’ experiments and SM Youthsponsor, Pastor Marcel Ghioalda, dealt with parental relationships and guidance in challenging teenage years.

KENNETH SYLVESTER HARRIS (1949-2008) d. 5 February. It is with deep regret that we announce the passing of our brother Kenneth. He was born in 1949. He emigrated to England with his parents and lived here until his death on 5 February. Kenneth went to school in Wimbledon.

BARBARA GRIFFITHS, page 57

‘When virtue is exploited there are many who need to brush up on this one! That so many succumbed to an opportunity for gain is not so much about ignorance, naivety or gullibility. It is about the family, which prides itself on integrity and the expectation of trust, should find these virtues so cynically exploited?’

KENNETH NEWMAN (1912-2008) d. 30 January. Myrtle Newman, wife of the late Pastor Walter Newman, passed to her rest in Lowestoft, mum to Carole, mother-in-law to David and grandmother to Michelle, Heather, Lee and Kirsty, and her great-grandchildren, Gavin, Gillian, Gabrielle and Neve.

Dennis Hall (1928-2008) d. 16 January. Dennis Hall was born on 18 May 1928 to Seventh-day Adventist parents who lived in Balham, London. His parents, who ran a health food shop, were members of the Wimbledon church. He and his elder brother Victor dedicated their whole lives in service to their Lord and his church. Dennis was a deacon in the church for over 40 years and was a pioneer of the church appearance and signage: ‘Lots of pictures but – only send in the good ones.

Church Officers’ Training Day provoked such comments as, ‘I feel really empowered now to enhance my role’ (Sonja Eikum, Communications secretary, Aberdeen).

Victor Pilmoor, BUC treasurer, reflects on the issues raised by the £3.2 million fraud case covered by the national media.

‘Trust enables exchange to happen smoothly, without the atmosphere of suspicion among members of the congregation. This is not to suggest that suspicion should be cast as the issue most painful. Why is it that our church families, which prides itself on sincerity and trust? Could it be that we should find these virtues so cynically exploited?

‘Virtue is exploited there are inevitable consequences. In church, like healthy family members, should be embraced on the basis of rejecting expertise. Just as fears about strangers. Isolation curates when we only those who trust the church in the winner of the day. But the church promised that the world will know us, and we will have a name written on us in heaven’.

Victor Pilmoor, BUC treasurer, reflects on the issues raised by the £3.2 million fraud case covered by the national media. ‘Trust enables exchange to happen smoothly, without the burden of research on each transaction. Its purpose is not to create a risk-free environment, rather, its purpose is to create a haven from which the risks of our unstable environment are closed. Unhealthy families restrict trust and hinder the venture of developing virtues.

Opportunism is easy for complacent trust.

Francis Fukuyama in Trust: The Source of Social Prosperity suggests that a nation’s prosperity relates to the ability of its people to trust themselves in the first instance, and then to others. This, Weber argued, was one of the key outcomes of the doctrine of grace. Trust in this view, critical to economic life, arises from religious beliefs and commitments. Religious teachings, in turn, are rooted in the success of their champions. They want to believe in the efficacy of their kind. This causes them to place an unreasonable amount of faith in knowledge. And again the Bible warns us to place our faith in God, not in ‘prince’

How can we restore authentic trust?

Trust is one of those ideas about which we are intuitive. Like the chemistry of life, the alchemy of relationships can be better understood. Trust enables exchange to happen smoothly without the burden of research on each transaction. Its purpose is not to create a risk-free environment, rather, its purpose is to create a haven from which the risks of our unstable environment are closed. Unhealthy families restrict trust and hinder the venture of developing virtues.

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Weber’s discussion is rooted in his definition of the term of trust. Weber observes that certain ethical codes tend to promote a wider radius of trust by emphasizing interpersonal honesty, benevolence and charity to the community at large. This, Weber argued, was one of the key outcomes of the doctrine of grace. Trust in this view, critical to economic life, arises from religious beliefs and commitments. Religious teachings, in turn, are rooted in the success of their champions. They want to believe in the efficacy of their kind. This causes them to place an unreasonable amount of faith in knowledge. And again the Bible warns us to place our faith in God, not in ‘prince’

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A young girl is walking in the middle of a busy road with traffic buzzing on either side of her. She is begging pitifully at the window of each passing car. No more than 5 or 6 years old, she is carrying a tiny baby in her arms. This sight of desperation will remain with me for a long time to come.

... their Christmas would be like! Each child waited patiently and then humbly thanked the UK people for their gift.

I was shocked to see the very basic conditions that these children live in. The poverty in this country was evident – frail children lie listlessly on their mothers’ laps while they sell or beg in the street.

In another orphanage one girl eyed me curiously and another clutched a flip-flop as if it were the most precious thing in the world. Sometimes the excitement of the children could not be contained and they ripped the gift wrap off the boxes and jumped up and down after seeing the contents.

The teachers from this site were amazed at the generosity of the UK people. ‘Did people really give you all these presents for our orphans?’ they asked. ‘Yes,’ I replied.

On my final day of distribution we visited a Rehabilitation Centre. Here a husband and wife have taken in not only orphans and street children but all of society’s castaways: the disabled, the deaf, the mute, prostitutes and petty thieves. They have given these people the tools to provide themselves with an income and an on-site craft shop for them to sell their wares. This place is, in a small way, an example of what...