The Scottish, Irish and Welsh Missions’ pastors and sponsors enjoyed a Three Missions’ Retreat in the Scottish Highlands at the Strathyre Cabins near Callander in Scotland from 9 to 12 February. The team of thirty plus enjoyed cabins in stunningly beautiful winter weather to spend a few days together in thought, fellowship and relaxation. They were privileged to have a guest speaker who really challenged and stimulated their thinking. Dr Jon Paulien is dean of the Loma Linda University faculty of religion. He is seen as one of the leading Adventist authorities on the book of Revelation and the other prophetic books of the Bible. Dr Paulien led out in topics such as ‘The Biblical Concept of Judgement’, ‘The Sanctuary in the Book of Revelation’, ‘A Lifetime of Spiritual Leadership’, ‘A Vision for the End-time Remnant’ and ‘Going Church in a New Reality’. He was accompanied by his wife Pamela and their daughter Kimberly, who was comfortable to answer some of the questions from the pastors with regard to the post-modern young people in church today. These topics were no doubt challenging and very enjoyable to all. Enough time was allowed for pastors to take a walk, take a nap, or just enjoy the snow.

But no retreat would be a proper retreat without good food, and food was there in abundance — supplied by Karin Edwards, Carole Peacock and Janice Perry.

The retreat was grateful to have Pastor Alan Hodges from the BUC, who also took one of the morning worships. The other morning worships were taken by Pastors David Neal and John Surridge.

So the recipe was complete — good food, speakers, and good, relaxing experiences. It looks as though it gets harder to improve as we think forward to new retreats.
The president of a conference a long way from here labelled any pastor who called in sick A Sickly Man’. Unsurprising? What was surprising was that he made the label stick, perma-
nently. When that label’s name came up for a move a year or two later, the committee was asked to remember that that pastor was A Sickly Man’. When he was nominated to be a departmental director, the nomination was questioned with, ‘Oh, isn’t that the pastor who had studied in depth over a lengthy time period?’ The fact that he had made an excellent recov-
ery from his sickness eight or nine years earlier was disregarded. That pastor had once admitted to being ill. And it became a perma-
nent and, apparently, ‘terminal’ demerit on his record.

A group of church workers speculated as to the reason for the president’s prejudice against the admission of a pastor who had studied in depth over a lengthy time period. He remembered the days when a man’s worth was estimated in Sterling, and any admission of sickness or disability would diminish his value, said one. ‘He doesn’t want us to off sick willy-nilly’, said another. A third explana-
tion was that in the very early days of the Advent movement there arose a belief that such people were spiritually less ready for the return of Jesus. Whatever the reason for the Sickly Man Syndrome, has the mindset on which it was based entirely died out among us?

Advocates are still apt to equate physical with spiritual health. Our health message has been a great blessing, but the fact that 74% of the diseases that do for us the most harm are mental or emotional diseases enables us to avoid them all. One 1950s pastor made ‘Advocats don’t get cancer’ part of his evangelistic pitch. What he should have said was that, given our lifestyle, we were less likely to get certain types of cancer. On aver-
age Adventists may have ‘seven extra years’, but, until the Lord comes, death will come eventually to us all. Pastor Willis tells me that incidence of some cancers among us is pretty much the same as it is in the general popula-
tion but without the lengthy, chronic illness that usually accompanies these conditions.’ Sadly, the dear old evangelist who had preached ‘Advocats don’t get cancer’, died of – cancer.

Over the years countless people have told me – sometimes talking about a loved one, and sometimes about themselves – that when they shared with fellow Adventists that cancer had been diagnosed, they encountered so much disapproval and even hostility for the burden of guilt that the patient subsequently carried was worse than the disease. These are life-destructive, toxic attitudes.

We save our most lethal toxic attitudes, however, for those suffering from mental disease such as anxiety states or depression. The fact is that such illnesses crop up relatively frequently among pastors (and other professionals) under pressure. Some of the most gifted and successful pas-
tors have been victims of depression. Those who have needed time off work have after-
wards felt stigmatised by fellow workers. The pressure of depression can include panic attacks, mood swings, a death obsession and mind-altering paranoia. But these days we acknowledge that these things are a matter of brain chemistry. Your General Practitioner knows that it’s all about ‘neuro-
transmitters’, and that a course of the appro-
priate antidepressants will hopefully, in time, restore ‘normal service’. The phrase ‘in time’ is important. Most antidepressants take four to six weeks before they ‘kick in’.

Our recent issues on Anxiety States, Depression and Suicide was meant to improve our understanding of these things and en-
force a process by which we could discuss them openly, and take a more matter-of-fact attitude towards them. The situation is that Health and Family Ministers who were addressing was one in which a depres-
sive pastor might feel totally unable to discuss his condition with anyone within his Church. While that might, in part, be an aspect of a paranoid perception on the part of the sufferer, it could also in part – because of attitudes prevailing within the Church – have a basis in fact. That was what we sought to address. The great majority of those who have written or spoken have been church members pleased that, finally, Adventists are able to discuss depression. A few have felt that our professionals came over as hostile to antide-
pressants. That is why I have mentioned the brain chemistry angle of things. A few also felt that our professionals ‘seemed so pat with their solutions’. One wrote, ‘My heart ached for those who may have tried all that was mentioned, with little or no positive results.’ I put those points to our professionals and they took them on board and said that they were primarily concerned to explain to depression to those who did not understand it, rather than to outline treatment options for those experi-
encing it. In the spring, Sharon Platt-McDonald will launch a Mental Wellness Strategy as part of the BUC Health Ministries agenda. At that time coverage of depression will be more sensitive.

What we have tried to say is that. When someone shares his/her mental health con-
cerns with you, it is appropriate to listen and sympathise, but it is inappropriate to disapprove or speak/behave intolerantly.

Toxic attitudes are incredibly destructive. Jesus ignored the stigma of leprosy, for exam-
ple, and healed the sufferers. He did not make sufferers feel guilty for having leprosy!

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Children mattered to Jesus!
by Karen Holford, associate director of Children’s Ministries, SEC

2009 is the Year of Evangelism. In an age when everything has to be ‘cost-effective’, do you know what is the most cost-effective kind of evangelism? You work it out.

Research indicates that 30% of the children we reach for Jesus will stay faithful to him all their lives, while only 3% of those who encounter Jesus as adults will accept and follow him.

So let’s hear it for the Junior Sabbath School teachers, the tellers of children’s stories and those preachers who make their worship and their sermons child-friendly.

Do you remember the Children Matter feature on the cover of the Messenger of 23 January? Throughout the year there will be ideas to inspire you with new ways to minister to the children in your churches and involve them in your worship and activities. This month we will explore ten of the ways that Jesus showed us how much our children matter to him.

1. Jesus welcomed children freely and encouraged us to welcome them warmly in his name. ‘Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.’ (Matthew 18:5, NIV.)

2. Jesus used the simple, generous gift of one boy’s lunch and invited people to participate in a miracle that fed thousands of people. (John 6:1-13.) How are you making use of the gifts God has given to the children in your church, so that the whole congregation can be fed and blessed?

3. Jesus used the example of a boy’s lunch and invited people to participate in a miracle that fed thousands of people. (John 6:1-13.) How are you making use of the gifts God has given to the children in your church, so that the whole congregation can be fed and blessed?

4. Even when he was tired, Jesus found the time, energy and compassion to bless the children who had been brought to him. (Mark 10:13-16.) How can you have compassion on the children in your church, in the church of every age, in every place?

5. Jesus went many miles out of his way to heal a non-Jewish girl who suffered from epilepsy. (Matthew 15:21-28.)

6. Jesus accepted children’s enthusiastic and energetic worship with delight, even when it was loud and bothered the other church leaders. (Matthew 21:15-16.) How do you welcome the lively praise and activity of small children in your church?

7. ‘Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.’ (Mark 10:14.) Jesus wants us to remove everything that could prevent children from experiencing the fullness of God’s love. We may have to remove our prejudices and our tightly held ideas about formal worship. We may have to let go of our ancient and beloved beliefs that block a child’s view of worship. We may have to spend some money so that our children can have an attractive Sabbath School room.

8. ‘How are you feeding the lambs first in your church? Or do the sheep get fed while the lambs starve?’

9. ‘Jesus came to Earth as a baby, to live as a child. He understands what it means to be young, vulnerable and dependent on adults. Whatever we do for the children in our churches, we can imagine that we are doing the same act of service, or neglect, for Jesus.’

10. Are you doing (or not doing) for Jesus in the way that your church ministers to the children?

All four one

I suppose if you are going to do a job you might as well do it properly. On 28 June Southampton’s Pastor David Foster baptised four candidates, the heavens rang and the congregation sang. Brother and sister, Magesa and Hilda Beseka, Keri Manuel and the most senior, Peter Kempster, all took to the water of the baptistry pool and in front of a packed church gave their lives to Jesus. Hilda and Magesa came from a loving, faith-based family. In 2002 the family came to us from Tanzania, Kigoma.

Their first introduction to Southampton was the Holiday Bible Club in August of that year. English was not their first language.

However, they joined in and made new friends and are now both great assets to the church today. Anything that has ‘youth’ in the title you will find them playing their part. They want to be part of those children who will one day be taken up to be with Jesus in the glimmering city of God.

Keri Emanuel was born and raised in Zimbabwe. She always went to church with her mother and siblings more out of habit than anything else. The day she joined Pathfinders her life changed.

She started to get to know God and her own place in the world. Keri was 14 when the family moved to England. First stop Plymouth and then they moved along the coast to Southampton. That was where Keri became a Master Guide, and during the training she realised she was falling in love with Jesus. The more she learned, the more she loved, and with that love she wanted to show the world and her friends what Jesus had done for her. In front of her twin brother, her mother, her siblings and her church family, she gave her life publicly to Jesus.

At the other end of the age scale comes Peter Kempster. He and his wife Linda began their walk with the Lord as members of the Salvation Army. It was in 1999 Linda first came to our church for the Dwight Nelson programmes. As time went on, Linda became a regular and we met Peter at small group meetings and events like the ‘jubilee night’ at Christmas parties. He was worshiping at the Church of the Nazarenes, just around the corner from our church, when Linda was baptised.

Due to the minister’s retirement and the closure of the Church of the Nazarenes, Peter, who had become a great friend to Southampton church, made the decision to take baptismal classes and become a full member of our church. With family and a very happy wife watching, Peter, Magesa, Hilda and Keri were taken through the waters and raised up to the Lord.

It was a joyous ending to a fabulous Sabbath day. Everyone included the angels in Heaven were singing. May God bless their walk and their work in his glorious name.

What will it be like when Jesus comes?

The dead in Christ shall rise. Those who are alive – swept up to meet him in the air.

Is that possible? And why have they all got their overcoats on?

Are they ready for Jesus to come? Are you?

Read Doug Batchelor’s SIX FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHRIST’S SECOND COMING

INTENDED FOR MASS DISTRIBUTION IN YOUR AREA

Order through your Personal Ministries secretary or directly from the Adventist Book Centre on 01476 539900.
The annual ADRA appeal is almost upon us and I know many of us are looking forward to knocking on those doors and interacting with the great British public, as well as collecting funds to help the poor in the UK and overseas. We hear about disasters around the world and see the pictures on television, but these tragedies are very personal to the people who make up ADRA. Every time a disaster happens it is a life-and-death situation, not only for those who are in the midst of the chaos, but for the people who try to help. These are courageous men and women who are ready to put their lives at risk to provide assistance to others living in places around the globe.

Disasters cut across people’s lives in unexpected ways. They also make us come together as brothers and sisters. ADRA-UK supporters raised £25,000 within just two weeks following Cyclone Nargis. This is thanks to such commitment that ADRA is able to save lives around the globe during disasters, feed those in need, build homes in war-torn countr­ies, and transform communities through sustainable development.

This bond, which the New Testament calls ‘the body of Christ’, is what brings people together to help the hurting, give sustenance to the poor, and provide hope to the downtrodden. That is something Jesus was passionate about in his ministry. The Church of England has reported a rise in numbers at their services since the recession began to bite. In last September’s Church Sunday, 37,000 new people went to church. That was almost double the previous year’s visitors. Church leaders believe that the economic difficulties are causing people to reassess their lives and values, and, for some, that means searching for new meaning by going to church.

That is surprising, before all this was the evidence that church attendance has been decreasing in this country for decades. Another very recent survey has found that 51% of people believe that ‘evolution alone is not enough to explain the complex structures of some living things’, and that the ‘belief in the intervention of an all-powerful God’ is not accepted by any large section of the public. That was according to research commissioned by the theology think tank Theos. With all the recently publicised over the 20th anniversary of Darwin’s birth, that has to have relevance. I believe we should record to counter the popular understanding in the UK wholeheartedly accepts the concept of evolution as adequately explaining where life came from. That is a nice surprise, isn’t it?

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The annual ADRA appeal is almost upon us and I know many of us are looking forward to knocking on those doors and interacting with the great British public, as well as collecting funds to help the poor and needy in this world. Over the past few years many other innovative ways have been initiated to raise these much needed funds. Activities such as car washes, sponsored sprints, auctioning items on eBay and boot sale sales have all played their part in aiding this great venture.

The major highlight of the ADRA Appeal recently has been the annual fun run. Members, as well as community members, have raised much money by taking part in this event, sponsored by their friends, family and fellow church members. This is a great, lucrative way of raising funds, and it is great fun! We are trying to expand the fun run to include as many people as possible this year, and so whether you are young or old, fit or unfit, you can take part. We are proposing the following:

- Golden mile (for youngsters and the slightly older folk)
- 3 miles (two laps) for the walkers
- 6 miles (four laps) for the faster ones
- 9 miles (six laps) for the sporty types
- 12 miles (eight laps) for the really keen

There will be no registration fee this year and T-Shirts can be purchased on the day for £3. Bottled water will be provided free of charge.

It will take place at Crystal Palace Park on 19 April and will begin at 10am. Further details are posted on the ADRA website.

I would like to invite you to take part – and why not invite your non-Christian friends to partici­pate? They will have great fun and would be glad to be doing something for such a great cause. I look forward to seeing you there!

In any recession there are many losers, which is obvious. The main ones seem to be those who lose their jobs. However, there are a few winners as well, such as certain food retailers, as people go out to eat less but spend more on meals at home. It also seems that as a Church we could be among the ‘winners’. The Church of England has reported a rise in numbers at their services since the recession began to bite. In last September’s Back to Church Sunday, an annual campaign to encour­age parishioners back into church, 37,000 new people went to church. That was almost double the previous year’s visitors. Church leaders believe that the economic difficulties are causing people to reassess their lives and values, and, for some, that means searching for new meaning by going to church.

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Forgiveness bubbles. Have you ever done something wrong and then felt terrible about it afterwards? That can be such a horrible feeling. Jesus loves us so much that he wants to take away our bad feelings, even when we’ve disobeyed him! His forgiveness helps us to feel happy and peaceful again. Try this: find a pot of bubbles. Open the pot and think of something you want to ask Jesus to forgive you for. Blow some bubbles, then shut your eyes and pray for forgiveness. When you open your eyes most of the bubbles will have disappeared completely. You can’t find the bubbles because they have gone forever. That’s what Jesus does to your sins when you tell him you’re sorry, and you ask him to forgive you.

Forgiveness prayers. I write to you dear children because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name” (John 2:12.) At Easter we feel sad that people did awful things to Jesus. Do you admire the way he was able to forgive those who hurt him? All of us have done wrong things. Easter time is special because it reminds us that Jesus died so we can be forgiven, too. He proved he forgives us because he has the power to rise from the dead.

Draw a picture of a cross. At the bottom of the cross write a list of things that you want Jesus to forgive, or go outside and choose a cross-shaped twig and some little stones. Tell Jesus what you want him to forgive as you place the stones at the foot of the cross.

Cross-eyed! Look quietly around the room or church where you’re sitting. See how many cross shapes you can find - look at the patterns in the windows, doors, floor tiles, shapes of furniture and so on. Try doing this when you go for a walk outside. Crosses can be found in all kinds of unusual places! Each time you see a cross, thank Jesus for dying for you and then rising again so you could live forever! That’s the best gift in the whole universe!

Eggstra-special Easter fun. Ask your parents to help you organise an Easter egg hunt for your friends. You can hide dozens of flat card egg shapes (you can cut these yourself), which can be swapped for real chocolate eggs, so that they don’t melt in the sun or get eaten by animals! Include a few gold card egg shapes, which will win special eggs. Make sure you have enough chocolate eggs for all the tokens.

Give each person a bag for collecting their egg tokens and a leaflet or comic explaining the meaning of Jesus’ death. You will find Easter leaflets and special comics for children about Easter at www.cpo-online.org.uk

Easter activity. Take a sheet of thick white paper and write “Jesus is alive!” on the paper using a white wax candle, or the edge of a tea light taken out of its metal cup. The writing will be nearly invisible. Then paint the paper all over with black paint and see what happens. Remember that however dark or bad everything may seem, Jesus is still alive and nothing can hide him. The disciples were very sad when Jesus died. Everything seemed dark and gloomy, but nothing could stop Jesus coming back to life again forever! Hallelujah! Jesus is alive!

The forgiveness code. Crack the code to see how much God has forgiven you:

10 19 22 11 19 8 23 19 16 19 26 9 8 24 12 9 1 19 22 16 8
24 12 5 24 12 9 11 5 26 9 12 13 23 19 18 16 3 23 19 18 24 12 5 24
1 12 19 9 26 9 22 6 9 16 13 9 26 9 23 13 18 12 13 17
23 12 5 16 16 18 19 23 20 9 22 13 23 12 6 25 24 12 5 26 9
9 24 9 22 18 5 16 16 13 10 9

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
5 9 13 19 22 24 26 1 A

Contributors: Karen Holford, Anne Pilmoor and Heather Haworth

Easter crafts on the web. Visit www.dltk-holidays.com/easter/religious.html for some Easter themed crafts that you can print off and use. Make some crafts to give away and help others to understand what Jesus’ death and resurrection really means. You will find other Bible crafts, games and activity sheets on this site that you can use any time you like.
Studying the words and knowing the Word at Newbold
by Helen Pearson, Newbold PRO

Newbold lecturers in Literature and Theology, together with Newbold pastor, Patrick Johnson, contributed to The Words and The Word — a four-week series at Newbold church, finishing on 14 February. The series focused on the Bible, the manuscripts, the nature of inspiration and, appropriately for a series that finished on Valentine’s Day, how to read it and relate to the God found in the Bible. In the final week, two sermons and a discussion focused on the “how to” of Bible reading.

In the Contemporary Service, Manuela Cach, lecturer in Pastoral Studies, chose as her title: ‘Eat the Book’. She focused on the warning to the apostle John in the book of Revelation that eating the book would be sour to his stomach but sweet as honey in his mouth. “We don’t read the Bible. It reads us,” she said. She warned her listeners that Bible reading ‘challenges, stimulates and questions your fantasies about yourself’.

In the Family Service, Jean Claude Verrechca, principal lecturer in New Testament, assisted by Dr Sandra Rigby-Barrett on the piano, drew out the comparisons to be made between reading the Bible and reading music — understanding music and context, relating to the author and the people for whom the music text was written.

In the afternoon, about eighty church members and visitors, including teenagers and pensioners from a variety of different nationalities, returned for a question and answer session on the four-week theme. Participants were interested in the reliability of manuscripts, the value of different translations, and books to read to help with the study of the Bible. Theology lecturers Daniel Duda and Jean-Claude Verrechca, who dealt with the questions, both testified to the power of Bible reading at different times in their own lives.

The series concluded with an appeal by Jan Barne, assistant lecturer in Systematic Theology and leader of the Sabbath School team at Newbold church, to participate — and encourage friends to participate — in the Sabbath School. A list of books to help non-specialist Bible students will be found soon on Newbold church’s website. For those who want to be specialist Bible students and to learn how to teach others how to study the Bible, Newbold offers a range of degrees and professional development opportunities for both pastors and lay people. As we go to press, Dr Daniel Duda is teaching a three-week intensive class on The Doctrine of Christ and Dr Reinder Bruinsma, another intensive on Approaches to the Contemporary Mind. For more information about how to study the Bible at Newbold go to www.newbold.ac.uk.

To discuss your options for studying the Bible at Newbold, contact Dr Steve Currow, Course Director. Tel: 01344-407487; Email: scurrrow@newbold.ac.uk.

Youth fellowship day in Swansea
by Thomas Stone

On 7 February, Chelmsford church housed its first youth day of four this year. On most Sabbaths the church accommodates about a hundred, but on this Sabbath almost 380 people turned up to witness, arguably, one of Chelmsford’s best youth days.

The normal structure for Sabbath Church, a session of praise and worship, led by the Chelmsford youth team, introduced the afternoon programme. The speaker for the day was Pastor Des Boldeau from the BUC. His sermon was very lively and youth-friendly. He challenged the youth to commit their lives to Jesus by submitting time at the start of the day to God, to read and meditate on his Word.

A free lunch, provided by Holloway and North Wembley, followed, with Pastor Des Boldeau leading a talk and discussion on commitment, but it contained a different message from that of his sermon.

The day ended with an evening social during which the youth played games and watched a film. The afternoon programme was again somewhat different. The youth provided scatter cushions and had us all sitting on the floor for the song service! This was again led by the praise team and was followed by Jonathan, Efdion, Fflin and Lydia giving readings on the need to have Jesus in every part of our lives and, most importantly, to invite him into our hearts. An inspiring duet by Tihomer Lacz and Belinda Stojanovic also contributed to the atmosphere of the occasion.

For some the youth day continued into the evening with entertainment at the Singleton Hospital residence hall. Here the young people enjoyed the evening either relaxing and chatting, or watching a film and playing games. We would like to thank Pastor Jovan Adamovic for the work he has been doing with the young people in Swansea. It is really important that we support our youth in all our churches — to help them to achieve their hopes and dreams, but also to help them to use their God-given talents in serving the Lord.

Chelmsford Youth Day
by Thomas Stone

On 7 February, Chelmsford church housed its first youth day of four this year. On most Sabbaths the church accommodates about a hundred, but on this Sabbath almost 380 people turned up to witness, arguably, one of Chelmsford’s best youth days.

The normal structure for Sabbath Church, a session of praise and worship, led by the Chelmsford youth team, introduced the afternoon programme. The speaker for the day was Pastor Des Boldeau from the BUC. His sermon was very lively and youth-friendly. He challenged the youth to commit their lives to Jesus by submitting time at the start of the day to God, to read and meditate on his Word.

After a free lunch, provided by Holloway and North Wembley, the after- noon programme started with an ice-breaker game, and then many special items took to the stage. Pastor Des Boldeau led a talk and discussion on commitment, but it contained a different message from that of his sermon.

The day ended with an evening social during which the youth played games and watched a film.

Wallathamstow baptism
Seven precious souls were baptised in a special service at Wallathamstow church, which was conducted by Pastor Leslie Ackie on 20 December. Among the baptismal candidates were two sisters, a young man who was called ‘a miracle baby’ by his parents, and the niece of Pastor Pickhart — who came especially to conduct his baptism.

This was a bittersweet day for Wallathamstow church members as they were also saying goodbye to Pastor Ackie and his family on this, his last Sabbath. It was therefore fitting that he should end his ministry at Wallathamstow with a baptism.

Merseyside: Year of Evangelism and our first harvest
by Jovan Adamovic

On 31 January friends and families from Swansea, Carmarthen, Cardiff, Newport, Bristol and Lamberpt gathered together in Swansea church to have a special youth fellowship day. Although it was a particularly cold winter’s day, the atmosphere inside the church was warm and cordial. In a change to the usual pattern of having two separate services, the youth decided to create one long service and to rearrange the seating plan. The service was conducted by Eifion Paul, the song service by Duane and Lubona, and music was provided by Tihomer, Fflin, Chris and Efdion.

The focus of the day was on the need to have ‘silence and time alone’ in order to appreciate God’s voice talking to us. We were reminded about the importance of prayer and the example that Jesus gave us through the Lord’s Prayer. In his inspiring Bible message Welsh Mission Youth sponsor, Pastor Jeremy Tremain, emphasised the need for all of us to be in tune with God and to have a meaningful prayer life.

The morning service was fol- lowed by the usual potluck lunch and we would like to thank everyone who helped and took the trouble to prepare special delicacies and treats for the day. After lunch some people headed for a walk in the nearby Singleton Park, while others stayed and relaxed at the church.

The afternoon programme was again somewhat different. The youth provided scatter cushions and had us all sitting on the floor for the song service! This was again led by the praise team and was followed by Jonathan, Efdion, Fflin and Lydia giving readings on the need to have Jesus in every part of our lives and, most importantly, to invite him into our hearts. An inspiring duet by Tihomer Lacz and Belinda Stojanovic also contributed to the atmosphere of the occasion.

For some the youth day contin- ued into the evening with entertain- ment at the Singleton Hospital residence hall. Here the young people enjoyed the evening either relaxing and chatting, or watching a film and playing games. We would like to thank Pastor Jovan Adamovic for the work he has been doing with the young people in Swansea. It is really important that we support our youth in all our churches — to help them to achieve their hopes and dreams, but also to help them to use their God-given talents in serving the Lord.
Elena’s special day

This delightful and warm photograph was taken of Elena Veggas with her father. It was a very special day for Elena who was baptised during the Sabbath service at St Albans church on 24 January. Elena is just 10 years old, but she made a wise choice to be baptised and seal an awesome commitment to follow Jesus. Having completed a series of Bible studies with Pastor Jonathan Barrett, she was determined to nail her colours to the mast. Pastor Barrett said that he had never known anyone so eager to be baptised. Like the pirates who nailed their colours to the mast, Elena was encouraged to nail her colours to God for life. He urged her to keep up her commitment and not to be dissuaded from doing so. However, he recognised that she needs to be supported by her immediate family and the church family if she is to grow and mature as a Christian. The baptism service was enriched by other children, one of whom was her sister who played the violin and read John 3:16. The children sang, ‘You are my all in all’ as a tribute to Elena as she came up out of the baptismal water. As the beliefs of the Adventist Church were read to Elena, she gave her full attention and then consented to them. As a symbolic gesture a mast was provided, and she literally nailed her colours to it, along with members who made a commitment to God on that day. As the elders welcomed Elena into the fellowship, the members unreservedly accepted her into the local and worldwide membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Baptism at Slough

On Saturday 24 January there was joy in both Heaven and on Earth as six young souls (Tinotenda Chingosho, Lezca Murray, Fadzani Nyama, Sharon Komiti and Angelique Gomes) gave their lives to Christ. In addition, four more people (Colin Harry and Kenkester, Odetta and Kizzie Murray) were accepted in the Slough Central church by profession of faith. Before their baptism the candidates gave moving testimonies about their walk with God which had resulted in their decision to be baptised. Speaking to the congregation, Angie said: ‘I want to give my life to Christ because he has been good to me, although I have not always been on his side or said the right things. That is why today I will dedicate my whole life to God.’ Lezca Murray affirmed that she would probably not have been here today without God and that she would not have missed the opportuni-ty to be baptised for the world. She explained how God had come through for her and concluded that the only and best way to repay him was to give her life to Christ and die to sin. Chantelle Ashleigh Khoza stated: ‘I do not deserve to be here. I am too sinful. I know Jesus can cleanse me and all I have to do is just ask.’ She acknowledged her indebtedness to the Lord due to his sacrificial gift and recognised our need to be faithful witnesses for him. ‘I used to be very shy,’ she said, ‘but now I can talk about my faith. I remem-ber how much the Lord sacrificed for me. In his sermon, ‘Following the example of Christ’, Pastor Ron Clemens entreated the youngsters to follow their parents and to be wary of friends who could not only discour-age or make fun of them, but could also be a snare to them and lead them to abandon their faith. He urged them to become friends of God and fully to rededicate his character in their lives so that others might be drawn closer to him. He concluded that they should make Christ their example.

Another of the candidates, Sharone, said: ‘I always knew this day would come at some point in my life and it seems that the Lord chose this moment in time for me. As I go into the water, I pray that I come out as a new child.’

Following her acceptance into the Slough church by profession of faith, Chantelle talked about her desire to work for God and saw that this could best be achieved within the loving and understanding atmosphere of Slough church. Her parents Kenkester and Odetta Murray expressed their joy at becoming members and said: ‘We aim to con-tinue to allow God’s Spirit to teach and renew us as we grow day by day in him.’ They also thanked God and the church for their support, as their journey had been an uphill one.

Finally, Colin Harry was grateful to God, his family, friends and the church for their support. When asked why he was rejoicing the church after many years of absence he said, ‘Why not now, my son?’ He explained how God has been with him through thick and thin and affirmed that there was no better time than the present to give his life to Christ.

Baptism, football and pale blue balloons

When Daniel Hama was baptised at Newbold church on the evening of Sabbath 15 November he chose to be baptised in a way that would witness to his school friends. So he combined his baptism with his 12th birthday party and created a unique programme that inspired people of all ages from 2 to 92!

Opening with rousing praise and worship led by Jena and Stephen Hubert, the service included Daniel’s testimony which he had written for his mother to read aloud.

Maidenhed elder, Will Sharp, who had created special Bible studies for Daniel using PowerPoint presentations on his computer, led Daniel through his baptismal vows. Pastor Benji Hofstad gave a short sermon explaining the connections between being on a football team and being baptised to illustrate that even when we’re on a team we still make mistakes, and we need to learn, be coached, develop our skills and be supported.

Pastor Bernie baptised Daniel in a baptismal pool bordered by a series of ascending pale blue bal-loons, reminding his family and friends of the steps he was taking towards Heaven.

The choir from Newbold School, where Daniel had been a student until the summer, sang a contempo-rary version of Psalm 23, and the Newbold Puppet Choir performed ‘Joyful, Joyful’ and ‘10 Happy Days’ celebrating Daniel’s decision with enthusiasm and energy. The Rogers-Matthan family also taught everyone a soothing song, ‘Wonderful God’, to remind those present that they had nothing to fear because God was watching over them.

Just as there is a party in Heaven whenever someone chooses to follow Jesus, so there was a party on Earth, and the baptism was followed by bread, soup and a baptismal cake. All the children and young people at Daniel’s left with a goodie bag of inspirational and spiritual treats and surprises, and Daniel’s family and friends left with special memories of a unique cele-bration of his faith journey and his personal decision to follow Jesus.

Brixton on the march

No sooner had Pastor Keith Anson Albury of the Exuma and Long Island churches in the Bahamas ended the campaign at Brixton church with a baptism on 19 October 2008 and returned home, than the evangelistic fervour that had been set in motion reaped its second baptism on 27 December. Truly it can be said that the Lord is working when souls come forward to accept the message of salvation so soon after a baptism.

Brixton is on the march for the Lord under the guidance of Pastor Hamilton Williams, and all the departments of the church are working towards soul winning in 2009. We are united and determined to work steadfastly at bringing the message of salvation to all who want to hear.

As we witness to our friends, loved ones and the community, the church family will continue to grow. As the signs of the times begin to manifest themselves, the Holy Spirit continues to impress on the minds of all ages the need to draw nearer to God. The victory is God’s and we are his instruments, so let us pray on.

Doncaster baptism

It was a joyous occasion on Sabbath 13 December for the family, friends and visi-tors of the pastoral district of Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham, when scores of worshippers congregated at the Doncaster Central church to celebrate the baptism of Elena Veggas. Elena is just 10 years old, but she was very wise to make her choice to be baptised and seal an awesome commitment to follow Jesus. Having completed a series of Bible studies with Pastor Ron Clemens, she was determined to nail her colours to the mast. Pastor Clemens said that he had never known anyone so eager to be baptised. Like the pirates who nailed their colours to the mast, Elena was encouraged to nail her colours to God for life. She urged her to keep up her commitment and not to be dissuaded from doing so. However, he recognised that she needs to be supported by her immediate family and the church family if she is to grow and mature as a Christian. The baptism service was enriched by other children, one of whom was her sister who played the violin and read John 3:16. The children sang, ‘You are my all in all’ as a tribute to Elena as she came up out of the baptismal water. As the beliefs of the Adventist Church were read to Elena, she gave her full attention and then consented to them. As a symbolic gesture a mast was provided, and she literally nailed her colours to it, along with members who made a commitment to God on that day. As the elders welcomed Elena into the fellowship, the members unreservedly accepted her into the local and worldwide membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Pastor Ron Clemens, Tinotenda Chingosho and Student Pastor Sam

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The British ARISE students – Dionne White, Clarissa Lewis, Lynette Allcock and Nathan Gray

The British ARISE Graduates

Dr Carl Fletcher (1946-2008) d. 30 December.

The funeral of Dr Carl Fletcher was conducted on 15 January 2009 at the Adventist church, Dean Road, Bournemouth. As there were many students from the ARISE Institute of Soul-winning and Evangelism graduating from the institute before Christmas, the family had to give this 85-year-old gentleman a huge funeral, which he deserved.

He earned his bye for summer book-selling in Swindon with the Drow twins, Ed and Otto. He kept many college friends in various parts of the world.
Retirees visit Cyprus

by Dorothy Taylor

While snowbound Britain shivered in February blizzards, a group of about twenty retirees from all walks of church life enjoyed the glorious sunshine and sea breezes of Cyprus — but not until the third day of our visit.

For the first two days we dodged tropical downpours, with varying degrees of success, as the locals delighted in the first rain to fall on their parched land for many weeks. We had been warned to take warm clothing and umbrellas, for even Cyprus weather can be unpredictable in late January and early February. Our rundown at Gelendzhik at 6.30am meant we were dressed for British winter when we left, though we could shed the outer layers when we arrived.

Our hotel was a delight, thanks to the careful choosing of our guide and mentor Pastor Martin Bell. Its location meant we could walk out of the back door down to the beach and follow the paved walks to the harbour at Paphos, or round the bay to view the sunset, or we could catch the bus into the town right outside the front door. Inside there was plenty to entertain — an indoor and outdoor pool, table tennis, Greek dancing and much more — and the food! The choice was so vast, and so tempting, and many of us just walked round the whole area before making any decisions. Such treats as omelettes or pancakes made while you watched, with a selection of fillings to suit all tastes, exotic and familiar fruits and salads, an array of savoury dishes, all clearly labelled, a rainbow display of desserts and all types of bread and rolls. No wonder there was only need for a snack at midday.

All of this may sound somewhat self-indulgent, but a short break like this is more than just a holiday. Many of our group live alone, have been bereaved, or rarely get a chance to associate with fellow Adventists. There were opportunities to reminisce with old friends not seen for years, and to hear stories that had us aching with laughter. When we played the card game called UNO — rather like a complex game of SNAP — we were having so much fun that two of the hotel guests asked if they could join us. How lovely to be seen as happy and welcome people instead of an exclusive ‘sect’. This same couple came to the presentation given by Harry Wilyb on the joys and hazards of being a driver for ADHA.

For those of us who have the blessing of attending church every Sabbath, where we can have fellowship and be spiritually fed, it is hard for us to appreciate the situation of these members who are isolated.

Our holiday location had been chosen so that we could bring a blessing to the little group of believers in Cyprus. During the week we followed in the steps of Paul the apostle in the historic sites, and on the Sabbath we tried to follow in his steps and ‘strengthen the believers’. Moses and Alice Edmands and their grandson Auran, with three Sabbath-keepers from Paphos, joined us for the day.

LETTERS

Since the death of Pastor David Spearing on 23 June 2008 many letters have arrived here expressing deep concern for his family. Repeatedly I have been asked, ‘How are they coping?’

We are publishing here a short piece written by Mrs Sylvia Bodman who used to be Sylvia Spearing, Sylvia is Pastor David’s sister.

Please continue to remember Lilian, Otty, Tony, Robin and Sylvia in your prayers.

Don’t think I don’t think about it

Don’t think I don’t think about it. I do, several times a day. Realisation of a reality that is unchangeable. But what I do with my incoming thought is important. I could bow my head in despair, have a crushed spirit and a heart of lead; or I can have joy, peace and serenity.

If we think outside of ourselves, most people could be walking or lying prostrate in the former condition, because all lives have been touched by sin’s tragedy. Therefore, God made man to be a resilient creature. Just as he made provision for sin. In Adam all die, but in Christ all can live — so therefore he made us capable of experiencing deep joy.

This joy does not depend on riches, wealth, families, health, position or power but on receiving heaven-sent joy! It is available freely without measure. In my case it even travels to me faster than email! I think that the world of nature plays a large part in distributing this joy. Maybe that’s why Grandma told me to walk in the garden when I was angry, upset or sad. When you receive it, peace and serenity come with the package.

For those living in cities, I recommend looking up at the sky throughout the day. It is an ever-changing landscape of God’s handiwork. Additionally, find a tree, a plant or patch of grass to study. Or you may, as I do, live in a rural setting where all of Creation calls out to us, instructing and revealing God’s goodness. The sea, sky, rocks, sun, moon, stars and many trees are all far older than I. Remember, we are like grass that flowers today and is then blown away or cast into the fire. However, we are far from forgetten. God remembers each one of us — his sons and daughters. I like to think of how parents confuse the names of just a few of their children with each other, or a teacher even more so. How many children does God have? He does not forget any single one of us!

The vein of kindness, compassion, helpfulness, mercy, unselfishness and meekness still flows from our Father, even if it is rather weak at times in many of us! We can boost our circulatory system through, by Bible study and communion with him.

So yes, I think about it, but I do something else. We have to be the smile, the hands, feet, heart, mind and mouth of those who sleep. Turn around, and be there for someone. Keep ordering the joy it grows like yeast, so you can always pass it on! (1 Cor. 15:19)