Future constituency meetings of the British Union Conference will now be more efficient and streamlined as well as giving a greater level of input for delegates and more information for members as a whole.

A one-day Extraordinary Session of the BUC was convened at Stanborough Secondary School on Sunday 17 May specifically to consider constitutional changes affecting the way future Union Sessions will run. The main areas under consideration related to delegate numbers, the length of session, cost and a restructuring of the way the Recommendations and Nominating Committees will work, allowing them to meet and make recommendations and nominations weeks in advance of the main session.

Delegates arrived early to an Evangelism Expo hosted by the various BUC departmental directors. Stands around the edges of the school gym gave opportunity for them to explore resources available to them for use in their local churches and communities. By noon most delegates had arrived and were treated to a one-hour act of worship. Hosted by Catherine Boldau and David Neal, three choirs and an orchestral ensemble raised delegates’ minds towards Heaven in a repertoire that ranged from lively Ghanaian and Filipino numbers to Schubert and ‘Abba Father’ performed by Newbold School children. It climaxed with a varied selection by the London Adventist Choralke, including a powerful rendition of ‘My Tribute’ by Romanian soloist Felicia.

1. BUC Executive secretary and president, Eric Lowe and Don McFarlane.
2. There were matters of constitutional minutiae.
3. BUC treasurer Victor Pilmoor: ‘What is the best use of the Lord’s money?’
4. Jim Huzzey who chaired the committee that looked at the options.
5. SEC president Sam Davis speaks from the floor.
6. Floor speakers Geoff Smith and Chris Peake.
You’re a born chooser!

David Marshall

One thing I’ve lived over the three decades in which I’ve occupied the editor’s chair is that I’m a born chooser. Read that last word again and make sure you’ve read it right.

At some level, I have (almost) always known it, of course. But what I have learned over the last three decades is how to exercise my choice.

I should go so far as to say that the greatest discovery of my whole generation has not been the iPod or the Worldwide Web, it has been that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind.

What first brought the be-a-chooser discovery to the face of my thinking was the story of death camp survivor Victor Frankl. Frankl was a Viennese Jew who was moved by the Nazis from one concentration camp to another. He even spent several months in Auschwitz. Whenever he was moved to a new camp the guards stripped him of everything he had and all the more. The Nazis found Jews easiest to deal with when they were minus their dignity — and everything else that marked them as individual human beings. When they had been reduced to barely alive skeletons the camp guards could treat them with a viciousness that they would not use on their cattle.

Cattle, after all, had value, whereas the very existence of these Jews was resented by the Nazis. Frankl discovered ‘that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one’s own attitude’. Notice that:

‘...one’s own attitude’, Frankl discovered, ‘an independence of mind.’ The choosers, Frankl came to realise, were the micro-minority who would survive. The Few.

But isn’t it a bit sad to allow other people to manipulate and determine our personalities? Isn’t it wise to reserve a core that they can’t reach? ‘Independence of mind’ was Frankl’s phrase. If he could manage it without a stitch on the skin-covered bone frame he thought of as himself, we should be able to do it on three square meals a day and a regular income.

Light and truth, light and death – are choices.

The apostle Paul struggled with his own freedom of choice. ‘Man can preserve a vestige of spiritual freedom,’ Frankl discovered, ‘an independence of mind.’ The choosers, Frankl came to realise, were the micro-minority who would survive. The Few.

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Light and truth, light and death – are choices.
Involving children in the sermon

by Karen Holford

I am sick to the heart of seeing how churches treat children during the worship service – holding them down in their seats for an hour and a half, punishing them for the tiniest flick, not letting them even look at the pictures in a Children's Bible – all in the name of reverence. Where do we get the idea that hurting our children helps them to be reverent? Reverence is born in the heart, not in forcing children to look as if they are sitting still and listening.

If you ask many children in our churches today what they like and don’t like about church, many will tell you that the worship services are boring. There is nothing for them, except perhaps a children’s story. In many churches they can count on one hand how many children still– and to listen to things they cannot understand for an hour or so. The heart of Jesus and the stories we tell in our churches each week is one that is potentially anti–evangelistic. If we want to change this, we can start by asking them what they like and don’t like about church, and we need to be wise and generous enough to let go of some of our own favoured traditions and create church services that will keep our own children attracted to Jesus.

Two ways to involve the children in the sermon.

1. As you prepare your sermon, think about how the children will hear what you say and which points will be rewarding to them. Pray for the Holy Spirit to inspire you to fresh and creative ways to involve the children in your sermon. If you find it hard to be creative, ask your local Children’s Ministers to help you come up with different ideas, or contact Ministry, Conference or Union Children’s Ministers for help with ideas and resources. Please give at least two weeks’ notice before you plan the service if you are asking a busy person to help you.

2. Tell the children’s story during the sermon. This can be one of the long story sermon times you have given them to think about: do they enjoy them? Otherwise they can often find it very hard to listen to the sermon as they have often learned that nothing else happens for the children in a church service once the sermon begins.

Be creative about involving the children in the theme of the service. If you are telling the story about Noah, you could have plastic animals in 7, 15 and 25 around the church for the children to find. These could then be placed beside a large ark – a cardboard box was fine! Gift wrap objects that help to tell your sermon and invite the children to explore. One pastor placed a surprise object in a special bag which he took to church each week. The children didn’t want to help him open the bag during the sermon. Each week the object is chosen to help the children learn how much God loves them.

Ask a teacher or scientist to involve the children in a science or nature experiment as an illustration during the sermon time.

Use attractive photographs to illustrate your sermon or PowerPoint slides so that you keep the children’s attention. Hide the picture of a small object on more than half the slides. You can choose an image that is relevant to the sermon theme, such as a storm, lamp, trees, and so on. Ask the children to look for the hidden pictures quietly and secretly and count how many they can find.

Create sample worksheets that is linked to the message and give it to the children for them to complete during the sermon. This is not bending, because it helps to think about the sermon, and many children actually listen better when they are engaged else where at the same time. There are many books of adaptable worksheets on the range of themes. The Children’s Ministries departments can help you to find worksheets for specific ages and themes.

Just before a lesson hand out a small ball of play dough to every child. Crayola’s Model Magic is clean, non–messy and soothing on the skin. Invite the children to model something that relates to the sermon or a scene from the Bible story. After the sermon, provide them withruud models and tell them why you chose them to make their creations. The models can be taken home to dry and be kept, or the food clay can be returned to a sealed container to be used during another service.

Give each child in your church a special Spiritual Memory box. Each week that they arrive they can collect items that are spiritually significant to them. Each week choose a small and impressive object that has special meaning to your church as they leave church. Make the connection between your message and the very clear, and remember that under 7s may find it hard to understand abstract meanings for objects. You could give out a large nail when telling about Jesus’ death, a small piece of map or tiny compass when talking about how God gives an instruction, a tiny smiling person when talking about joy, and so on. Encourage the children to use the boxes during their own worship and family worship and to share them when they move to their new home or church. A notebook can be added to the box so that they can write down what each week they brought home and what they put in the box.

Give older children a piece of squared paper and a pencil and ask them to create a simple crossword or word–search puzzle that relates to the theme of the sermon. They can then exchange them with other children or keep it hidden in the worship service. This helps them to concentrate on what you are saying and helps them to remember the important parts of your message.

Dress a few children as the characters in your chosen Bible story and help them to create tableau scenes to illustrate the story. You could also give them cards with clearly written words for them to speak at the appropriate moment. Talk to the children about how they would feel if they were different characters in the story to add another dimension to the Bible story. Ask the children to share their ideas for ways in which they could be involved in your sermon times.

For a complete set of the ideas for involving children in your church, visit the Children’s Ministries Resources at www.seventhdayadventist.org

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JLS: Operation Take Back

by Pastor Rosyton Smith, chaplain

Ruth Pearson, deputy head

Tears filled the eyes of not a few teachers as they experienced the first baptism at the John Loughborough School for over ten years. This was a week that will linger in the minds of all those who witnessed ‘Operation Take Back’, the title of the school’s Week of Prayer. At the end of this Spirit–filled week our one young lady was baptised by our chaplain, Rosyton C. Smith, while others have requested Bible studies. Truly, students, staff and everyone were blessed at the end of the week.

Our speaker Pastor Daniel D. Saugh, a native of Trinidad, now resides in Canada. He has travelled extensively throughout the world preaching and teaching the Word to young people. From the beginning it was evident that there was something special about this young man. His quiet and amiable presence and his immediate connection with the students, his ability to get positive responses to questions raised, as well as his method of breaking down complex messages into simple, student–friendly ones. This irresistible pastor

believe but knew and respected the work of the Adventist Church. She explained that her late husband was saved, along with her infant son, from the Holocaust by Seventh-day Adventists. The dear friend was a convert to the Adventist faith for the rest of her life. The lady gave generously and thanked us.

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Saved from the Holocaust by Adventists

The annual ADRA appeal to help the needs of human

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Training in Adventist Muslim Relations
by Pastor Petras Bahadur, SEC AMR director

S ome years ago Newbold College offered a course on Islamic Studies but this is not in place anymore. So we in the Adventist Muslim Relations department, seeing the need for pastors and lay people to have a good understanding of Islam, have organised a six-month course on Islam.

The one-year Islamic Studies course at Newbold used to cost approximately £7,000 in fees alone, but now this six-month course will cost only £120.

The course will take place as follows:

Frequency – Once a month (every third Sunday of the month)
Dates – 17 May, 21 June, 19 July, 20 September, 18 October, 15 November
Graduation – 20 December
Venue – The Advent Centre, 12 Crawford Place
(off Edgware Road), Westminster, London, W1U 5HD

This very special course, called Encountering the World of Islam, is organised by the World Mission Institute, USA. You will receive a certificate at completion. Every topic will be covered by professors and scholars coming from across the world to lead in the presentations. These presenters are authorities on Islam and evangelism. Topics covered will be: History of Islam, Expansion of Islam, Spiritual World of Islam, Cultural Barriers, Theological Issues and Approaches to Evangelism. We have limited places, so please register for this course on time to avoid disappointment. Please send an email to my secretary Mrs Sophia Ventidalis: sventidalis@secadventist.org.uk or call the South England Conference on 01923 232728.

Good Friday witness
Clapton church, along with Holloway’s Pathfinder band, marched around the Hackney community on Good Friday, making our presence known and letting the community that Jesus saves. It was a day filled with rejoicing as we marched to the glory song, singing, ‘When the saints go marching in’, giving the community that hope and the blessed assurance of the resurrection and Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

High Wycombe evangelism
In keeping with the Year of Evangelism focus, the three Adventist churches in High Wycombe decided to look at ideas that were slightly ‘outside of the box’. Within the last three months, the Micklefield, Sands and Amersham churches have embraced varying methods of spreading the Gospel of Christ within the community.

Pastor Andrew Lozano’s enthusiastic drive in the district has resulted in all the churches having a strategic plan for the next twelve months.

• the distribution of the Amazing Facts’ ‘Final Events’ DVD
This has already proved to be successful. Bible studies with members of the public have already begun, and thousands of the DVDs have been distributed in the homes of the community.

• the baptismal candidates were young people aged from 9 to 18 years. As B. Rutherford, Holloway’s Bible worker, aptly declared: ‘Devil, you’ve lost once again!’ before Clarence and Karem Riley-Guishard entered the baptismal pool. There was a pensive moment, as Pastor Richard Holder reminded the congregation how much hope these young men had brought to a community where knife and gun crime was still prevalent. God had spared their lives to save their lives.

• the surge of young candidates was the result of years of attending Bible study groups, Pathfinders and the witness of the youth to their friends. This was confirmed during Holloway’s recent Youth Revival, “a most impressive baptismal service.

• once a month (every third Sunday of the month)
Sabbath 25 April will reside in the hearts of the Holloway members as the occasion of a most impressive baptismal service. It was impressive for many reasons. Each of the fifteen baptismal candidates had journeyed far and wide to declare publicly Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, four of them quite literally. Sonto Mashele of South Africa, Gilian Tembo-One of Nigeria, Musa Maphosa of Zimbabwe, and Vivien Goddard-Quilton of Trinidad. Joining the women were two men who had found Christ through their service to the church and the regular small groups which met for Bible study during the week. Jeremiah Bonner and Lee Carter.

Eight of the baptismal candidates were young people aged from 9 to 18 years. As B. Rutherford, Holloway’s Bible worker, aptly declared: ‘Devil, you’ve lost once again!’ before Clarence and Karem Riley-Guishard entered the baptismal pool. There was a pensive moment, as Pastor Richard Holder reminded the congregation that filled most of the 400 seats. As one senior member later commented: ‘I have never seen so great an amount of support and dedication from young people at a baptism in all the forty years I have attended this church.’

Each candidate was honoured with songs and readings rendered by friends and family. The father of Trevina and Trevona Jennings sang ‘Amazing grace’. Nela Hopkins, 15, had a song and poem dedicated to her by her friends and sister. And the sound of Aca-pella accompanied Georgina Anderson and Vanessa James, both aged 15, two of the first teenagers to enter the pool. The youngest yet determined member to enter the pool was 9-year-old Alya-Jada Chunda, who had grown up in the church under the guidance of her grandmother, Sister Spence.

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A life of volunteering
Lynn Thomas, who attends Brixton church, came to England from the West Indies in 1963. This was a happy but sad time for her as she left behind a loving family. However, to make up for leaving them behind she threw herself into doing voluntary work, from which she gained a great deal of satisfaction. Even when her children were growing up, she found the time to continue doing this work, always having in the back of her mind that someone would be looking after the people she had left behind in Jamaica.

She says, ‘When I came to this country I left my parents at home in Jamaica. I felt that whenever I did something over here I was helping someone. God would do some good for my parents. Even though they have now passed away, I’m still doing it for my children and grandchildren and everyone who might be left out.’

Now, after working tirelessly for thirty-six years as a volunteer, her hard work has been recognised and, after winning the regional and then the national award, Lynn was handed the Marsh Christian Trust 2008 UK Award for supporting older people. She continues to visit people’s homes to keep them company and to make sure that they are not left out.

She has also been a school governor and a St John Ambulance volunteer and holds her annual elderly tea parties, supported by various departments at Brixton church.

Carolyn Robertson, from Contact the Elderly said, ‘Lynn is amazingly caring and considerate and obviously has great empathy with elderly people. We are privileged to have people like Lynn volunteering for us.’

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Joining the two young men was Stevie Tutaloamo, 15, whose eagerness and enthusiasm were echoed by the youthful congregation that had brought to a community where knife and gun crime was still prevalent. God had spared their lives to save their lives.

To complement the Adventist health seminars – the Advent Centre, 12 Crawford Place (off Edgware Road), Westminster, London, W1U 5HD

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Heaven-seekers!

What's your bedroom like? Is it messy and full of your toys, heaps of clothes and the things you need for school? Does your room have a theme like trains, boats, butterflies or flowers? If you could make your room special, what would you do? Did you know that God is making a special room for you in Heaven, right now? He knows exactly what you like doing and how you like your room, and he's preparing the perfect place just for you!

My friend likes bears and he hopes that God will put a real brown bear in his heavenly room, a bear that will hug him when he wants to sit down and rest, or when he wants to go to sleep. I think I'd be happy just to be in Heaven with my loving Father God, where no one ever hurts or cries, and where I can learn about all the flowers and animals and stars.

When you think of Heaven, what are you looking forward to most? Ask the people in your family what they think will be the best thing about being in Heaven and pray that you'll all be there together one day.

Heavenly room craft

This is a fun thing to do on a wet Sabbath afternoon! Find a strong shoebox that nobody wants and then make it into a model of your heavenly home. You can turn it upside down and just decorate the outside, or you can pretend the lid is a roof, and decorate the inside, too. Use scraps of junk, fabric, gold paper and anything else you can find to make furniture and decorations for your heavenly room.

Heavenly stone search

In Revelation 21:19, John mentions thirteen precious/semi-precious stones and metals that will be used to build 'The New Jerusalem' (another word for Heaven). See if you can find them in this word-search puzzle:

Amethyst
Beryl
Carnelian
Chalcedony
Chrysoprase
Chrysolite
Emerald
Gold
Jacinth
Jasper
Pearl
Sapphire
Sardony

Heavenly prayer

In my Father’s house are many rooms... I am going to prepare a place for you. I will come back and take you to be with me. (John 14:1-3.)

Have you seen a TV programme where they surprise people by decorating their houses? Would you like your bedroom to be redecorated? Draw a picture of the tools they could use and what it would look like.

Take some time to think about the words in the text where Jesus promises to prepare a super room for you in a heavenly mansion. Close your eyes and imagine what it will be like. Imagine the colours of the countryside around it and the people you will see. Try drawing this scene.

Now think about how you will feel when you finally meet Jesus. Does it give you a warm glow just thinking about the perfect future God plans for you? Tell him how much he promises mean to you. Thank him for letting you know what a wonderful future he has prepared for you and tell him how much you look forward to being in Heaven with him.

Heavenly food

Plan a meal with your family where everything you eat is food that you might eat in Heaven! What do you think you would eat, and what foods do you eat everyday that you might not eat in Heaven? You can always choose your favourite fruits and ask an adult to help you make a super-healthy and delicious smoothie!

Heavenly memory verse house

In my Father’s house are many rooms... I am going to prepare a place for you. I will come back and take you to be with me. (John 14:1-3, NIV.)

Use a pencil to make a very faint outline of a house on a sheet of paper. Then write the memory verse along the lines you have drawn, so that the words are written in the shape of a house. Inside the verse outline write some of the different things you’d like to do when you’re living in Heaven.

Karen Holford, Anne Pilmoor and Heather Haworth
Manor of hope

by Victor Hubert, BUC Communication director

It is not your average Adventist congregation. There are more chil-
dren than adults. Visit any Sabbath morning and you discover that some-
how both age and racial differences between core members and
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Family worship is a little noisy and is stripped down to the essentials so
as to be understandable to the ‘unchurch’d from the troubled area of
Manor, Sheffield. There is always music.

Core members from Sheffield’s two churches chose to move into
this area many years ago. Led by Carlton Lee, and with much prayer, patience and
what is left of door knocking, they have really become a community church,
attracting families from social housing in the local area.

One of the positive things about Manor has been the fact that both
blacks and white children and adults have been attracted to the Manor
church from the local community.” Andrew Yusudian states. Not every-
one understands their way of worris-
ing – but parents and children in the area see the difference. Andrew
argues that churches need to change
their way of thinking. He is thrilled
that his church can hold onto the
traditional theological values of
Adventism but develop a programme
where you feel welcome, whatever
your background.

Chatting comfortably on one side of
the church are teenage mums with
their babies. Children from var-
ied backgrounds are welcomed and
easily being there. Adults were
being influenced as well. Carlton
Caine started attending on and off
about two years ago. Now he plays
various roles in the church from
varied backgrounds.

God has blessed the Manor
Pastor group with two youth from the
community committing their lives
to Jesus through baptism. With the
increasing number of young people
attending, a recent trip organised by
the group took a minibus full of
students to Aberdeen, North Wales, for
a youth weekend. For some it was
the first time ever camping and the first
time leaving England. Commenting
on the weekend and the increase of
young persons attending Manor, Grace
Paster Andrew Rashford-Newby
said, ‘We are excited about this and
the way in which God is blessing.’

Meeting in St Swithans Anglican
church, the core group have a good
working relationship with the
Anglican parish and the community.
Members have just produced 5,000
attractive cards, reminding residents
in the area of their presence and
most Sabbath afternoons they will
spend up to an hour knocking on
doors and talking with residents.

Visit Manor and you will find a
warmth and passionate essence to
worship and witness. People choose
to come to Manor because they
know they are making a difference.
Andrew states they are keen on
reaching and retention. At one time
we were worried about reaching out
to the majority community,” he says,
but equally we realise that many of
our own children are dropping away
fast. We need to do something
that caters for the trend, making
the Adventist message and mission
relevant. This is what Manor looks
to do.

This is a different form of evan-
gelism. Manor members have chosen
a weekly and daily commitment
that after seven years of hard work
is making a difference. This year
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Health Ministries at Camp Hill and Yardley

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March 28 marked the graduation day for thirty-one candidates in Sheffield who undertook the MicroCHIP training programme to enable them to deliver the full CHIP programme to the wider community. The programme was facilitated by Val Gosssett with the support of NEC Health director Grace Walsh, Mike Reeser, Pastor and Naomi Watson and a skilled and willing team. The training was held at Brunnsorge church and the participants were members from the Adventist churches in Sheffield, Doncaster and Leeds.

CHIP is more than just another health programme; it is based on the foundation that 75% of our Western diseases are lifestyle-related. We are taught that by making simple lifestyle changes we can reduce our risk.

The participants met for five consecutive Sundays. On the first and last sessions, weight, blood pressure, height, blood sugar and BMI readings were taken. After analysing all the data, we were amazed to see that twenty-nine participants had lost a grand total of forty-three bags of sugar (43kg in weight!).

In sharing her testimony at the graduation, ecstatic Portia Githens, a type 2 diabetic, told how she went to her local GP and informed him about the simple lifestyle changes she had made. The GP noted that her blood sugar levels had decreased dramatically over a period of four weeks, but he was reluctant to reduce the dosage of her medication, saying that she would need to take the drugs for life. He has since agreed to review Portia’s progress over the next few months.

The practice nurses, on seeing the dramatic change in Portia, have asked for leaflets regarding MicroCHIP and have encouraged Portia to keep on doing the programme.

Another participant enthusiastically shared her experience of avoiding sugar for four weeks and then being faced with a wide array of mouth-watering desserts at work. CHIP went out the window and she succumbed to temptation. The result of this indiscretion was abdominal pain, bloating, spots and physical proof to her of cause and effect. Other success stories included elevated feelings of wellness, a renewed sense of purpose, weight loss, increased energy, lower blood pressure, learning to cook healthier meals, fellowshipping, and being involved in a different way of evangelising to colleagues and friends.

It is gratifying to see the changes in people’s lives and we are planning to run the full CHIP programme in Sheffield in September 2009. With the Holy Spirit leading, we are confident that seeds will be sown and members of the community will become ‘healthy by choice and not by chance’.

We recommend that you try the programme and see what it can do for you and your community.

For further information contact Gene Nell, BUC CHIP co-ordinator, on gnel@adventist.org.uk or 07966713469.

New church at Northolt

On the last Sabbath of January, the members of Northolt and visiting friends assembled together as they witnessed a Spirit-filled and memorable occasion. The Northolt Adventist group became a church organisation.

Northolt Seventh-day Adventist Church under the umbrella of the South England Conference.

The Sabbath commenced with the reading of music from local artistes and Golden Chords. Wederly Aguiar presented a talk and reminded the members that they should always shine their light in the community.

The Pathfinders were ecstatic when they were invested, and receiving presentations and a continua- tion of music from local artistes and Golden Chords. Widely Aguiar presented a talk and reminded the members that they should always shine their light in the community. The Northolt group started in July 2005, when Leonard Mujaya, the founder and leader back then, saw that the time was right to branch out to start somewhere new in the Northolt area. Pastor Aguiar was the minister at the time and supported the group until he moved away. Along with Leonard Mujaya were young vibrant men, namely Dean Jena, Jason du Pont and later Reekwana Jena. Then members from Southall and Hanwell churches started attending the group and have continued ever since.

Pastor Aguiar succeeded by Pastor Robert Vine, under whose leadership the group continued to prosper. The current minister is Pastor Everett Pickart.

Over the last two years Northolt has seen two baptisms and a total of ten precious souls have been added to the group.

West Bromwich investiture

The morning of Sabbath 25 April started off gloomy but the sun shone in the hearts of the West Bromwich Pathfinders and Adventurers who were to be invested that day. All dressed up and looking smart. The Pathfinders began the day by leading out in Sabbath School. A presentation was given on the history of the Pathfinder movement which ended with a slide show of camp which our Pathfinders had attended, and we saw some of the activities that they had undertaken.

The Pathfinders were ecstatic when they were informed that Pastor Des Boldeau, BUC Youth director, would be spending the whole day with them. The Pathfinders were also favoured with the attendance of three Pathfinder Area co-ordinators – Joseph Empowie, Len Stewart and Loretta Griffin.

Pastor Boldeau delivered the message of the day on the theme ‘The Christian Walk’.

The essence of the day was of serious introspection at the Liverpool Stoneycroft Youth Day. Having realised the need for consistent attendance, the youth had decided to review two major aspects of their lifestyles: communication and relationships. They therefore asked the speakers, Pastor Eric Low, the BUC Executive secretary, and Pastor Ebenzer Daniel, the local pastor, to address these two themes.

In the divine service, Pastor Low presented a sermon entitled, ‘The Weapon of Mass Destruction’, using the book of Proverbs to highlight the importance of our mouth and the use of the tongue. This was followed in the afternoon by a presentation on dating and courting by Pastor Daniel. Both presentations were warmly received by the young people, as evidenced by their enthusiastic questioning directed at the pastors after the afternoon presentation.

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Evolution: myth or reality?

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norous snakes, skunks and dangerous spiders were all on show to be seen and handled by the children and adults attending the 4th ASNA annual respite weekend held at the Pioneer Centre, Shropshire, from 24 to 26 April. Over thirty children, including those with special needs and many elderly relatives, were entertained by the children and their carers. The children also took part in an inclusive Sabbath morning worship with paracletes, arts, crafts and music.

Over fifty adults attending the weekend included carers, adults with special needs and great workshop leaders. Brother and Sister Bacchus and Susan Bacchus led in the early morning worship services. Susan uses a wheelchair and has learning difficulties but this did not stop her leading out in the morning service. This expression of worship by Susan inspired the Special Needs co-ordinators and other carers to feel happy and grateful for all that God has done for them. The weekend theme was ‘Evolution – myth or reality?’ These were presented by Stefania Bertolini, an international speaker on this subject who is also vice-president of ASNO, the Italian Association for the Study of Origins. Stefania presented his thoughts on the subject and indicated how he had been asked by his studies but urged his audience to listen and study by themselves to reach the right conclusions.

Walsall honours its soldiers for God

On 28 February the Walsall church said thank you to twelve of its hard-working, dedicated soldiers of the army of God. Pastor Patricia Douglas wanted to recognise those who have served the church and community of Walsall with distinction. Special mention must be given to Elder Browne, who was one of the founder members of the Walsall church and who served as head elder for many years, nurturing the congregation. His dedication to the growth and development of the Walsall church will never be forgotten. Sister E. Taylor, who overcame many obstacles in establishing the first branch Sabbath School in Walsall, was also remembered for her tireless efforts. The message for the day was delivered by BUC president Don McFarlane, who spoke on the theme ‘Walk Worthy of the Calling’, in which he admonished the congregation to remember the great sacrifice that was made on their behalf to redeem them from their fallen state. He told the brethren not to compromise the truth or lose their salvation, because the road will not always be smooth. The reward at the end, however, makes it worthwhile. He urged all present to walk worthy of the blood of the shed for all. Pastor McFarlane addressed the twelve and thanked them for their dedication and hard work and assured them that God is aware of the sacrifices they had made over the many years and he will one day reward them with eternal life.

The evening ended with praise and worship and Pastor P. Douglas thanked the president and his wife for gracing us with their presence on such a grand occasion for the Lord. Those honoured were Elder and Sister L. Lawson, Sister L. Scott, Brother and Sister W. Taylor, Brother T. Senior, Brother Henry, Sister M. Lawrence, Sister A. Wright and Brother W. Williams.

Ladywood baptism

On Sabbath 4 April at Ladywood church, Birmingham, an excited congregation gathered together to witness the baptism of five individuals who, in the company of family and friends, took their stand for Christ. It was a time of rejoicing as well as recommitment. Pastor Paul Lyber presented a thought-provoking sermon in which he explored the cyclical nature of our walk with God. The converts were administered to and then read the Word which will point them back to prayer. Most of the converts gave brief testimonies of their experiences as they solicited the prayers of the brethren and sisters. The people baptised were Vereenie O’Garr, Melanie Goodin, Brandon Lee, Kenneth Lewis and Lenney Lee. The Spirit-filled singing and the solemnity of the occasion were clear reminders to all present that there is ‘joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth’.

Connecting people, changing lives, 100+ attend ASNA weekend by Sophia Nicholls, ASNA Hon. secretary/trustee

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This set the tone for a moving devotional message by Joseph Kidder, associate professor of Christian Ministry at Andrews University Theological Seminary. He also challenged delegates to ‘believe in a God who can do the impossible’ and ‘to pray like your life depends on it’.

The session then opened for business as BUC Executive secretary, Pastor Eric Lowe, announced that 320 delegates had registered by 1pm, which was more than the 51% needed for a quorum.

The first section of minor changes, principally tidying up legal and banking requirements, was completed just before 3pm. A full hour of discussion included questions such as ‘What was the purpose of the BUC in the first place?’ and ‘Can the money saved by organising sessions more efficiently be better used in the work of evangelism?’

Delegates such as Pastors Michael Mbu and Curtis Murphy commended the BUC Executive Committee for taking the initiative to look for better ways to organise future sessions. Others were concerned that the new structure would lower church representation, particularly with the very diverse church to be found in the British Union. At 3.53 a motion was carried by a large majority to accept the general principle of the changes. That then moved the delegation on to look at the detail.

This included two main areas. The first under discussion was that the Recommendations Committee be appointed by the various Conference or Mission Executive Committees at least eighteen weeks before the session. Delegates felt that this would limit democracy, and an amendment was accepted that the choice of members to this committee should be made by the delegates. Confessions and Missions will now have to work out the best way to do this. However, the principle of meeting fourteen weeks before session and then for the Nominating Committee to meet at least twelve weeks before session was seen as a very positive way of allowing the committees to deliberate in a less pressured and more thoughtful manner.

Delegates further helped the democratic process move forward by suggesting a further amendment to the constitution. The proposal was that ‘The Recommendations Committee would appoint the Nominating Committee, the Constitution Committee and other committees as necessary’. Delegates felt strongly that the committee could only recommend to the delegates and that all delegates should have the right to vote. The constitution will provide flexibility in the way this vote is registered.

This effectively left one more major change, the size of the delegation. The proposal under Article 6 of the constitution was that the total number of delegates would be halved from the current 400 down to 200 of which not less than 70% would be non-employees of the Church. The BUC officers had received a considerable amount of feedback on this proposal which they shared with the Constitution Committee earlier in the day, and then with the BUC Executive Committee members around midnight. The recommendation that then went to the floor was that the number should be set at 300. This would be sufficient for good representation, while keeping costs at a reasonable level.

The day finished at 5.30pm with delegates in good spirits. As Silvia Ham-Ying stated to the delegation, ‘I commend this initiative to increase efficiency – it is long overdue.’ It has now been voted. The new system will be implemented in 2011.

It was a long and busy day. Heartfelt arguments were presented but the spirit was good. BUC president, Pastor Don McFarlane, commented in his summary, ‘The Church is not about a session – that’s merely a means to an end. The Church is about delivering the Gospel of Jesus Christ.’

In due course the newly amended constitution will be posted on the BUC website, www.adventist.org.uk. A selection of pictures from the event is also available.

If the church wants a better preacher, it only needs to pray for the one it has. God himself does not propose to judge a man until he is dead. So why should we? Some minds are like concrete – thoroughly mixed up and permanently set!

And Finally...