Pope Benedict XVI will be visiting Britain from September 16-19, 2010. This is reported to be only the second time a pope has visited Britain, the first being in 1982 when John Paul II came to our shores. John Paul's visit was pastoral in nature while Benedict will come as Head of State – the Vatican state.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, has said of the forthcoming visit, 'I am sure I speak on behalf of Anglicans throughout Britain, in assuring him that he would be received with great warmth and joy.' This statement seems quite remarkable coming from one who represents a body of Christians that broke away from the Roman Catholic Church nearly five hundred years ago.

The archbishop's statement has led me to think about the message that I should be giving to the Adventist community in the British Isles in connection with the pope's visit. Should I be telling members that the pope is an enemy of Seventh-day Adventism, and that he represents the 'Little Horn Power' in Daniel and the first beast that stands in opposition to God in Revelation 13? Should I remind members that he represents the power that distorts God's provision of salvation in Jesus Christ – the power that changed what God intended to be a simple approach to Christ through personal faith into a complex sacramental journey? Should I encourage all our churches to be open each night during the period of 16-19 September and present stirring messages regarding the pernicious nature and beguiling methods of the Catholic Church? We might even engage in a poster campaign against the Catholic Church, as one state in the USA did a while back.

After reading one of Ellen White's statements on how we should relate to Catholics, I find that the archbishop's statement expresses sentiments fairly close to those that I and other Adventists should be expressing over Pope Benedict's visit:

'It is true that we are commanded to “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” [Isaiah 58:1, KJV.] This message must be given. But, if it is given, let it be done in a spirit of love. Let us present the message with calmness and kindness. If the message is not received with ready acceptance and for this reason is not heeded, I do not feel that we should be surprised. The message is presented at the right time, and when it is presented it should be expressed in a way that is clear and plain. Those who have great privileges and opportunities, but who use them to please themselves, refusing to bear their responsibility, are in greater danger and in greater condemnation before God, than those who are in error upon doctrinal points, yet who seek to live to do good to others.'
Anita and I were based in Jerusalem. We had made friends with an English bank manager and his family. Indeed the whole thing was made a hundred times worse because they were both with us in the car when it happened.

The car was a small Nissan. The day I hired it, the owners of the Bonifacio stressed, “You must solemnly undertake not to go anywhere near the Lebanese border!”

The front page of the next morning’s Jerusalem Post provided the explanation why the boys at Bonifacio had been so edgy. Overnight, Israeli forces from Menachem Begin’s Government, had invaded Lebanon. As we aimed the Nissan northwards that morning, I had so much confidence in the bank manager’s navigational skills that I let him navigate to Caesarea Philippi. He had been before. He knew the way.

I followed his directions. We were climbing. Indeed, some of the inclines were so steep that the Nissan laboured to haul four adults and itself ever upwards. The bank manager was feeling sufficiently confident of the rightness of the road that he decided that now was the time to share his mistaken impressions of Adventism. So I aimed the juddering vehicle upwards on the ever-narrowing road that had been cut into the mountain like a narrow shelf, and I defended the faith at the same time.

When these events were subsequently called into question there was a feeling in the backseat that the driver and navigator had been too absorbed in theological debate when their principal preoccupations should have been, respectively, driving and navigating.

No one has ever accused me of being a brilliant driver. I am for ‘safe’ and leave the fancy manoeuvres to those with fancy cars. There must have come a point on the shelf road round Hermon when a double track road became a single track road, and when the single track road lost its overtaking places.

What obliged me to stop the car was a pill box, a chain across the road and a soldier with a machine gun aimed at the windscreen. Nervously I asked him ‘Are we anywhere near the Lebanese border?’ He glared at me, and replied: ‘Zees eez Lebannese border!’ We were within a mile of the fighting.

With withering contempt, the one-man army indicated that I had no option but to head back the way I had come.

It was at that point I realised I was facing my worst-case scenario – that this was the Grandaddy of all my nightmares.

The worst-case scenario had little to do with the soldier, but quite a lot to do with the view from the passenger window. We were in a left-hand drive car – and the view from the right window was one I would have only been comfortable seeing from the safety of an aeroplane. My worst-case scenario was that the situation necessitated my reversing for a considerable distance along a road barely wider than the car, to find some sort of gap in the sheer rock on the driver’s side which might enable me to wriggle the car round until it faced the opposite direction. Four lives at stake.

In The Complete Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook there was nothing about doing a three-point turn in a Nissan Micra on the narrowest of roads with a sheer drop into infinity on the right-hand side.

What do you do when you are in the grip of your worst-case scenario? Jesus faced his one Thursday night in the Garden. It was greater than anything you or I will have to face. Worse than the knowledge of the following day, Jesus was already experiencing what was humanly impossible. The collective sin of all time was crushing the life out of him and – worse – had created an immense guilt between himself and his Father.

God had become flesh and he was feeling fear full-bore. What did he do? He fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting him might pass him by. “Abba, Father,” he cried out, “everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.” (Mark 14:35-36, NLT).

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Tithing: do we send it or bring it?

I was talking to an African evangelist friend of mine recently about the financial crisis which the North England Conference is currently facing. During the conversation he asked me why I thought so many members of the conference were not returning tithe. When I told him that many people were still sending their tithe back home, his reply surprised me.

My friend said that people think they are returning tithe to their home countries but they are not. He wouldn’t expand upon that, so I was forced to go back to the Bible and re-evaluate what I thought I knew about returning tithe.

And my friend was right. People may think they are returning tithe to their home nations, but such action does not conform to what the Bible says about returning tithe as a response of love. That is, because we cannot have love without obedience (see for example, Matthew 22:37-40), then sending back money home to family believing it was tithe, and still another who had not returned any tithe for years. However, my shock was softened by the ones who had returned a faithful (should I say, loving) tithe during all their years in the country.

If I take this small sample and expand it across the conference as a whole, and perhaps even the country, I wonder if I would find similar results. From what I understand, there is more than enough tithe in the pockets of the members to almost double the amount that the members are putting in their work. Sadly however, an alternative course of action was taken. The Bishop started to sacrifice money from his own tithe which has not been returned.

JOHN DAVIES

Propriate dress for church?

The mosque, the pope and women

Religion is acquiring increased attention in the media. The cover of a recent Time magazine features the question, ‘Is America islamophobic?’ The plans to build a mosque near the site of the 9/11 terrorist attacks sent shockwaves around the world as protests. The Time poll indicated that 26% are in favour, 15% don’t know, and a massive 51% are opposed. Another poll shows that 24% of Americans think President Obama is a Muslim!

These facts suggest that Islamophobia may be present in mainstream American politics. This may adversely affect Muslim integration into the American way of life.

In this context, Pope Benedict’s visit has commanded attention. Terry Sanderson, of the National Secular Society, opposes the visit of Benedict XVI to the Conservative conference in 1870. At the same time, the tide of infidelity became retrospective. Both the Papacy and Islam maintain attitudes to women which are incomical to our thoughts and plans. Christ is the head of one, and we are crucified in two among us.” – St. Remigius, p. 6, p. 479.

As a child, I asked myself what they got out of the sermon. One person, whom I understood to have been returning tithe to her home nation, said she had stopped tithing altogether out of need. And then there was one who sent back money home to her family believing it was tithe, and still another who had not returned any tithe for years. However, my shock was softened by the ones who had returned a faithful (should I say, loving) tithe during all their years in the country.

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Appropriate dress for church?

O

One Sunday morning, an old cowboy entered a church prayer meeting. He was dressed in a suit and tie. As the service began, he attempted to begin. Although the old man and his clothes were spotless clean, he wore, a jeans, a denim shirt and boots that were worn and ragged. In his hand he carried a worn-out old hat and an equally worn, dog-eared Bible. The church he entered was in a very upmarket and exclusive part of the city. It was the largest and most beautiful church the old cowboy had ever seen. The members of the congregation were all dressed with expensive clothes and fine jewellery. As the cowboy sat down, he noticed the Bishop’s robe. The sacrifice made in our behalf is ever to be fresh in our minds and is ever to exert an influence on our thoughts and plans. Christ is the head of one, and we are crucified in two among us.” – St. Remigius, p. 6, p. 479.

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Gospel Melodies

Dear Editor

In addition to the New Advent Hymnal, the Weymouth church uses Gospel Melodies and Evangelistic Hymnals (1944), published by the Review and Herald Publishing Association in USA. At present we have but a few books to share, so we would love to obtain some additional copies. Unfortunately, Gospel Melodies and Evangelistic Hymnals seems to be out of print. Still, we were wondering whether anyone has some spare unused copies that would be prepared to sell or loan? If so please let us know, we would be delighted to hear from you.

JOHN KENNY

Editor

Yes. I know that the River Tiber flows through Rome. However, I wrote ‘Tigis’ – twice; and, unfortunately, owing to some sub- sequently failed to spot that I had done so. We can’t blame the proof readers for the errors in the years of editing the service the esteemed Sarah Jarvis left us on 30 June and her replacement. A Cambridge graduate, began work in early August. The Phoebe story was written and published in July. It’s a case of my ‘fault’ and ‘profound apologies’.

So, for the record then:

• the River Tigis is in Mesopotamia,
• the River Tiber is in Rome.

Based on your vigilance.

Marion Testimonies

Joe Young

Editor

This is written as a reply to K. A. F. Yusuf’s question in Messenger 9 July.

The aim of AMR worldwide is to bring the Muslims we meet in our jobs, at educational establishments, as neighbours and as friends, to a knowledge of the Jesus we know and love.

We are trained not to offend or alienate them while trying to win them to Jesus. That is our duty in life. I fully believe that I am put on this earth by God to do exactly that; to introduce someone to Christ who has no past understanding, either religious or otherwise.

The world would come under pressure to address the financial problems of the NEC. It is never good in times of famine to eat your seed corn. I write, not in anger, but in sorrow.

KATH FARMER

Seventh-day Adventists

Tigis, not Tigis?

Dear Editor

I wondered whether your ‘What Phoebe is up to’ (Messenger 115.16) was a displaced April Fool’s exercise aimed at increasing the readership of this excellent FREE magazine. It is still a young department, so it needs to be given time to grow.

PHILIPPE KORS 

Time of trouble

Dear Editor

This letter was printed in our local Evening Herald last week, its title was later changed.

Our laws still allow us freedom of religion, to worship what we believe in, or none, and to express our views without hindrance. Attempts were made by the previous government to amend the Religion Rights Act 2004 in such a way as to curtail this freedom of expression, but these were unsuccessful.

There have been also numerous examples in the last few years of individuals and organisations taking on the workplace and elsewhere. However, within the United Nations a much greater menace to our freedom is looming. Each year since 1999 the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, linking 57 countries which have majority or significant Muslim populations, has attempted to have a Defamation of Religion section adopted.

Supporters claim it protects religious freedom, but in reality it is the opposite. It would allow governments the power to determine which religious views can and cannot be expressed, and to punish those who express ‘unacceptable’ religious views.

This resolution is adopted, it would have the effect of legalising religious persecution and stifling free speech, and every government including the British Government would come under pressure to adopt it.

A petition to the United Nations has been initiated seeking to achieve the defeat of this resolution. Go to http://www.opendiscover.org.uk/ then click on the Campaign and Latest News.

If this resolution were adopted where would it leave the proclaimed ‘three angels’ messages?’

Mackerel

Dear Editor

In Messenger 20 August, Jessie Allotey suggests that mackerel is an unclean fish. If you buy a mackerel you will find that it does have fins and scales, although the scales are very small.

 downing street on 18 september, the day benedict is due to conduct a prayer vigil in hyde park. peter tatchell and richard dawkins also plan to protest during the visit. a discussion of the possible appointment of the british MP Ann Widdecombe as papal ambassador to the Vatican, in the church times, raised an important issue. the writer believes that Roman Catholics are subject to two rival sovereignty claims, one to the Vatican as a secular state, and one to the Papacy as a religious institution. the writer, tim callard, a diplomat of twenty years, says that the Vatican is the more legitimate authority, and that the papacy is more important. he says that the secular state claims cannot be true, because they are all based on the notion that the pope is the political representative of God. the writer says that the papacy is the true representative of God, and that the secular state is not.

re: my article ‘death by a thousand cuts’ in your august issue. i am glad to hear that several hundred people signed the petition regarding the revelations. as you comment, it is indeed a complicated issue. it seems clear that all religious groups are open to criticism. as i understand it, the key issue is the nature of the claim. if the claim is that all religious groups are open to criticism, then i would agree. if the claim is that all religious groups are open to criticism, then i would disagree.

mackerrall

"There will be a march and a rally near Downing Street on 18 September, the day Benedict is due to conduct a prayer vigil in Hyde Park." Patrick o’Connell and Richard Dawkins also plan to protest during the visit. a discussion of the possible appointment of the british MP Ann Widdecombe as papal ambassador to the Vatican, in the church times, raised an important issue. the writer believes that Roman Catholics are subject to two rival sovereignty claims, one to the Vatican as a secular state, and one to the Papacy as a religious institution. the writer, tim callard, a diplomat of twenty years, says that the Vatican is the more legitimate authority, and that the papacy is more important. he says that the secular state claims cannot be true, because they are all based on the notion that the pope is the political representative of God. the writer says that the papacy is the true representative of God, and that the secular state is not.

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co-ordinator, Joseph was forced to move to the UK by the volcano. The West Bromwich church benefited greatly from his experience as he supported the Pathfinder club on his arrival. In 1998 he became its director. The club moved from having indoor experiences and nature walks to embracing the rigours of camping, winning the gold award at their first camporee.

During the afternoon programme his former pathfinders (who are now directors) led out and told of their experiences with the rigorous activities in which they participated. These included fund-raising ventures, which afforded them the opportunity to visit different countries including Antigua, St Kitts and Guadeloupe. Their many stories were accompanied by a picture slideshow, which made it very apparent that Pathfinding was a fun and memorable lifetime experience.

Throughout his time in Pathfinders Joseph has assisted a number of local, national and international clubs in various activities through the development of both camping skills and activities such as archery. He has spent time with Pathfinder clubs in Canada, St Thomas and the USA. This service celebrated the impact of Pathfinders on the life of Joseph Spencer, who is currently a Pathfinder area co-ordinator, but who has plans to return to club directorship. One of the goals of this event was to raise funds for the New Carmel club and other Pathfinder clubs in Montserrat.

We all remember. Some memories are happy ones. Others bring pain, regret and discouragement. Some things are easy to remember; some we readily forget. As a nation, we remember VE day, VJ day, Remembrance day, Christmas, Easter and many others – days set aside with a specific reason for remembering.

As a Church, we quote the words of Mrs Ellen White, words of encouragement and warning. “We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.” (Testimonies vol.9, p.18.) But above all came the words of God, who says: “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” Exodus 20:8, 11, NIV.

In all of our remembrance, there still remains one day that is ignored, sidelined, shunned, forgotten, yet it is the greatest Remembrance Day of all, and that is the Sabbath day.

We erect monuments of remembrance, rolls of honour; spaces of commemoration throughout our world, and this is good and right; but God has in place a day to remember him and his great acts of creation. Isn’t it right and just that his day is also honoured and respected?

We live in a world that is constantly in a rush. There is no time for anything except work and worry with a few hours snatched in between for sleep, but God has provided a whole day to recharge our batteries, refocus our minds and revive our relationship with the Creator. And so many have forgotten his wonderful gift; isn’t it time that we remind our family, friends and neighbours of this matchless gift? Right now you and I have the opportunity of putting into the hands of everyone in our circle of influence the book When God said Remember, by Mark Finley. Right now we can give someone a reminder of God’s priceless gift, a weekly holy day, his Sabbath. Someone is waiting for you to share your blessings with them. Someone very near to you needs to know about God’s Remembrance Day. Are you going to disappoint, or will you be that messenger of good news? It is so simple. Right now you can purchase your supplies of the book from Stanborough Press Ltd.

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When God said Remember

by Curtis G. Murphy, BUC publishing director.

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W
Welsh language literature outreach

This summer more than ten thousand Welsh language evangelistic books have been distributed throughout Wales. This is believed to be the largest Adventist literature outreach to Welsh speaking people for twenty-five years.

Several years ago, the former Welsh Mission president, Pastor Brian Phillips, secured permission from Mrs Connie Vandenman, Jeffrey to translate a book written by her late father, evangelist and broadcaster Pastor George Vandenman, into Welsh. The book chosen was his popular work on the Sabbath, A Day to Remember, or, in Welsh, Diwrnod a bokwe, or, in Welsh, Diwrnod a bokwe.

First written in the early 1960s, A Day to Remember targets a questioning, post-war generation, searching for identity and meaning in the face of conflicting ideologies and moralities. It was printed in vast quantities and distributed around the world from the mid-sixties to the late seventies, establishing itself as a classic work of Seventh-day Adventist literature. More than forty years on it is still regarded with affection within the Church and serves as something of a landmark in the Church’s apologetic development. A re-reading of the book reminds members, and explains to other interested parties, the reasons why Seventh-day Adventists are so passionate about Sabbath.

The initial translation was carried out by Cliff Tomos, a member of the Ynys Mynach church, and the Stanborough Press took a great deal of care to arrange the most economical printing possible. As a result twenty thousand copies were printed, half of which were distributed this summer.

‘We printed plenty so that we can give them away freely to our Welsh-speaking friends and contacts,’ says the current Welsh Mission president, Pastor John Surridge.

Outreach in a Welsh castle

Wales is not short of castles, but it’s pretty rare that you can give out Adventist literature in one. However, that’s exactly what happened on Wednesday 18 August when five members of the Lampeter company set up a stand inside Margam Castle, near Port Talbot.

The opportunity came through a series of connections. This year Jack Rayne, one of the longest standing members of the Lampeter company, began writing articles about Adventist beliefs in his local Landoverney-based newspaper, The Post. With a circulation of around 4,500 Jack was not optimistic about getting much feedback. However, one of the people who did respond was Mrs Valerie Wood-Gaiger MBE, who runs an organisation called ‘Learn With Grandma’. Jack gave Valerie a copy of The Desire of Ages and also showed her some of the other Adventist literature and DVDs that he regularly promotes. In return she invited him to run a stand at a couple of her events. The first of these events was in the National Botanical Gardens of Wales, on Friday 13 August, and the second took place in Margam Castle.

Speaking during the event Jack Rayne said, ‘These days we try to take every opportunity for outreach. A lot of what the Church does seems to be focused more on ‘inreach’ but outreach is what’s he put us here for. He gave us this opportunity in Margam Castle and we’re going to make the most of it.’

Admittedly Margam Castle is not as old as some of the other castles in Wales. In fact it is a nineteenth-century manor built in the Tudor Gothic style – but it’s still pretty impressive. Youngest member of the group Ellen Williams (13) seemed to be in her element as she explored the dark corridors and other nooks and crannies – as well as helping on the stand of course.

Events at the castle attract thousands of visitors and the Lampeter members were able to make numerous contacts and give away lots of magazines, books, pens and DVDs.

Baptismal dominoes fall at Wimbledon International

Words: Adam Ibrahim
Pictures: Bridgett Nkomo

It all started last year as Mavis Mthwede watched her friend, Bridgett Nkomo, surrender her life to Christ through baptism. It was the first time she had been to an Adventist church. The warmth with which she was met surprised her. One year later, inspired by her friend, convicted through Bible study and watched by her new church family, it was her turn.

The baptism had been postponed so that Mavis and her friend Hope Kapitaan, a regular attender for some time, could be baptised together in front of their families. Hope was very keen to be baptised, but her new friendship meant so much that she agreed to wait. They are so close now that Mavis sees Hope as part of her family. She looked back at the event and said that she was very impressed with the whole atmosphere of the day.

Pastor Sam Neves challenged us all with a bold sermon from Revelation, but perhaps his most powerful line was an observation of what had happened. ‘Last year you were watching, now you are in the pool. Next year, you will be watching, and I wonder who you will bring to the pool. Every believer must be a disciple, and have a disciple.’

After a beautiful meal, Pastor John Surridge said, ‘Our approach is not so much to launch an attack on their own religious practices but to help them understand why we take the stand that we do on the Sabbath.’

Mahali live in a Kettering theatre

An afternoon of inspiration by Dr Molapo Selepe

People flocked to Kettering from across the UK on Sunday 1 August, to hear Mahali Selepe from the Wellingborough Stanton Close church sing. A lot of people in Kettering and the surrounding area got more than they bargained for: an ordinary Sunday afternoon introduced them to a young woman who has personally tasted the love of Christ.

Mahali has had a successful year, but those who know her from Wales will remember the loss of her little son in January 2009. Although she was happily telling those present that ‘God is a God of second chance!’ This year in June, supported by Integrity Music, she got to the semi-finals of Gospel Rock, a gospel music talent show in Manchester. Though not initially in the finals, the executive of Gospel Rock later took a decision for her to go to the finals in London. Although she didn’t win the finals, a lot of people were moved by her music and she got a roaring ovation.

The Kettering concert was a brilliant expression of her cumulative experience with the Lord. Her humble and genuine personality makes her ministry so real and so touching. She sang six songs in the first half of this stunning concert, most people say it was started promptly and the standard was perfect throughout. She featured the Higher Ground acapella group from London in her song ‘Cigifffed’. In this song there was an orchestra, and also a children’s choir from the Bournville church called ‘Angels’ Praise.’ The second half also saw a spine-tingling duet by Mahali and Charlotte Bramble (also from the Wellingborough church). One of the highlights of the afternoon was the Sesotho song ‘Morena a bokwe.’

Request to ADRA

Dear Chief Editor,

It was gratifying to learn of the amazing £40,000 raised in the ADRA-UK appeal at Hampstead, and of Don Parker’s total of £2,215.93 at Erdington. What tremendous devotion to our Lord!

But as an isolated member I have been looking for the total sum collected by the efforts of our UK Church to be published in the Messenger for some years now, without success. Maybe this year?

Yours faithfully,

D. M. EVANS, Warrington
The power of 31,000

By Eglan Brooks, PM director, BUC

Once upon a time there was a church near a beautiful lake in the middle of nowhere. The people who attended were considered to be good people by the people in the nearby town as they didn't drink and didn't smoke. Most believed in a healthy lifestyle and the majority were vegetarians. They were religious in the fact that they attended church at least once a week and the very pious made a special effort to attend the regular mid-week prayer meeting.

But although the people in the town respected the people of the church near the beautiful lake in the middle of nowhere, they knew nothing of them and were a little suspicious. The church-goers only socialised with each other and spoke to the town people as if they were a little above them. The church-goers had become members of the church.

One day there was a fire in the village school and several children were trapped inside. The members of the church near a beautiful lake in the middle of nowhere held a prayer meeting to ask God to help to deliver the children, but no-one from that religious community came to assist. Unfortunately, one little girl of five died. On hearing of her death, members from the church near a beautiful lake in the middle of nowhere sent her family cards and flowers and letters of condolence, and invited her mother to be part of their congregation, where she could obtain comfort. They even offered to hold the funeral service at the church.

To their surprise, she refused. ‘When I needed to see the Gospel, you weren’t there. You stayed in your church near a beautiful lake in the middle of nowhere, but you never came to me.’

Too often, we stay in our churches and they become fortresses. Imagine if, like the disciples, we moved from the comfort of our religious environments and took the word of Jesus seriously, to ‘Go’ and take the Gospel to others.

The BUC Youth Department and the Adventist Discovery Centre are encouraging all 31,000 Seventh-day Adventist members in the United Kingdom to make 31 contacts by distributing literature, doing community outreach, taking part in door-to-door witnessing or any appropriate witnessing activity. Did you know that if every member were to make 31 contacts that would add up to nearly a million people being reached with the Gospel in the United Kingdom? What do you think would happen if the SDA Church in the United Kingdom could get its 31,000 members actively engaged in sharing the Gospel with their family, friends and immediate community? Can you imagine the power of 31,000?!

NEC cuts

A précis of the text of an interview with NEC president Ian Sweeney, conducted by Jeff Nicholson, the NEC Communication director, first published in BUC News, 13 August 2010.

‘The time has come for us to have a radical rethink about how we can manage our limited resources and take the Conference forward,’ said Pastor Sweeney.

The term ‘financial realignment’ was used. Steps had been taken to make budget savings of around ten percent, said the NEC president. It was unsatisfactory, in view of a pension deficit and an increase in appropriations to higher organisations, to have inadequate reserves. Every organisation, including the Conference, needed to safeguard working capital to ensure survival should crises arise. The NEC was, therefore, obliged to make painful cuts in its workforce to ensure its long-term health.

Pastor Nicholson asked if it was the case that membership and, it should follow, tithe income were increasing. Pastor Sweeney confirmed that NEC membership had grown to a total of 8,724. He praised God for this but added that, in the face of an increasing number of congregations, ‘it would have been good to have seen a corresponding parallel increase in financial growth’. The cost of serving the needs of a growing membership had far outstripped any increase in income. The costs of the various ministries, of camp meetings and of the conference session had escalated. Membership had expressed concerns that pastors were serving too many congregations.

That had placed tremendous pressure on the NEC ‘to grow the worker force’. It was the accumulated effect of that policy on the balance sheet that had made restructuring imperative.

Pastor Nicholson asked Pastor Sweeney to explain in layman’s terms why it was so important to increase reserves. ‘Working capital is the lifeblood of an organisation by which it meets day-to-day operational requirements and meets unforeseen challenges,’ responded Pastor Sweeney. The NEC had been living ‘from hand to mouth’. Policy required it to have reserves equivalent to twenty percent of annual operating expenditure. ‘That is not just a policy requirement,’ said the NEC president, ‘but it is sound financial management.’ A continuation of hand-to-mouth methods would lead to a situation in which the Conference could not meet the salary bill. That would lead to insolvency. To address that situation required the NEC to budget surpluses for future years. Hence reductions in expenditure were called for, and the principal outlay for the Conference was employee costs. Those costs had to be brought within the NEC’s current level of regular income — tithe funds.

Pastor Nicholson asked — since the only way to balance expenditure was to trim the workforce — what kind of numbers are you thinking about? Pastor Sweeney replied, ‘We are seeking to reduce the annual wage bill by some ten percent or £400,000.’ Seeking to reflect membership’s views, Pastor Nicholson asked if balancing the books in this way would hinder the primary purpose of preaching the Gospel. That, said Pastor Sweeney, is the dilemma. However, he noted that the GC session in Atlanta had demonstrated that church growth was highest in the places where churches are less pastor dependent and where greater emphasis is placed on Ephesians 4:12: ‘(To) prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. (NIV)’

Pastor Sweeney continued, ‘It is my profound belief that every member is entrusted with the responsibility of evangelism, and it is the duty of the pastor and other leaders to equip and train the Church for ministry. Lay involvement is the only way the mission of the Church, that of proclaiming the three angels’ messages, is going to be achieved. That is how the early Church began, with every member taking ownership of ministry where God had placed them, and that is how it is still growing by leaps and bounds in areas where membership are still committed to true discipleship and personal evangelism, and that is certainly how the work is going to be completed.’

Structures had been put in place, said Pastor Sweeney, so that all affected employees and their families would receive every support as they faced painful situations. ‘I want those affected by this situation to know that it is my deep conviction,’ said the NEC president, ‘that their calling is sure and that God’s purpose will still be realised in their lives.’... When things improve, opportunities for re-employment will occur.

‘What steps must be taken,’ asked Pastor Nicholson, ‘to ensure that the conference never revisits a situation like this?’

When noble plans are made at conference sessions, said the NEC president, ‘we must always ask ourselves, “Can they really be afforded and sustained in the long-term by the conference?”’ There were always dangers of administrations over-reaching themselves financially. It was important that administrations retained a membership-employee ratio that was realistic in terms of tithe income. ‘Looking at it in terms of membership input,’ added Pastor Sweeney, ‘it is now time for those of our membership not faithfully supporting the cause of God to “step up to the plate”.’

Pastor Nicholson thanked Pastor Sweeney and asked if he had some final words. He had. And they were these: ‘I would like to ask all our brothers and sisters to continue to uphold in prayer those who are being affected by this process of financial restructuring, as well as this conference. I would also like to thank those who have submitted suggestions and criticisms, for they have challenged us as leaders to re-evaluate our plans more carefully and to be more diligent in the discharge of our duties to God and the constituency.’
Langley baptism

It was a beautiful Sabbath morning on 7 August, not only because of the weather but also because four individuals gave their lives to Christ and took the vows of the baptismal ceremony. Two married couples entered the baptismal waters together – Angela and Samuel Paul, and Netan and Stephen Joseph. Although the couples have been coming to church for a long time they had not been baptised into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. How would this be achieved? – the prison did not have a baptismal pool or even a swimming pool and, despite being surrounded by it, surely access would not be granted to the English Channel due to security reasons?

One of the men had requested to be baptised into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. How would this be achieved? – the church had to do something to make it possible for the man to be baptised. The Rev. Bill Cave, resident chaplain at HMP The Verne, informed the pastor that he would photograph the event.

Pastor Daly preached to a chapel packed with at least one hundred and fifty men who came to witness the baptism and hear the Word of God. Pastor Daly’s sermon focused on the love of God, and he informed the men that God’s love is unlimited.

The congregation was encouraged to open their hearts and let Jesus come in so that they could embrace God.

As the candidate climbed into the laundry basket, to a round of applause and shouts of encouragement from the men, some wondered whether Pastor Daly would be able to fully immerse him – he was over six feet tall, so Pastor Daly had to lower him into the water standing beside the basket. God ensured that he prayed, rose to the challenge and went out in the men that if anyone else desired baptism and wanted the team to pray for them, they need only step forward: by God’s grace three men responded to the appeal.

Cornerstone-Polegate baptism

On Sabbath 24 July there was much rejoicing at the Cornerstone Adventist church in Polegate, when four precious people followed their Lord through the waters of baptism.

We praise the Lord for Bea and Joshua Castro, two young people who have committed their lives to Jesus. It was also a joyous occasion for husband and wife Tony and Barbara Sutton.

All four received Bible studies from Pastor Alan Hart, who also conducted the baptismal service. We give thanks to all those family and church members who have demonstrated their love and support for the candidates. We pay tribute to Shirley, who was instrumental in bringing Tony and Barbara to a knowledge of God and of the Advent message.

Let us continue to pray for all those who are newly baptised.

Community outreach for the disabled

Hungarian-born Erzsebet Majrovics-Gordon, who is now a mother of three children, first came to live in England in 1991 and settled in the Midlands. She had been trained in conductive education at the Peto Institute in Budapest, and when she moved to Exeter in 2006 she wanted to find a way to use her skills within a Christian context to benefit disabled children and adults.

Erzsebet had been convicted that the seventh-day Sabbath was the biblical day of worship while watching Adventist programmes on the television, and she sought out the Exeter Seventh-day Adventist church, where she has since worshipped on a regular basis. She is involved with the children’s department and has established a community group called ‘Petals’, which provides conductive therapy for children with cerebral palsy. She was encouraged to pursue the idea of using the church hall during the week to provide a service for the community when she attended a training day at Newbold College. Malika Bediako led out in faith. She thought, ‘If they can have a seminar which discussed ways to initiate and fund such programmes. Erzsebet has been to visit other groups to learn about their practice, and is constantly seeking new grants to fund her work.

Erzsebet currently has an afternoon session once a week in the church hall for pre-school children, and once a month on a Sunday she works with older children. This summer she has also conducted holiday clubs. Erzsebet works in other venues with adults who suffer from multiple sclerosis, strokes or Parkinson’s disease. She has a number of Christian friends from various denominations who serve on a committee, and Pastor Laszlo Liebhardt, a fellow Hungarian, keenly supports Erzsebet’s outreach. Even though Erzsebet has to make a living, she is more anxious that people recognise her group’s work as Christians serving the community where they live. She has future plans to educate her clients in healthy eating and the members of the church will be only too happy to support her vision. If you would like to read more about Erzsebet’s work, you can find information at: www.pathforthedisabled.co.uk

Prison baptism in a laundry basket

On 7 August the Croydon Prison Ministry departments, along with Pastor Richard Daly, made the three- and-a-half hour journey to HMP The Verne, a category C male prison located on the coast of Poole in the beautiful county of Dorset.

This visit was indeed different as there are many such events happening all around the country, throughout the year; so if there is one near you, why don’t you give it a go and get involved? – JENNIFY PATISON

Questions, questions, but our Lord always has an answer.

Following a very successful 2010 ADRA fundrais-

ing campaign, the children and top four adult collect-

ors at Nottingham Central were presented to the

church to receive their richly deserved awards on

Sabbath 3 July. The church goal was a staggering £7,483. Undaunted by the harsh pre-

vailing economic situation, the faithful members prayed, rose to the challenge and went out in

faith. For the first time in quite a few years some children were so impressed to fundraise that they arranged sponsored events in their neigh-

bourhood and collect-

ed a combined total of £77.70. The faith and determination of the adults was richly rewarded as they managed to collect a quite astonishing

Nottingham Central ADRA celebration

£9,078.91 which, when combined with the chil-
dren’s total, amounted to a staggering overall total

of £13,156.61. This total, however, was auspiciously

short of our goal by just £326.39. The ADRA team for 2010 would like to thank everyone sincerely for their efforts, donations and commitment to ADRA, and we look forward to an even more successful campaign next year.

Leamington Peace Festival

Every year the town of Leamington Spa hosts a peace festival, which lasts a whole weekend and is set in the grounds of the Pump Room Gardens beside the River Leam. It is a free festival featuring over one hundred and twenty stalls (promot-
ing charities, spiritual groups, crafts and fair-traders), two entertainment areas and tents for workshops and kids’ activities.

Leamington Peace Festival aims to promote peace and equality between people and nations while living in harmony with the environ-

ment. The Festival is an opportunity for local artists, campaigners, community groups and Leamington people to come together to share two days of inspiration and celebration.’

http://www.peacefestival.org.uk

This year, for the first time (and thanks to the initiative of Antonia Castellino, leader of the Personal Ministries team), the Leamington Mission was represented. Antonia said that she had become aware of the annual peace festival when she looked around it last year and noticed that many other churches in the local community had stalls informing the public about their faith. She thought, ‘If they can have a stall, why shouldn’t we?’ Antonia looked into applying for a stall and discussed the idea with the church board and the rest of the Personal Ministries team. The event was left in the capable hands of Gemma Proctor – unfortunately Antonia was away at the time of the festival.

Many church members were involved, and the stall tent became a base to let people know more about our Church and beliefs. Lots of books, magazines, leaflets and other goodies were given away and loads of people were invited to the ongoing ‘messy church’ programme for chil-

dren. We gave away many bright balloons to the children printed with our church name, address, logo and website. These could be seen bobbing around the field as they carried them off. The free face painting was also very popular, there was a permanent queue. It was a great way to witness to lots of people in a relaxed, friendly and fun environment.

A lot of hard work and time went into manning the stall all weekend, and huge thanks go to Antonia Castellino and Gemma Proctor for their hard work in organising this successful event. We hope to make it a regular outreach programme in future.

There are many such events...
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children and adults belonging to the Hackney Seventy-day Adventist church received special awards at a Pathfinders banquet held at the church. Some of the awards included:

Best Behaved Pathfinder, Excellence in Outreach, Most Improved Pathfinder, Father(s) of the Year, Grandparents of the Year and Pathfinder(s) of the Year.

All attendees came in their best clothes and enjoyed a three-course meal while listening to music. The hall was decorated with balloons and photos of some of the activities in which Pathfinders had been involved during the year, including a march from the church to London Fields Park in Hackney.

Special thanks must go to the Pathfinders facilitator, Andrea Simpson, and her team — they organised many outreach and teambuilding trips which culminated in the end-of-year banquet. Hackney celebrates its thirtieth anniversary in 2010. Our commemorative investment service took place on Sabbath 9 June at the All Saints church on Haggenroad. Pathfinders were assessed and rewarded for the work they had done throughout the year.

MARY ANN SMITH (1911-2010) d. 15 May
Mary, born in Barnoldswick, Yorkshire, was the youngest of the four children of Henry and Amalia Birkett. Mary’s early life was beset by tragedy. At the tender age of 10 Mary lost her father Harry, a quarrymen and ironworker, from the轧ad. She was later to suffer even more heartbreaking when her eldest sister Helen died of illness. However, Mary found glimpses of happiness through school friendships, and a love for kith and kin — especially her grandparents. As a young girl Mary worked as a farm girl and a domestic help. After leaving school, she joined the飾ar and became a very active member of the community service department, eventually taking on the leadership role along with other members, setting up the church’s day care centre as they saw a need for it.

Estriana was a devout Christian, who prayed morning, noon and night for everyone, especially her children and their families. She was a member of the church and the local community. Estriana served as a teacher both in senior and junior Sabbath school.

Estry was baptised into the Wolverhampton Oxford Street church and was a member of the church’s day centre as they saw a need for it.

The funeral service was held at the Oxford Street church on 25 May. The church was so full that the church doors had to be left open.

Estry’s children, grandchildren, extended family, friends, colleagues and the wider circle of her friends joined her on her last journey. Estry was laid to rest in the church’s burial ground, with a service of worship.

Estrianna CLEOPATRA MUNROE
(1934-2010) d. 8 May
Estranuna was also known as “Ester” as the young people called her. Ester was born on 28 October 1934 in the town of Lincoln, taking up employment at Ruston’s in 1949, where she worked as a welder, plater and polisher.

Her life’s journey has now ended and she has entered her very close family.

This is the hope of the resurrection when Jesus calls her soul from her sleep. Happy are those who rest in the Lord.

Job vacancy at ADRA-UK
ADRA-UK has a vacancy for the position of Chief Programmes Officer.

The Chief Programmes Officer leads the Programmes Team and will work closely with ADRA-UK’s managing director to design, develop and implement programmes in support of ADRA-UK’s strategic plan and the overall vision and values of the organisation. This includes leadership of the programme development team, setting high standards for programme quality, and ensuring that programme results are aligned with organisational priorities.

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Britain?

Can the Adventist Church...

...take a Sunday morning service, under the baton of Kevin Johns (recently appointed Prison Ministries Chaplain for the South England Conference). The lead chaplain at the prison very kindly invited our Church to conduct a ministry team of Adventists had been asked to visit the prison to provide pastoral care, to support and to operate in the sources of strength Jesus provides. The prison. A prayer meeting was held in an open area of the prison. A portable baptistery was also extended the right hand of fellowship and welcomed into the South England Conference. An edit of the prison very kindly invited our Church to conduct a baton of Kevin Johns (recently appointed Prison Ministries Chaplain for the South England Conference). The lead chaplain at the prison very kindly invited our Church to conduct a ministry team of Adventists had been asked to visit the prison to provide pastoral care, to support and to operate in the sources of strength Jesus provides. The prison. A prayer meeting was held in an open area of the prison. A portable baptistery was...