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Messenger

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Building a foundation of peace: a vision for conflict resolution

by Pastor Kirk Thomas,
BUC President



The British Union Conference (BUC) is made up of vibrant, diverse and passionate congregations in the UK and Ireland. We are a people bound together by a shared hope and a unified mission – yet the reality of any deeply committed community is that friction can be normalised. Where there is passion, there will be differing perspectives; where there is human frailty, there will be misunderstandings.

Conflict is inevitable, but how we respond to it defines our witness to the world.

The apostle Paul understood this reality intimately when he pleaded with the early church: *'Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace'* (Ephesians 4:2, 3, NIV). Unity, as Paul describes it, does not mean we will always agree; rather, it requires the intentional, sometimes difficult effort of maintaining our relational bonds even when we differ.

Over the past few weeks, I have been reflecting deeply on the ancient meaning of the name *Jerusalem* – the 'Foundation of Peace'. As believers, our eyes are naturally drawn to the promise of the New Jerusalem, that eternal city where God will put an end to all strife. However, we are not called to passively wait for that future reality. We are called to begin laying a foundation of peace right here, right now, within our own congregations, committees, missions, conferences, and, yes, in the BUC office.

True peace – biblical *shalom* – is not merely the absence of disagreement. A quiet church is not always a healthy church, especially

if that quietness is achieved by sweeping legitimate grievances under the rug or silencing marginalised voices. Genuine peace is the result of active, intentional conflict resolution. This is why Jesus declared, *'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God'* (Matthew 5:9, NIV). Notice that Christ blesses the 'peace-makers', not the 'conflict-avoiders'. Making peace is active, courageous work.

When the poet William Blake wrote of the 'mental fight' required to build Jerusalem in his poem of the same name, he recognised that creating a just and peaceful community requires a profound internal struggle. In our context, this fight is never against flesh and blood; it is the spiritual

discipline of laying down our egos. It is the dismantling of the 'dark Satanic mills' of gossip, entrenched bitterness and pride that can so easily pollute our fellowship.

Moving forwards into this new term, I want to challenge us to rethink our approach to conflict by rooting our actions in Scripture:

Assume the best of intentions: When disagreements arise in our board meetings or Sabbath School classes, let us start from the premise that our brothers and sisters love this church just as much as we do.

Speak with grace and truth: We must be brave enough to address issues directly and privately with those involved. As Colossians 3:13 (NIV) reminds us, *'Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.'*

Prioritise the relationship over the argument: Winning a theological debate or a committee vote means nothing if we lose a brother or sister in the process.

My vision for the British Union Conference is not a fellowship devoid of disagreement – that is an impossible standard. Rather, my vision is that we become a union that models healthy, redemptive conflict resolution to a fractured and polarised world. We must become a community where apologies are readily given, forgiveness is freely offered, and healing is prioritised.

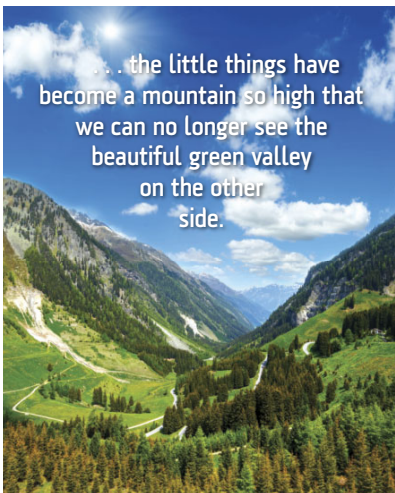
Let us not cease from this spiritual and mental fight. Let us commit to the hard, holy work of reconciliation, until we have truly built a foundation of peace across the British Union Conference.



When conflict comes knocking

by Dusanka Rancic, *Editor*

EDITORIAL



... the little things have become a mountain so high that we can no longer see the beautiful green valley on the other side.

'Blessed are the peacemakers' (Matthew 5:9, NKJV).

Another difficult conversation. Another dry-mouth moment when thoughts are racing, but somehow the right words refuse to come.

Perhaps you know the feeling. We smile, carry on with the day, and tell ourselves that everything is fine ... except it isn't. A small disappointment here, a misunderstanding there, a conversation we keep postponing – we sweep each one under the carpet until, one day, we realised that the little things have become a mountain so high that we can no longer see the beautiful green valley on the other side.

Most conflicts do not begin with a dramatic explosion. Often, they grow quietly in the spaces between people: in what was said, what was misunderstood, what was never said at all. Many people avoid talking about problems, because those conversations make them sad and stressed, but the

cost of silence is unresolved tension; unaddressed issues often escalate or turn into unhealthy habits and anxiety. And the people with whom we experience the most conflict are often those closest to us – the very people we love and care about most.

The Bible gives us a powerful picture of conflict resolution in the story of Abigail in 1 Samuel 25. David was furious after Nabal, a wealthy man whose shepherds David and his men had protected, refused his request for provisions and insulted him. David responded in anger, gathering 400 armed men and setting out to destroy Nabal's household.

Nabal's wife, Abigail, heard of what was happening, and acted decisively and independently. She prepared food and provisions and went out to meet David. Instead of adding fuel to his anger, she approached him with humility. She spoke truth, appealed to his better judgement, and reminded him not to take vengeance into his own hands.

David listened. He recognised that God had used Abigail to change the course of events, and he responded by blessing the Lord, praising her wise counsel, and blessing her personally (1 Samuel 25:32, 33).

Her intervention did not erase the offence or pretend that Nabal had done nothing wrong. But Abigail refused to allow one person's foolishness to determine the actions of everyone else. Her wisdom and courage helped turn a moment of escalating conflict away from violence and towards peace.

So, what if conflict itself is not the enemy?

What if it can become an invitation – to listen carefully, speak honestly, forgive freely, and depend more deeply on God?

Jesus calls us to be peacemakers, but peace-making is not the same as avoiding difficult conversations. Sometimes peace requires courage: the courage to say, 'We need to talk about this'; the courage to listen without preparing our next defence; the courage to speak the truth, but to speak it in love.

We all know how easily a raised voice can make us feel small, frightened or unheard. And perhaps we have sometimes done the same to others. In those moments, communication can become less about understanding and more about winning – defending our version of events, protecting our pride, or simply making sure our voice is heard.

But are we really listening?

This issue of *MESSENGER* explores what it means to reflect Christ when we disagree. It looks at the courage to have difficult conversations, the importance of listening before responding, the relationship between truth and love, and the transforming power of forgiveness. Because forgiveness does not mean pretending that nothing happened. Nor does it mean forgetting. It means choosing not to let the wound have the final word.

Every conflict can become a place of spiritual growth. It can reveal our character, expose our blind spots, teach us humility, and remind us how much we need God. Handled prayerfully, difficult moments can strengthen relationships, improve leadership, and help us build healthier communities.

And perhaps the best time to learn peace-making is before conflict arrives.

Trust is built in ordinary conversations as well as difficult ones. Peace grows through appreciation, encouragement, prayer, honest listening and the freedom to say, 'I see things differently,' without fearing rejection.

The mountain of unresolved things does not have to remain there. With courage, grace and Christ at the centre, we can begin moving stones aside – one conversation, one apology, one act of forgiveness at a time.

Like Abigail, we may sometimes find ourselves standing between anger and its consequences. In those moments, may God give us the wisdom to know when to speak, the courage to speak, what to say, and the grace to speak in a way that makes peace possible.



When Christians disagree – a biblical approach to conflict resolution

by Pastor Sam Ngui



warns: *'If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.'*

James exhorts us to 'be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath' (James 1:19, NKJV).

Most conflicts arise from the human heart – driven by selfish desires, pride, gossip, positions of power, and limited resources. Ken Sande observed that 'where two or three are gathered, there conflict will also be.' Paul and Barnabas disagreed sharply over John Mark (Acts 15:36-41). The early church wrestled with divisions between Hebrew and Hellenistic believers (Acts 6:1). Even Peter and Paul had a public confrontation (Galatians 2:11-14).

Conflict is inevitable. The question is not whether it will occur, but how we will respond. Ken Cloke notes that 'every conflict is an opportunity for transformation.' Handled wisely, conflict can deepen relationships, refine character, and draw us closer to God.

1. Start by listening. The first step towards biblical conflict resolution is to treat people's concerns as legitimate. This does not mean we agree with every position. It means we acknowledge that the person raising the concern has a perspective that matters to them – and, therefore, it should matter to us.

Too often, our instinct is to dismiss concerns. We tell ourselves: 'They don't understand the full picture.' 'They are being emotional.' 'They have a hidden agenda.' But when we dismiss people's concerns, we dismiss people themselves, violating the command to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Matthew 22:39, NIV).

Listening is not weakness – it is wisdom. Proverbs 18:13 (ESV)

2. Don't judge motives. One of the most destructive habits in conflict is doubting the motives of those we disagree with. When we assume the worst, we become defensive and detached. Jesus warned us: *'Judge not, that you be not judged'* (Matthew 7:1, NKJV). Only God knows the motives of the heart (Proverbs 16:2). Paul reminds us: *'In passing judgement on another you condemn yourself'* (Romans 2:1, ESV). Our focus should be on examining our own hearts and responding with grace.

3. Lay aside pride and position. When we hold leadership positions, we may be tempted to ignore the concerns of those 'beneath' us. We may think: 'I have more experience' or 'I have a broader perspective.' While these statements may be true, they do not justify dismissing legitimate concerns. Jesus turned leadership upside down: *'Whoever would be great among you must be your servant'* (Mark 10:43, ESV; see also verse 44). Position does not exempt us from listening; it obliges us to listen more carefully.

4. Avoid taking sides. When conflict arises, there is a natural tendency to take sides. We align with those we agree with or those closest to us. But taking sides deepens divisions. Instead, we should focus on the bigger picture and take a stand for the Gospel. The wise peacemaker listens to all parties and works towards a resolution that honours God, remaining true to principle while expressing our convictions in a

loving and Christlike manner (Galatians 2:11-14).

5. Choose the way of peace. When conflict arises, we have a choice. We can choose defensiveness and division . . . or humility, grace and reconciliation. Jesus said: *'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God'* (Matthew 5:9, NKJV). Peacemakers actively work to bring about peace – with God, with others and within themselves.

6. Follow a better way. Paul provides a framework for godly conflict resolution: *'Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves'* (Philippians 2:3, ESV). This is the heart of biblical conflict resolution:

Humility – recognising we do not have all the answers.

Listening – treating others' concerns as legitimate.

Grace – extending the same mercy we have received.

Apology – owning our role early.

Reconciliation – seeking restoration, not victory.

The goal: unity in Christ

Paul exhorted the Ephesians: *'Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit'* (Ephesians 4:1-3, ESV). Conflict will come. But when we treat one another with humility, listen to legitimate concerns, resist the temptation to judge motives, and lay aside pride, we make space for the Spirit to work. We become witnesses to a watching world that we are disciples of Jesus because we love one another.

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God' (Matthew 5:9, ESV).

Facing antichrists: learning from the apostle John

by Dr Laszlo Gallusz, Principal Lecturer in New Testament, Newbold College of Higher Education



Disagreement has always been an unavoidable dimension of church life. Conflict is mentioned in most early Christian documents from the first two centuries. Disagreement, division and disunity in the body of Christ are as old as the church. One of the clearest lessons on how to handle conflicts wisely is found in the First Epistle of John.

The problem: In his first epistle, the apostle addresses a Christian community fragmented into two opposing camps. The problem was not only a clash of personalities or ambitions: it was doctrinal. The author asserts that ‘many antichrists have come,’ who ‘went out from us, but they did not belong to us’ (2:18, 19).¹ The text strongly contrasts ‘antichrists’ and ‘us’, the Christian community.

The problem dividing the two parties was clearly twofold – doctrinal and ethical (the two were related). The secessionists challenged the church’s Christological confession, overemphasising Jesus’ divine nature at the expense of His humanity. They denied that ‘Jesus Christ has come in the flesh’ (4:2) – and also ‘the water and the blood’ (5:6) – namely, His physical suffering during the crucifixion.²

Depreciating Jesus’ humanity led to the denial of the importance of the life one lives, including adherence to the love

commandment. This problem is clearly articulated in 1 John 1:6–2:2, in which three pairs of ‘if’ clauses counter the erroneous idea that one who follows God can engage in scandalous actions without consequences. Moral indifference is strongly opposed in the epistle (2:4, 6, 9; 4:20).

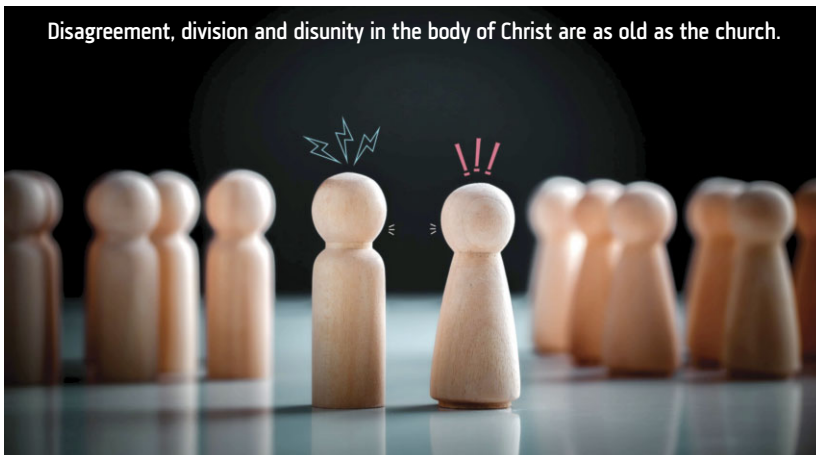
The response: John’s focus is on caring for the church rather than demonising those who represent another gospel. He reminds his addressees of the core elements of Christianity, confronting beliefs and practices that betray the Gospel. He suggests two essential criteria for what constitutes a church. The first is brotherly love: ‘The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters’ (3:10). The second is true faith: the confession ‘that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh’ (4:2). Thus, ‘The Gospel and love – the truth of the confession and the fellowship of believers – are the two focal points of . . . the church in early Christianity.’³

While John is firm concerning the need for commitment to the fundamentals of Christianity, his approach is that of a peacemaker. Even though the future of the church is threatened, he refuses to focus on polemics and division. Instead of strengthening the dividing

lines, he seeks to resolve the tension within the community by insisting not only on the correct belief, but also on mutual love expressed in self-giving. He points out that God’s all-embracing love extends to the entire world, including the secessionists. In that context, he strongly warns the community: ‘We must not be like Cain, who was from the evil one and murdered his brother’ (3:12). Associating a hating brother or sister with Cain and charging them with murder is astonishing. It reinforces the negative consequences of disobeying the love commandment, and highlights that we risk mutual destruction if we do not treat one another with respect. Peacemaking will happen only when church members commit to following the pattern of Jesus rather than the way of Cain.

Implications: Any kingdom derives its strength from its unity. A community marked by hostility and disunity does not have a future: without love, it will fall apart, even if it holds to the correct doctrine. Disagreements will be part of church life until the Second Coming. The question is whether the church can respond to its challenges in a way that advances rather than hinders the Gospel. This depends on whether the church can create an environment in which disagreement can take place, hearing each other with mutual respect rather than talking over each other. Miracles can happen when human beings are willing to sit down and talk to each other.⁴

Disagreement, division and disunity in the body of Christ are as old as the church.



¹All Scripture quotations throughout this article have been drawn from the Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version.

²The Book of Revelation speaks to the same context (first-century Ephesus) and also reports the activity of deceptive figures, whom it calls false apostles (2:2, 6).

³Lukas Vischer, Ulrich Luz and Christian Link, *Unity of the Church in the New Testament and Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), p. 152

⁴Stephen Ruttell, ‘Mediation and the Church’s Mission’, in *Good Disagreement: Grace and Truth in a Divided Church*, eds. Andres Atherstone and Andrew Goddard (Oxford, UK: Lion Hudson, 2015), pp. 195-218

Forgiveness that brings healing

Jeffrey O. Brown, PhD,
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John Gottman identified what he calls *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*: (1) Maintain a love map; (2) Foster fondness and admiration; (3) Turn towards instead of away; (4) Accept your partner's influence; (5) Solve solvable conflicts; (6) Cope with unresolvable conflicts; (7) Create shared meaning. 'With this awareness,' he says, 'couples can navigate roadblocks without creating "emotional gridlock".' I respect the findings of Dr Gottman's Family Research Laboratory, but there's something the 'Love Lab' missed – forgiveness. Forgiveness is the fountain of healing.

In his poem *Forgiveness*, George Roemisch says, 'Forgiveness is the fragrance of the violet which still clings fast to the heel that crushed it.' In other words, it is the one thing that still stands when everything else has fallen. When you are overlooked – forgive. When you are mistreated – forgive. When you are abused – forgive. Really?

Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them [the soldiers who were crucifying Him], for they do not know what they are doing' (Luke 23:34, NIV). Yet they did what they did on purpose. Forgiveness does not mean pretending the negative event didn't happen. Forgiveness is not the same as forgetting. Forgiveness does not mean demanding change or an

apology first. Forgiveness is rare because it is hard. Forgiveness is costly and substitutional. It took the life of the Lamb of God. The significance of the Lamb is forgiveness.

A couple were celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. Asked about their secret, the wife responded, 'On my wedding day, I decided to make a list of ten of my husband's faults which, for the sake of our marriage, I would always overlook. I figured I could live with at least ten.' When asked which faults she had written down, she replied, 'I never did get around to listing them. Instead, every time he did something that made me mad, I'd simply say to myself, "Lucky for him, it's one of the ten!"'

Lamb power can forgive broken promises, broken hearts, a mistake, a slip in behaviour – even an affair. In *The Romance Factor*, Alan Loy McGinnis states, 'The Scriptures take an unequivocal position: it is always a sin to commit adultery. [But] I know of hundreds of wonderful marriages which were shaken by the "earthquake" of infidelity in the past and today the "wronged" partner is very glad that he or she did not panic unnecessarily. A slip is not necessarily the end of the world. Even if you lose a round in today's highly competitive game of love and sex, it should not be the end

of your self-esteem and it need not be the end of your marriage.'

The six most important words to say are: 'I admit I made a mistake.' The five most important words are: 'You did a good job.' The four most important are: 'What is your opinion?' The three most important are: 'I forgive you.' The two most important are: 'Thank you.' The most important word is: 'We'. The least important word is: 'I'. So Paul can say that love 'does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong' (1 Cor. 13:5, TLB).

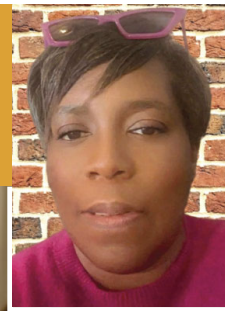
Forgiveness is mental health insurance. Mental health expert Hymers Wilson, Junior, states: 'You may be thinking, *I haven't got a problem with anyone – I am at peace with the world. There's nobody out there who has done me wrong whom I need to forgive*. All the same, it is important to learn about forgiveness because events sometimes take you by surprise. People you think you can trust stab you in the back. They can hurt you unexpectedly. You need something you can take now to protect you against the blight of bitterness, the bane of betrayal and the affliction of an unforgiving spirit.'

While forgiveness may deliver your enemy, it will also deliver you. Robert Muller said, 'Decide to forgive. For resentment is negative. Resentment is poisonous. Resentment diminishes and devours the self.'

Right now, God may be calling you to forgive someone who does not deserve it. Agony aunt 'Dear Abby' says, 'Only the brave know how to forgive. A coward never forgives. It's not his [or her] nature.' When you can't bring yourself to do it, acknowledge that the strength is not in you. Just recall the words of that old hymn: 'There is power, power, wonder-working power, in the precious blood of the Lamb.'

Collaborating with the 'enemy' in church: how to build a more peaceful congregation

by Catherine Anthony Boldeau, BUC Communication Director



Picture a serene congregation bathed in stained-glass sunlight, perfectly united in thought, word and deed, singing hymns in flawless four-part harmony . . . idyllic. Then someone calls a church business meeting. Suddenly, a discussion over the sanctuary thermostat setting or the colour of the carpet transforms decent, Sabbath-keeping saints into seasoned warriors. Friends can quickly become enemies as we fight for our opinions and our perceived rights.

We are a passionate, diverse family, and where there is passion, friction is guaranteed. In his insightful book *Collaborating with the Enemy*, Adam Kahane dismantles the myth that we can only work alongside people we completely agree with, like, or trust. Kahane argues for 'stretch collaboration' – the messy, courageous act of working together even when we are fundamentally at odds, giving up the illusion that we can force a neat, perfectly harmonious outcome.

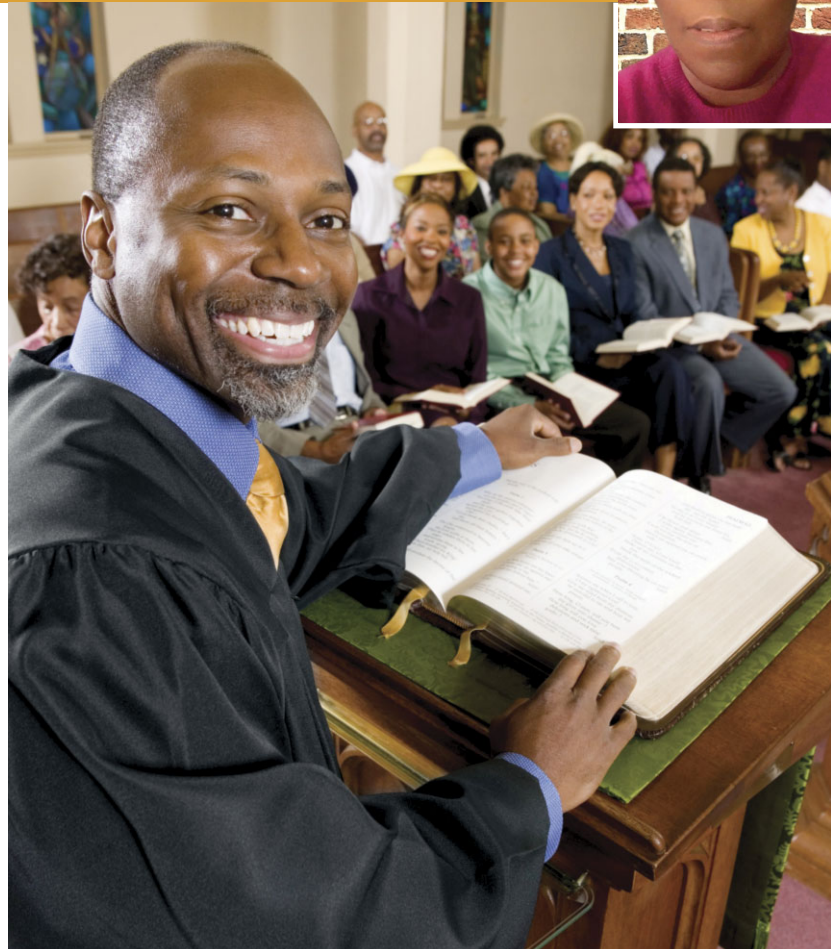
Here is a survival guide to practising this kind of stretch collaboration and cultivating actual, sustainable peace in our pews.

1. Treat conflict like a Bach fugue.

When sitting down at the piano to practise a complex piece by J. S. Bach, there are often moments of intense, deliberate dissonance before the beautiful resolution. Church life operates on a similar frequency. We shouldn't panic at the first sign of a discordant note in a committee. Rather than shutting down the person vehemently opposed to the new outreach strategy, try listening for the melody beneath the noise. Conflict is usually just an unmet need trying to find a voice.

2. Practise the 'slow to speak' rule.

The book of James offers what might be the best communication advice ever written: *'Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry'* (James 1:19, NIV).



Nothing shatters church peace quite like a fiery email sent at 11.30pm on a Thursday evening. Step away from the keyboard. If a message makes your blood pressure spike, draft your scathing response in a private document, and then delete it. Wait 24 hours. The time we take to rest, breathe, and reset before we react is often the difference between a minor misunderstanding and a multi-generational church feud. (And please use the 'Reply All' button with the exact same caution you would use when handling live explosives.)

3. Swap 'but' for 'and'

Here is a free mediation trick that perfectly aligns with Ephesians 4:29 (NIV): *'Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, . . . only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.'*

The word 'but' psychologically erases everything that came before it ('I love your idea for the youth service, but . . .'). Instead, try using 'and'. ('I love your idea for the youth service, and I wonder how we can make it fit into this quarter's budget.') It instantly shifts the conversation from a tug-of-war to a collaboration. You are no longer opponents; you are two people sitting on the same side of the table, looking at a shared problem.

Kahane's approach to collaborating with the 'enemy' reminds us that we don't need perfect harmony to move forwards together. Fulfilling Christ's prayer *'that they all may be one'* (John 17:21, KJV) takes active, intentional work. It requires us to lay down our egos, embrace the messiness of stretch collaboration, and, occasionally, just bite our tongues.

Trust leadership: rebuilding what conflict breaks

by Dr Dan Serb, Principal of Newbold College of Higher Education



Every conflict tests something deeper than the issue on the table: it tests trust.

Trust is the foundation every healthy relationship rests on, be it personal, professional or spiritual. When it is strong, communication flows easily and differences can be explored without fear. Conflict, while still uncomfortable, feels manageable. But when trust weakens, even small misunderstandings start to feel threatening. Most leaders underestimate how quickly trust is activated or eroded in a single tense moment. Trust is not built in a crisis ... but it is always tested there.

The three instinctive responses

Here is what I have noticed after years of watching leaders under pressure (and experiencing it myself): in the heat of conflict, most people don't consciously choose how to respond. They default to instinctive survival patterns, wired early in life and reinforced by stress. The nervous system moves faster than the rational mind. Usually, three responses tend to show up:

Some flee. They avoid the conversation, delay it, tell themselves that raising it will only make things worse. Silence looks peaceful on the surface. Underneath, it breeds resentment and distance.

Some fight. They push harder, assert authority, try to win rather than resolve. It can produce a fast outcome, but it often costs trust. People comply outwardly and withdraw inwardly.

Some unite. This is the harder, more intentional path. Uniting doesn't mean agreeing on everything. It means staying engaged, choosing dialogue over dominance, and curiosity over control. This is the posture of trust leadership.

Scripture captures the risk this posture requires

'For we walk by faith, not by sight'

(2 Corinthians 5:7, KJV). Rebuilding trust almost always asks someone to take the first step without proof that it will be rewarded, to speak honestly, name doubt, and open a conversation where silence once felt safer. Without that step, relationships stagnate and assumptions multiply.

Trust is built, not declared

Good intentions do not build trust. Consistent behaviour does – words aligning with actions, expectations made clear instead of assumed, boundaries honoured, decisions experienced as fair. This is where knowing your conflict style matters.

Most leaders default to one of five modes: avoiding, competing, accommodating, compromising, or collaborating – a framework researchers Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann developed to describe how people balance their own goals against their relationship (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). None of these styles is inherently wrong. Each has its place. The danger is operating on autopilot, unaware of how your default style is landing on the people around you.

Avoiding preserves short-term peace but breeds long-term resentment. Competing produces fast decisions but can quietly damage psychological safety. Accommodating maintains harmony on the surface while eroding the accommodator's own clarity and self-respect over time.

Trust leaders slow down long enough to choose rather than react. As Roger Fisher and William Ury (1981) suggest, people are far more willing to accept a difficult outcome when they trust the process that produced it, when they feel the decision was reached fairly, not just delivered. Fairness stabilises relationships even amid disagreement.

Emotion is information, not weakness

Trust leaders also treat emotions as signals, not as liabilities. Emotions point to values, fears, hopes, needs. Acknowledged, they tend to settle. Ignored, they escalate.

Proverbs puts it plainly: 'A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger' (Proverbs 15:1, NIV).

Equally important is separating the person from the problem. Attacking a person's character breaks that person's relationship with you; but addressing someone's behaviour with curiosity preserves dignity. Stephen M. R. Covey (2006) argues that trust is a measurable, buildable competence, not a fixed personality trait, and that character and competence together determine whether trust holds under pressure.

Trust leaders also ask thoughtful questions. They check their assumptions. They seek to understand before demanding to be understood – a discipline Paul describes as 'speaking the truth in love' so that a body of people can grow together rather than fracture (Ephesians 4:15, NIV).

The question worth asking

The real question a leader faces in conflict isn't 'How do I control this?' It is 'How do I lead in a way that builds trust, especially when it would be easier not to?' Therefore, trust leadership doesn't eliminate conflict. It creates the conditions in which conflict can be navigated without destroying the relationship – one honest step, one fair process, one gentle answer at a time.

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Trust **LEADERS**

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Conflict doesn't have to be the thing you dread. The leaders who handle tension well aren't the ones who avoid it; they're the ones who've learned to read it.

Trust is not built in calm moments. It's built in hard ones, and how you respond when things get difficult shapes everything: your relationships, your culture, your credibility as a leader.



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EXPLORE THE CLASS

When the church hurts: the psychological impact of bullying in the church

by Lynne Sesinye-Samwanga



Each October is recognised as National Bullying Prevention Month – a month dedicated to raising awareness of bullying and promoting kindness and inclusion within our communities. Although bullying is often associated with schools and young people, it can happen anywhere . . . including the church.

The church should be a place of love and acceptance, a space for healing and a place of refuge – yet when bullying enters the church, the pain can be especially deep, because it may come from people regarded as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Bullying is not always loud or obvious. It can hide behind gossip, exclusion, manipulation, ‘concern’, spiritual language and seemingly small actions repeated over time.

Jesus said: ‘This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you’ (John 15:12, NKJV).

Christian love must be more than words. It must be evident in how we treat one another.

Common bullying tactics in the church

- **Turning people against someone:** Spreading rumours, false information, insinuations or selective stories to damage their reputation or influence others against them.
- **Gossip disguised as concern:** Constantly discussing someone’s character, family, ministry or personal life – especially when they are absent – while hiding gossip behind ‘Please pray for them’ or ‘I’m only concerned.’
- **Exclusion and isolation:** Leaving someone out of meetings, social activities, ministry opportunities, conversations or decision-making, then criticising them for not contributing.
- **Creating divisions:** Talking negatively about people to one another, recruiting allies, and discussing issues with

everyone except the person involved.

- **Public humiliation:** Mocking, belittling, or criticising someone publicly or in church WhatsApp groups, then dismissing it as ‘just a joke’ or saying they are too sensitive.
- **Undermining and misrepresenting:** Questioning someone’s competence or intentions, portraying concern as division, disagreement as rebellion, or boundaries as unloving.
- **Manipulation and control:** Using the silent treatment, gaslighting, past mistakes, private vulnerabilities, Scripture, forgiveness, submission or authority to shame, silence, or control someone.
- **Retaliation:** Labelling someone as ‘difficult’ or excluding them after they raise a legitimate concern.
- **Making the person feel like the problem:** Criticising repeatedly so that someone stops asking, ‘Why are they treating me this way?’ and starts asking, ‘What is wrong with me?’

The psychological impact

The effects of bullying may appear invisible. An individual may arrive at church smiling while privately experiencing anxiety, sadness, loneliness, shame, loss of confidence or emotional exhaustion. Repeated criticism, gossip and exclusion can make people feel constantly watched and judged. They may withdraw from ministry, stop volunteering, lose trust in others, or eventually stop attending church. For someone whose faith is closely connected to their church community, the pain can become spiritual as well as emotional. They may begin questioning whether they belong and whether they are valued.

The Bible calls us to care for those who are hurting: ‘Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ’ (Galatians 6:2, NIV).

Sometimes carrying someone’s burden begins simply by listening.

The church has a responsibility

Not every disagreement is bullying. Churches will naturally experience differences of opinion and conflict. However, a repeated pattern of intimidation, humiliation, exclusion, manipulation, gossip or reputational harm should never be dismissed as ‘church politics’.

We must challenge gossip, refuse to participate in smear campaigns, create genuine opportunities for people to contribute, and listen when concerns are raised. ‘And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it’ (1 Corinthians 12:26, NKJV).

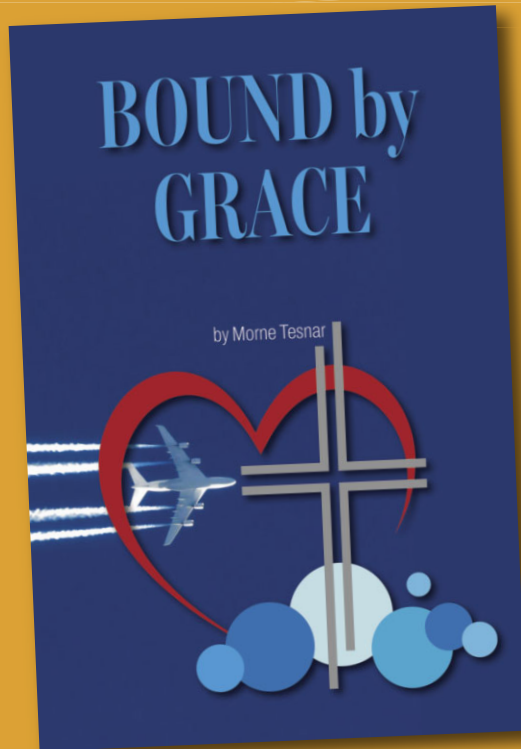
If one person is hurting, the body of Christ should not look away. Churches can help prevent bullying by creating a culture of openness, respect and belonging. Christ-like leadership, clear policies and healthy accountability provide safety and trust. Training helps leaders and members recognise and respond to bullying wisely and compassionately. Those affected need pastoral and emotional care, while regular teaching on kindness, forgiveness and respectful communication can help build communities where everyone feels valued, heard and safe.

This October, learn more about bullying. Perhaps someone sitting beside us on Sabbath is carrying pain nobody knows about. Let us not simply wear orange to show solidarity with those who have experienced bullying; rather, let us change the culture.

Choose kindness over gossip, truth over rumours, inclusion over exclusion, accountability over silence, and love over bullying.

‘Let all that you do be done with love’ (1 Corinthians 16:14, NKJV).

The Book of the Month



Bound by Grace

What would you risk for love? And what would you be willing to lose for faith?

Bound by Grace is the moving story of Sarah, a young Christian woman, and Bobo, a Chinese law student, whose lives are transformed by love, faith and an unexpected encounter with Jesus.

Their journey takes them across cultures and continents, where love is tested by distance, cultural differences and the growing cost of following Christ. As persecution draws closer, they face choices that will challenge everything they believe.

Yet, in the darkest moments, their hope refuses to disappear.

This is a story of courage, conviction and a love that endures against all odds. And, as Bobo discovers: 'Jesus is worth it. He is worth everything.'

A captivating read – and a meaningful book to share with someone who is curious about faith.



To order this excellent book for yourself or to give it as a gift to someone you care about, telephone 01476 591700 (8.30am-5.30pm, Monday-Thursday) or visit www.lifefsourcebookshop.co.uk.

Wait

by Khaya Chiweshe

'I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry' (Psalm 40:1, NKJV).

My mother has long said that one of the hardest things – perhaps the hardest thing – a person can do is to wait on the Lord. As a young man, I did not understand her. I thought it was the kind of phrase older folks repeat once they have survived their storms. Waiting, to me, sounded passive, inactive . . . something you do when you have run out of options.

I see now that I was wrong, oh so profoundly wrong.

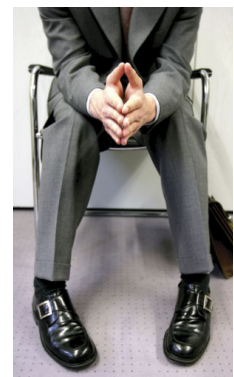
'Wait' – that four-letter word, heavy with pain yet carrying that strange, phoenix-like quality of hope. We instinctively understand the tension. We feel it in the particulars of our own walk, and in the harrowing horrors we witness in the world around us. It is more than tension. It is the dark night when the bills are due and heaven seems unmoved. It is the bright morning, sunlight pouring through the window, yet your heart is heavy with concern for your son or daughter. It is the lump in your throat as you wait for news from the doctor. It is the silence before the phone rings. It is the knock . . . the knock that divides your life into before and after; the blood-curdling scream; then the ear-splitting silence that follows, a silence so loud it seems to echo through the walls, through your bones – a silence in the house, a silence in the soul, and sometimes – if we are honest – what feels like a silence in heaven.

Waiting is not always dramatic. Often, it is the relentless, grinding pilgrimage of prolonged struggle – not a sudden catastrophe, but the slow erosion that threatens to hollow a person from within; a long obedience through unrelieved strain, testing whether faith can endure the stretch.

The word 'wait' stalks our dreams. It chases our nightmares like the hound of heaven – not to torment, but to pursue. It stands in that narrow space between our pain and our purpose, between what we were promised and what we presently see. Waiting is not passive resignation: it is suspended breath. It is remaining when every instinct tells you to run. It is daring to believe that silence is not abandonment.

Psalm 40 does not rush past that silence. It does not deny the cry. 'I waited patiently for the LORD,' the psalmist writes – and the language is emphatic, layered, almost strained: *waiting, I waited*. There is no pretence that the answer was immediate. There was space enough for crying out; space enough for longing; space enough for the kind of faith that feels more like clinging than confidence.

And then – not abruptly, not theatrically – 'He inclined to me, and heard my cry.' He inclined. He bent. The God who seemed silent was not distant. The silence was not absence; it was the hidden posture of a Father leaning closer than I knew . . . and perhaps that is what my mother meant all along.





Hello Little Stars!

Peace is such a wonderful fruit of the Spirit. Living peacefully with family and neighbours is important, but this is only possible when we are at peace with ourselves. Only when we accept that God alone can make us peaceful and peace-loving can we receive the gift of peace. One of the peaceful stories from the Bible that I love is found in Genesis 26:12-30.

Isaac had become very rich and prosperous. He lived close to a well his father Abraham had dug many years earlier. King Abimelech was worried that Isaac would become so powerful that he might be a threat to him. He asked Isaac to leave the land and find somewhere else to live. Isaac was a peace-loving man, and he left. Then his servants discovered a well, but some herdsmen from Gerar said the water was theirs. This happened twice, and each time he gave the well a new name and then moved to another place. After the fourth move it seemed that everything was calm and settled. Isaac had been living at the well of Sheba for quite a while when Abimelech, one of Abimelech's friends, and the commander of his army appeared. 'Not again!' Isaac must have thought. 'We do not want to chase you away,' they said. 'We know that the Lord is with you. We want to make an agreement with you. We want you to promise that you will not hurt us.' Isaac was happy to make the promise. He threw an enormous banquet and then allowed them to leave in peace.

Use the code below to help you find the names given to Isaac's wells.

The well of:

A	E	G	M	N	O	R	U	T	H
✖	×	*	♥	◊	◊	★	◻	✖	⋮

The well of:

✖	×	*	♥	◊	◊	★	◻	✖	⋮

The well of:

✖	×	*	♥	◊	◊	★	◻	✖	⋮

The well of:

✖	×	*	♥	◊	◊	★	◻	✖	⋮



Dove of peace:

Copy this peace text from the Bible onto the dove. Cut it out and use it as a special bookmark in your Bible:

'You, LORD, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you.' (Isaiah 26:3, Good News Bible.)

Peace flag:

A few years ago, when I visited Venice, I saw hundreds of flags hanging from the windows of the buildings. The flags were all the same. They had bright rainbow colours and the word 'pace' (pronounced 'PAH-chay') was written across them in white letters. The word 'pace' means peace. Although there were rainbow colours in the flag, the colours started with violet at the top and red at the bottom. The Venetians were begging the countries of the world to stay out of the war in Iraq. It reminded me of the first rainbow God 'flew' for Noah. God told Noah he was at peace with His people and he promised not to send another flood to destroy the world again. Just as then, only God can give us the gift of peace. Only God can change us from being arguing, quarrelsome, awkward people to those who are calm and peaceful. Only God can fill our hearts with goodwill towards others.

Design your flag of peace, in the flag on the right. What symbols will you use? How will you show that 'being at peace' and living peacefully are important to you?

Wise words about peace:

Use the co-ordinates to work out a peace quotation from Abraham Lincoln. Do you think you could apply it to your life?

Z	A	I	D	R	G
Y	X	M	H	T	J
X	E	B	S	F	W
W	Y	O	K	N	C
	1	2	3	4	5

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'Shalom' wordsearch:

Find all the meanings to the Hebrew word 'Shalom' in the wordsearch. All the words help us to understand the Bible definition of peace. The words go in eight directions.

B	K	L	W	P	W	Z	Y	Q	L	C	M	B	J	calm
S	S	E	N	I	L	D	N	E	I	R	F	K	Y	fortune
T	G	N	P	R	O	S	P	E	R	I	T	Y	U	friendliness
R	O	B	G	L	Y	J	R	H	F	L	Y	N	R	goodwill
A	O	Z	R	K	T	K	H	W	M	R	O	K	E	justice
N	D	S	E	R	E	N	E	L	X	N	X	R	F	nonviolent
Q	W	S	R	W	F	Q	A	F	V	P	A	X	L	prosperity
U	I	F	E	J	A	C	T	I	K	F	E	C	E	reflective
I	L	O	Q	C	S	D	O	C	L	Z	C	R	C	respect
L	L	R	N	L	U	L	J	E	E	G	I	H	T	safety
L	P	T	M	H	E	R	W	N	X	P	T	U	I	security
I	X	U	X	N	K	T	I	Y	Y	B	S	N	V	serene
T	Q	N	T	Z	P	K	M	T	H	N	U	E	E	tranquillity
Y	T	E	J	W	D	D	N	K	Y	K	J	L	R	welfare



Till next time,
be stars of
peace ...
Shalom!

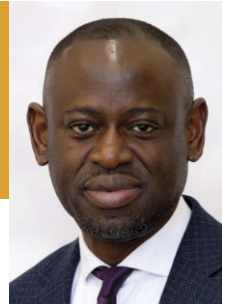
Taken from Little Stars activity book.

To purchase yours, follow this link: <https://lifeforcebookshop.co.uk/product/little-stars-activity-book/>

Anne Pilmoor
& Heather Haworth

Re-imagining disciple-making: the case for trauma-informed discipleship in the British Union

by Dr Augustus Lawrence,
BUC Evangelism Director



Introduction

In the British Union Conference (BUC), the context in which the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19 is lived out has shifted dramatically. Congregations across the British Union increasingly comprise people who have experienced significant adversity: families fleeing conflict, survivors of domestic and institutional abuse, individuals coping with the long tail of the COVID-19 pandemic, young people navigating mental health crises, and members who carry unresolved pain from experiences within the church itself. Traditional models of disciple-making, often built around linear programmes of doctrinal instruction, do not, on their own, adequately address the emotional, psychological and relational realities many members and prospective members bring with them. This context compels the British Union Conference to convene a dedicated weekend to re-imagine disciple-making through a trauma-informed lens.

Understanding the present state of disciple-making in the BUC

In many BUC congregations, discipleship is assumed to end at baptism. This approach treats discipleship mainly as a cognitive and spiritual journey, often leaving the relational and emotional dimensions of transformation underdeveloped. Yet growth data and anecdotal reports from pastors across the Union highlight a persistent challenge: many newly baptised members drift from active fellowship within a few years, while many visitors do not return after their first visit. Although several factors may explain this pattern, one significant and often overlooked issue is that our discipleship structures are not designed to recognise, hold, or respond to trauma.

A weekend on re-imagining disciple-making would give pastors,

elders, youth and Sabbath School leaders, health ministry teams and lay members a shared language, a sound theological foundation and practical tools. It would help them move beyond a primarily instructional model towards one that integrates formation, healing and community.

What is trauma-informed discipleship?

Trauma-informed practice originates in clinical and social-care settings but has increasingly been adapted for use in faith communities. It rests on a small number of principles that translate naturally into a discipleship framework: safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment. A trauma-informed discipleship approach does not require every leader to become a therapist: rather, it asks leaders to structure discipleship pathways – baptismal classes, small groups, mentoring, worship and pastoral care – in ways that avoid re-traumatising people, that build felt safety before requiring vulnerability, and that recognise the body and emotions, not only the intellect, as sites where faith is formed.

‘He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds’ (Psalm 147:3, NKJV).

Scripture itself models this integration. Jesus’ discipleship of the woman at the well (John 4), the Gadarene demoniac (Mark 5) and the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24) begins not with doctrinal correction, but with presence, safety and the patient uncovering of a person’s story. Trauma-informed discipleship is, in this sense, biblical.

The United Kingdom continues to report high and rising levels of anxiety, depression and psychological distress, particularly among young adults and those in economic difficulty. NHS waiting lists for mental health support remain lengthy, meaning that churches are, in practice, often the

first – and sometimes only – point of

contact for people in crisis. A discipleship model that does not equip local leaders to recognise trauma responses, avoid causing further harm, and make appropriate referrals leaves both members and leaders exposed.

Many people carry experiences of displacement, family separation, economic hardship, racial discrimination, war or persecution. Disciple-making that ignores this reality risks being culturally and psychologically tone-deaf, while a trauma-informed approach allows the church to become a genuine place of sanctuary and belonging.

Moreover, the pandemic produced grief across British society and within the Adventist community – bereavement, isolation, economic disruption and the sudden loss of in-person fellowship. Many congregations have not intentionally processed this season together. A discipleship framework attentive to trauma gives space for this corporate grief to be named and addressed rather than simply moved past.

Additionally, Britain is among the more secularised societies in the Western world, and public attitudes towards organised religion are frequently shaped by well-publicised accounts of institutional and spiritual abuse across denominations. Within Adventism specifically, some members carry wounds from legalistic teaching, harsh church discipline or experiences of exclusion related to race, class or personal circumstance. If disciple-making does not reckon honestly with this history, the church risks repeating the very patterns that have driven people away, and risks appearing irrelevant or unsafe to a wider society already wary of institutional faith.

It is important to note that the BUC spans a wide range of

generational, cultural and denominational-heritage contexts within one relatively small territory. A trauma-informed discipleship weekend offers a rare opportunity to bring these varied congregations into a shared conversation, developing common principles that can then be contextualised locally rather than leaving each congregation to address these issues in isolation or not at all.

Trauma-informed discipleship is not a concession to secular psychology at the expense of biblical fidelity. Rightly understood, it is an expression of the Gospel's own logic. The health message historically championed by Seventh-day Adventists has always insisted on the unity of mind, body and spirit – a holistic anthropology that finds direct application in trauma-aware ministry. Ellen White's description of Christ's method – mingling with people, showing sympathy, ministering to needs, winning confidence, and only then bidding them follow Him – is, in essence, a trauma-informed sequence: relationship and safety precede instruction and commitment. A Union-wide weekend grounded in this theology would reaffirm, rather than dilute, our core Adventist identity while equipping the church to live it out more faithfully in a wounded society.

Beyond the theological case, there are strong practical reasons for the BUC to devote a full weekend to this theme rather than address it through isolated seminars or written resources. First, it would help pastors, elders and ministry leaders across the Union develop a shared framework and vocabulary for trauma-informed practice, reducing inconsistency between congregations. Second, these skills require practice, not information alone. Trauma-informed listening, safe small-group facilitation and clear boundaries between pastoral and clinical care are best developed through guided practice, role-play and facilitated discussion – formats better suited to an in-person weekend than to a memo or webinar. Third, the weekend would strengthen safeguarding and reduce risk by equipping leaders to recognise trauma responses and

avoid language or practices that may re-traumatise people, supporting the Union's existing safeguarding responsibilities. Fourth, it would address retention and re-engagement by helping congregations respond to the emotional and relational barriers that often contribute to declining involvement after baptism. The fifth reason is cross-generational and cross-cultural cohesion. I am putting the point that a shared Union event builds relational capital between congregations of different cultural backgrounds, strengthening the wider BUC family rather than leaving each community to reinvent the approach independently. Finally, we will build momentum for lasting change. A well-designed weekend can produce concrete outputs – revised small-group and mentoring materials, a network of trained facilitators, and a follow-up plan – rather than a one-off inspirational event with no lasting structural impact.

What outcomes could the weekend achieve?

A weekend of this nature should be designed not simply to inform, but to transform practice across the Union. It could establish a shared, biblically grounded definition of trauma-informed discipleship and provide practical training for pastors, elders, Sabbath School leaders and youth leaders in trauma-aware listening and referral pathways. It could also lead to the review or development of baptismal-class and small-group materials that build

safety and relationships alongside doctrinal teaching. Each congregation could identify trained local champions to continue the work after the weekend, supported by a follow-up and evaluation plan so the event becomes the starting point for sustained change rather than a one-off programme.

Conclusion

The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has never changed, but faithful mission always requires discernment of the context in which it is carried out. The British Union Conference ministers today to a population marked by many adverse experiences. A discipleship model built solely on doctrinal transmission is insufficient to meet this moment. A dedicated Union weekend to re-imagine disciple-making through a trauma-informed lens offers a strategic, theologically sound and pastorally urgent opportunity: to root discipleship more deeply in the compassionate method of Christ, to safeguard and retain members more effectively, and to position BUC congregations as places of genuine safety and healing in a society that badly needs both. The church that makes disciples who are not only informed, but truly whole, will be the church best equipped to fulfil the Great Commission.

To register for the Re-Imagining Disciple-Making Conference at the Leonardo Hotel in Hinckley from 30 October to 1 November, please scan the QR code in the advert above.



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A call to join the conversation about what it means to be an active disciple of Jesus Christ in 2026 and beyond.

British Union Conference Evangelism Department
For enquires contact: lcampbellross@adventist.uk or 01923 665 576

Literature as a tool for mission

The Stanborough Press welcomes visitors to its annual gathering

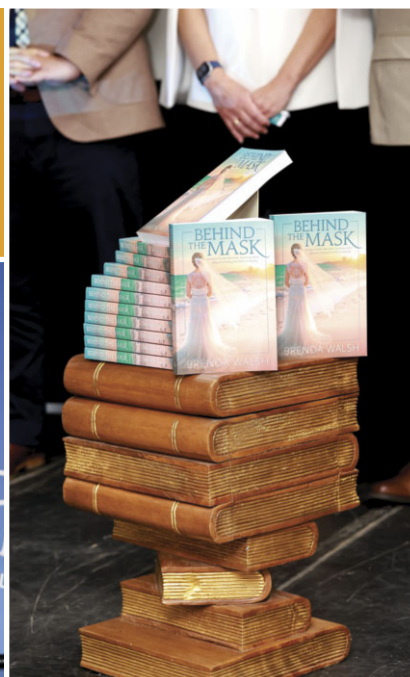
by Charlene Martin with tedNEWS



North England Conference President Pastor Steve Palmer with Brenda Walsh



Brenda Walsh launches her new book



Literature as a tool for mission

The main programme began with worship led by a praise team from Milton Keynes, followed by a presentation from Dusanka Rancic, Stanborough Press Editor, who explained the role of the *MESSANGER* in communicating the Adventist Church's vision, strategic plans, reports and news from across the United Kingdom and Ireland. She also highlighted the importance of printed and digital media in evangelism, and explained how *FOCUS* can be used as a tool for outreach.

Her presentation showcased resources available for adults, young people and children, as well as publications designed for people who do not yet know Christ, encouraging church members to use literature as a means of sharing the Gospel.

Brenda Walsh launches *Behind the Mask*

One of the highlights of the Open Day was the launch of *Behind the Mask*, the twentieth book by author and international speaker Brenda Walsh. (To order her book, scan the QR code on this page.) Known to many as 'Miss Brenda' through her role as host and producer of *Kids' Time*, Walsh has written devotionals, children's titles and books on relationships.

During the launch, she spoke

The Stanborough Press, the British Union Conference (BUC) publishing house, welcomed visitors to its annual Open Day in Grantham on Sunday 6 September, highlighting the role of literature in ministry and outreach, and hosting the launch of Brenda Walsh's latest book, *Behind the Mask*. The event gave visitors the opportunity to browse its range of Bibles, books, periodicals and devotional materials while learning more about the work involved in producing resources for Adventist churches as well as for individuals. 'It is important for us to be visible, to show what we do and the full wealth of titles the church has as resources,' said Elisabeth Sangüesa, Stanborough Press General Manager.

knowledge of the Bible.'

Another attendee said she enjoyed purchasing books to share with friends, while first-time visitors spoke positively about the welcoming atmosphere created by the Press staff.

Visitors were also able to meet vendors and representatives of ministries and community initiatives. Children were included in the day's activities, with North England Conference Children's Ministries Director Bekezela Peters and her team organising games and using everyday objects to help explain spiritual truths in ways children could easily understand. Food was available throughout the day, with visitors able to choose from snacks and full meals.

about the personal experiences that led her to write *Behind the Mask*, a memoir in which Walsh describes a marriage that began with a shared faith and the hope of serving God together, but which she says later became marked by narcissistic abuse. The book presents Walsh's account of the emotional impact of those experiences, the challenges she associates with surviving silent abuse, and her journey towards healing through faith.

'This was not a story I wanted to write,' Walsh said.

She told attendees that she had completed the book in 38 days and believed God had given her the strength to share her experiences openly in the hope of helping others.

Walsh's presentation prompted discussion during the question-and-answer session about how individuals and churches can support people experiencing similar situations. Attendees wanted to know how they could better respond to those in need and provide appropriate support.

Pastor Don McFarlane, a former president of the BUC, said the book had created an opportunity for more open conversations. 'The book has opened a space where we can take off our masks and seek help,' he said.

Following the presentation, visitors purchased copies of the book and attended a signing session, where Walsh met readers, posed for photographs, and offered words of encouragement.

For more than 140 years the Stanborough Press has produced and distributed Christian literature and resources, and has done so from Grantham for the last six decades. Its

publishing ministry continues to support churches, outreach initiatives and readers through material intended to educate, encourage, and, in the words of the Press, 'introduce people to Jesus'.

This article was first published on the Trans-European Division website.



Mixed emotions during Brenda's presentation



Pastor Don McFarlane prays for Brenda and her book, with Dusanka Rancic and Pastor Ian Sweeney



Questions and answers



Photos:
Aklass Photography



Brenda Walsh meets people during the book signing for *Behind the Mask*

SEC Camp Meeting 2026: 'Inspired for Mission' – a call to serve

by Don Roberts, *Communication and Media Assistant*



Pastor John Bradshaw



A solemn moment as the Communion emblems are distributed

'Inspired for Mission' was more than a theme as members from across the South England Conference (SEC) and beyond gathered at Newbold College of Higher Education from 26 to 29 August 2026 for the SEC Camp Meeting, the Conference's largest annual convocation. Total attendance across the four days reached approximately 6,500, with 3,100 attending on Sabbath alone. Across the Newbold campus, a varied programme of worship, learning, fellowship and activities created moments of reflection, celebration and challenge for adults, youth, teens and children.

Welcoming the SEC family to his first major Conference event since his appointment as SEC President in July, Pastor Kwesi Moore set the spiritual tone: 'Camp Meeting is not a stage for a show. It is an opportunity for an encounter.' That encounter began on the opening night with Pastor John Bradshaw,

President of It Is Written and the Camp Meeting's commitment speaker.

Bradshaw challenged members to recognise that human effort alone is insufficient for mission. Pointing to Christ's promise of the Holy Spirit, he urged members not to be overwhelmed by the task of reaching eight billion people. 'This isn't a numerical battle. This is the commission given by God,' he said, encouraging believers to share the Gospel 'one person at a time'.

On Thursday, the morning renewal speaker Dr Marleena Debrough, Director of Prayer and Women's Ministries for the

Allegheny East Conference in the USA, drew on the story of blind Bartimaeus to warn against becoming so occupied with church programmes and agendas that people in need are overlooked, stressing that 'nobody should be deemed insignificant.' Dr Daniel K. Bediako, Associate Director of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference, similarly challenged the idea that evangelism belongs primarily to pastors and church organisations. Addressing secularism, he asked: 'What is secularism compared to the power of the Holy Spirit?'

Bible studies by Dr Laszlo Gallusz, Principal Lecturer in New Testament Studies at Newbold College, explored the Second Coming and encouraged members to live expectantly through service and witness rather than sensationalism. Practical workshops carried this theme into everyday mission through the global OneVoice27 evangelism initiative, personal evangelism, community engagement, health ministry and digital media. Singing evangelist Tara Goddard also contributed through music.

Friday brought one of the week's most memorable moments. Concluding her morning renewal message on reflecting Christ's character, Debrough invited members forward with prayer requests written on dissolvable paper. One by one, they placed them into three water-filled glass containers, where they disappeared as Debrough prayed – a striking expression of surrender and renewal.

As the evening ushered in the Sabbath, the atmosphere became reflective as attendees gathered for Communion, with Pastor Moore and newly appointed Ministerial Association Secretary Pastor Wilson Lagos officiating. Bradshaw turned to the biblical record of Jesus washing the disciples' feet, contrasting the disciples' concern for

position with Christ's example: 'I don't care about the title. I don't care about the position. I care about serving,' he emphasised.

Sabbath morning brought a change of pace. Drawing from Acts 4 and the bold witness of Peter and John, Debrough emphasised the necessity of the Holy Spirit for mission. 'I am amazed how we try to do the works of Jesus without the Spirit of Jesus. How dare we try to do the works of Jesus without Jesus?'

An interactive Sabbath School led by the Croydon Church Sabbath School team followed, with BBC

presenter Neil Nunes hosting a panel that included Newbold College Principal Dr Dan Serb and drew contributions from the congregation and those joining online. Mission testimonies then showed churches putting the Camp Meeting theme into practice. Among the examples, Pastor Tremon Jackson shared how Bedford Central Church had committed a third of its annual budget to evangelism, resulting in so many baptisms that he remarked they had 'lost count'.

Following an energetic contribution from the Reading West Drum Corps, Bradshaw's final

message returned to the value of reaching individuals. Drawing from the paralytic brought to Jesus by four friends and the parable of the lost sheep, he declared: 'We can't be inspired for mission until we start to understand that the loss of a single person is a tragedy.'

Attention then turned to the SEC School of Evangelism, Mission and Leadership graduation, where 81 certificates were awarded across nine cohorts, including courses in Lay Preaching and Counselling Skills. Moore charged the graduates to go out inspired 'to touch and transform the lives of men and women'.



Youth: inspired and transformed

The youth programme combined worship, learning, fellowship and recreation, with wellbeing workshops led by Vanessa Boachie of InsideOut focusing on personal growth, resilience and emotional wellbeing. Pastor Bozidar Prgonjic led morning worship, while Pastor Adil Habib explored Islam and Christianity through apologetics sessions designed to equip young people to understand and share their faith.

Dr Laurent Grosvenor brought 'Inspired for Mission' to life through his evening messages, challenging young people to live purposefully and embrace God's call to impact their communities. Go Ape and GolfPlex provided opportunities for adventure and friendship, while Afterglow sessions created space for testimonies and reflection.

Teens: inspired to worship, connect, and grow

More than 150 teens attended daily, with Salisbury Hall filled to capacity on Sabbath. Morning devotionals from Clarke Collins provided spiritual encouragement, while evening messages from Bright Agyemang-Baah challenged teens to draw closer to Christ.

Workshops explored relationships, mental health and worship, complemented by music, testimonies and prayer. Go Ape provided an opportunity for teens to challenge themselves and work together, while the Friday evening Communion Service featured a visual narrative illustrating its meaning and significance.

On Sabbath morning, 10 young people came forward expressing their desire to be baptised.

The programme concluded with an open mic showcasing the talents of the teens, followed by an evening of fun and fellowship – rounding off a camp meeting that gave young people opportunities to worship, learn, connect, grow, and encounter God.



Children: discovering God through 'Rainforest Falls'

The Children's Camp Meeting Vacation Bible School welcomed children aged 0-4 and 5-8 for 'Rainforest Falls', a programme exploring nature as a reflection of God the Creator.

Throughout the programme, children explored three Bible points: 'God Is Our Creator', 'God Is Our Safe Place', and 'God Is Forever'. Mornings combined lively singing with skits, Bible stories, object lessons and creative crafts, helping children to discover more about God in an engaging and age-appropriate way.

Carrying the mission home

Over the four days, SEC Camp Meeting 2026 became a shared journey across the generations, moving from message to response and from inspiration to action. Having experienced spiritual renewal and fellowship, those who attended were challenged to carry the mission beyond Newbold and into their local churches and communities.

Strengthening the first Seventh-day Adventist Chinese church in the UK

During the SEC Camp Meeting in August, the UK seventh-day Adventist Chinese church, led by Pastor Connie Tsang, was deeply blessed to welcome Pastor Daniel Jiao, President of the Chinese Union Conference, and Steve Rose, Treasurer of the Chinese Union Conference, who met with the South England Conference (SEC) administration, including Pastor Kwesi Moore (President), Pastor Nathan Stickland (Executive Secretary), Sister Ann Swaby (Treasurer) and Pastor Wilson Lagos (Ministerial Association Secretary). Together, they reflected on God's guidance and explored how the Chinese Union Conference and the South England Conference can continue to support, strengthen, and develop the first Adventist Chinese church in the United Kingdom. Seeking God's direction for the future, they shared their hopes, challenges and opportunities, and discussed practical ways to strengthen the church's ministry.



From left to right: Dr Hezron Otiendo Adingo; Pastor Connie Tsang with Michael (husband) and daughter; Sister Ann Swaby; Steven Rose; Pastor Laszlo Liebhardt; Pastor Kwesi Moore; Pastor Daniel Jiao; Pastor Nathan Stickland; Pastor Wilson Lagos

Pastor Tsang is especially grateful to the SEC and to Pastor Daniel for their encouragement, and prays that God will continue to guide every step. May this meeting mark the start of even greater collaboration, united in mission and committed to seeing God's kingdom grow.

PASTOR WILSON LAGOS



London Chinese Church Retreat 2026

Over the May Bank Holiday weekend, the London Chinese church held its second annual retreat, 'Power Up with Jesus', bringing together more than 40 church members, seekers and visitors. With the theme 'Rooted in Scripture, Focused on Mission', the retreat provided worship, Bible messages, fellowship and a children's programme that encouraged spiritual growth.

Participants shared how God worked in their lives. Sister Angel Lam experienced God's protection while travelling alone and was encouraged by the warm fellowship and active involvement of the young people. Sister Eva Lam described the retreat as a foretaste of heaven, finding renewed hope through the reminder that

Jesus walks with His people during seasons of uncertainty. As a newcomer, Ms Samantha Tang shared that her family has found a spiritual home in the church, despite travelling an hour each Sabbath. The retreat strengthened her desire to study God's Word, while her son built meaningful friendships through the children's programme.

A key emphasis of the retreat was passing the torch of faith to the next generation. For many overseas Chinese families, the church is not only a place of worship, but also a caring community where they truly belong. As participants returned home with renewed faith and deeper friendships, they were reminded of Isaiah 40:31 – those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength and continue serving Him faithfully.

PASTOR CONNIE TSANG, TRANSLATED BY SISTER PIN YEO

Heart of Newbold

After 18 years of faithful service as a volunteer at Newbold School, Margaret Raitt, who celebrated her 80th birthday earlier this year, is stepping down to move closer to her family. Her kindness and dedication have left an indelible mark on the school community, and we will miss her more than we can say.

Miss Raitt began volunteering at Newbold School in 2008 after retiring from her years-long teaching career at Newbold College of Higher Education. She has given her



time freely, never seeking recognition. A familiar and much-loved presence in our classrooms every Wednesday for nearly two decades, staff have appreciated her experience, reliability and encouragement, while generations of pupils have benefited from her support. Two of her older siblings were among the school's first pupils in the late 1940s, and she can now also claim a role in Newbold's family story.

Margaret had planned to slip away without fuss on her last day, but the school gathered to present her with a few gifts and a heartfelt round of appreciative applause. It hardly seemed enough.

As she prepares to move, we offer our heartfelt thanks for her outstanding service.

MRS J. CRISSEY, HEADTEACHER

A determined faith: Edward Harris gives his life to Christ

On Sabbath 18 July, Brixton Seventh-day Adventist Church witnessed a deeply moving moment as Edward Harris publicly gave his life to Jesus Christ through baptism.

Having studied the Bible with Leon and Kellee Halliburton, Edward responded to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and accepted the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Although Edward had been battling illness for many months and was physically frail, he was determined to follow Christ in baptism.

The congregation watched a touching video in which Edward shared his personal decision to commit his life to the Lord before he entered the baptismal pool, supported by Pastor Daly and Elder Leon Halliburton. The congregation watched with emotion as he was immersed beneath the water and rose again – a powerful symbol of new life in Christ.

The church rejoiced together, praising God for another precious soul added to His kingdom. Faith, hope and God's grace are stronger than any earthly challenge. Edward's testimony inspires us that when God calls, no obstacle is too great to overcome.



BRIXTON CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

Exeter baptism

July 25 was joyous for Exeter Church when Zibusiso (Busie) Ndiweni and Susan Webber were baptised by Pastor Florin Orasanu. Both ladies are nurses and had been influenced in the past by family members who are now asleep in Jesus.

Sue gave a testimony of how her parents had become Seventh-day Adventists in New Zealand when she was a child. They eventually returned to England and attended the church in Torquay, where her father was an elder. Sue always believed in God, but stopped attending a church. When her son was 8 years old, she started to bring him to Exeter Church, and she has now been part of the Exeter family for years, extremely involved and passionate about the needy. She looks forward to being reunited with her parents when Jesus returns.

Busie, from Zimbabwe, had moved to the United Kingdom to work as a nurse. It was a culture shock for her, and she was separated from her family. She had also lost her mother, who had tried to encourage Busie spiritually and pray for her. She found Exeter Church and started to attend. Pastor Florin gave her studies along with Sue, with her son watching on Zoom from Zimbabwe.



Left to right: Pastor Ian Lorek, Pastor Ron Clemow, Zibusiso Ndiweni, Susan Webber and Pastor Florin Orasanu

She knows that her mother will be delighted when they meet in heaven.

Pastor Florin gave a short message, and Pastors Ian Lorek and Ron Clemow also participated in the service. Busie and Sue were presented with gifts and flowers from the church, which had been arranged by Ruth Clemow. After the service, there was an excellent fellowship lunch and a special cake to celebrate.

STELLA JEFFERY



gave a personal feel to his messages on the lost sheep and Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2, and his enthusiasm restored life to sin-battered souls.

The conclusion of the campaign saw three souls, Lucy Hydra Daniel, Ayse Oliver and Ethan Hyploite, declare their love for Christ by stepping into the baptismal pool. Wood Green and visitors were restored and revived to continue the Lord's work.

ELDER BARBARA SOMMERS, WOOD GREEN CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

Wood Green restored and revived by evangelistic series

On 27 June, Pastor Eugene Carolus from South Africa arrived at Wood Green Community Seventh-day Adventist Church to conduct the 'Restoration Hope in Uncertain Times' evangelistic series.

Before each of Pastor Eugene's sermons, his wife Sharri set the tone with her melodious voice. The young preacher's infectious laugh and his catchphrase 'beloved'

Messenger

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From recovery meetings to baptism: a life transformed

For several years, the Bury St Edmunds church has hosted six weekly meetings for Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Turning Point. Church members share refreshments, friendship, encouragement and the hope they have found in God.

Pastor Ray Patrick's passion for helping people overcome addiction has made a significant impact. He regularly visits recovery meetings and leads special Sabbath programmes, warmly inviting those he meets to discover the hope found in Jesus Christ.

Dom faithfully attended our church for months while studying the Bible with Head Elder Richard Shone and participating in Pastor Mary Barrett's online small group. As his faith grew, Dom decided to give his life to Christ, and was baptised during the Sabbath service on 1 August, following a sermon from Pastor Patrick.

Pastor Anthony Opoku-Mensah had the privilege of baptising Dom, who had invited members of the NA and AA communities to attend. Between fifteen and twenty guests came, many of whom stayed for a fellowship lunch, where they asked questions and expressed their appreciation for the warmth and acceptance they had experienced. Each received a gift bag, including a copy of *Messiah*, the contemporary edition of *The Desire of Ages*. Dom has already begun reading the book and enthusiastically recommends it to others.

The following evening, during the regular NA meeting, several attendees spoke positively about the baptismal service and expressed an interest in attending Sabbath worship. Please pray that these seeds will continue to grow through the transforming love of Jesus Christ.

RICHARD SHONE



Pastor Anthony Opoku-Mensah baptises Dominic Turnbull

Children's Sabbath at Weston-super-Mare

On Sabbath 25 July, the Junior Sabbath School class of the Weston-super-Mare church was responsible for preparing and presenting the Sabbath School preliminaries and the Divine Service, including beautifully read Scripture passages, a musical



Adrian, preaching

item and the dedication of Voo and Nesipho Mlalazi's children, Yame and Liwa Elihle Mlalazi (aged 5 and 2).

The sermon, presented by 9-year-old Adrian Karuma-Chawatama and based on David and Goliath, emphasised David's eagerness to fight for the Lord, who granted him the victory. Adrian drew the lesson that if God gave David the necessary skills to fight Goliath, He is more than willing to help us fight our 'giants'.

In the afternoon, youth and children alike visited a nearby care home, presenting an afternoon of musical items and devotional thoughts. Some of the residents enthusiastically sang along to the hymns, especially 'Amazing Grace'. The day concluded with vespers, when the Weston-super-Mare young people were joined by others from the Bristol, Taunton and Chard churches, making a total of forty-five.

The Weston-super-Mare members greatly appreciate the work done by the Junior Sabbath School teachers: Viola Tagwi-Mabhena, Primrose Karuma-Chawatama and Alva Gallaher; and the youth leaders: Layra and Mattheus Correia.

CYNTHIA SOUTHCOTT, COMMUNICATIONS SECRETARY

Touched to serve – bringing Christ's healing to our community

Camp Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church held its Health Ministries Day on Sabbath 27 June, under the theme 'Touched by His Hands, Sent by His Love', emphasising that Christ's healing ministry calls every believer to serve with compassion, practical care and Gospel hope.

Guest speaker Marta Machado, a registered nurse and Health Ministries Director for the North England Conference, delivered a sermon challenging members to follow Christ's method by combining compassion, practical service and the message of salvation. She reminded the congregation that churches should be centres of hope, healing and wholeness.

The service included a children's poem by Sister S. Toussaint-Peterson about healthy living and God's love. Sister P. Mullings and Brother K. Greenidge shared a meditation, while Pastor J. Swaby conducted a joyful baby dedication. Unlimited Praise led vibrant worship reflecting the day's theme.

Afterwards, members and visitors enjoyed a healthy fellowship lunch. The afternoon focused on community outreach, including plans for a health expo and other ways to strengthen local health ministry. We pray that Camp Hill Church will continue bringing hope, healing and wholeness to its community.

DR JACQUIE HALLIDAY-BELL, CAMP HILL HEALTH MINISTRIES LEADER



Marta Machado

Peninah White (1921-2026) d. 19 March.

Peninah White – affectionately known as Pinney – was born in St Thomas, Jamaica, on 23 December 1921 to William and Amanda Smith. She was the fifth of six siblings, five girls and one boy. The family later relocated to Portland, where she grew up.

Her father became instrumental in establishing the first Seventh-day Adventist church in the district. She and her siblings grew up in the church. They were baptised and became active in church at a very young age. After receiving her education at Moore Town Public School, Pinney went into sewing, which became useful in her later years.



On 16 March 1947, at the age of 26, she married Charles Augustus White, with whom she had two boys and four girls: Tilford, Alton, Herma, Ava, Joyce and Patricia.

After a while, her husband decided to migrate to the United Kingdom to make a better life for his family, and Pinney and the children joined him in March 1962. She worked in various jobs that allowed her to be there for her children, including certified childcare worker.

While living in England, Pinney was very active in various departments at Camp Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church, including the Community Services ministry. She was a very spiritual person, always telling people about God's goodness and mercy.

She was blessed with good health, and was never admitted to hospital until she

picked up an infection in her foot. She was to be treated with antibiotics on 1 March. However, after one week, her condition deteriorated; she stopped eating, and her children decided to bring her home. On 19 March, at approximately 3.45pm, she passed away peacefully, surrounded by some family members at home. Words cannot express how much we miss her. We want to thank the Lord for lending her to us for 104 years and almost three months.

Pinney left behind five children, eleven grandchildren, twelve great-grandchildren, a son-in-law, a daughter-in-law, nephews, nieces and their families and friends.

Our mother was the last survivor of her generation. She was a remarkable, incredible person. She will always remain in our hearts.

MRS JOYCE WRIGHT

'Cactusville' Vacation Bible Club celebrates faith, fellowship and 'holy calling'

Tassels, sheriff hats and vibrant songs of praise filled the sanctuary at Leicester Central Seventh-day Adventist Church as more than fifty children, accompanied by parents and church members, gathered at Leicester Central Church for the culmination of the 2026 Vacation Bible Club. Open to young people aged 4 to 12 from both the church family and the local community, this year's programme was an action-packed week centred on faith, fellowship and discovery.

The sanctuary and hall had been creatively transformed into the Wild West town of 'Cactusville', brought to life each day by the local sheriff and her faithful horse, Dusty! Greeting the children each morning with a hearty 'Yee-haw!' the duo kept energy levels soaring from the opening assembly on 13 July to the afternoon dismissal on the 17th.

Every station throughout the church was creatively decorated to fit the Western theme. The children were completely engrossed in every activity from start to finish: interactive Bible lessons exploring Scripture through dynamic object lessons and group discussions; themed stations with custom-decorated zones for prayer, creative craft-making, snacks and games; energetic action songs as well as memorising Scripture using British Sign Language; and a mid-week outing to Pets Corner at Abbey Park, where spiritual lessons continued alongside animal discovery, concluding with a fun sports day.

The core spiritual curriculum focused on five foundational pillars showing how every child is chosen and cherished by God: called to faith, called to serve, called to give, called to forgive, and called to be different.

During the Sabbath graduation service on 18 July, each young deputy was called forward by the Sheriff to receive a graduation certificate and official cowboy hat. VBC Leader, Sarah Moyo, was presented with a gift of appreciation from the church family for her outstanding leadership, alongside the dedicated team of parents, youth and volunteers who worked tirelessly throughout the week.

The service concluded with a children's sermonette based on Romans 10:14-16 by Casey Tengende, encouraging the congregation to answer God's call to serve, and a sermon based on 2 Corinthians 1:23 by Pastor Ian Sweeney, who reflected on authentic church community, leadership transparency and standing firm in faith.

There is so much going on at Leicester Central Seventh-day Adventist Church – why not check out our website? www.leicestercentral.church

LUVETTE GUNNING LOWE



Youth speaker, Casey Tengende

Messenger

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		London	Card	Nott	Edin	Belf
Oct	2	6.36	6.48	6.39	6.46	6.57
	9	6.21	6.33	6.23	6.28	6.40
	16	6.05	6.18	6.07	6.10	6.23
	23	5.51	6.03	5.52	5.53	6.07
	30	4.37	4.50	4.38	4.37	4.52

**Get organised with our 2027 calendar –
includes a scripture for each day
as well as Sabbath sunset times.**



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