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# Messenger

Journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Church  
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## 'For Such a Time as This: Reflect, Re-imagine, Reset'

*A report of the British Union Conference Executive Committee end-of-term review weekend*

by Catherine Anthony Boldeau,  
BUC Stewardship Director



**I** believe that you are invested in the future of the BUC. Despite what is going on, I know that you have a passion for God in the British Union Conference. . . . Honestly look at what we have been doing as a church, charity and corporation.' These words from the President of the British Union Conference (BUC), Pastor Eglan Brooks, were part of his opening welcome statement to the members of the Executive Committee. 'I invite you to reflect, re-imagine and reset on the work done in this Union.'

These were the spiritual sentiments that surrounded the members of the British Union Conference Executive Committee (ExCom) as they spent the weekend of 16-18 January conducting their end-of-term review, themed 'For Such a Time as This: Reflect, Re-imagine, Reset' at the Denham Grove Hotel near Maple Cross, Hertfordshire. The purpose of this premier event was to reflect on the work of the ExCom over the past five years, audit the status of the Union, re-imagine future expectations and discover the steps that we need to take to arrive there.

### Spiritual

'As leaders of the church of the living God, our decisions should not be self-serving. Our decisions should always be checked by God's purpose for our lives and for the life of the church,' said Dr Nicardo Delahaye, Executive Secretary of the Northeastern Conference in the Atlantic Union, who was the keynote speaker for the weekend. His thesis on Sunday morning was a warning from the story of Lot,

who firstly pitched his tent towards Sodom and may even have ended up being one of the city leaders and becoming increasingly 'insensitive to the will of God'. He urged the ExCom to be alert to the will of God, and not the lure of Sodom.

As well as the delivery of thought-provoking and challenging messages by Dr Delahaye, prayer was an integral part of the weekend, as members of the ExCom spent time each day asking God to grant a spirit of unity and collaboration. Entering the presence of God was not merely an automated exercise to 'top and tail' the seminar sessions – rather, it was embedded into the programme in a meaningful and engaging way. Meaning was added to the weekend's programme by Elisabeth Sangüesa, General Manager of the Stanborough Press, as she led out in an interactive Bible study based on the Sabbath School lesson, ending the session with the question, 'How can we apply the lessons learnt in this study to our role as an ExCom?'

### The role of the trustee

The role of charity trustees in the twenty-first century is filled with increased responsibilities, and each trustee is expected to fulfil his/her fiduciary duty. The ExCom members are the trustees of the BUC (a registered charity); and, to remind them of their role and responsibilities, Daniel Jennings, a commercial litigator from Shakespeare Martineau, gave a whistlestop tour of effective decision-making, the nature and extent of risk, public benefit, safeguarding, governance, and the importance of documents (among other topics) and how these relate to trustees, even in faith-based and Christian charities.

### Review and reset

Several key presentations were delivered around the need for the BUC ExCom to review and reset. First, Dr Delahaye showcased the services and ministries of the Northeastern Conference for exploration and consideration by the ExCom. Other sessions included 'Dream Awake: From Aspirations to Action' with Catherine Anthony Boldeau, BUC Stewardship Director, which focused on the need for organisational accountability; Abigail Wright-Stephenson's interactive session with case studies entitled 'Examining Our Fixes'; and a presentation by Alex Maglorie, BUC Non-Executive Director for Safeguarding, who explored the role of the trustees in 'Safeguarding, Protecting the Vulnerable: A Sacred Trust'.

### The administration

Concluding the weekend were Pastor Jacques Venter, BUC Executive Secretary, who presented some proposed constitutional changes; Wederly Aguiar, BUC Chief Finance Officer, who discussed the mission in the light of the proposed budgets for the forthcoming session in July of this year; and President Brooks, who spoke about the role of the BUC as a church, charity and corporation in his closing speech, 'Forward Ever'.

'The weekend was informative, thought-provoking and a little scary,' said one attendee. 'It made me reaffirm my commitment to serve the Lord faithfully in my role of trustee.'



Jim Botha/AME (CC BY 4.0)



British Union Conference Executive Committee residential 2026, Denham Grove Hotel, Denham, Uxbridge

Jim Botha/AME (CC BY 4.0)



# Prayer changes everything

by Dusanka Rancic,  
Editor



*Ten years of waiting taught me that prayer doesn't just change circumstances – it changes us.*

There are seasons when prayer feels effortless, words rise smoothly, faith feels natural, and gratitude overflows. And then there are seasons when prayer is the only thing left to hold onto. Those are the seasons that change us forever.

In recent months, after participating in the Prayer Ministries conference organised by the North England Conference and ten days of worldwide prayer, I found myself reflecting deeply on my own prayer life. Of course, I pray all the time. I have seen undeniable blessings and experienced peace 'which surpasses all understanding' amid pain and great life struggles. I have witnessed God's hand at work so many times, trusting it to be a direct answer to my prayers. Yet I also know this: I could rely on Him even more than I do. Prayer is not simply a ritual for special moments or a spiritual reset at the beginning of the year; it is meant to be the breath of our everyday lives.

When I think about the most powerful answer to my prayers, my mind goes immediately to the longest prayer I ever prayed – almost daily, for ten years.

I prayed for a child.

When I was younger, I considered myself strong, confident and resilient. I could imagine facing many challenges, but never losing myself in despair. Wanting a child felt like a good and natural desire – nothing selfish, nothing harmful, nothing contrary to God's will. And yet, year after year, heaven was silent.

I knew all the right answers. I knew that God was good. I knew that He was powerful. I knew that He was close, even when I couldn't feel His presence. But knowing the truth did not spare me from feeling forgotten. Slowly, hope turned into exhaustion. Faith turned into questions I was afraid to ask out loud. I began to wonder – not whether God could hear me, nor whether He cared enough to respond – but rather, if He would ever grant me my desire . . . and if I could cope if He didn't.

We often say that God answers prayer with 'yes,' 'no,' or 'wait.' I knew this in theory. But living in the 'wait' was something entirely different. How long is long enough? What exactly is God trying to teach us when nothing changes? I still don't have all the answers. But I know this: waiting revealed how little I understood myself.

I thought I was strong. But I was weak – weak in patience, weak in endurance, weak when nothing happened day after day. The desire to become a mother consumed me. It strained my marriage, my studies, even my ministry. Sometimes I even struggled to get out of bed to go to church. I remember thinking, *This is not who I am. Where have I gone?*

There were moments when I felt I had given up on God and feared He had given up on me. But He never did. God is not a quitter.

Even when I could not feel His presence, He was working. He sent people to pray for me and my husband. They didn't know our struggle; we never shared it. We were carrying the burden on our own. But people prayed anyway. I cannot overstate how powerful this was. When our own prayers feel weak, the prayers of others can carry us.

Slowly, hope returned – but it looked different. I stopped praying for a specific outcome, and started trusting that *everything would be okay in the end*, even if I didn't know what 'okay' looked like. That simple truth became my daily prayer. With it I started to feel God's presence again, followed by countless blessings, both small and great. I was certain, more than ever, that God had never left my side in the season of my greatest storm.

Yes, my prayer was answered. We were blessed with a baby girl – and, two years later, with a baby boy. But the greater miracle happened long before that. Prayer changed me. It taught me that when I am weak, God is strong; and that brokenness does not disqualify us – it makes room for His power. He is telling us: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9, NKJV).

So pray. Pray when answers come quickly, and pray even more when they don't. Give thanks in joy and in waiting. Because prayer doesn't just change outcomes – it changes us.

**Prayer changes everything.**



# 'Prayer Changes Everything': NEC Prayer Ministries conference leaves hearts renewed and lives reoriented

by Dusanka Rancic, *Stanborough Press Editor*, and Vera Bont Amponsah

Leonardo Hotel in Hinckley became a sanctuary of prayer, worship and spiritual renewal from 12 to 14 December 2025 as the North England Conference (NEC) hosted a three-day prayer conference under the theme 'Prayer Changes Everything'. Organised by the NEC Prayer Ministries Department, the gathering brought together more than one hundred members, united by a shared longing to deepen their prayer lives and rediscover the transforming power of prayer.

The call to transformation echoed throughout the weekend as prayer was woven into every aspect of the conference – from sunrise devotions and quiet moments in the prayer room to praying in pairs, in groups and individually. Even the small details carried spiritual meaning, as attendees received coloured bags containing different Bible verses, symbolising the personal and diverse ways God speaks to His people.

The weekend opened on Friday evening with a warm welcome from the NEC President, Pastor Dr Steve Palmer, who set the spiritual tone with a compelling challenge. 'The question is not what will happen at this conference,' he said, 'but what will happen after we leave this place. We need to leave this place changed. The power is not in the prayer, but in the God of prayer.'

One of the most touching moments of the weekend came simply through presence rather than words – the attendance of the 93-year-old mother of Brenda Walsh, vibrant and still travelling the world. When asked about her secret, the answer was simple: prayer and loving Jesus. Her life, marked by raising five children and faithfully supporting a husband who served as a colporteur and pastor for decades, became a living testimony to a lifetime anchored in prayer.

The conference's guest speaker, Brenda Walsh, an internationally known author, TV host and

producer, brought warmth, honesty and spiritual depth to every session. In her Friday evening message, she shared a story from a Seventh-day Adventist church in Russia where believers worship from morning until evening every Sabbath. When she asked why, the pastor replied, 'Because we can.' Brenda used this moment to remind attendees that the freedom to publicly pray and worship should never be taken lightly – a privilege that may not always be available.

Drawing from her own journey, she spoke candidly about answered prayers, surrender and grace. 'Whoever has never experienced answered prayer,' she said, 'has never prayed.' Her message was not about perfection, but persistence. 'God doesn't wait for eloquent prayers. He listens to the prayer from your heart.'

Her testimony underscored a central truth of the weekend: people are not won to Jesus through arguments or doctrines, but through love, prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit. 'We have one Saviour, and we are not it,' she reminded listeners. 'We cannot save people; He does.' Repeating the phrase that became a refrain throughout the conference, she declared, 'Prayer changes everything, and I am a living proof.'

Saturday morning deepened the call to spiritual dependence as Pastor Dr Mario Phillip challenged attendees to rethink their prayer priorities. Drawing from John 14 and Luke 11, he emphasised that the greatest inheritance Jesus left His followers is the Holy Spirit. 'Have you claimed your inheritance?' he asked. 'The first thing I do in any church is not a strategic plan; I call the church to pray.'

He observed that while many believers pray persistently for material needs, Scripture calls us to seek God first and ask boldly for the Holy Spirit. 'When you take things to God in prayer, He can move things around,' he shared, recounting powerful testimonies of answered

prayer in his own congregation. A Spirit-filled church, he explained, is marked by kindness, love and God-centred living.

Throughout the day, attendees were reminded that prayer is not about recognition or control, but surrender. As a quote shared by Pastor Palmer says, 'Prayer is laying down your idols and kneeling humbly before God.' Another memorable quote he used left a strong impact on attendees: 'If you are too busy to pray, you are busier than God intended you to be' (Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir).

On Saturday afternoon, Brenda led an hour-long singalong at the piano, filling the room with hymns of faith such as 'Blessed Assurance', 'How Great Thou Art', and 'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus'. The simple act of singing together became a prayer in itself. The session closed quietly and reverently with 'Silent Night', leaving many deeply moved.

Saturday evening brought a heartfelt appeal: *let's get serious with God*. Brenda encouraged attendees to stop trying to solve their own problems, and instead to lean fully on Jesus. 'When you lean on Jesus,' she said, 'it is not your problem anymore.'

Morning devotions by Elder Clive Palmer focused on God's sovereignty and the transforming nature of prayer. Drawing from Psalm 139 and Galatians 1, he reminded listeners that prayer awakens us to God's constant presence, grounds us in every season of life, strengthens us with His power and keeps us rooted in Gospel truth. Elder Palmer challenged attendees to resist cultural and spiritual drift, to deepen their motives through active prayer and to anchor their lives in the unshakeable sovereignty of God. His message was clear and compelling: prayer does not merely change circumstances; it changes us. Pastor Linda Asare, the South England Conference Prayer Ministries Director, also offered



'I always want to be where the children of God have gathered to pray and learn of Him.' (Ms Pauline Marsha)



Book signing with Brenda Walsh



some intercessory prayers.

The Stanborough Press, the Seventh-day Adventist publishing house, enriched the conference through their presence and ministry. A wide range of books and spiritual resources was made available, offering participants valuable tools to support their ongoing spiritual growth. Many attendees eagerly queued to purchase books, particularly those by Brenda, who personally signed copies and shared heartfelt messages with readers, making the experience both meaningful and memorable.

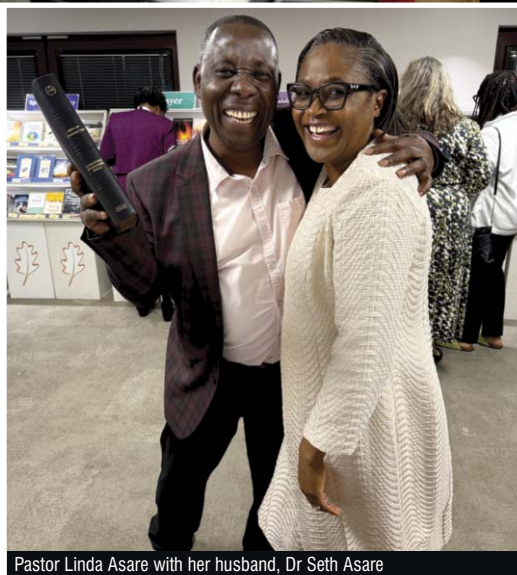
**The impact** of the weekend was perhaps most powerfully expressed through the voices of attendees. Children and young people shared how the conference had helped them understand God's faithfulness. One teenager (Raquel, 17) reflected that this conference 'reminded me of the value of prayer, and how God is always there for us'. Another young attendee (Kairós, 11) reflected on learning how God answers prayer in unexpected ways, and 'how God works through us', while another (Grace, 13) shared how the retreat left her reluctant to go home because of the deep spiritual renewal she experienced. 'Prayer not only changes our situations, but also our

lives,' she said. Adults echoed similar sentiments. A couple from Lewisham described the retreat as 'peaceful and prayer-filled', leaving them spiritually renewed and strengthened.

In her closing remarks, the Conference Prayer Ministries Sponsor, Mrs Faith Muimo, acknowledged the organising team for working tirelessly. Gratitude was expressed to all who made the event possible, including the speakers, organisers and sponsors. Yet, above all, there was a shared recognition that God Himself had been present.

One attendee (John Dumenya) summed it up simply: listening to the testimonies and prayers confirmed that God is still 'in the miracle business', but He invites us to ask, to seek and to trust Him.

As the conference drew to a close, one truth stood out clearly: God is still active, still answering prayer, and still inviting His people to seek Him more deeply. As many left Hinckley, they carried with them not just notes



Pastor Linda Asare with her husband, Dr Seth Asare

or memories, but a renewed desire to pray, believing once again that prayer is not optional, but essential. Prayer truly changes everything . . . including us.

## Prayer

Lord, make me instant  
to Your will.  
Lord, fill me with the Holy  
Spirit and give me more  
of the Holy Spirit today  
than I had yesterday.

# Valentine's or romance?

by Pastor Andrew Rashford-Hewitt



**D**uring my 30 years of pastoral ministry and community working, I have worked with many families, couples and men.

I remember working within one church during the Valentine's season. There was one senior brother who said to me and the congregation, in a deep Barry White voice, 'Pastor, every day is a Valentine's day in my house!' We then laughed together, the congregation too – but as I looked at his wife, she was not laughing.

The Catholic doctrine of the veneration of the saints (including Saint Valentine) is not a biblical teaching, and many men tend to ignore Valentine's Day. Be that as it may, my question to us, as men, is a deeper one – namely, how do we intentionally build romance into our marriages or our courtships on a regular basis? We might choose not to participate in Valentine's Day, but what else are we doing to keep romance alive with our beloved wives or fiancées?

## What is romance?

As an abstract noun, it is 'the actions and feelings of people who are in love', according to the *Collins Online Dictionary*. Thus, to build romance into a relationship is to purposefully demonstrate one's feelings of love and affection for another, which in turn can awaken a feeling of being loved or in love by the recipient. Thus, both experience love.

We forget to show

romantic expressions of love.

During my time in the NHS as a family practitioner, working with parents in a children's and adolescents' mental health service, it was sometimes the case that the child's mental health condition was related to the marital difficulties experienced between the husband and wife. In such cases, when we went deeper, there was often a lack of romance due to the presence of life traumas and other complexities. Thus, part of the work was to help parents demonstrate appreciation, affirmation and love to each other in rebuilding the parental alliance so as to increase their emotional availability and responsiveness towards their child. You see, one of the major flaws we all bring to the love life of relationships is that once we express our love, we forget the need to continue expressing new and old romantic acts of love.

## Men – how to increase your romance at home

The Lord blessed me to develop a romance cycle for continuing romantic expression, which has been instrumental in my work. Allow me to share it:

**R – Reveal** your love, feelings and appreciation for your loved one. Secret love does no one any good (Proverbs 27:5).

**O – Offer** tangible expressions of your affirmation and love. Be practical and make it unambiguous, just as God did during creation week and on the cross (Genesis 1 & 2 and John 3:16).

## M – Make

moments meaningfully memorable intentionally. This will take time to plan and perform. Be playful, tender and genuine.

**A – Accountability.** Share your ideas and plans with a male friend you trust. He can help to keep you on track and to explore other ideas. It might also encourage him to be more romantic too.

**N – Never** assume that your loved ones do not need your romantic expressions.

**C – Be curious** about what your loved one likes, and try to meet that preference. Carefully construct your plan and perform it with compassion for her and yourself, in case it doesn't go so well – this will help you avoid choosing to give up.

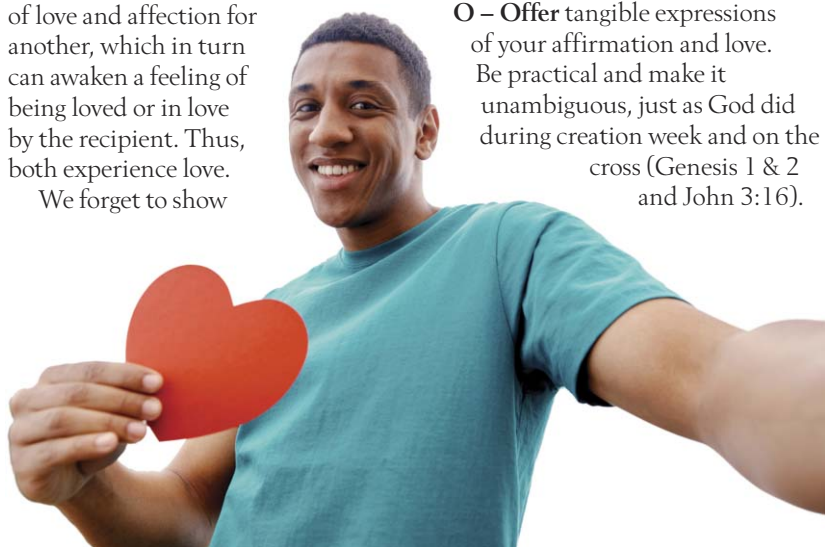
## E – Enact, enjoy, evaluate, engage.

Enact your plan of loving romantic expression. Enjoy it. Then evaluate it with curiosity by checking in with your loved one to see if it connected with her. Then engage. This means, engage in the process again.

The evaluation is a very crucial part of the process, as it allows the recipient to give voice to how the act of romantic expression landed for her. For example, the mere fact that something is romantic to me does not guarantee it will be romantic for my wife. Gaining feedback can allow you to know if it hit the mark or how you might need to revise and create a new romantic expression. In this way, the romance cycle continually gives rise to fresh, joyful expressions of loving endearment.

## Take the initiative

In summary, men, let us take the initiative to disclose our love for our wives and betrothed ones. Let us be active, creative and intentional in revealing our feelings through romantic expressions to the ones we love. Lastly, if your idea doesn't work well, don't give up – revise, review and try again; it will get better.





# More than just 'kids' – understanding the biblical child

by Pastor Emmanuel Asamoah



passive recipients of care, but active participants in the household's daily functioning.

This explains why biblical narratives seamlessly integrate children into core activities of life and faith. Samuel 'ministered before the LORD' as a boy in Shiloh (1 Samuel 2:18,

NKJV), a role that involved sacred service. The young Miriam was entrusted with the crucial task of watching over her baby brother Moses (Exodus 2:4). In agrarian societies, even young children had responsibilities in herding and food preparation. They weren't segregated from the serious work of family and faith; they were essential to its continuity.

**The modern divide:** Contrast this with how we often structure family life today. Children have their activities, their specialised entertainment, and their separate spaces. While some of this reflects positive advancements, we can unintentionally communicate that children matter less because they *contribute* less to the family's core mission. They risk becoming consumers of family resources rather than contributors to the family's story.

But the biblical model, grounded in historical context, shows us something different: children's sacred value comes not from what they will someday do, but from whose they are right now, and the vital role they play in the family community.

**Restoring sacred belonging:** So what does this look like in a modern home? It means shifting from seeing our families as collections of individuals to seeing them as interdependent teams with a shared God-given mission.

When your toddlers help you fold the laundry (even if you have to re-fold it later), they're learning that they contribute to the household. When your teenagers participate in family decisions, they learn that their

voice matters. When you tell stories about your faith journey, you're weaving them into a story bigger than themselves.

## Pragmatic actions for godly parenting:

- 1. Meaningful contributions:** Give your children real (age-appropriate) tasks that the family genuinely depends on. Try saying, 'I need your help setting the table so we can eat together as a family.' Explain why their specific task matters to everyone.
- 2. Family identity markers:** Create regular opportunities to say: 'In our family, we pray about hard things,' or, 'We trust God's timing because He's been faithful to us before.' Tell stories about your faith journey. These become markers of their identity in Christ.

## Pragmatic actions for church communities:

- 1. Intergenerational service:** Create serving opportunities where children and adults work side-by-side – preparing meals for the sick or cleaning the church grounds together.
- 2. Testimony inclusion:** During testimony times, intentionally include stories of how God is working in the lives of children and youth, validating that the Holy Spirit speaks to and through them now.

**A prayer for our families:** *Heavenly Father, thank You that our children belong first to You. Help us create homes where all the children know they are an essential part of Your story. Give us wisdom to include them and eyes to see the sacred value of their presence in our lives today. Amen.*

<sup>1</sup>Kristine Henriksen Garraway, *Growing Up in Ancient Israel: Children in Material Culture and Biblical Texts* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2018); T. M. Lemos, *Children and Family in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021)

# The immune system and wellbeing, part 1 – the psychological impact

by Sharon Platt-McDonald,  
BUC Director for Health, Adventist Community Services & Women's Ministries



This issue of Enhancing Health commences a series on our immune system and its importance to our overall wellbeing.

## Our immune system

Many factors influence how well our immune system works. The Cleveland Clinic explains: 'Your immune system is a large network of organs, white blood cells, proteins and chemicals. These parts all work together to protect you from germs and other invaders. Your immune system also helps your body heal from infections and injuries.'<sup>1</sup>

## Psychological wellbeing and the immune system

Ongoing studies continue to show the link between our mental health and physical wellbeing. One specific field of study focusing on the impact of psychological health on the immune system is called 'psychoneuro-immunology'. Explaining this area of research, the WebMD website states: 'Psychoneuroimmunology is the study of how your immune system and your central nervous system interact. Psychological stress makes you more susceptible to everything from the common cold to flare-ups of autoimmune diseases.'<sup>2</sup>

## Research findings

The *African Journal of Infectious Diseases* published an online article in 2018 titled 'The Role of Psychological Well-being in Boosting Immune Response: An Optimal Effort for Tackling Infection'.<sup>3</sup> Outlining key findings, the authors state: 'Based on the literature, our findings showed that psychological well-being could increase the human body's immune response. This was evidenced by improvements of several indicators in saliva, blood and plasma. In other ways, psychological illness was associated with a decreased immune response. Numerous studies compiled and discussed in review also suggested that improving immune response through psychological well-being could increase living comfort.'

In their summation, the research authors concluded: 'Psychological well-being could improve the human body's immune responses, enhance resistance towards diseases (including infectious diseases), and create a spiritually and physically more prosperous life.'

## Further studies

A deeper analysis of mental health conditions and potential links with the immune system has yielded significant data from recent research.

An article by Muhammad Tuhin published on 1 May 2025 in the Health and Medicine segment of *Science News Today* was titled: 'New Study Links Immune System to Depression and Schizophrenia in Major Psychiatric Breakthrough'.<sup>4</sup> The findings suggest 'how inflammation and immune signalling – once considered peripheral to mental illness – may actually lie at its heart'.

Explaining the study, Tuhin reports: 'The team looked at an astonishing **735 immune response-related proteins**, all measurable in human blood. These included cytokines, chemokines, and other key messengers of immune activity. The researchers then assessed how these proteins were related to **seven major neuropsychiatric conditions**: depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, Alzheimer's disease, autism, and ADHD.'

## Immunopsychiatry

A new field of psychiatry, called 'immunopsychiatry', is now seeking to

ascertain the link between our immune system, metabolism and the brain. Emerging study outcomes are already establishing this link: 'Research suggests that alterations in the immune system and metabolism can influence mental illnesses such as depression or bipolar disorder.'<sup>5</sup>

## Immunopsychiatry clinics

Recently developed immunopsychiatry clinics are currently conducting clinical studies exploring connections between inflammatory processes, brain function and the immune system. The Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust explains that its clinic is 'a clinical research service which offers personalised advice to support and enhance clinical management of patients suffering from difficult-to-treat mood disorders (e.g. depression and bipolar) associated with chronic inflammation or inflammatory conditions'.<sup>6</sup>

These clinics provide clinical recommendations and comprehensive assessments. They also seek to ascertain how any emerging interconnections from the findings could shape pharmacological treatments. A key aim is to educate patients, carers and healthcare providers in the following three areas:

- explanation of the interactions between brain function and the immune system;
- discussion of how these relationships can influence pharmacological treatments, both in terms of efficacy and tolerability;
- role of dietary and nutritional choices, or engagement in mind and body therapies that benefit mood symptoms by targeting immune and metabolic dysregulation.

For further information, visit:  
[www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/boosting-the-immune-system-an-added-benefit](http://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/boosting-the-immune-system-an-added-benefit).

## Good health!

<sup>1</sup><https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/body/21196-immune-system>

<sup>2</sup>[www.webmd.com/brain/what-is-psychoneuroimmunology](http://www.webmd.com/brain/what-is-psychoneuroimmunology)

<sup>3</sup><https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5876785/>

<sup>4</sup>[www.sciencenewstoday.org/new-study-links-immune-system-to-depression-and-schizophrenia-in-major-psychiatric-breakthrough](http://www.sciencenewstoday.org/new-study-links-immune-system-to-depression-and-schizophrenia-in-major-psychiatric-breakthrough)

<sup>5</sup>[www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/our-research/mental-health-dementia-research/research-clinics/immunopsychiatry-clinic](http://www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/our-research/mental-health-dementia-research/research-clinics/immunopsychiatry-clinic)

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.



# The Stewardship SNAPSHOT

## BUC Giving Survey and Combined Offering Plan Consultation

The BUC needs your help in collecting data around giving and generosity in the region and you are invited to participate in a **15 minute** anonymous survey.

**6 DEC** 2025 –TO– **28 MAR** 2026

Further information  
can be found at



[qrco.de/stewardshipsnapshot](https://qrco.de/stewardshipsnapshot)



**GOD FIRST**  
ADVENTIST STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES



# When God says no – the hidden grace of a denial

by Dr Nicardo K. Delahaye,  
Northeastern Conference Executive Secretary, Atlantic Union, USA

2 Corinthians 12:7–9

We cherish the moments when God says yes. They arrive like sunlight breaking through heavy clouds. Doors open. Diagnoses change. Provision appears where lack once loomed. In those moments, faith feels effortless, praise comes easily, and testimony flows naturally from grateful hearts.

Yet prayer, in its deepest and most formative expression, is not shaped only by God's affirmations. It is refined in those quieter, heavier moments when heaven responds with a holy no.

The apostle Paul invites us into this sacred tension. Writing to the Corinthian church, he speaks honestly of a 'thorn in the flesh', a persistent affliction that caused him anguish. Three times he pleaded with the Lord for its removal. Three times he prayed with expectation and sincerity. And three times God declined his request.

This is unsettling. Paul was faithful, obedient and sacrificial. He had endured hardship for the sake of the Gospel and received extraordinary revelations from God. If anyone seemed deserving of relief, it was Paul. Yet God answered him with words that would echo through Christian history: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV).

God's no was not punishment; it was purpose.

Sometimes God says no to preserve our perspective. Paul explains that the thorn was permitted to keep him from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations he had received. The very limitation Paul wanted removed was the means God used to anchor him in humility and dependence. The no kept him prayerful. It kept him grounded. It reminded him that his strength did not originate in his

gifting, but in God's sustaining presence.

Many of us discover that unanswered prayer keeps us closer to God than answered prayer ever could. The no presses us into deeper reliance and reminds us that God is never overwhelmed, even when we are.

Sometimes God says no because He has a better plan. God did not remove Paul's thorn, but He gave him something greater. He gave him sustaining, strengthening grace, which reframed his suffering with divine power.

God's no is rarely rejection. More often, it is redirection. What we ask Him to remove, He may instead redeem. What we ask Him to fix, He may teach us how to carry.

Sometimes the pain remains, but peace arrives. Sometimes the situation does not change, but we do.

I learnt this truth in the most personal way imaginable.

I prayed for God to heal my mother of cancer. I prayed with faith, urgency and hope, believing that God could and would do what medicine could not. But she died at the age of 59.

There are no eloquent words to soften that loss. God said no to the healing I had asked for. Yet, in the long, painful journey of grief, God said yes to something I did not know I needed. He revealed Himself to me as the perfect parent. In my deepest loss, He taught me that while earthly parents may be taken from us, He will never leave us nor forsake us. His presence did not erase the pain, but it carried me through it. His grace did not change the outcome, but it changed me.

Sometimes what we have prayed to be fixed remains broken, yet God quietly fixes us to live faithfully within the brokenness.

Paul eventually learnt to say something remarkable: 'When I am weak, then I am strong' (verse 10, NIV). His thorn

became the place where Christ's power rested most fully upon him. The suffering he once resisted became the testimony he embraced.

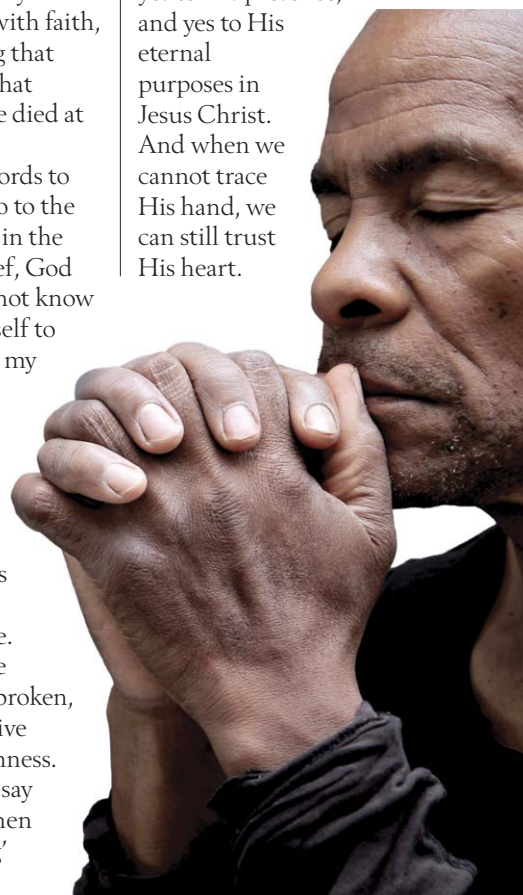
Scripture bears witness to this pattern. God said no to Joseph's comfort, but positioned him to preserve life. God said no to Moses' request to enter the Promised Land, but welcomed him into eternal glory. And in Gethsemane Jesus prayed, 'Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.' Heaven said no, yet from that no came the greatest yes the world has ever known: redemption for humanity!

When God says no, it is not abandonment: it is accompaniment. It is not silence: it is sacred shaping.

The no that disappoints us today may be the very means by which God forms Christ within us. Grace arrives where strength ends. Power rests where surrender begins.

The God who sometimes says no has already said yes to His promises, yes to His presence, and yes to His eternal purposes in Jesus Christ. And when we cannot trace His hand, we can still trust His heart.

Jim Botha/AME (CC BY 4.0)





# The Book of the Month



## The Final Victory

Learn how the book of Revelation reveals Jesus' love, power and guidance with clarity and hope. Experience the story of redemption and the assurance of Christ's ultimate victory, brought to life through compelling explanations.

*The Final Victory* simplifies complex prophetic themes, showing how they bring meaning, purpose and confidence to everyday life.

### Who should read this book?

- Anyone curious about Bible prophecy and looking for an understandable, hope-filled explanation of Revelation.
- Christians wanting to deepen their relationship with Jesus by seeing His character and love revealed through prophecy.
- Readers seeking spiritual encouragement in times of uncertainty or change.
- Small groups, churches and Bible study leaders wanting a clear, engaging resource on end-time themes.
- Both new and experienced Bible students who desire a fresh, Christ-centred perspective on prophetic messages.



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.lifesourcebookshop.co.uk](http://www.lifesourcebookshop.co.uk).

## Love isn't seasonal

by Dara Dare

Roses, chocolates, Valentine's cards – February screams romance. But once the 14th passes, does love disappear too?

Dr Gary Chapman introduced the concept of love languages – the ways people give and receive love. These include words of affirmation, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time and physical touch. We easily apply this framework to dating or friendships . . . but have you considered it in your relationship with God?



Scripture shows a God who speaks love fluently. From the start, He declares our worth: 'Let Us make man in Our image' (Genesis 1:26, NKJV). Jesus reminds us that we are worth more than many sparrows (Matthew 10:31). God does not whisper encouragement; He proclaims it: 'For I know the plans I have for you' (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV). The psalmist responded to this love with praise. Do God's words still move you, or have they become merely decorative quotes?

Jesus also showed love through service. 'The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve' (Mark 10:45, ESV). He fed hungry crowds, healed the sick whom others avoided, and washed His disciples' feet. True love is practical, often inconvenient, and interrupts our plans.

Love gives, and God gives extravagantly. 'For God so loved the world that He gave . . .' (John 3:16, NKJV). His generosity is not only material, but spiritual: forgiveness, peace, salvation. When Solomon asked for wisdom, God gave more than he requested. If every good gift comes from God, how do we respond? Obedience, returning tithes, offering time, and using our talents are all ways to show love to the Giver.

Jesus also embodied physical touch, reaching out to the untouchable when society kept its distance. God becoming man was divine closeness; He refused to love from afar. Through the Holy Spirit, God is not only with us, but within us. When did you last let Him comfort, correct or heal what you keep hidden?

Quality time is treasured in relationships, but often neglected with God. Moses glowed after meeting Him; Mary chose stillness over busyness. 'Draw near to God and He will draw near to you' (James 4:8, NKJV). Yet our devotion is often rushed or postponed.

*Pause and reflect:* how are you expressing your love for God today – in what you say, how you live, where you invest your time, and how near you draw? While February celebrates romance, God invites us into something far deeper: a love that does not fade with the season. He is not merely loving; He is love.





CAKES, BAKES  
& DESSERTS



# Banana Cake

I used to make this banana cake for a health food shop in North London. I would bake multiple loaves of it and sell it to the shop, and they would then sell it by the slice. They always sold out really quickly, and no matter how many loaves I made they would always sell out. I think that is why I've decided to include this recipe in this book, as I know it is well loved by both young and old.

- 1 Preheat oven to 190°C (375°F; gas mark 5).
- 2 Mix together **all ingredients** until combined.
- 3 Pour mixture into a medium-sized cake tin, greased and lined with greaseproof paper.
- 4 Bake for 55 minutes, or until a toothpick placed in the middle comes out clean.
- 5 Allow to cool and then serve.



## Shopping list

**Bananas** – 1 lb (450g), ripe, mashed  
**Light flavourless oil** – 4 oz (100ml):  
for example, sunflower  
**Raisins** – 4 oz (100g)  
**Rolled oats** – 3 oz (75g)  
**Wholewheat or spelt flour** – 5 oz (150g)  
**Cinnamon** – ¼ tsp  
**Nutmeg** – ¼ tsp  
**Pinch of salt**



Taken from *Cooking with Kids*.

To purchase yours, follow this link: <https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/cooking-with-kids-paperback/>



20

## Before I ask, You know

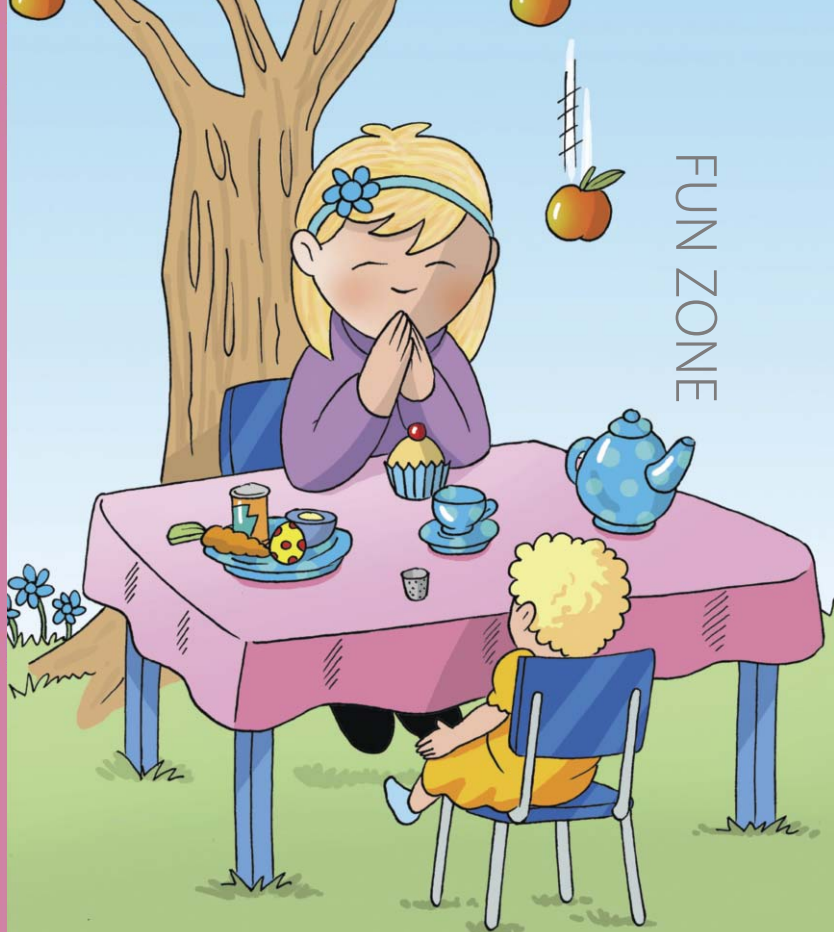
'Your Father knows the things you need before you ask him.'

*Matthew 6:8*

**Before I close my eyes to pray,  
God knows what I want to say.**

Dear God,  
Wow!

You know what my prayers will be?  
You knew that I would pray this prayer?  
Everything I say,  
All that is on my mind,  
You have always known it.  
That's awesome, God!  
In Jesus' name,  
Amen.



FUN ZONE

25

## Please help me, Lord!

'Lord, my Rock, I call out to you for help.'

*Psalms 28:1*

**When you don't know what to do,  
Call on God to rescue you.**

Dear God,  
When things get tricky  
And I get upset  
And nothing seems to go right,  
I will pray to You for help.  
Please help me, God.  
In Jesus' name,  
Amen.



Taken from My First Bedtime Prayer Book.

To purchase yours, follow this link: <https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/my-first-bedtime-prayer-book/>

## Adventist-Muslim relations: building bridges, sharing hope

Across the North England Conference, we're witnessing something remarkable: Muslims are exploring faith in Jesus Christ in safe, welcoming spaces – and the Seventh-day Adventist Church is uniquely positioned to walk alongside them on this journey.

As migration patterns bring more people from Muslim-majority countries to the UK, many are drawn to the Adventist lifestyle, our understanding of Christ's second coming, and our commitment to community ministry. AMR (Adventist-Muslim relations) training equips church members to share their faith authentically and build meaningful relationships with Muslim friends and neighbours.

Through this ministry, members learn to engage with Islamic texts and perspectives while sharing the biblical message of salvation through Jesus Christ, including insights on the Sabbath and the nature of Scripture. The General Conference AMR Department has developed practical resources that make these conversations accessible and effective.

### Join the global prayer movement

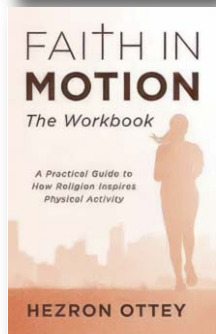
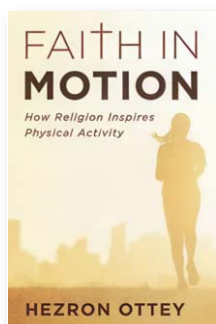
The General Conference is calling for one million Seventh-day Adventists to pray during Ramadan (18 February – 19 March 2026). The NEC AMR Department, partnering with the Prayer Ministry, will observe 30 days of prayer using the GC's *Ramadan Prayer Diary* – available free from the NEC office.

### Get trained; get involved

Whether you're passionate about interfaith ministry or simply want to better understand your Muslim neighbours, AMR training provides the tools you need.

Please contact the NEC AMR Director (Pastor Dr Jeff Couzins) or his secretary (Kaydeen Grant-Dumenya) to find out how to receive training: email [jcousins@necadventist.org.uk](mailto:jcouzins@necadventist.org.uk) or [kgrant-dumenya@necadventist.org.uk](mailto:kgrant-dumenya@necadventist.org.uk), or phone 07780 610877 or 01159 606312.

PASTOR DR JEFF COUZINS



## From sanctuary to centre court: a month of purpose in motion

Telford Central Seventh-day Adventist Church hosted the official launch of two books on 1 November 2025: *Faith in Motion: How Religion Inspires Physical Activity*, and *From PhD to Purpose: The Unexpected Path*, which were followed soon after by a third book: *Faith In Motion: The Workbook*. All three books were written by a local Adventist member, Dr Hezron Ottey.

The church family shared testimonies of how faith had strengthened their families' health. Members reflected on how the physical, mental and spiritual were never meant to be separated. As the dedication service and prayer were led by Gary Clark, Elder Golozera and Pastor Jeremy Johnson, the congregation realised that this wasn't simply literature – it was a call to embodied discipleship.

Twenty-six days later, on 27 November, the Growing Business Awards at Hilton London Bankside saw the **Positive Impact Award 2025** go to Telford Community Basketball CIC, a local, grassroots, faith-inspired movement founded and directed by Dr Hezron Ottey, built on the values of community, inclusion, belonging and hope – and now being honoured on a national stage. The young people, parents, volunteers, members and participants who had prayed, encouraged and believed all cheered as Dr Ottey held the trophy.

In a press release covering the award, Dr Ottey stated: 'This national award is an honour not just for us, but for the entire community of Telford. It recognises the heart and purpose of what we do – bringing people together, breaking down barriers, and creating a space where everyone feels they belong.' Continuing, he described receiving the award as 'an incredible moment', saying, 'We are excited to build on this momentum and continue bringing people together through basketball.'

From the letter received earlier this year from Kensington Palace acknowledging our work to this national recognition at the Growing Business Awards, the message is clear: something profoundly meaningful is happening in Telford.

The book launch and the national award may seem like separate occasions, but both were birthed from the same conviction – that **faith must lead to motion** and that **community is ministry**. At the heart of both stories is the same mission: **to help people discover purpose, healing and belonging through movement, faith and community**. From a sanctuary filled with prayer to a ballroom filled with applause, November 2025 became a testimony of what God can do when His people choose to move with purpose.

DR HEZRON OTTEY

To order Dr Hezron Ottey's excellent books, telephone 01476 591700 (8.30am-5.30pm, Monday-Thursday) or visit [www.lifesourcebookshop.co.uk](http://www.lifesourcebookshop.co.uk).







## Twelve souls united with Christ

On Sabbath 29 November 2025, the South East London Community Seventh-day Adventist Church in Herne Hill experienced a powerful outpouring of God's grace as twelve precious souls publicly committed their lives to Christ through baptism. The day carried deep spiritual significance, with the twelve new members symbolically echoing the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve disciples of Christ.

The Personal Ministries team, devoted to nurturing young people, engaging in community outreach, and supporting non-Adventist spouses, saw their vision fulfilled as eight young people and four adults stepped forward to be baptised. Their decision reflects both their

personal commitment to Christ and the faithful guidance of the mentors, teachers and leaders who have walked alongside them.

One of the baptised adults, Maude Estwick, is a respected pillar of the community with a long connection to our church. She played a key role in establishing the adjoining Milkwood Community Park, where she serves as Honorary Patron. Maude often recalls meeting Prince Charles (now King Charles III) when the park was officially opened in 2004. Having worshipped faithfully with us for some time, she poignantly chose this day – her late daughter's birthday – to make her baptismal vows.

Among the other baptised adults was Frederick Asare-Bediako, whose wife is a member of the church, along with Nana Yaa Frema Opoku-Agyemang and Juliet Minta, both in their mid-twenties.

Pastor Emmanuel Osei Acheampong gave thanks to God, as did the Personal Ministries leader, Elder Johnson Amponsah. As a church family, we rejoice with these twelve new believers and commit to supporting them through prayer, fellowship and encouragement. Baptism is not the end; it is the beginning. Just as a marriage ceremony marks the start of a lifelong journey, so baptism calls us to the work of post-baptism nurturing. May we continue to be a church that encourages, uplifts and celebrates every soul that chooses to follow Christ.

MRS REBECCA ASAMOAH AND MRS PHYLLIS ARHIN

## Revival at Camp Hill Church

Camp Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church in Birmingham recently hosted a dynamic eight-day evangelistic series entitled 'A New Tomorrow' with Randy Skeete, an international evangelist widely respected for his clear, Scripture-saturated preaching and ability to quote extensive portions of the Bible from memory, attracting attendees from across the United Kingdom and thousands of viewers from nearly every continent via livestream. The series, held from 29 November to 6 December, offered spiritually rich preaching, practical Christian living principles, and a holistic health emphasis grounded in the Adventist message.

Each evening began with health messages aligned with the Adventist NEWSTART and CREATION life principles. Local musicians and singers provided deeply moving meditational selections that prepared hearts for worship. Pastor Skeete preached nightly messages and delivered two Sabbath services, each rooted in Scripture and presented with clarity, conviction and urgency, challenging listeners to experience biblical transformation through obedience, surrender and personal revival.

One hallmark of the series was Pastor Skeete's willingness to take challenging questions, something he did each night and in a special hour-long Q&A session on the final Sabbath evening. The questions addressed such topics as modest dress and Christian identity; biblical diet and modern lifestyle issues; appropriate Sabbath observance and work-related dilemmas; marital abuse and pastoral counsel; use of musical instruments in worship; and the existence of dinosaurs and creation theology. Pastor Skeete answered each question directly from Scripture, reinforcing that the Bible remains sufficient to address the moral and spiritual concerns of the modern world.

The campaign had a significant spiritual impact. Members reported renewed commitment to personal devotion, healthier living and intentional Bible study. Many non-Adventist visitors expressed appreciation for the clarity of the messages and the warm fellowship experienced at Camp Hill. Notably, several attendees indicated a desire to be baptised, and arrangements are underway for Bible studies in the coming months. Online viewers also submitted requests for spiritual support, study materials and follow-up engagement.

Throughout the series, Pastor Skeete emphasised that discipline, practice and daily exposure to Scripture are essential for spiritual strength, encouraging both young and old to read the Bible consistently.

Camp Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church extends heartfelt gratitude to Randy Skeete; the health presenters, musicians and hospitality teams; and the global audience who participated. The series leaves behind a renewed appetite for Scripture, a call to holy living, and the anticipation of even greater things as God leads His people into 'A New Tomorrow'.

COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT





## Coventry Eagles Pathfinders & Adventurers Club induction ceremony

The Coventry Central Eagles Pathfinders and Adventurers Club held a joyful and deeply inspiring induction ceremony on Saturday 22 November 2025, bringing together children, youth, families, church members, community guests and civic leaders, including the Lord Mayor of Coventry, Councillor Rachel Lancaster; local area coordinators; and the club's designated area coordinator, Mr Levon Johns.

The Pathfinders and Adventurers marched in, led by the drumming team and flag bearers, highlighting how the Pathfinder ministry nurtures confidence, discipline, teamwork and creativity alongside spiritual growth. Then

the Adventurers' heartfelt performance of 'This Little Light of Mine' moved the entire congregation. The Pathfinders' fancy drill team followed with an impressive display of coordination and discipline.

In her address, the Lord Mayor expressed deep appreciation for the club's work, sharing that witnessing the positive engagement of young people restored her sense of hope. She spoke candidly about how the ceremony reminded her that there is still goodness, light and joy in the world – especially among the youth. A meaningful connection was also

revealed when the Lord Mayor shared her involvement with Co-op charity organisations supporting the FareShare network, which supplies food to Coventry Social Supermarket.

The highlight of the day was the induction of forty-five candidates, including Pathfinders, Adventurers and counsellors. Their pledges reflected commitment, growth and a bright future for the club. The ceremony concluded with presentations, fellowship and joyful photo moments.

More than an event, the 2025 Induction Ceremony stood as a testimony of faith, answered prayer and God's guiding hand over the Coventry Eagles – now firmly shining as a beacon of hope and service in the city of Coventry.

COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

## 'The Greatest Gift'

On Sabbath 20 December 2025, the youth of Windsor Street South Seventh-day Adventist Church beautifully retold the miraculous story of the birth of Jesus through powerful narration and heartfelt music in 'The Greatest Gift – A Musical Journey from a Stable to Your Heart', a play written by Pastor Jermaine Swaby and Ann Marie Johnson. The audience was taken back to that holy night when heaven touched earth and hope was born in a manger.

The journey began when a group of older teenagers at the church expressed interest in participating in a church play. Encouraged, the church member offered to write a Christmas Nativity script, provided the teenagers were committed. The church member compiled a list of Nativity characters and invited the teenagers to select the roles they wished to play. By the end of Sabbath School, the teenagers had not only selected roles for themselves, but had also suggested the names of children who were not present at church. Pastor Swaby responded enthusiastically, recognising the Nativity as a valuable community outreach initiative, and the date was set.

The project aimed to engage the local community during the Christmas season, highlighting the true meaning of Christmas, beyond gifts and celebrations – the birth of Jesus, and the hope, peace and salvation He brings. It became a whole-church effort, with multiple departments contributing skills, resources and creativity to create a high-quality, welcoming programme. The church donated fabrics and materials, and skilled members sewed all of the costumes, forming the Windsor Street Sewing Circle along with members from Yardley and Smethwick in the process. Their expertise and attention to detail resulted in well-made, high-quality costumes that are now available for future events and can be hired by other churches, generating income to support Windsor Street's youth ministries and Pathfinders.

The spiritual impact was significant. During the altar call, one adult and three children requested Bible studies. Youth engagement was another highlight, as children and teenagers were empowered with meaningful roles. The project also helped to develop skills within the church, increase community visibility, and lay the foundations for continued engagement.

As church members reflect on the project, they are reminded of Colossians 3:23, 24 and the importance of doing everything to the glory of God. Through teamwork, dedication and wholehearted effort, every action, contribution and role was performed for the glory of God, making the Windsor Street South Nativity not just a performance, but a ministry of service and love carried out for God's glory.

COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT







### 'Jonathan's Lad'

The Hackney SDA Church community was left stunned by the power-packed preaching of 12-year-old Nana-Osei Bonsu Boakye-Dankwa on 29 November 2025. Accompanied by his mother (Alberta) and his elder sister (Gabrielle), who read his scripture reading, Nana-Osei, a member of Reading Ghana Seventh-day Adventist Church, is the son of a late pastor, and this was clear to see as he delivered his message.

In his introduction, Nana-Osei, who is affected by cerebral palsy, was described as one who advocates as a voice for the disabled. Yet his sermon, entitled 'Jonathan's Lad', was delivered with power and conviction, challenging all those listening to live a life of unquestionable obedience, just as Jonathan's lad did in 1 Samuel 20:35-40. 'Jonathan's lad represents all those who trust in God,' said Nana-Osei; 'we are challenged to walk by faith and not by sight. In the minutest details of life God instructs us, and we prove our love by our obedience to Him.'

Concluding his message, Nana-Osei, reading from Revelation 3:20, appealed to the congregation to respond to the knock of Jesus on their hearts by surrendering their lives to Him.

DARELL J. PHILIP, PR AND COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT; PHOTO BY ZINZE BISHOP



Children's Ministries Leader, Sister Peters, for her valuable contribution; the church elders; all volunteers; and families for their support. We look forward to offering more programmes in the future. To God be the glory!

INDRA KUNDER, MANCHESTER SOUTHERN ASIA CHURCH CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES LEAD

### Unique Remembrance Day for Erdington Community Pathfinder Club

A unique remembrance event took place on Sunday 9 November, involving the Erdington Community Pathfinder Club, a local primary school, the police and the local Tesco Extra store. The event, coordinated and organised by Trevor Davis (the club director), Linda Kelly (the store's community champion) and Rob Bull (the front-end manager), also coincided with the opening of a special on-site remembrance garden.

The brief service of songs, poetry, prayers and wreath-laying, led by Pastor Michael Baker, was preceded by a march of Pathfinders, Adventurers, a number of local air cadets, club directors and members of the church and community, followed by an engaging display of drilling and drumming led by Fontaine Parchment and Emmanuel Henriquez (Area 5's drilling & drumming instructors), which attracted a significant crowd of Sunday morning shoppers.

Millie-May (Linda's daughter) read a poem by Sienna, a pupil from the local primary school. Wreaths were laid on behalf of Tesco, the West Midlands police and our Pathfinders.

Reflecting on the event, local area coordinator Cislyn Morgan-Davis commented that the two minutes' silence 'was very emotional'. Linda Kelly said, 'It was a fantastic event; I was very impressed with the behaviour and how smart the children were.'

It is hoped that this successful community collaboration will continue in the future, providing opportunities for our young people and the wider church family to share God's love with others.

PAULSON NDUMELE

### Manchester Southern Asia Church vacation Bible school

This year's vacation Bible school at Manchester Southern Asia, conducted by the Children's Ministries Department, ran from 26 to 30 October with the theme, 'God Made Me'. Between 18 and 22 children attended each day, including several non-Christian children who enjoyed the programme so much that they asked for it to be run at the end of every term. Despite limited time, the team delivered a meaningful and memorable week filled with learning, fun and spiritual growth.

The daily lessons focused on Creation, Noah's ark, God's promise, wise and foolish builders, and the facts that God created each child and Jesus is coming back for His people. The children enjoyed a mix of songs, story time, prayer, painting, drawing, colouring, crafts and games, helping reinforce each day's lesson in creative ways.

There was strong engagement from children throughout the week. Non-Christian children expressed excitement, and the joyful, safe and memorable environment was appreciated.

We thank the church pastor for his immense support of this successful vacation Bible school; the NEC



## Primary school inseparables celebrate 70<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary

Lifelong members of Stanborough Park Church, Llew and Margaret Meredith, celebrated their platinum wedding anniversary on 28 October 2025.

Friends recall that as children Llew and Margaret were best friends – which they still are! They were neighbours in Sheepcot Lane (a road which runs down the side of Stanborough Park), were students at Stanborough Park School, and attended Stanborough Park Church. Not surprisingly, they

established a close friendship, with one contemporary describing them as ‘inseparable’. Over the years their friendship turned to love, and they were married in Stanborough Park Church on 28 October 1955.

They still live in Watford, although they raised their two daughters, Corinne and Sharon, just outside the borough boundary but on land owned by the council, so they can claim to be lifelong residents of the town. In view of this, and in recognition of the occasion, some church members organised a letter of congratulations from the Elected Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor, who wrote, ‘Seventy years of marriage is not only a rare milestone, but a remarkable testament to your love and commitment. It may be of special interest that, in Scripture, the number seventy symbolises completeness and divine order, being the product of perfect numbers, seven for perfection and ten for completeness. . . . On this joyous occasion please accept my heartfelt wishes for continued happiness, good health, and many more wonderful years ahead.’

They are now the proud grandparents of seven grandchildren and fourteen great-grandchildren, whom Llew describes as ‘a great blessing and a pleasure to both of us’.

The couple completed 62 years of denominational service between them in their working life before retiring. During their time together they have developed their love of travelling and caravanning – a hobby they have enjoyed for more than 50 years. They also enjoy ‘reading and, of course, family’ as Llew puts it.

Llew has a further connection with Stanborough Park Church. When the church was officially opened in 1928 it was Llew’s grandfather, Pastor Meredith, then the BUC President, who conducted the opening ceremony using a silver key which came to light relatively recently and is now displayed close to the door it opened.

The members of Stanborough Park Church congratulate the couple on their special anniversary, and, echoing the Mayor’s words, wish them continued happiness, good health and many more wonderful years ahead.

JUNE COOMBS

## SEC Women’s Ministry retreat

The South England Conference (SEC) Women’s Ministry Director, Anastasia Ross, truly put together an



amazing and much-needed women’s time of rejoicing, reconnecting and rejuvenating at the De Vere Hotel, Chesham from 28 to 30 November 2025, based on Ecclesiastes 3 and Proverbs 31. We were truly blessed by our speaker from Atlanta, Pastor Kimberly Bulgin, alongside the BUC’s Sharon Platt-McDonald and a host of SEC pastors. Young and mature ladies were blessed by a double portion and walked high. Roll on 2026!

SHARON MATTIS

## Pastor Appreciation Day at Grace Community Church

On 1 November 2025 the members and friends of Grace Community Seventh-day Adventist Church in Tottenham gathered to celebrate Pastor Appreciation Day, honouring Pastor Mohan Abbadasari and his wonderful, supportive family. The atmosphere was filled with singing, praise and thanksgiving as the congregation came together in gratitude for the dedicated ministry and



selfless service of their beloved pastor.

From the opening hymns to the heartfelt tributes, every moment reflected deep appreciation for Pastor Abbadasari’s spiritual leadership, compassion and unwavering commitment to the church family. Members and regular visitors alike took the time to express their love and gratitude, sharing personal stories of how the pastor’s guidance and prayers have touched their lives.

The celebration was not only a recognition of Pastor Abbadasari’s ministry, but also a warm acknowledgement of the vital role his family members play in supporting him. Their grace, patience and encouragement have been a true blessing to the church community.

As the day concluded with smiles, laughter and fellowship, one sentiment was shared by all: gratitude for the past and hope for the future. The Grace Community Seventh-day Adventist Church members look forward to many more years of Pastor Abbadasari’s inspiring service as they continue to grow together in faith, love and unity.

ALTHEA MOORE





## 'The Good News' – Nativity musical at Barnet

On 20 December at Barnet Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Divine Service was presented as a Nativity musical called 'The Good News'. The play, written by Lorraine Imbrah (children and youth leader) ministered to members, families and visitors alike – some attending for the first time.

It was very inspiring to listen to Mary recite the Magnificat (from Luke 1) and then burst into song with 'Great Is Thy Faithfulness'. Angels came down the aisle, singing 'Rejoice in the Lord Always', and lifted their voices with the congregation as they manoeuvred to a steel pan tune of 'The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy'. It was quite humorous to note that one shepherd's tiny lamb (his baby brother), who was due to visit the manger, was fast asleep when the time came. The big finale came when a young girl who had not been visiting the church for very long, dressed as the star that led the wise men, sang a solo of 'He Is Exalted'.

Who would have believed that up to a week before the musical some children were not confident, some parts had to be changed due to ill health, and some had to learn things even on the morning of the play? Please pray for the children and young adults at Barnet Church, that God will continue to develop their talents and give us all wisdom on how to preach the Gospel in a myriad of creative ways.

LORRAINE IMBRAH

## 'Joy Cometh in the Morning' – Stanborough Park's annual toy service

Charles Dickens' words in *A Christmas Carol* that at Christmas time 'want is keenly felt and abundance rejoices' are, sadly, still true nearly two centuries later. It is exactly for this reason that members of Stanborough Park Church have been donating toys every Christmas for over sixty years so that impoverished local families can still provide gifts for their children.

Staff at local children's centres, social workers and support staff are grateful for the toys that they obtain from the church, as are the parents who receive them. Other recipients are nominated by MIND and receive



an adult's pack of suitable goodies.

The annual toy service, which this year was held on 13 December, was started around 1962 by the late Alf Kelly MBE. These days the event is master-minded by his daughter, Pat Walton, who is well-known to the local social services for her welfare work; she can always provide them with what they require for their needy clients.

The toys are spread around the platform, which also has to accommodate the orchestra as well as a grand piano! Those responsible for arranging them this year claimed that there were even more toys donated than last year – each year seems to see more – meaning that many local families could give their children a better Christmas than they expected.

The event was attended, as usual, by Watford's Elected Mayor, Peter Taylor, who gratefully accepted the toys on behalf of the local families and expressed his appreciation for how the church meets their needs throughout the year. Social and support workers attended the service and chose appropriate toys for their clients from the display. Some are regular attendees, including the chair of the local refugees' association, who is always amazed by the church's generosity.

As usual, the church's young people featured prominently in the service: in the orchestra, through song, and delivering the scripture reading. The Pathfinders helped as usual. The meditation was delivered by Pastor Don McFarlane, now retired, who spoke on 'The Indescribable Gift'. He recalled that the first time he preached at the church he was told by a member, 'We don't do long sermons here.' He duly kept his message short and to the point!

Once again the church was full to capacity. Numbers had fallen since the church reopened after the COVID-19 closure, but for the first time since then attendance was back to what it used to be.

Unclaimed toys were rounded up and delivered by Pat to local children's centres later in the week so that their clients could wrap them in time for Christmas, bringing joy to needy homes in Watford on Christmas morning.

JUNE COOMBS; PHOTOS BY ARTO KESHISHIAN



Left to right: Pastor Don McFarlane and his wife, Mary, and the Mayor, Peter Taylor



## Raising money through songs of praise

On 15 December 2025 Croydon Seventh-day Adventist Church dedicated its annual winter concert to raising funds for those affected by Hurricane Melissa. The evening was a joyful celebration of worship, featuring songs of praise from the nineties and noughties alongside much-loved hymns and classics that resonated deeply with the congregation.

The concert opened with a lively game of 'Name That Tune', helping to warm up the audience before moving into a spirit of worship and praise. Croydon SDA's children's choir set the tone for the evening, followed by uplifting performances from the Croydon Quintet, the Croydon Gospel Choir, the Croydon Ensemble, and Resurrection. The programme was further enriched by contributions from sister churches, with the Beckenham Praise Team and the New Addington Gospel Choir blessing the audience with carols.

Midway through the programme, the music paused as one of the elders made a heartfelt appeal to raise funds for communities devastated by Hurricane Melissa in Jamaica and Cuba. A reflective silence filled the room as the congregation considered the fragility of life and the vital work of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), whose support continues long after news headlines fade.

Donations quickly began to flow, both in person and online. What started as a few hundred pounds soon grew into a thousand, before being joyfully doubled by a generous anonymous donor who pledged to match the total amount given. Contributions continued online in the following week, bringing the final total to £2,700, all to the glory of God.

*The evening was a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when we use our talents, treasure and time to support others and share God's love in practical ways.*

'As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God' (1 Peter 4:10, KJV).

COMMUNICATIONS  
TEAM



## NEC District 7 multicultural music afternoon

On Sabbath 1 November, Salford Seventh-day Adventist Church hosted a vibrant multicultural music afternoon for the North England Conference's District 7.

Following a sermon on the signs of the times, Pastor Romel Ricarte welcomed the congregations that overflowed from the sanctuary into the foyer. The uplifting songs of international praise continued into the evening.

The event featured performances from the district's four congregations: Salford, Manchester Southern Asia, Swinton and Old Trafford, compered by Sister Dawn McKenzie, the praise team leader at Salford Church.

Attendees were blessed with hymns sung in various languages, including Yoruba, Bura and Igbo from Nigeria, as well as songs from Zimbabwe, Ghana, Portugal, the Philippines (Visayan) and Romania. Manchester Southern Asia showcased many of the 22 official languages from their region, including Kannada, Marathi, Malayalam and Telugu – often referred to as the Italian of the East.

In a world increasingly marked by division, rooted in fear and territorial defensiveness, it was a true joy to gather as diverse groups united by the love of God.

There's a distinct joy and confidence that radiates from the faces of individuals when they sing in their mother tongue, reflecting the comfort of feeling at home. Many attendees wore traditional dress, waving flags in a celebration of Christian fellowship.

While the languages spoken varied, it was recognised that our hearts communicate in the same universal language of love and understanding.

The music resonated through a variety of instruments: violins, trumpets, saxophones, pan flutes, keyboards, pianos, guitars, ukuleles, tambourines and string orchestras.

During the event, we paused to acknowledge the suffering of those in the Caribbean affected by the destructive Hurricane Melissa. An offering of £480.32 was collected to support the ADRA appeal and assist the Caribbean communities in need.

Following the musical performances, attendees had the opportunity to sample a delightful array of international snacks, ranging from patties to parathas, closing a beautiful day of fellowship. This gathering served to remind us of the day when we will all be united in the lingua franca of heaven. As Psalm 150:6 says (NKJV), 'Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!'

ELDER ELEANOR DUNCAN



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DATE	VENUE	TIME
7 February	Wycombe Community	After Sunset
14 February	Kettering	After Sunset
7 March	Filipino International	After Sunset
15 March	Cambridge	10am-2pm
21 March	Hampstead	After Sunset
22 March	Manchester South	10am-2pm
29 March	Huddersfield	10am-2pm

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## Hampstead's happy homecoming – a celebration of faith, family and fellowship

Hampstead Church's happy homecoming on 6 September 2025 was a celebratory day of joy, gratitude and belonging. The antique church doors, manned by Andre Ruan and Dwight Watson, swung open to welcome families, friends and visitors old and new. Some (like Alice Wharton-Hylton) travelled from as far afield as Florida, while others came from nearby, but all came to give thanks for God's goodness and to rejoice in the bonds of fellowship that unite us. As Psalm 122:1 declares (NKJV), *'I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD."'*

Elders Paul Lee and Bobby Car were ably joined by Michelle Hoyte-Terrelonge and Sandra Watson to spearhead the praise team, raising the roof with their singing. Pastor Colin Stewart delivered the keynote message, 'Coming Home to Go Home', reminding us to look forward to our eternal home. As we remembered those who laid the foundations of our church, we also reflected on the responsibility of nurturing and encouraging the next generation.

Pastor Mohan Abbadasari commented on how full the church was, and the faces of the congregation glowed with happiness. After the service, the celebration continued with a feast in the fellowship hall. One long-time member, Victor Lammy, remarked, 'It feels like stepping back into a living story – one where every chapter is marked by God's faithfulness and the love of His people.' As the day drew to a close, many lingered, reluctant to let the moment end. It was a living reminder of who we as a church family are called to be.

Pastor Mohan and the leadership team at Hampstead have truly gone above and beyond their duty to make this day a momentous one. Thank you. May the joy and togetherness we experienced continue to inspire us until we gather again to rejoice in God's unfailing love.

COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT



Andre Ruan and friends



## Flower and harvest festival at Stanborough Park Church

Stanborough Park Church's harvest festival this year was, unusually, shared with a flower festival. While the harvest loaf baked by Fiona Cooper was in its traditional place in the centre of the platform, the main harvest display was relocated to the Stanborough Centre, while the sanctuary was filled with wonderful and colourful floral displays.

Organised as usual by Audrey (Balderstone) Huzzey, the theme of the well-attended event was 'Joyful Reflections' on God's love, blessings and grace. Despite having decided that the 2017 event, which raised £14,000 for a children's hospice and the Church Development Fund, would be her last flower festival, Audrey realised that most current members of the increasingly diverse congregation had never seen one, so she suggested to her helpers that they do another.

'An enormous amount of planning has to go into such an event,' she said. 'Once we had agreed on a title and theme, I contacted potential flower arrangers. Some were from our church; others from Watford and other flower clubs belonging to the National Association of Flower Arrangement Societies; and some from the community (some from as far as Bedfordshire and Essex). Some were new to flower arranging, and others were very experienced.' Altogether forty-one arrangements were created – and what a display they made!

The opening ceremony of the preview evening on Thursday 2 October was attended by the Elected Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor; a representative from the local hospice, which was to be the beneficiary of the event; and Professor Nicola Ranger, General Secretary and Chief Executive of the Royal College of Nursing, who revealed that she had been a pupil at Stanborough Secondary School and was familiar with the church building. A gala concert featuring church musicians and pupils from the Stanborough Park College of Music was held on Saturday evening, and the event finished with 'Songs of Praise' on Sunday evening. The church was open for the usual services and for public viewing, accompanied by a musical ensemble.

In Audrey's words, 'A flower festival is a very happy time which brings people together, brightens the lives of those who attend and does good in the community. . . . The hospice does an amazing work, and we have been thrilled . . . to give a good donation to the Rennie Grove Peace Hospice.' As a result of many generous visitors and sponsors giving donations at the flower festival, Audrey and some of her committee members formally handed a cheque for £14,500 to Gemma Norris, the hospice's fundraiser, during the main Sabbath service on 15 November.

JUNE COOMBS



## Barnet Church gives out free hygiene packs in the community

On 20 December at 10am, the Barnet Community Services Department, led by Joan Mabb and volunteers from the church, were ready to give out free hygiene packs and hot drinks. The weather forecast indicated that there would be rain, but the team prayed, and there was no rain on the day – instead, morning sunshine shone brightly on the table that had been set up in Tally Ho Corner, Finchley.

The setting up of the stall aroused a lot of curiosity from many passers-by. Many accepted their free gifts and hot drinks. There were those who also wanted to know more about the church.

Some of the hygiene packs were tailor-made by the Community Services leader, and some were pre-packed and compiled specifically for men. There were 45 packs available for distribution, and all the packs were handed out.

Also available were hot drinks made and served by the church volunteers. This was well received by the community visitors, as the day was cold and the visitors appreciated the hot drinks. There were wristbands with Bible verses, which attracted more visitors, including the children.

During this time visitors who were in obvious need were also given details about Barnet Church's Together We Thrive community space. This is a community space where visitors can come along on a Saturday afternoon and have a hot meal to eat in or take away. It is a safe, warm place where they can meet others, collect emergency food and toiletry parcels, and sit and chat to others who are feeling lonely.

For the few hours invested in reaching out, it was time well spent. One person commented that *'the day went well.'* The Barnet Church Community Services Department and volunteers are looking forward to their next day in the community by God's grace.

JOAN MABB



## Croydon Church symposium on the Trinity

Croydon Seventh-day Adventist Church hosted a three-day symposium from 31 October to 1 November last year, exploring the doctrine of the Trinity. Led by respected Adventist scholar Dr Denis Fortin, the event addressed ongoing questions within Adventism about the Godhead, the biblical foundation for the Trinity and why this doctrine matters for Christian life today.

Dr Fortin highlighted that understanding the Trinity shapes our view of God's character – showing Him as embodying within Himself relational, self-giving love. Misunderstanding the Trinity, he noted, can lead to legalism, a diminished view of Christ, and a weakened understanding of the Holy Spirit.

A panel featuring Dr Fortin, Pastor Andrew Cudjoe and Pastor Devon Thomas engaged with questions from both the in-person and online audience, clarifying why Adventists use the term 'Trinity' and reflecting on the progressive nature of biblical truth.

The symposium affirmed that the Trinity is not merely a theological concept, but a framework that influences how believers show love to God and to one another. It was a spiritually deepening weekend for the Croydon Seventh-day Adventist Church community.

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM



## Messenger

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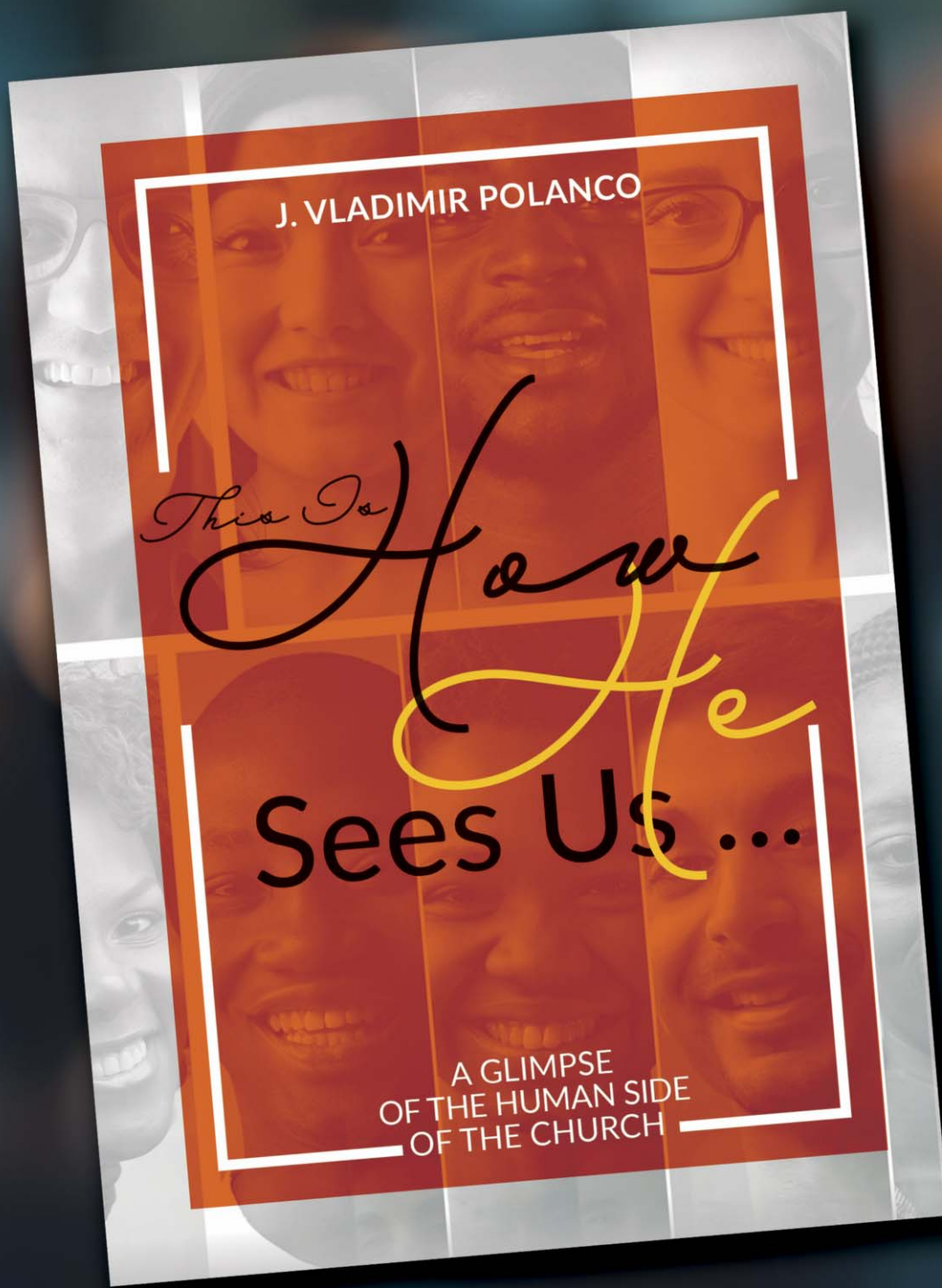
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	13	5.12	5.24	5.12	5.12	5.27
	20	5.25	5.37	5.26	5.28	5.42
	27	5.37	5.50	5.39	5.43	5.56
Mar	6	5.50	6.02	5.52	5.58	6.10



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