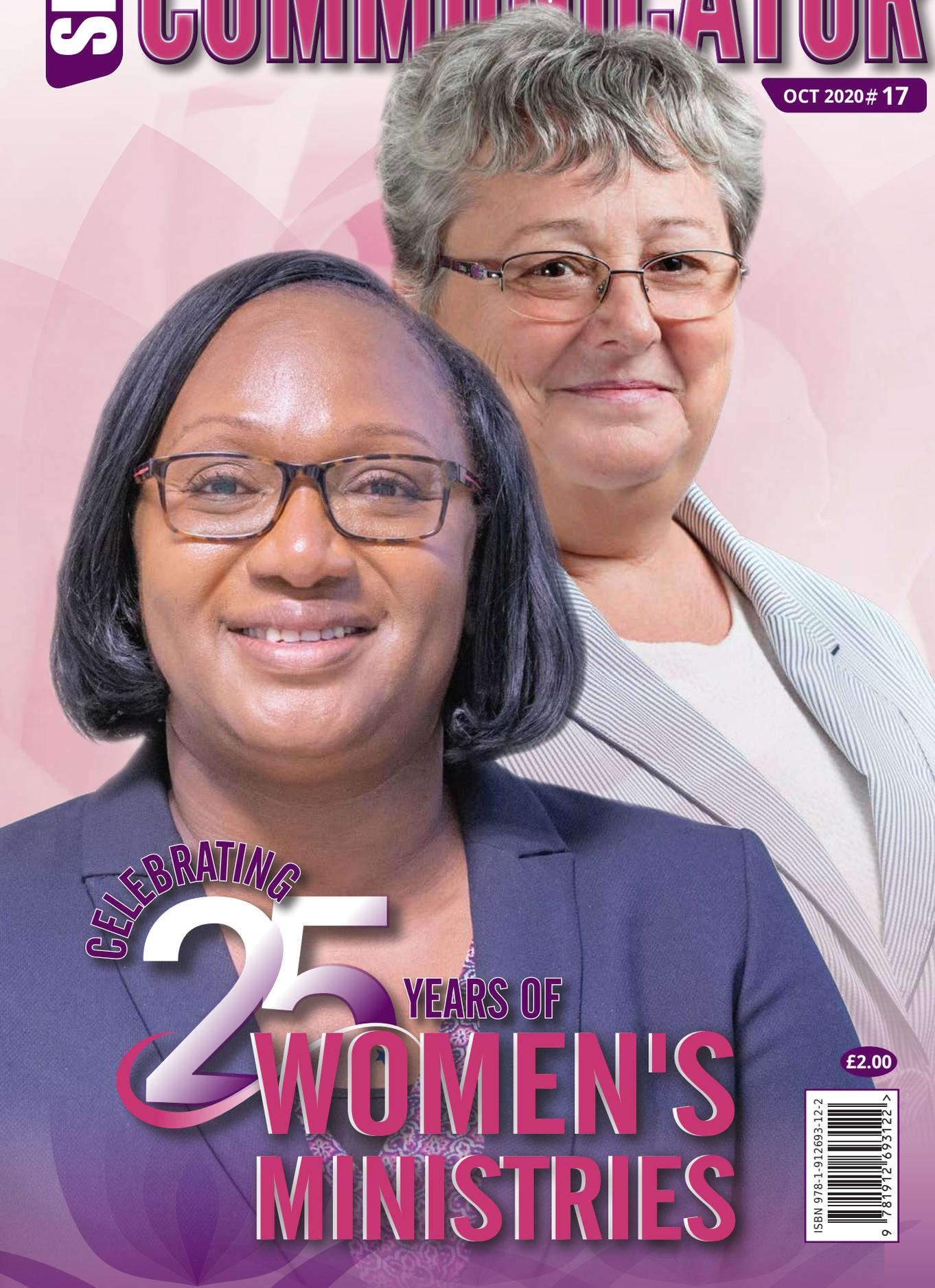


SEC COMMUNICATOR

OCT 2020# 17



CELEBRATING

25 YEARS OF
WOMEN'S
MINISTRIES

£2.00





WOMEN AND FAMILIES



THERE'S A WOMAN AT THE PODIUM



WOMEN AND WELLBEING

EDITORIAL TEAM

- Editor**
Sam O. Davies
- Copyeditor**
Catherine Anthony Boldeau
- Proofreading**
Norma Borrett
- News & Photo Editor**
Don Roberts
- Layout & Design**
Peter Oppong-Mensah

CONTENTS

- 03 EDITORIAL**
- 05 THE PRESIDENT'S DESK**
- 06 TRAIL BLAZER** - Drene Somasundram
- 08 WOMEN AND FAMILIES** - Karen Holford
- 09 AIN'T I WOMAN - REFLECTIONS ON SINGLE, BLACK WOMEN** - Val Bernard
- 10 RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY** - Lynda Ince
- 13 THERE'S A WOMAN AT THE PODIUM** - Sharon Platt-McDonald
- 14 ALL THE WAY MY SAVIOUR LEADS ME!** - Jacqueline Otokpa
- 15 WOMEN'S MINISTRIES AND PERSONAL CHANGE** - Beulah Plunket
- 16 25 YEARS REFLECTION...AS A MAGISTRATE** - Karen Jordan-Nichols
- 17 WOMEN MINISTRIES AT LONDON-GHANA CHURCH** - Gina Boamah
- 18 MY PERSONAL JOURNEY OVER THE PAST 25 YEARS** - Ritu Gill
- 19 OUTREACH - ZIMBABWEAN WOMEN IN THE UK** - Fleur Chimwadzimba
- 20 WOMEN AND WELLBEING** - Michelle Sancho
- 22 PROFILE: PAULINE PECK** - Adrian Peck & Catherine A. Boldeau
- 24 ADRA**
- 26 DEPARTMENT REPORTS**
- 32 NEWS SPOTLIGHT** - Don Roberts
- 35 POEM** - Annice Thomas
- 36 DEVOTIONAL** - Maureen Rock
- 37 ADVERTISEMENTS**

You can now read the SEC Communicator online at <https://seccommunicator.com>

The views expressed in this magazine are opinions of the writers

Editorial

Do we need to have Women's Ministries? The articles in this edition provide a resounding response to the question. God has always engaged women, just as men, for the redemption of the human family since the fall. Evidence of this can be found throughout both the Old and New Testaments. "And it shall come to pass afterwards That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28-29, NKJV).

It is God who calls each one of us, sinners by nature, to engage in what he has purposed for human salvation. Ellen White, a woman called by God said, "Young men and young women who should be engaged in the ministry, in Bible work and in the canvassing work, should not be bound down to mechanical employment." - *The Review and Herald*, May 16, 1912. CM28.1

Unfortunately, there have been many who have interfered with the sort of ministry women should pursue. Such persons have brought pain and discouragement to many women.

When the Apostle Peter proclaimed that God is no respecter of persons, it was to tackle the human inclination to discriminate. He himself had been guilty of this. God does not sanction any of the many forms of discrimination we see in our world which cause many to feel demeaned. Indeed, there is no place for chauvinism among God's people, because it is not a Christian attitude. Culture and even religious systems

have contributed to inequalities in our world. All of us have a God-given mandate to challenge all forms of discrimination.

Significant work has been done by our Women's Ministries Department in leading the fight against all forms of abuse against women. Enditnow is an initiative by our GC Women's Ministries to tackle the evils of abuse and domestic violence. It is now a yearly event for all our churches around the world. Women's Ministries Day is now celebrated yearly in our churches to highlight the work of women.

Women are best suited to address the unique challenges they face. It is the reason why God makes a gender-inclusive call in Joel 2:28. Ellen White says that, during the years of Christ's ministry on earth, godly women assisted in the work that the Saviour and His disciples were carrying forward. If those who were opposing this work could have found anything out of the regular order in the conduct of these women, it would have closed the work at once. But while women were labouring with Christ and the apostles, the entire work was conducted on so high a plane as to be above the shadow of a suspicion. No occasion for any accusation could be found. The minds of all were directed to the Scriptures, rather than to individuals. The truth was proclaimed intelligently, and so plainly that all could understand. - *Evangelism*, 67, 68

As we celebrate 25 years of Women's Ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, let us remember that we all have a responsibility to support each other's ministry until the coming of the Lord.

OUR COVER

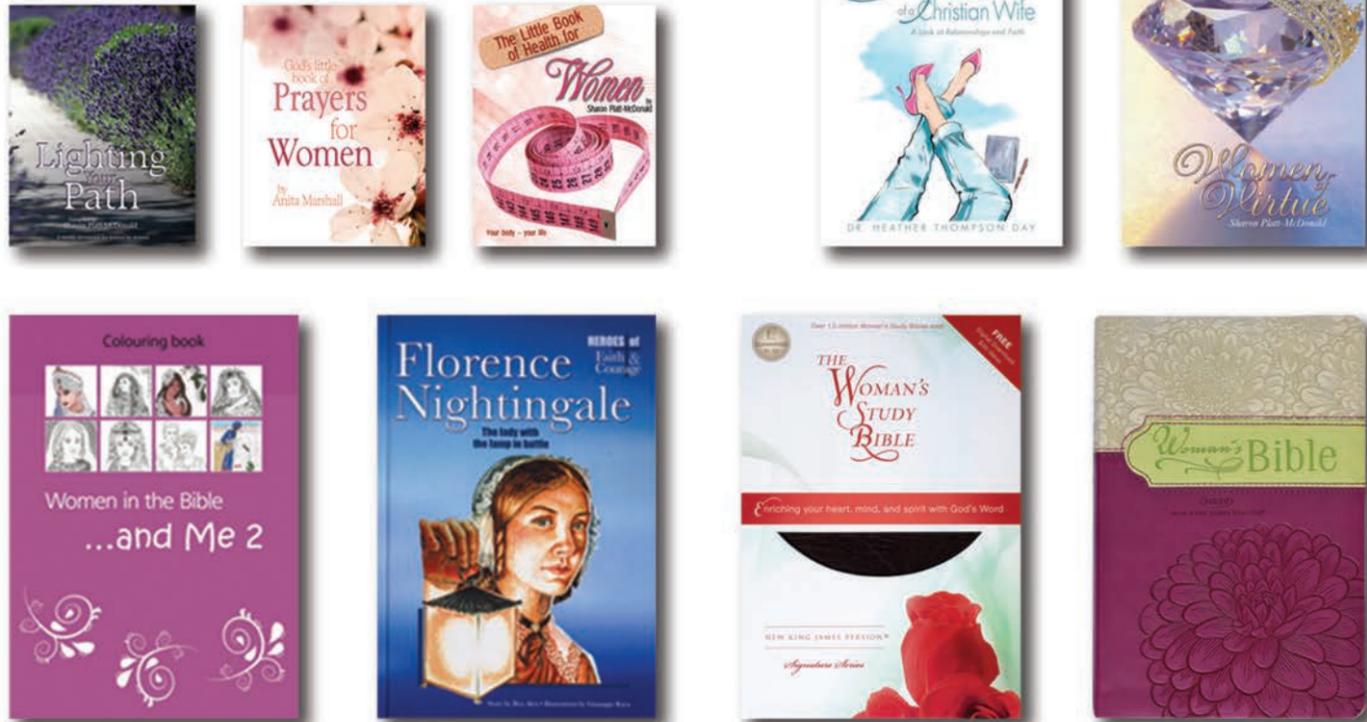


SAM O. DAVIES
Editor

NEXT ISSUE: January 2021. Subscribe to receive your copy!

We pride ourselves on the wide selection of women's titles we have to support our women's ministries.

Female encouragement



All of these titles are available now for you to encourage yourselves and support others

01476 591700
sales@stanboroughpress.org.uk

You can also order online at:
www.LifeSourceBookshop.co.uk

the President's Desk

DR EMMANUEL OSEI



September marks the sixth month that our churches have been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the tragic loss of lives and the inconvenience caused, the mission of the Church still goes on. The Church has continued to stay together by regular weekly video updates, where members have been informed about different activities taking place around the Conference.

Our theme for the quadrennium, *Making Disciples: Building Communities*, has been etched in the minds of our members as they have participated in various acts of community ministries. Each of our 8 Areas within the South England Conference had the opportunity of being featured weekly and showcasing how they have implemented our theme in their territory. We were excited to learn from each Area that although the doors of our churches were closed, ministry still took place

throughout the week in their respective communities.

Our annual Camp Meeting, which is the largest convocation of our Conference, could not take place, but we tried something new. We had our first virtual Camp Meeting which proved to be a major success. It was refreshing meeting online every morning for our Prayer and Praise sessions. We had our local Pastors and Leaders bringing us spirit-filled devotional messages and encouraging testimonies. This was followed by heartfelt prayers which prepared us for the challenges of the day. We met again in the evening for our Health lecture after which members were able to interact with our Health Ministries Director and ask questions. We then were blessed with great sermons from our many and varied guest speakers from different parts of the world. Thousands logged on, not only from our Conference but from all over the world.

We were blessed to feature the 25th anniversary of Women's Ministries. This department has made great inroads and impacted many women, both members and non-members alike. Every week the department has met and discussed various subjects pertaining to the emotional, social and spiritual needs of women. The attendance to these zoom meetings has been very encouraging.

During the lockdown, there has been an increase in domestic violence. The fact that victims were isolated and could not visit family and friends for help meant victims were trapped at home with their abusers. The perpetrators of domestic violence continued their abuse. The Women's Ministries Department was instrumental in affirming the dignity and worth of every human being. The Department decries all forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and has brought an awareness of these forms of abuse in our Church. The Department is committed to help bring an end to these forms of abuse against women, men, girls and boys in every family and community.

I take this opportunity to commend the Women's Ministries Department on this their 25th anniversary for the excellent work they continue to do within the South England Conference territory.



The various departments also continued their ministries, including our Counselling Services, Children's Ministries, Pathfinder & Adventurer Ministries, Youth Ministries, Men's Ministries and Women's Ministries.



Trailblazer

I was in unknown territory when I entered ministry in the South England Conference. There were no clear signposts to point the way ahead, no expectations were laid out and no wise female mentor was assigned. In fact, I had yet to meet a female pastor. Not in my wildest dreams did I imagine that I would become the first female pastor in England and be called a 'trailblazer' by my president - the President of the SEC. The idea of pursuing a theological degree and working in pastoral ministry never crossed my mind. Perhaps it was because I subconsciously knew women were not employed in this role. Sadly, growing up in my early teens, I never asked why. Well, a couple miracles later, and after a golden fleece, I found myself studying for a Bachelor of Theology at Newbold College, with supportive lecturers and peers. I must admit, during my time at Newbold I began to like the idea of pursuing the impossible.

To be honest, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I was in my early twenties and fuelled with optimism and energy. I started in the New Gallery Church in Central London. The beginning of my ministry were such happy days; in fact, I could not believe I got paid for doing what I loved. I am so grateful I was sheltered from church politics. I had a nurturing and supportive faith community. My senior pastor believed in me and provided an environment where I could explore, innovate and discover my uniqueness in ministry.

The next few years were filled with hostility, loneliness and struggle as I was assigned different church placements. To be candid, I was ill-prepared for the opposition I faced from my churches. My conference and churches did not know how to embrace a female in ministry. Who could blame them? They were in unknown territory too. I performed my duties without a title. Infra-structure and policies were yet to be

developed for women, and I had no role models to learn from or look up to. The Conference, I felt, was silent.

At that time, I did understand that the achievement of being the first female would come with challenge and responsibility. I also understood that my presence in many church settings challenged gender bias from cultural, theological and political perspectives. Sadly, with all my understanding and knowledge, it did not lessen the blows of hurt and rejection when: male elders plotted in the wings; a church board asked me to leave the room while they decided if they wanted me in their church; my name was absent from the preaching roster; senior pastors suggested I follow other career choices; or families walked out the door when I got up to preach. These were painful realities of my lived experience.

Giving up and running away from challenges is not in my nature. Dear Aunty Peggy from the New Gallery used to say, 'Drene, you are a hard nut to crack.' What kept me going in those difficult days was God's call to ministry. My 'call' was dramatic and powerful. I'm talking thunder and lightning, mighty howling winds that encircled me, and an up-close and personal small cloud - a cloud I could almost touch at the edge of a seaside cliff in Rye. Up until then, my picture of God had always been of a kind, gentle parent who is loving and compassionate. But in that late afternoon, I met a powerful God who promised to accompany me on my ministry journey. He would make me what I needed to become, and He asked me to trust Him.

God had His work cut out in transforming me into the kind of woman He wanted me to become. I remember one morning, picking up my briefcase and heading towards the door. As an afterthought I said, 'God, is there anyone you wish me to visit today?' Instantly, I heard His reply - 'Yes, please visit Mary.' Mary was

an elderly woman who took care of two beautiful grandchildren. 'No, God,' I said. 'Mary lives on the other side of London. I have not planned to go there; and besides, I have my day already mapped out.' I must have argued my case for at least 20 minutes. Finally, I gave in, as I felt compelled to visit Mary. Well, I was not very happy; and I was even more unhappy stuck in heavy London traffic, trying to get to her home. I remember opening her gate and walking up the path towards the door. Before I could ring the doorbell, Mary opened the door and greeted me with a big smile. 'Good morning, Pastor. I knew you would come this morning.'

'Oh, how so?' I asked, trying to smile.

'I have been praying since 5 o'clock this morning for you to come.' That morning I had learned a valuable yet humbling lesson of what it means to practice ministry on God's agenda.

Another eureka moment was the realization of defeating the whole purpose of being a woman in ministry. My professional colleagues were male pastors. I was educated by male lecturers, mentored by male senior pastors and my conference was an all-male administration. To my dismay, I realized I was even dressing like them with my pinstripe suits, briefcase and keys in one hand and, in those days, a Filofax in the other. I had no idea how to be a female in ministry. I had to find my way in an all-male world.

I enrolled at King's College in London to study a course, 'Feminism in Philosophy and Theology', with a leading theologian. I can best describe the experience as a 'watershed moment'. For the first time I was introduced to 'women's ways of knowing' - feminist theories, identity construction and methodologies. I discovered new philosophical, political and theological writers, theories and epistemologies. A new and exciting world challenged my personhood, faith and profession. King's College gave me the tools and confidence to construct and shape a new methodology that redefined my

professional context and began to reflect my engendered approach to theology, pastoral care, and biblical interpretation.

As time passed, I felt better support from the Conference, as they developed policies that enabled me to function better; and churches seemed more open to having a female serve in their faith community. I have ministered in a number of church settings, both urban and provincial, and also in multi-cultural congregations. I concentrated my ministry in such areas as youth, community, artistic evangelism and gender issues. One morning in 1997, the former president, Don McFarlane, called me on the phone. He told me it was time to move churches, but this time into my own district of churches. He told me that his administration team had waited for this day to come, and he thanked me for being a 'trailblazer'.

I spent 14 years in ministry in the SEC (1988 - 2002). I am so grateful to the churches I served: The New Gallery, Hampstead, West Kilburn, Chiswick, Wimbledon, Crawley, Peterborough and Cambridge. I remember the many loving church members, administrators, pastoral peers and friends who always encouraged and supported me along my journey. Thank you for allowing me to grow, tolerating my mistakes and allowing me to live out my calling. Those years spent in pastoral ministry were preparatory years for what lay ahead. I spent five years in my district of churches, then received a call to teach at Avondale University College in the Faculty of Theology. Avondale had female students in the course who soon would graduate and have their own church placements; yet they had never seen a female pastor. My remit was to lecture from a female perspective, mentor, promote women in ministry throughout Australia and continue my doctoral programme with Middlesex University in London. I was compelled to accept Avondale's call because I understood first-hand the journey that lay ahead for those ladies.

This year the SEC is celebrating the journey of Women in Ministry. I am so proud to have belonged to a conference that had vision and insight and that honoured women's 'call' to ministry. Today, there are hundreds of women following God's call and serving as pastors around the world within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We have come a long way, but the journey is not over. To my SEC sisters in ministry I say, remember your calling; God sees your faithful work. Find a female mentor, explore what 'womanist and feminist' theology has to offer your soul and, if you are weary and tired, pass on the baton. To the young ladies who are thinking about becoming pastors, I would say, first, pursue a degree, perhaps in chaplaincy, counselling, leadership or teaching. If you still feel called to ministry, then begin your theological education (credit first degree towards theological training) and see where God leads. To my Church I say, don't question a woman's call to ministry. It is hard serving, essentially, a rejecting Church that is still yet to ordain women. The harvest is waiting; time is short. God calls both men and women to pastoral ministry to extend His Kingdom. So, the next time you see a female pastor, cheer them on; support them. Their desire is to serve your faith community and follow God's call. Expect them to pastor a little differently from what you have been used to - you may even grow to appreciate them.



DR DRENE SOMASUNDRAM

Chaplain and Lecturer BA, MA, DProf Faculty of Arts, Nursing and Theology. In her Doctoral dissertation she developed a Gender Inclusive Model in Theological Education. Drene received the 2008 Ken Goulding Prize for Academic Excellence in her Thesis from Middlesex University in England. Drene is in her 32nd year of Ministry.

WOMEN & FAMILIES

Naomi cradled her newborn grandson, hugging him close to her heart. Even as she laughed with the sheer joy of delight, she cried for the loss of her own husband and sons. Once upon a time she dreamed of sharing this moment with them – her sons becoming fathers – Elimelech becoming a grandfather. Although tiny Obed would carry her family's inheritance into the future, he was not her flesh and blood. His mother was a Moabitess and his father was the son of Rahab of Jericho – the mixed heritage of migrants welcomed, included and respected in the Israelite community of Bethlehem.

Naomi remembered her wedding to Elimelech. She had imagined a settled life, surrounded by friends and family. When their sons were born, they were weak and fragile. She called them Mahlon (sickness) and Chilion (wasting). Naomi cared for them patiently, lovingly, kindly and unselfishly, driven by the deep desire to keep them alive long enough to father children of their own.

And then the drought came, and the fertile soil crumbled into dust. The meagre food supplies were not enough to nourish their vulnerable children. They made the difficult decision to move to Moab until the harvests prospered again. Naomi made friends around the well in the Moabite marketplace. She was kind, and she was looking for gentle and caring wives for her delicate sons, hoping they would bear healthy children to carry the family's inheritance. She found Ruth and Orpah, cheerful, kind and loving girls. But Elimelech died, and then Mahlon and Chilion. Tragedy upon tragedy. And still no grandsons. Broken-hearted, Naomi kissed her daughters-in-law goodbye and set off back to Bethlehem. But Naomi's kindness had

won Ruth's heart. She couldn't leave her. She committed herself to caring for this amazing woman who had shown her the kindness of God's love.

There is something in the story of Ruth and Naomi that most women can identify with. There are themes of singleness, marriage, motherhood, widowhood, caring for sick relatives, grieving, concerns about infertility, migration, vulnerability, grandmothing, friendship, being dependent on the goodwill and protection of others, mentoring the younger generation...the list of connections is long. But, more important than these connections, are the different ways in which Ruth, Naomi, and every woman today, cares for their families that are theirs.

In Romans 12 Paul shares his guide to healthy relationships, love lessons that Naomi and Ruth knew in their hearts, and that are just as relevant to every woman and family today. We are all connected (Rom. 12:1-5) and included as members of God's family. It didn't matter that Naomi was an Israelite, Ruth was a Moabite, and Boaz's mother was Rahab from Jericho. When Naomi's life was painful, Ruth hurt with her, and when Ruth was filled with joy, Naomi rejoiced too. As Christian women we are called to build strong, healthy and caring connections with all those God brings into our circle of concern – whoever they are.

God has given us all different spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:6-8). We bless each other in our uniquely gifted ways: by serving joyfully, encouraging people who are struggling, teaching children about God, giving generously, being kind, etc.

Then Paul describes how to strengthen all of our relationships,

just like Ruth and Naomi (Rom 12:9-18). They loved each other deeply and devotedly. They held on tight to what was good in others. They honoured and respected each other, even though they were different ages and nationalities. They comforted each other in the sad times and celebrated the good times together. They lived together humbly, harmoniously and hospitably. Ruth lives in Naomi's old home when they arrive in Bethlehem, and Naomi comes to help Ruth with her newborn son. Whatever they have, they share it with each other.

God calls women to bless others in their circle of family, friendship, church fellowship and community – welcoming whoever comes into their life with joy and kindness. We are to saturate ourselves daily in God's incredible love for us, like a huge sponge, and then squeeze God's love in generous drops to refresh all those who are tired, thirsty, lonely and struggling, just like Ruth and Naomi. One day these two women will discover their place in the family of Jesus. And we discover our place in His family too, whenever we strengthen our relationships with the power of His love.



KAREN HOLFORD

Karen Holford is the Family Ministries Director of the Trans-European Division. She has been married to Pastor Bernie Holford for nearly 37 years, and they have three adult children, and three young grandchildren.

AIN'T I WOMAN

Reflections on Single, Black, Seventh-day Adventist Women

Disabilities, Men, Women's and (with various attempts in progress) Indigenous Ministries, testify to our church's growing embrace of the diversities that underpin what we mean by Seventh-day Adventist. I have also seen the fledgling work of Singles' Ministries stumble and 'grow' whilst cushioned under the supportive arms of Family Life and Women's Ministries respectively. Over the last twenty-five years, Singles Ministries has been labelled a woman's issue, and my work on single SDA women is 'guilty' of giving credence to this assumption. Additionally, by focusing on how Black SDA women 'do' singleness, I have introduced ethnicity as another important layer in attempting to understand this already complex identity.

Sojourner Truth knew much about how her public image complicated definitions of what it meant to be seen as a 19th century American woman. It was in 1851 at a Women's Convention in Ohio that Sojourner took to the stage to agitate for the right to vote. She was able to speak, in spite of the fact that some of the convention's organisers did not want her to. She was African, Black and an ex-slave, and it was felt that her contribution would undermine the credibility of women's agitations for the right to vote. It is recorded that when she spoke, she punctuated her impassioned delivery on equal rights for women with the cry "Ain't I woman?" Her rhetorical question, "Ain't I woman?", told her listeners that Black women also had the right to be seen, heard and have their needs met. She acknowledged her physical and emotional strength but that did not mean she was not a woman. She also told them of her mistreatment, her isolation and tears and that 'none but Jesus' held her up and recognised her needs as a woman.

My research (google It is not good to be alone) on Black SDA women and subsequent work with single women, has taken Sojourner Truth's challenge forward. It does so by putting the voices of some of the Black single sisters (who make an invaluable contribution to our communities) 'out there'. These 'Sheroes' invited me into their complex world and shared with me how they navigated the many marginalising challenges of being single. They told me of the challenge of wanting to love, recovering from divorce and regrets over not having children. They also told me of the challenge of living celibate lives, their desire to live for God and the challenges of single parenting. Some spoke of a suspicious church environment, policing their intentions with married brothers. These are, of course, the experiences and challenges of many single religious women across the globe, but, in the quietness of the interview space, the distinctiveness of my Black sister's singleness took shape. In hushed tones and often with tears, we pulled back the curtains and together we saw the universal racialised, gendered narratives of the strong Black woman, colourism, White and Black SDA male privilege, non-Black SDA women's privileges, as well

as the micro-aggressive racisms in places of work. Their collective accounts strongly suggest that slave narratives live on, doing its harmful work with demonic consistency. They reminded me (for I was once long-term single) how God comes through for Black single women. Together we testified of the goodness of God and this is when praise and laughter soothed the rawness of it all.

As the world erupts with cries for social justice, many of us have witnessed the SDA church resurrecting difficult conversations about our past and current collusion with discrimination. I have also witnessed moving and honest conversations that show a willingness to develop an authentic engagement with reality. Covid inspired the SEC women's online programme for instance, testifying to a new normal where our church has intensified its intention to shed light on novel, difficult and important issues such as sexual violence in the Church and wider communities.

The disturbing statistic that at least 65% of Black British women are unmarried (Val Bernard Allan 2016), suggests that Black British women and Black families are in trouble. The post-enslaved oppressive narratives that still inform the lived experiences of Black communities are part of this trouble. As we develop our ministries to meet wider diverse and diversifying needs, we can be confident that we are in step with the ministry requirements of Isaiah 61. By doing so we can develop an understanding of some of the trouble that drives Black women's singleness and illuminate the truth that Black single women's lives matter too!



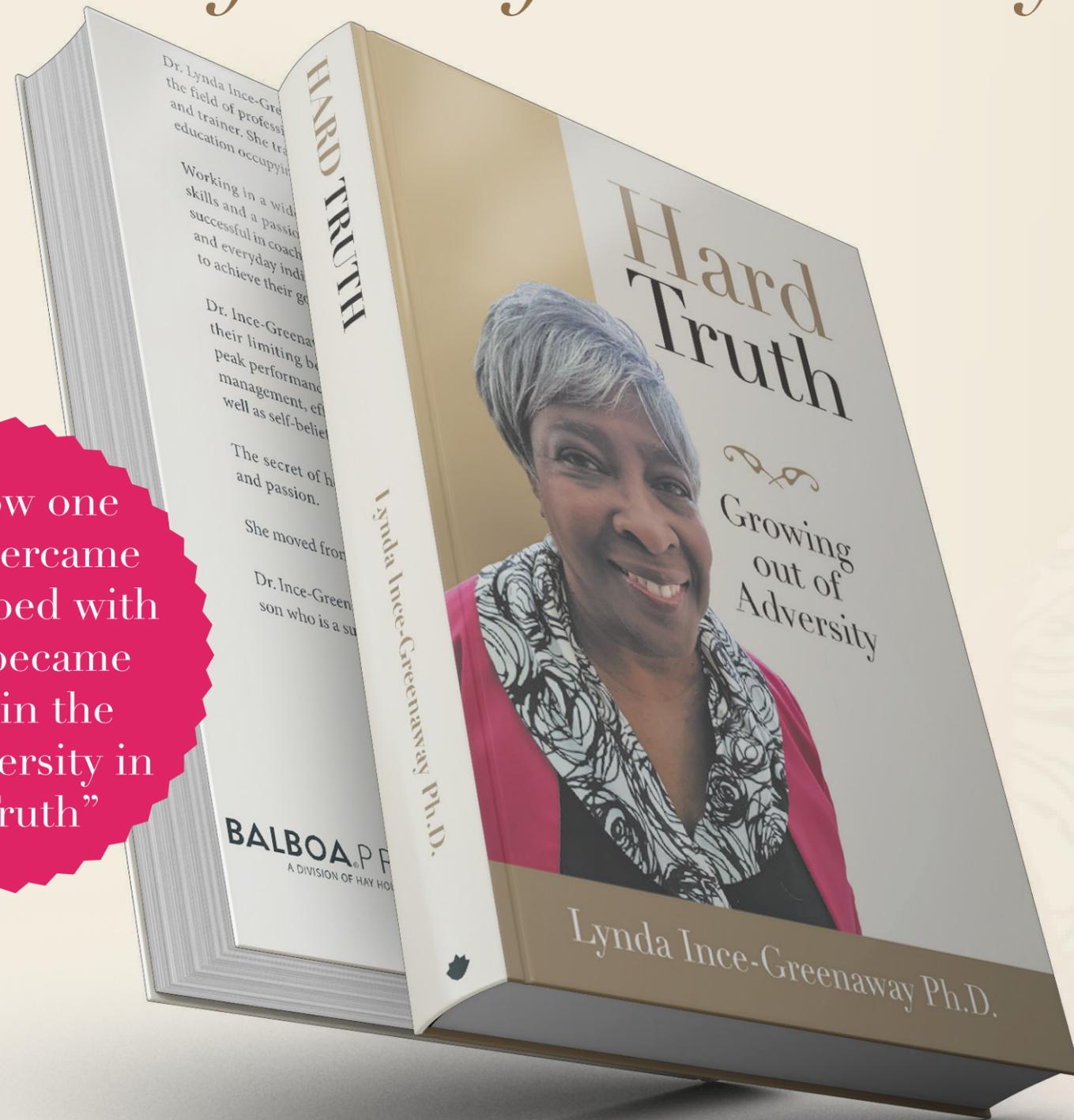
DR VAL BERNARD ALLAN

Val Bernard is a sociologist who divides her time lecturing in sociology at Activate Learning/Bracknell and Dauphine University/London. She is author of the self-help book 'The Seven habits for Black women who want to marry'

RESILIENCE

in the face of Adversity

Learn how one woman overcame trauma, coped with loss and became resilient in the face of adversity in “Hard Truth”



Lynda Ince-Greenaway Ph.D. tells her life story in her new memoir.

Overcoming adversity is the backdrop to survival in this new memoir titled “Hard Truth: Growing out of Adversity.” Dr. Lynda Ince-Greenaway takes the reader on a journey as she shares her life story. The memoir reveals times of happiness and innocence, of sadness, loss, grief, emotional pain, triumph and success.

My memoir revolves around several losses I experienced, beginning with the death of my father during childhood, subsequent migration to England and how I fought back after the death of my husband. I explain how opening my own “Pandora’s box” provided an opportunity to reflect on personal experiences and the roller coaster journey that turned my life up-side-down and then around. I show how my faith and dependence on God along with the support of my family helped me to develop positive strategies to cope with loss and grief. It was a series of steps that enabled me to move from despair to resilience.

Hard Truth is written from my heart and is born out of my experiences. I want readers to share in my moments of sadness and joy as well as the road I travelled to get to a place where I am able to share my story. I want readers to understand that it is possible to grow out of adversity, thrive and survive.

I know that the messages I give will resonate with many people because it will touch many lives. Hard Truth is a gift that you can share with others, particularly in this age when many are losing relatives and friends as a result of Covid-19.

As you read my memoir, stop periodically and reflect on your own life experiences.

There are two messages I would like readers to take away. The first is that even if you have been in a dark place, know that the light will eventually come streaming through. Healing will come. The principles that lead to recovery after loss are the determination to fight back, the will to survive, and the capacity to develop a positive mindset and a winning spirit while looking for light at the end of the tunnel. The second is that you should never draw a line in the sand and say this is what I am capable of, but always move towards self-improvement, strive to overcome and work towards success. It is possible to enlarge your territory.

Lyndalifecoaching@gmail.com

www.connectedlifecoaching.co.uk

Love, Joy, Peace and may the God of grace be with you.

Dr Lynda Ince-Greenaway



YOU ARE NOT ALONE

CCS is here for you

CONTACT

0330 133 2495

Dedicated listening line

0207 723 8050

Office Number / Appointments

connect@ccscounselling.org.uk

www.ccscounselling.org.uk

**"I am not living,
I am just surviving."
Together we can make
it happen.**

Often, it is not the initial experience that creates the overwhelming pain, but the lack of support.

Do not suffer alone
Do not suffer in silence
CCS is here to support you
Together we can win your struggle.



THERE'S A WOMAN AT THE PODIUM

"I don't listen to women preachers, but I'm glad I stayed to hear you speak. You preached a wonderful sermon. It's a pity you're a woman!" That was the comment I received one Sabbath morning from a gentleman, as the worshipers exited the church at the close of the service. Yes, it was several years ago, but as I am not that old, I deemed it to be an archaic comment, even if it was well meaning.

Yet, as the years have passed and I recall that comment, what I once thought an old-fashioned view, appeared to be one still held by some men and some women. No, this is not an article about women's ordination or even about female preachers. The point I am making is that certain attitudes create negative environments and isolate the very people who come to our churches to seek acceptance, nurture and love.

So, is there a place where women can speak up, feel safe, or occupy platforms where they can speak to issues that are important to women? Yes, mostly at Women's Retreats or conferences where women do not feel judged and no-one minds who is at the podium.

The impact of our in-reach and out-reach to women can be life-altering. Let me share a few examples with you. The following are correspondences I received for women who attended some of our BUC Women's Ministries Retreats over the years. They are used here by permission:

"If you had invited me to a regular church service, I would never have attended. I had a very bad experience with church, which I am still getting over, so would have been put off by a church invitation. However, when I received the invitation to go to a Women's Ministries Retreat, even though it was run by the church, I accepted because of the programme format.

The first thing I noticed, was that it was not a 'regular' predictable church pro-

gramme, but gave space for people to reflect, to feel valued and to be listened to. You don't generally get this with the usual Sabbath services.

The subject themes for the workshops also caught my eye, as they were not ones you would hear being discussed in a church service. I am so glad I attended the Retreat and am looking forward to the next one." **Rose**

"Dear Sharon

Having returned from your weekend event, my friend R. has asked to be invited to the next Retreat! She really loved it and felt it was a gentle way to learn about God. She usually throws out the religious literature that comes through her door, however, the attractive Retreat poster I sent to her in the post, caught her interest, and she signed up to attend for the weekend.

She was so taken by the presentations that did not 'preach' at people but helped them to be reflective. She mentioned being surprised that the speaker made time to talk with her afterwards and answer her questions. She was also delighted that the 'prayer ladies', as she called them, took time afterwards to pray with her personally in the beautiful prayer room. It was a touching experience for her.

Well done on getting the balance right. Don't forget to let me know when the next Retreat is scheduled. Much love". **L. S.**

"Dear Sharon,

Thank you so much. The Retreat was just what I needed! Thank you for the carefully crafted sessions and the wonderful resources that were so relevant to us. The environment was really lovely and so relaxing. This was 'church', packaged in a relevant, sensitive, nurturing and impactful way. I wish we had more of these events as I know that so many hurting women out there would benefit. Don't get

me wrong, the church is there as well, but I don't think they meet the wholistic needs of women. At least here, our voices are heard, and we are listened to in a timely manner.

Please keep having these events where women can come away and connect together outside of the usual church setting. At least with these events, we can begin to unpack some of the issues we can't address in church in a public setting. Please invite me to the next one!" – **Barbara**

Over the years, several letters like these are received at our BUC office from individuals whose lives have been positively impacted by our Women's Ministries department.

While our church continues to debate the parameters of women in ministry, there are individuals waiting to receive ministry from us, regardless of gender.

"When a great and decisive work is to be done, God chooses men and women to do this work, and it will see the loss if the talents of both are not combined." – Evangelism 469

So, the next time a woman occupies the pulpit, a conference platform or Retreat podium, say a prayer, and ask God to bless her ministry.



SHARON PLATT-MCDONALD

BUC Director for Health, Women's Ministries and Adventist Community Services

All the Way MY SAVIOUR LEADS ME

My journey began 25 years ago, after I found myself in a situation where I thought all hope was lost. Today, as I reflect on that time, I am grateful that I didn't give up. What I now realise is this path, which God allowed me to travel, was my training ground of testing and preparation for greater things He had for me. Today, I am a mother to three boisterous boys and a wife to my wonderful husband.

As women, we often face many challenges that discourage us on the individual journeys God has placed us on, making us want to give up or choose the easy way out. However, it is on the tough road where we will be prepared for the greater things God has in store for us to do. Oh, how I would have missed out, had I chosen to follow the direction the enemy wanted me to take!

There are women today who are experiencing trials and who find themselves at a place where giving up seems easy. To them I say, be encouraged; giving up is not an option! Your journey is your testing ground for greater things to come. Do not lose hope! Had Joseph lost hope when sold into slavery by his own brothers, he never would have become the King in Egypt. In his distress he remained faithful to God, exercising his faith in Him. Joseph's journey of 11 years in Potiphar's house and 2 years in prison was not easy. But he survived it. How did he survive this ordeal? He prayed daily and remained faithful to God. By displaying these characteristic traits, he was able to endure his ordeal, and in the end, God rewarded him greatly.

Today, we are celebrating the 25-year journey of Women's Ministry worldwide. Looking back, we have come a long way with the sole purpose of sharing the good news of salvation, and to

encourage and empower women in their Christian Journey in this ever-changing world. We have come this far – the past 25 years – by faith; however, work still needs to be done. One of the challenges we face is disunity. As women, we need to unite by embracing and accepting each other more, culturally, academically and spiritually in our churches and in our communities. The enemy uses disunity as a tool to separate and divide, preventing us from fulfilling the masterplan of us working together in sharing this good news of salvation.

One underlying driving force of my work as SEC Women's Ministry Director is inclusivity – to be inclusive in all that I do and to enhance our working ethos of reaching women within our communities. This will help us to embrace diversity and to experience our differences, not as negative, but as positives, giving us the opportunity to learn alongside each other.

During this pandemic lockdown, I became aware of its lasting psychological effect on many women and prayed to God for direction in how SEC Women's Ministry could be of help, knowing many women were locked down alone, and some were even experiencing domestic violence and abuse. God answered my prayers and give the vision for our Zoom meetings that are presented now on Sundays, Wednesdays and Sabbaths. The rest is history. In this short space of time, we have reached thousands of women. To date, many women have written in, sharing how they have benefited from these programmes.



JACQUELINE OTOKPA

SEC Women's Ministries Director

One wrote, "If these meetings had not existed, I would not have done well surviving the COVID-19 lockdown."

In mentioning these Zoom meetings, I must extend my gratitude to the team behind the scenes that have been, and still are, working tirelessly to ensure that this Christ-centred ministry is presented in a professional manner. Our aim is to be a movement not seeking to overtake and conquer, but that reflects the love of God by helping others on their spiritual journey to reaching their full potential ministering in the love of God.

25 years on, we as a church have embraced Women's Ministries, however, there is still room for improvement and, by God's grace, we will achieve that which is needed. Personally, I can truly sing from the heart,

*'All the way my Saviour leads me,
What have I to ask beside? Can I
doubt His tender mercy Who through
life has been my guide? Heavenly
peace, divinest comfort, Here by faith
in Him to dwell! For I know, whate'er
befall me, Jesus doeth all things well.'*

We are all on a Journey. At times, it may seem as if the road

is getting difficult with no end in sight. I encourage you to keep trusting God, and in the end, we will be able to join with Joseph in saying, 'As far as you're concerned, you were planning evil against me, but God intended it for good, planning to bring about the present result so that many people would be preserved alive.'

Like Joseph, I am thanking God that I had not accepted my ordeal and given up, but trusted in God, as He leads all the way.



WOMEN'S MINISTRIES AND PERSONAL CHANGE

Each woman that encountered Jesus experienced personal change. The Samaritan woman "...left her waterpot..." (John 4:28, NKJV) and told the whole city about what Jesus had done for her. Her self-concept had changed. She was now an evangelist. Her behaviour started to change and with it, her attitude.

Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42, NKJV) also experience change. Martha believes that she belongs in the kitchen and not at the feet of Jesus. She is being held down by the negative patriarchal concept of 'a woman's place in society'. Mary has found the love of God, and Christ means everything in her life, so much so that her self-concept changes and she takes up her place at the feet of Jesus, with all who desire to be taught and blessed by Him. I believe that one of the pillars that underpin Women's Ministries is to help women move from a negative self-concept to a positive self-concept through Jesus Christ.

Women's Ministries was officially voted in as a department in 1995 at the GC Session in Utrecht, Netherlands. In 1893, Ellen G. White initially asked that '...women could unite together to work for the Lord' (Evangelism, p. 462). In 1995, the call was for "Adventist women globally to work with our brothers in every field of service where we are needed".

This is about being in one accord in the faith and being diverse in our missional outreach. God created difference but we are one in the faith with different spiritual gifts and different approaches to the work. The world unites with us to end violence against women and other destructive practices that deny women their humanity, but it builds fences between women and men. Women's Ministries builds Christian fellowship while addressing violence against women.

It so happens that I drove from the UK to that GC Session in Holland that year (1995). It was my first time driving in Holland – an experience of itself. I still felt new in the church, even though I had been a baptised member since 1986. My knowledge of church organization was wanting, and so I went with my older sister to experience the much-spoken-of GC session. I can't recall at that time being aware of this significant vote for Women's Ministries. This might have been down to my lack of understanding or to the church not providing information that would keep us informed. However, to be able to commemorate 25 years of Women's Ministries, giving documented and effective service (after 97 years of different women and men striving to make it a reality prior to the vote in 1995,) in these challenging times, is much worthy of celebration, thanksgiving and praise to our Lord and our God!

When I asked the women what Women's Ministries meant to them, they said that 'Women's Ministries is a channel for women to express their spiritual voice from a female perspective', and 'giving visibility to women's challenges and issues'. Women's Ministries is a 'ministry for all women and to all women regardless of race, status in society, background, culture, and abilities'.



BEULAH A. PLUNKETT

Women's Ministries & Sabbath School Director,
North England Conference

25 Years Reflection... as a Magistrate

Foreword

Justice is love in action, and love is the essential fibre of the community of being¹ (1 John 4:8) and the cohesive glue required to build our society.

My Passion

I have a passion for justice and a great love of people, and this is the driving force and core influential factor in my desire to serve others. As a Christian I am commissioned to love God with all my heart, my mind and my soul and to love others as Jesus loves me. (Luke 10:27) The role of a magistrate has enabled me to fulfil and honour this command.

How I Became a Magistrate

In 1988, I and several local community members, with the support of the Racial Equality Council, set up the Barking and Dagenham African Caribbean Association, which I chaired for the duration of its existence. Our purpose was to provide a positive voice for the local African and Caribbean residents. We built relationships through networking with existing local community organisations, sharing our ideas and solutions, supporting each other to successfully achieve our common goals. During this period, I was approached by then Clerk to the Justices, on behalf of the Lord Chief Justice, about becoming a magistrate.

From Then to Now

To date, I have served my local community by volunteering in my local Magistrates' Court for 5 months short of 25 years, when I was sworn in at Snaresbrook Crown Court. I recall this day vividly as I was eight months pregnant with my son, much to the apprehension of the Clerk to the Justices who remarked, "I see you are with child", to which I responded, "and with husband." We both smiled.

My Role

I now sit as Presiding Justice and Chair in both the Adult and Youth courts, as well as appeal cases at the Crown Court, along with mentoring new magistrates – previously for several years – including the youngest appointee at the time.

¹ <https://spectrummagazine.org/article/2018/03/15/love-enough-%25E2%2580%2594-sermon-dr-olive-j-hemmings>

Intriguingly, I found law intellectually stimulating and successfully completed an LLB (Honours) Law Degree although this was not a requirement.

What I Do

97% of criminal cases are heard in the magistrates' court, with the more serious being referred to crown court either for sentencing or for a trial with a judge and jury. Bench duties not only involves me adjudicating on criminal cases to ensure that justice is administered fairly and impartially, but also focusing on children's welfare to prevent reoffending through proposing and securing suitable education and training provisions for rehabilitation.

The Link

Furthermore, as a Senior Resettlement Manager (SRM) for the Redbridge Night Shelter, I worked with people experiencing rooflessness, homelessness, front-line poverty, loneliness, isolation, addiction, fear, and/or mental illness. As a magistrate and SRM I have seen that there are many women with multiple and complex needs, yet low-level offending, who end up in the criminal justice system. These same women face disproportionately high levels of trauma and abuse. This, together with the added enormous shame attached to women who are convicted of an offence, particularly if they receive a prison sentence, can result in women being rejected by their families and community, making rehabilitation and successful resettlement on release a real challenge. Of course, there are programmes for these female offenders, (who are often victims of crisis) but, unfortunately, the lack of resources and early intervention are sometimes at the forefront of adequate support. Left unresolved, trauma can lead victims to lash out in anger in an attempt to defend themselves in this vicious cycle of survival.

My Ministry

I identified repeated successive behaviours of entrapment, not only by these women, but for all defendants that needed investigating as issues often linked back to serial Unresolved Negative Emotions and Experiences™ (UNEES™ - pronounced 'u-nees'). Although the truth of the matter is, I have never met anyone who does not

KAREN JORDAN-NICHOLLS JP

JP – Magistrate and College Lecturer and a transformational Speaker. Her passion to transform lives, began 36 years ago with Barnardo's children's charity and the Samaritans. She is married with two children and three grandchildren.

have a UNEE, the only difference being the varying degree of debilitation on their daily lives. This, together with the sad demise of a number of my friends, led me to form the charity Holistic Emotional Education (HEE™) in 2008.

Personally, and as a qualified counsellor, I have experienced how holistic emotional education, knowledge and understanding opens the door for individuals to make wholesome choices, as they are empowered and become educated about their conflict and events that reside, unchallenged, in their subconscious. They also come to recognize that UNEEs limit their ability to love God, themselves, and others.

College Lecturer

In addition, I was blessed with the opportunity to create and roll out a holistic study skills programme for students, focusing on their personal development. It was in response to the positive feedback from the Assistant Principal that I became a qualified lecturer through UCL – Institute of Education, which led me to lecture in business with law as my specialist subject.

The Future

Having shared the HEE programme across the SEC and NEC and in my local community through the grace of God, I am now in the process of writing a book in response to participants' requests. I have also combined all my teachings into a single programme called the Abundant Living Activator™ (ALA™) to be rolled out in 2021.

Lastly, prior to each sitting in court, I pray for all court users, that the rule of law will be upheld to deliver justice impartially, speedily, and efficiently. The fundamental foundation on which I stand is that we are all created in God's image (Genesis 1:27). This is the common ground we share that rescinds everything, but includes everyone as we are one race – the human race.



Impact of Women's Ministries on Ghanaian communities in the UK and in Ghana

GINA BOAMAH

Area 6C and GAC-UK's Women's Ministries Coordinator

In 1995, Sister Rose Otis was appointed Women's Ministries Director by the General Conference. During her term, she attended the first Women's Retreat in the UK to launch the ministry and mission nationwide.

It is from here that Sisters Heather Haworth (Women's Ministries Director for the British Union Conference, or BUC), Julia Smith (a voluntary sponsor to the South England Conference, or SEC) and Ruth Mensah (Women's Ministries Leader at the London Ghana Church) met regularly to plan future programmes, including the Women's Retreat within the SEC and the BUC. Together, they visited multiple churches and introduced the ministry with the aim of demonstrating ways in which the movement could be started within local churches. Eventually, Sister Julia was employed by the SEC as the Women's Ministry Director and Sisters Julia and Ruth had the opportunity to travel far and wide to preach and teach about the mission Christ has laid out for us. Thus, the Women's Council was formed, and council members were appointed to designated areas as the leaders of the Women's Ministries movement.

Sister Ruth Mensah, our Ghanaian Women's Ministries pioneer, coordinated Area 6C which comprised 14 churches. She was supported by Sisters Juliana Amakye and Lucy Darkwa, alongside a multidisciplinary group of volunteers which included teachers, doctors, pastors and more. For three weeks they travelled to Agona and Kumasi, located in the Ashanti region of Ghana, to

support the Women's Ministries movement there through the provision of health checks, counselling and the propagation of God's word in neighbouring churches and communities. Even more so, they were able to visit the Muslim community in Kumasi Zongo and to reach them by providing health checks and advice on healthy living.

Although the Seventh-day Adventist churches in Ghana have already established a women's organisation called the Dorcas Society, whose mission is to support families by donating essentials and providing post-natal support to new mothers, the visit by the UK team strengthened the Dorcas Society's mission, which in turn has led to what is now known as Women's Ministries in Ghana.

Meanwhile, in the UK, our Ghanaian sisters wanted to work together with our fellow conference sisters in attending retreats and leadership programmes, however, it was observed that some Ghanaian women found it difficult to participate and contribute to prayer and worship sessions in the English language. Unfortunately, the means for translation services are not always available at such retreats and programmes. To ensure that our members had the opportunity for spiritual growth, and to have their evangelistic needs met, the Ghanaian Adventist Churches in the UK (GAC-UK) saw it fit to appoint a Women's Ministries Coordinator to support the local Women's Ministries leaders in organising similar programmes and retreats, wherein these women would feel empowered to participate fully, using their own native tongue if they wished.

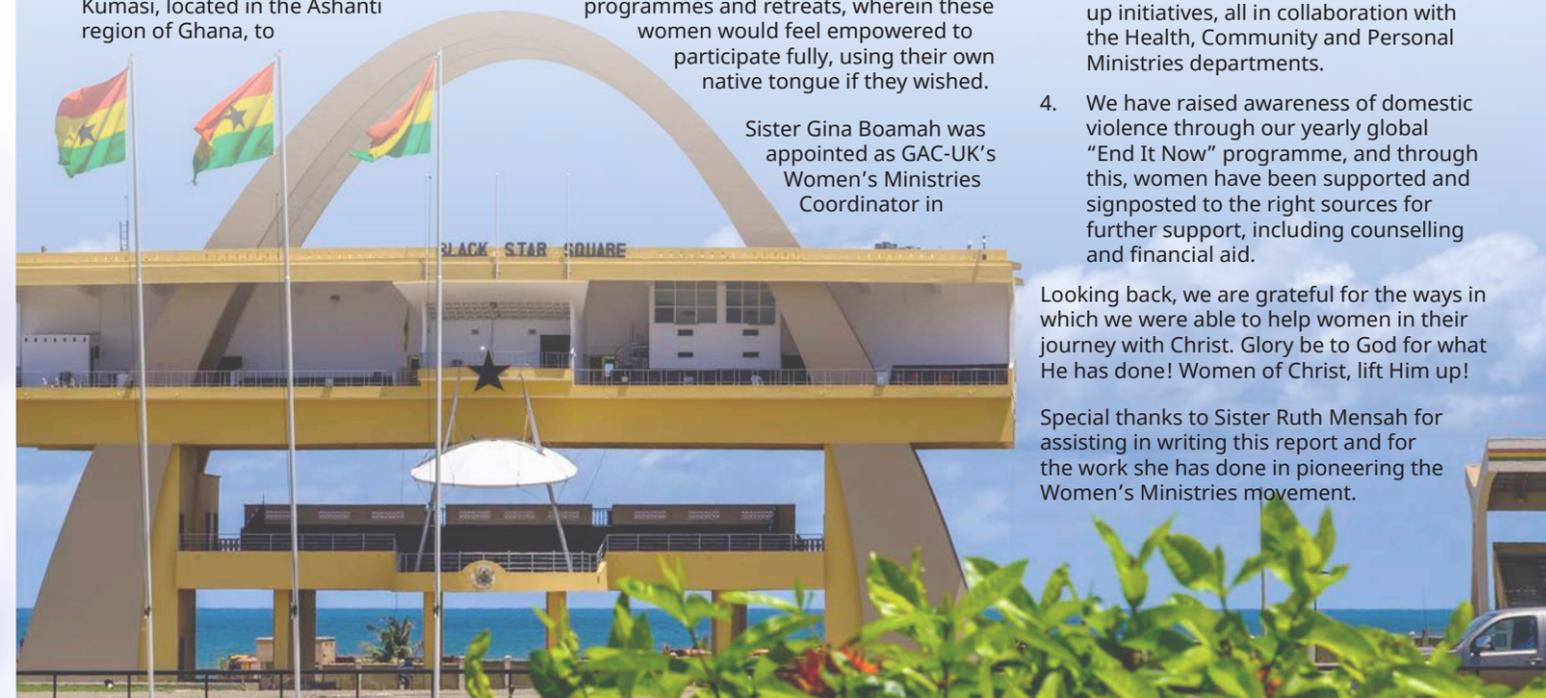
Sister Gina Boamah was appointed as GAC-UK's Women's Ministries Coordinator in

2012, assisted by Sister Comfort Kwarteng Ampofo. Together they have worked with the fifteen Women's Ministries leaders from the local churches to make programmes accessible to all women who may otherwise require translation services. Since 2012, GAC-UK has been able to accomplish the following:

1. In 2016, a Single's Banquet was organised which hosted over 100 singles from the ages of 18-40. This event resulted in 10 weddings within the Ghanaian churches from 2017-2018.
2. Our first GAC-UK Women's Ministries Retreat took place in November 2017 with 70 attendees. Our subsequent retreat took place in November 2019 with 170 women attending! The latter saw SEC Women's Ministries Director Jacqueline Otokpa open the event on Friday evening, with SEC Prayer Ministries Coordinator Sister Linda Nyamhunga as guest speaker. Some highlights of the retreats were the speaker-led workshops which focused on evangelism, mental health, the home and family.
3. The ministry has empowered the women to contribute to church programmes through preaching, outreach, food banks, cooking demonstrations and community clean-up initiatives, all in collaboration with the Health, Community and Personal Ministries departments.
4. We have raised awareness of domestic violence through our yearly global "End It Now" programme, and through this, women have been supported and signposted to the right sources for further support, including counselling and financial aid.

Looking back, we are grateful for the ways in which we were able to help women in their journey with Christ. Glory be to God for what He has done! Women of Christ, lift Him up!

Special thanks to Sister Ruth Mensah for assisting in writing this report and for the work she has done in pioneering the Women's Ministries movement.



MY PERSONAL JOURNEY OVER THE PAST 25 YEARS

I still remember that day when I walked to church with my cousins. I was wearing a floral dress, the church bells were ringing and I noticed the smiles on the faces of the people who were entering the sanctuary.

I was cherished by my cousins, aunts and grandmas 'in the faith'. Every weekend I would go to church and participate in cleaning the building and arranging flowers to beautify the building. I memorised scriptures in Sunday school and returned my tithe out of my pocket money.

God blessed me with the ability to sing. My voice became my passion. I became well-known for my performances in my local community.

In spite of all the success, my parents' arguments affected me deeply. Yet, they also brought me closer to my Lord who assured me of His peace in the midst of all the chaos facing my family.

One day I had an epileptic attack which resulted in memory loss and mobility challenges. I was prescribed sedatives. The prayers of my parents resulted in my returning to normality for time. However, I still had epilepsy, and every episode led me to question my faith and eventually I stopped believing.

But I was on a quest for answers to my doubts and queries. I approached many pastors, evangelists and Bible teachers. I visited many churches, but, unfortunately, I received unsatisfying, irrelevant answers.

But one beautiful day I saw a ray of hope through the window when an Adventist pastor visited me with "The Bible". He explained to me the exact picture of God and led me to acknowledge the controversy between God and Satan. He declared, "Satan has a

gun, but bullets are with the Lord", and it helped me understand that though I can be threatened by Satan, he has no power to ruin my life. God is still in control. I jumped in faith and started by faith again with more conviction and confidence. This time I had the full power and understanding of God's Word to shake the devil's dominion.

With fasting and prayers, I got freedom from my ongoing sickness and its side effects. The memory loss which had had dominion over me disappeared like a dew on the grass in sunlight. I moved with His word and transformed lives with a clear picture of His love and sacrifice. Many people got baptised and I became a pioneer woman who preached and introduced the online Sabbath School lesson study in my local language. My voice brought power in the church and the church began to grow. I could see Christ fulfilling His plan in my life. The Saviour chose me as a medium to save humanity and I was humbled.

Satan was furious by seeing the outcome of my conversion. People around me were engulfed with insecurities and jealousy. I experienced discrimination for being a woman. Satan started blocking my way, biting at my heels. He suppressed my talent by insecure personalities. Again, perilous times came upon me where I was surrounded by the enemy one more time. He attacked me not only physically this time but mentally, spiritually and socially. I had no one to rely on or lean on. I felt lonely and abandoned but my faith was still on a Rock of Ages. I'm still waiting for my redemption and looking forward to that similar sort of ray of hope as a rainbow through my window. I'm still strong with the same voice but waiting for His call. When He calls me, I will speak with a tireless voice and influence my world with my testimony. I know that day will bring devastating shame on the face of Satan because my Lord lives forever and ever. Amen.



RITU GILL

BSc (Hons), PGCE, PG Dip. CBT, MSc, DEdPsy, C. Psychol, AFBPsS, Acc. BABCP
Ritu is married to Pastor Thomas Gill.

Outreach: ZIMBABWEAN WOMEN IN THE UK

As women, our desire is to reach out to other women here in the UK and abroad, the central aim being, 'No woman left behind'. In so doing, we prayerfully aim to develop Christ-centred relationships and support. 1 Peter 4:10 admonishes, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." We recognise that women, in general, are identified as occupying lower economic and social status and are more likely to be victims of abuse and neglect. We also recognise the need to reach out to our younger women, to acknowledge their contributions and encourage them to participate in events. We take very seriously the biblical counsel to teach and train our younger women, not only as a support network, but by being a sisterhood. Our aim is to inspire, challenge and meet the needs of each woman as the Lord leads. Every woman is a valuable 'centre of influence' in and around their family, church group and community.

Due to COVID19 social restrictions, all outreach work has been severely restricted. Support has continued for those within previously established social groups.

Access to All Women, Building a Sisterhood:

Our aim is to reach out to all women, to recognise and celebrate social and cultural differences, regardless of religious affiliation. Over the past four months, the

Zimbabwe Adventist Women Abroad Conference (ZAWAC) organized Zoom meetings on Sabbath afternoons (between 15:30-17:00hrs) to serve the diverse needs of women. These meetings follow on from a well-attended Women's Day of Fellowship, held before the lockdown, and give women the opportunity to worship and fellowship together, to request help and solicit prayers directly, and to make new contacts.

Spiritual Support Offered

- Weekly Zoom meetings with sermonettes and music. Daily devotional readings on WhatsApp platform prayer group to provide social and emotional support.
- Members identify and share, via WhatsApp, individuals in need of help.
- Prayers and support for individuals and families affected as we saw a rise in bereavements from COVID19.
- Women with specific identified needs are directed to appropriate support networks, e.g. Cornerstone.

Support Workshops

- Life Skills Support Workshops given via Zoom, to provide genuine and meaningful ways to give women skills to lead an effective and fulfilling life.
- Interactive workshop-style presentations covering a range of contemporary and relevant issues, in a safe, ladies-only

forum. Guest speakers covering topics such as:

- Family Relationships and skills and strategies to build positive relationships • Dealing with Family Conflict.
- Managing Finances and Family - Biblical guidance and counsel on getting priorities right as women.
- Health issues / diet and nutritional guidance.

Other significant individual efforts

- A Prayer Ministry for young people, led by a woman who prays with troubled youths, individually, demonstrating the wonderful truth that prayer changes lives.
- A young woman develops and presents Christian programming for children using a YouTube channel.
- Several women are involved in the Food ministry, assisting with the foodbanks in their local community.



FLEUR CHIMWADZIMBA

An ordained elder at Reading Central SDA Church. A wife and a mother of one son. She is a Registered General Nurse

Women & Wellbeing

In England, women are more likely than men to have a common mental health problem¹ and are almost twice as likely to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the wellbeing of many women. Some women have also been more vulnerable to domestic abuse during lockdown. Nearly 70% of adults in the UK report feeling somewhat or very worried about the effect COVID-19 is having on their life. The Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (2020) found that the most common issues affecting wellbeing during lockdown were worry about the future – feeling stressed or anxious about the future. The Bible offers comforting scriptures in the areas of worry and our future. Philippians 4:6-7 reads: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

1 McManus S, Bebbington P, Jenkins R, Brugha T. (eds.) (2016) Mental health and wellbeing in England: Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2014. Leeds: NHS Digital

Also, from Isaiah 41:10 – “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” These remind us that God is there to give us peace and guidance during these uncertain times. Jeremiah 29:11 reassures us that God’s plan for us is to prosper us in the future. We can have hope in the knowledge that God is in control and wants the best for our eternal good.

With the knowledge that God wants us to live in peace, we can also take some proactive steps to improve our wellbeing and that of those around us. Here are some simple wellbeing tips to get started with:

1. Be kind

Kindness develops community and deepens solidarity. It is a cornerstone of our individual and collective mental health. Wisdom from every culture across history recognises that kindness is something that all human beings need to experience and practise to be fully alive. Proverbs 21:21 says “Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honour.” So, how do we pursue kindness?

And how does that benefit our mental health?

Pursuing kindness is like exercising, a bit like weight training. People can actually build up their compassion ‘muscle’ and respond to others’ suffering with care and a desire to help, because that is what they are used to practising.

Practising kindness also has a profound effect on our own mental and physiological health, helping us to become happier and compassionate towards others. Being kind to others has been known to help boost our own immune system, slow down ageing, elevate our self-esteem and improve blood pressure.

Practising and witnessing acts of kindness can help reduce blood pressure by producing oxytocin, known as the ‘love hormone.’ Oxytocin causes the release of nitric acid in the blood vessels which effectively expands the blood vessels thus reducing blood pressure.’ Self-esteem, a better outlook on life (optimism) and a healthy heart are said to be the benefits of kindness. But it does not stop there. Kindness has a positive effect on others; that spreads. It is contagious!

2. Be active

Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups. Exercise is essential for slowing age-related cognitive decline and for promoting well-being. It does not need to be particularly intense for you to feel good – slower-paced activities, such as walking, can have the benefit of encouraging social interactions as well as providing some level of exercise.

Try to be active for 30 minutes a day (you could also do 3 sets of 10 minutes throughout the day or start with 10 minutes a day in total and gradually build it up to 30 minutes). This may include running, walking and cycling, but this does not have to be strenuous – you can do the gardening or get those arm muscles moving by doing housework. Whatever your physical ability, everyone can build up to 30 minutes of daily activity.

3. Stay connected

Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing. They can:

- help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth
- give you an opportunity to share positive experiences
- provide emotional support and allow you to support others

There are lots of things you could try, to help build stronger and closer relationships and feel connected to others. We have been away from our churches for several months. No open churches and gatherings, but there have been opportunities to link in other virtual ways. At first, some of these may have felt overwhelming and unfamiliar, but if you persevered, you are probably reaping the benefits now. If you withdrew, you may be feeling disconnected and perhaps alone right now. God has made us social beings. Try to connect with someone in a different way from the usual. So, if you are primarily communicating with others via what’s App, try giving someone a call; or if you are using zoom all the time, try something different.

4. Take notice

Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. This includes your thoughts and feelings, your body, and the world around you. Taking time to pray, to be still and listen, and to notice your thoughts and feelings promotes wellbeing. Taking time in nature and noticing creation can draw you closer to God. Pre-lockdown, when our life was busier, we most likely did not take much time to notice the world around us and may have been rushing here and there. Now is the perfect opportunity to think about

practices we want to take with us post Covid; and it would be good for one of them is, to slow down and take notice. So, take time to notice each day. Perhaps find 10 minutes each day when you can take time to notice. It could be to spend 10 minutes in nature each day, 10 minutes taking time to be still and listen to God or taking time to journal your thoughts and feelings.

5. Keep learning

Research shows that learning new skills can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

- boosting self-confidence and raising self-esteem
- helping you to build a sense of purpose
- helping you to connect with others

Even if you feel like you do not have enough time, or you may not need to learn new things, there are lots of different ways to bring learning into your life.

Some of the things you might try include:

- Reading a book, audiobook or podcast on a subject that interests you
- Learning to cook something new
- Work on a DIY project
- Signing up for an e-course
- Trying a new hobby or a learning a new skill such as another language

Identify a new skill or an area you can develop and make one step towards that learning journey. That might be downloading the audiobook or podcast, or deciding on a DIY project or course that you might start.

6. Give to others

Giving to others can involve giving financially and also giving of your time. Research suggests that acts of giving – small and large – are associated with positive mental wellbeing. Several studies over the past decade have found that many aspects of wellbeing are higher in those who give compared with those who do not.

Research into the brain has shown that giving and co-operating with

others can stimulate the reward areas in the brain, helping to create positive feelings. Helping and working with others can also give us a sense of purpose and feelings of self-worth.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 reminds us: *Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.* One of the ways that we will reap sparingly is in relation to how our brain responds to how generous we are which then has an impact on our wellbeing.

Try to sow generously. That may be financially, but it may also be in terms of your time. What is it that you could contribute to make things better? Do you have a gift or a talent that you have not shared? Make a commitment to give.

7. Be creative

Even minimal creative activity boosts wellbeing, research finds. A study of 50,000 people found that regardless of skill level, taking part in activities like painting, pottery or music helps people manage their emotions, build confidence, and explore solutions to problems.

There are many ways we can be creative; it is not just about drawing. Creativity can include painting, photography, collaging, journaling, and writing poetry, for example. I have challenged myself along with a group of friends to do something creative every week during lockdown. This week, as part of this challenge, I wrote a poem which I would like to share with you.

Hopefully, these top tips have helped you to enhance your wellbeing. I hope that you stay safe and stay well.



DR MICHELLE SANCHO

BSc (Hons), PGCE, PG Dip. CBT, MSc, DEdPsy, C. Psychol, AFBPsS, Acc. BABCP



Profile:

PAULINE PECK: THE END OF A GOLDEN ERA

By Adrian Peck and Catherine Anthony Boldeau



The South England Conference (SEC) will feel the loss of Pauline Peck who retired at the end of August 2020. Pauline has given years of tireless faithful service to the church in her quiet and unassuming manner. Those who have worked with Pauline remember her as extremely hard-working, resilient and

forward-thinking. She was always willing and ready to assist new workers to the team and executed her daily tasks with dignity.

Pauline (then Spofford not Peck) started working as a receptionist at Granose in August 1959. She transferred to the SEC, starting work there for the first time on 12th June 1961.

During that period she worked in reception, for the publishing directors Prs John Curnow and Alex Freeman, and for Pr Horace Pearce in the Home Missionaries Department.

She left the SEC at the end of March 1964. The next 15 years were taken up by having and bringing up three children and working part-time as an auxiliary nurse. Pauline recommenced working for the SEC in November 1979. On this occasion she joined the treasury department which was to be her home for the next 41 years before she retired finally and properly in August 2020.

During that time she worked with the following 8 treasurers:

Mervyn Leicester, Pr Maurice Musgrave, Basil Powell, Mervyn Leicester (again), Marcus Dove, Victor Pilmoor, Earl Ramharacksingh, Fred Shone and Candy Layson.

She has also served under the leadership of 9 presidents: Pr Bayliss, Pr Ken Gammon, Pr Silburn Reid, Pr Cecil Perry, Pr Don McFarlane, Pr Humphrey Walters, Pr Sam Davis, Pr Richard DeLisser and Pr Emmanuel Osei.

Her part of working for the church was having the privilege of being able to serve the church, members and ministers. She particularly enjoyed interacting with the local treasurers, so forming friendships that have lasted decades. She won't miss doing the monthly ministers' expenses and travel reports or getting up early in the morning!

But, she will miss the regular contact she had with fellow workers, pastors and the treasury team.

Pauline, you will be greatly missed by colleagues, pastors and the many friends that you have made over the years. May God bless you on your retirement and may you enjoy the rest that you truly deserve.



Big Thank You
PAULINE PECK

FROM SEC

JOIN US!



TUESDAY NIGHT LIVE

NEWS | PROJECT FEATURE | HUBS | Q&A

LIVE STREAMING ON YOUTUBE LIVE ON 6 OCT, 3 NOV AND 1 DEC @ 19:00

www.ADRA.org.uk | YouTube.com/adrauk

Adventist Discovery Centre, UK & Ireland

FREE Postal & Online

BIBLE STUDIES

Additional support available
via



info@discoveronline.org.uk

www.discoveronline.org.uk

<https://bibleschools.com/1510>

UK: Stanborough Park, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD25 9JU, UK
Ireland: 47a Ranelagh Road, Dublin, D06 NX99, Ireland

SEC TEENS MINISTRIES PRESENT

VIRTUAL Prayer and Faith CONFERENCE

26-30 OCTOBER 2020
10-11AM | 7-8PM



EVENING SPEAKER
Pr Wilmoth James

- Mon. 26 Oct - Pr Dejan Stojkovic
- Tue. 27 Oct - Pr Isaac Liburd
- Wed. 28 Oct - Pr Rosemary Lethbridge
- Thur. 29 Oct - Ebenezer & Hanna Commodore
- Fri. 30 Oct - Pr James Shepley



JOIN US ON FACEBOOK SEC
AND ON YOUTUBE TEENS

CONTACT
01923 232728 | teens@secadventist.org.uk

The Constant is Change

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has reached into all of our lives and made changes to the ways in which we live and experience community. We have all had to summon reserves of creativity and flexibility in times of restricted social interaction and travel. To a large extent, the current nature of our SEC plants and groups will depend on their varying abilities to engage the pandemic implications with creativity and flexibility.

Along with most of my colleagues in the SEC office, I was placed on the HMRC Furlough Scheme from early April 2020, returning to work at 40% (16 hours per week) from July 2020. While there are differing views on the decision of the trustees to engage the furlough scheme, I recognise that by being on furlough, I have still played a part in supporting the Conference leadership and contributing to the ability of the SEC to weather this particular storm. Furlough has meant that the weekend and Sabbath conferences and gatherings planned by the Church Growth Department were postponed or cancelled. In time, these will

reshaped and re-suited to our changed and changing context. Additionally, for several months, pastors involved in plants and groups were also part of the furlough scheme. And while there are implications and ramifications that we might lament, we should also be careful to note the opportunities that lie before us.

A good number of plants and groups were able to adapt to various forms of online programming, not only for the sake of worship activity, but to provide their wider ministry context with creative outlets and community togetherness. Craft groups and "Coffee Mornings" continued via Zoom, with regulars and new friends engaging the opportunity to meet up and share time and virtual space in the company of one another. This has been a great help, especially for older persons who live alone.

Lock-down has also provided an opportunity for a more local approach to mission and ministry. So many of our members usually travel a fair distance to join up with their local congregation on a Sabbath morning, a commute that has been absent from our Sabbath routines for some months now. Being at home for work and recreation has given time and opportunity to engage more meaningfully on a local level. For some, this has meant walking at particular times of the day so as to be more likely to see other walkers at the same time of day and to engage wellbeing conversations with their neighbours. Clapping for the NHS brought neighbours out of their homes at the same time and connections were made that did not exist before.

Moving forward post-Covid, the Church Growth Department will be focusing greater time and energy specifically on our church plants and groups. This is a time to capitalise on the local experience and to strengthen and support the roots and shoots that have come from our changed circumstances. At the same time, there are those who have gone into hibernation and will be needing to try and pick up the threads of their earlier community work and ministry. In fairness, some plants and groups will do well in our post-pandemic world while others will need to reconsider their focus and strategic plans. The Church Growth Department will be there to give support and counsel.

Perhaps one of the good things to come out of this "annus horribilus" is the reminder that, while we are part of a global Church with a message of hope for the world in the closing portions of its history, we are also, fundamentally, a local church—a gathering of believers, a community of faith, a Kingdom presence—with a very local ministry. As we look around ourselves for the remnants of our pre-Covid lives, may we also be reminded that our faithful ministry is not found in recreating the past but in being faithfully present in the present. As we take stock and realise that, once more, our context has undergone some significant shifts, let us adapt for the sake of contemporary, contextual mission and ministry! And let us live the gospel – in word and deed!



WAYNE ERASMUS

SEC DEPARTMENTS

Reports and Articles



CORNERSTONE COUNSELLING

Cornerstone Counselling Services (CCS) started this year with so many projects in mind. The first project that became a reality was the acquisition of the trauma unit, with the acronym H.O.P.E for Adverse Life Events.

- H** - Help and healing from traumatic experiences
- O** - Overcoming life traps
- P** - Prayer support
- E** - Empowerment

This was to be followed by a H.O.P.E. weekend retreat in conjunction with the BUC Health Ministry in April, but due to the COVID-19 outbreak, this well-needed conference was postponed till a future date. The trauma unit helps CCS to extend its hands to a group of clients that have been impacted throughout their lives by abuse, neglect, bullying, adverse events, and traumatic deaths. It aims to support the client in a systematic way with the aid of the alpha stim. A big thank-you goes to the BUC Health Ministries who funded this project.

The second significant accomplishment for CCS this year was the launch, in March, of an 8am-12 midnight daily listening line. This service offers members and their communities an opportunity to talk to someone in times of distress. The service is available through a dedicated listening line that is manned by



trained listeners and counsellors, as well as through a live chat. This venture encouraged CCS to recruit and train more listeners. Currently, we have 50 active listeners who are listening to isolated, frustrated, depressed and anxious people, due to COVID-19 and other stresses of life.

CCS has been training church members in Listening Skills Levels 2 and 3, since 2016. The class for 2020 targeted pastors and elders. This became handy for the pastors, equipping them to support members effectively during lockdown, as the numbers of those affected by bereavements, anxiety, fear, isolation and loneliness increased.

We have seen a massive increase in the number of clients contacting CCS for counselling in the last six months, a good indication that our church community is breaking the stigma of mental health and seeking the help they need.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, CCS has been supporting and giving psychoeducation on emotional and mental wellbeing

to various churches, groups and organisations, including the recent GYCE and ASIE via Zoom and other social media platforms. CCS is to support people when they need it, increasing resilience and emotional stability at these unprecedented times.

Your prayers and donations are valuable to the support and expansion of our team. To all the counsellors, listeners and students that volunteer their time, we want to say thank you for the hard work and dedication. You are truly assets to the ministry and unsung heroes. To all the pastors, elders and members training to become qualified counsellors, well done for recognising the need and taking this bold step. Our churches and communities will be grateful. To our team of volunteer counsellors, we want to say thank-you for your dedication and enthusiasm in what you do; CCS would not exist without you

As children are going back to school, some families are looking forward to a possibility of a return to routine. Yet some parents and pupils will be feeling anxious. Do not struggle alone; reach out to CCS. We are here for you.



THEMBIE MAPINGIRE

MEN'S MINISTRIES

SEC Men's retreat and other programmes were all cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic that has swept the world. It has put a whole new dimension on the way we do things, called the "New Way".

While in lockdown, we had to see how we could reach men living alone or who lacked communication in their marriages and in their household or had issues with mental health, wellbeing, loneliness etc.

An idea came up, to do an SEC virtual men's meeting via Zoom.

We did a test run at the beginning of April, and around 40 men joined the open forum. The men wanted this to happen every week, so Monday evenings from 7.30-9.30pm was set aside, and that is how "Real Men Real Talk" came to life.

"The idea for this forum was to get men talking - as this doesn't happen very often - to encourage interaction and to build a community of men who can help and learn from each other. The forum also provides a safe space for men to open up. The meetings are not recorded for that reason.

Each week we had presentations from different speakers on real issues relating to men, for example, the Power of Mentoring (Clarence Jackson), Cooking Class (Marvin Campbell), Being Accountable (Christopher Khuoge), Trusting God's Leading in our Life (Dr Emmanuel Osei) and many more.

In brief, we would like to share some of the testimonies of how these talks have impacted the men during these unprecedented times.

"Joining the men's group every Monday evening has been a great source of inspiration during times of discouragement and uncertainty. It was therapeutic in all aspects, as it dealt with the issues I was facing. It was good to see things from different aspects and listen to men as they prayed, shared their experiences and offered hope. It was pertinent for such a time as this, and I thank the leadership for coming up with such a powerful and transforming initiative. (Clarence Jackson)

"The weekly meeting by the Men's Ministry is having a great impact, especially on me, in this period we are going through. Lockdown has played a big role on my/our mind, causing

depression and mental problems. I thank God for this programme, where men can meet on Monday night just to unwind and talk about issues facing us and get advice on how to deal with certain problems; just talking from the heart, allowing us to be open to each other. For me, it's been a blessing to listen and be a part of this ministry. I hope it continues, for in this weekly meeting our life will be changed for us, and how we see each other. So, let us continue to support this ministry." (Hewan Tardiel).

"Good morning, Devon, I just wanted to say it is so good to meet with other men with the same and similar intentions in life, to help our families and help our communities.

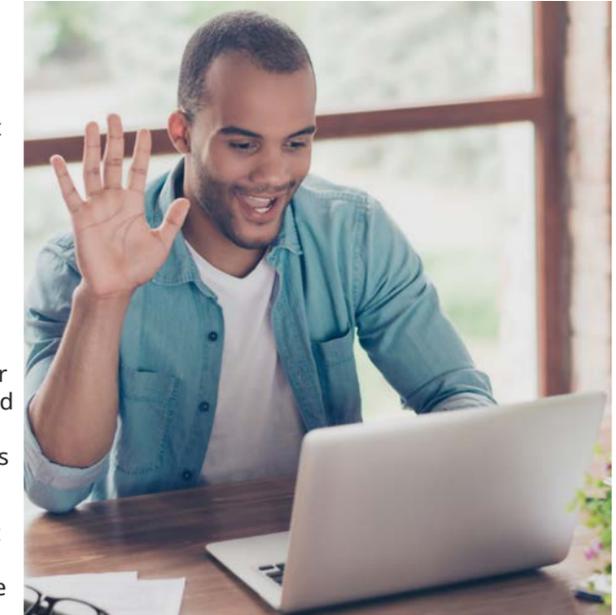
"We have some great speakers that bring a true understanding of subject areas we all need to know about, and there is good community in the team that we learn from each other.

"I see that there are people who look to better the environment of people around them and look to impact their society; and it's great to be around people who are committed to doing that. Much appreciated and God bless you all.

'John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'" (Carl Peters)

"The Men's Ministry platform and the discussion we've been able to share has made me realise the issues we encounter both spiritually and mentally; that I am not the only one facing such challenges. It's helped me specifically during the lockdown, to realise that this platform has helped many of our men folk get together to discuss a range of issues." (Renato Cristofoli)

"There is something good that has come from this Covid-19 experience. Men's Ministry has stepped up to the mark as Devon and Basil have constantly given the men food for thought by inviting various men to share their expertise



to encourage and empower us. I look forward to this programme continuing well after Covid-19. Thank God, and thank you guys that attend and share." (Sylvester Davis)
 "I hope and pray that this ministry is not only for the men in church, but a witness tool for the men that have left or are not in church."

I would like to thank everyone that got involved during these past months to put these programmes together, and we would like to encourage our members to either join us or to start something similar in their church and community.

If you need to know more details, please contact me dboyd@secadventist.org.uk.

Continue to pray and help each other - prayer/help matters.

Stay Safe, Social distancing, follow the SEC / Government guidelines.



DEVON BOYD

Readjusting, Rethinking and Reinventing

Knock, Knock, Who's There

In October 2019 our calendar of activities was finished. By this time venues and activity centres were booked, survey results were tabulated and speaking engagements were confirmed. Little did we know that ahead of us laid a crisis whose impact would force us to readjust, rethink and reinvent that which we had prepared for the teens. Furthermore, we never thought that that crisis would affect us, our loved ones and the world in such a devastating manner. The virus would come into our lives without knocking on the doors.

During the Evangelism Expo celebrated in January, the Teens' Department listened to a kind audience who was willing, not only to share their insightful ideas and concerns, but also to become committed support members of the staff. These ideas, along with the survey results, gave us the content for our activities, seminars, events and afternoon trainings. None of us, however, thought that a few days later, gatherings would be hazardous for the health of our teens.

Consequently, Covid-19 forced the Teens' Department to unbook the venues and activity centres we had previously booked. This was done one activity at the time, as we thought that the

virus would soon be gone, but it wasn't. So, to avoid incurring penalties or cancellation fees, we payed attention to the behaviour of the virus and the datelines for cancellations. Needless to say, we ended up cancelling all gatherings. In addition, some of our own staff members or some of their families were affected by the pandemic in one way or another. I myself have lost several friends to this virus.

Readjusting, Rethinking and Reinventing

In light of the crisis, the Teens Department has no other option but to readjust, rethink and reinvent its approach. After praying and asking the Lord for guidance, the first thing that comes to my mind is: "keep on preaching in the morning and training in the afternoon as we have been doing, but this time, virtually." Although it looks like the obvious choice right now, it did not look so to us in March, as we thought the crisis would be over in a month. Right before being furloughed, we contacted at least two teen leaders from every single area (from area one through area eight) and formed a WhatsApp group of people willing to prepare programmes for the teens and keep them informed. Their main task was to share with one another what they were doing for their teens. In this way the teens would have several options and diversity of Zoom and online programmes.

What type of Programmes and Posters

In a text, by phone and by email we explained our situation and

the type of programmes we were looking for, namely, 1) Spiritually inclusive and respectful – a programme that promotes unity and harmony among the teens and that is not hostile against the SDA church or mocks the religious beliefs of other teens. Of course, other beliefs can be considered and discussed, but respectfully. 2) Socially inclusive (Joel 2:28, NKJV) – a programme whose content and poster includes all the teens from of all races, ethnicities and socio-cultural backgrounds. When the teen sees the poster and reads its promo, he or she should be able to say: 'Hey! That's for me!' Regardless of nationality, race, colour of skin or social background. Everyone agreed, and we praised the Lord. Now I could go on furlough in peace.

Currently, we continue preaching by Zoom, celebrating virtual Teen's Days and giving seminars (or webinars), wherever we are invited in the SEC. It would be an honour to visit your church and celebrate a Teens' Day with your teens and all the saints. Please pray for us, now more than ever. We need volunteers who would join forces with the SEC Teens Ministries and bless our teens. I'm more than sure that together we will be able to support them, their parents and guardians in miraculous ways.



JUAN CARLOS PATRICK

The department ended 2019 with an all-night prayer at Milton Keynes SDA church. At the beginning of 2020, the team had planned many all-night prayer events and prayer conferences. This started with the Ten Days of Prayer which culminated in a half-night of prayer at the Holcombe Road SDA Church. Prayer Ministries then held an all-night prayer at Stanborough Secondary school, with special focus on children and students.

Plans had been made for the year with nights of prayer, day conferences and days of prayer. Plans to hold a Prayer Retreat with guest speaker Pastor Telemaque had been put in place, however, with the unexpected lockdown, the Lord worked His wonderful way and it became a virtual event.

Despite the cancellation of some of these events, Prayer Ministries still managed to hold days of prayer and fasting on Zoom virtual platform.

The South England Conference Prayer Ministries Department has been a tower and refuge of strength during the many months of lockdown. The theme for this year is: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." Under the caring guidance of the Prayer Ministries leader, it has gone from strength to strength.

At the beginning of COVID-19, a day of prayer was held for the whole of the SEC including a day of prayer for pastors.



During the time of lockdown, many people joined the daily prayer line, requesting intercessory prayer for diverse issues caused by the pandemic. Often there were so many requests, it was necessary to extend the time. The prayer leader opened the line at different times of the day to contact and reach out to those in need of prayer. The Prayer Ministries team was always open and ready to serve. The prayer line has been in operation for many years, however, at this time of pandemic, it increased its activity.

The prayer line is well attended with over 100 people dialling in from different countries, as well as from all around the UK. People from different denominations are joining the SEC prayer line. People from many cultural backgrounds, men, women and young people from all walks of life and careers, join and are blessed. People of diverse nationalities regularly take part leading out in the morning devotional. The prayer line is immersed in the Spirit and glory of a God who answers prayer.

The SEC Prayer Ministries team met in the innermost walls of worship, as the unexpected earthquake of the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic struck on a global scale. Locked in the innermost part of a prison, Paul and Silas sang and prayed. A sudden and violent earthquake shook the building opening doors and breaking chains. The distraught jailor in Acts 16:25-31 immediately thought to draw his sword to end his life, but the encouraging voice of Paul prevented him from doing so. The extensive damage of this pandemic caused many distressed people to draw their swords of hopelessness and despair. The voices of prayer never faltered, and its encouragement restored many to a deeper faith in God.

The SEC Virtual Camp Meeting was the largest introduction and invitation for people to join the House of Prayer every morning. People came for morning prayer and then joined in the evening for testimonies and reflection. Those in the Prayer Ministries team participated in the programmes, and the Lord blessed abundantly to make it a significant success.

The SEC Virtual Prayer Retreat, titled, 'God comforts his people in crisis', reached global proportions with a captivated audience and another wave of appreciation for the work of the Prayer Ministries Department. Members of the team rallied again to participate by keeping the prayer line active and becoming involved in the presentations. The testimonies from the

youth and the involvement of children was highly commended and inspirational.

When God works, He does so in a marvellous and mighty way. The strength of the SEC Prayer Ministries Department has inspired others to form their own prayer teams. The first started in Horley Gatwick, and another one began in Willesden. Many churches have been encouraged to develop prayer warriors and to develop prayer partnering of members. The Prayer Ministries leader has been helping to support these new initiatives.

Prayer Ministries is not just about intercessory prayer and their miraculous answers; it is about the praise, testimonies and the daily devotional that people share. These have brought hope, faith and inspiration to the lives of many. Silent listeners on the daily prayer line gain encouragement and peace. This house of prayer never closes its doors or leaves anyone behind. Its inclusivity is one of its strengths.

The SEC Prayer Ministries Department is a thriving community of help and healing. It continues to reach out and witness in a way unique to its purpose. Emotional, physical and spiritual healing is surrounded by kindness, joy, comfort, friendship and love. Many who have drawn swords of despair have put them away and cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" Truly they have seen the transforming power of prayer in their lives. Indeed, during the pandemic, many people have run to God in prayer, virtually, accomplishing our theme, 'My House Shall be called a house of Prayer for all nations'. The midweek meetings, which would only have about ten people in attendance, has, at the moment, over fifty connections in use in different homes.

This is a ministry of the benevolence of God's love. It is alive; it is active; it is amazing! To God be the glory for what He has done, is still doing, and will continue to do through the SEC Prayer Ministries Department.



LINDA MUKWADA

HOLDING THE PLANK: AUDREY'S CHALLENGE FOR ADRA

(Author: June Coombs)

For Stanborough Park's Audrey Balderstone, the fact that her much-loved charity, ADRA-UK, was unable to launch its annual house-to-house appeal this year was a personal blow. With her usual methods to raise funds being blocked by 'lockdown' rules, she found a new, creative way to contribute to the charity's shortfall during its online collection during July and August.

Her aim to raise £1,000 through a sponsored challenge was rapidly exceeded as news of her efforts spread far and wide. By mid-August her total, including Gift Aid, had reached the amazing sum of £8,059.75.

With so many fund-raising options closed as a result of the current health crisis, Audrey decided to defy the tyrannies of age by taking part in a demanding sponsored challenge to hold the 'plank position' for five minutes every day. "I would normally do a number of fundraising events for ADRA, such as a garden party, clothes sale etc, but of course I cannot do that this year. So, I challenged myself to raise £1,000 by this method," she said at the outset.

ADRA-UK is a special cause for this church elder, grandmother of four and flower-arranger extraordinaire. "Usually, during the annual appeal in March/April, ADRA raises around £500,000. It will be interesting to see how much the 'digital appeal' is able to generate to help the most vulnerable of our society at home and abroad," she continued. "ADRA-UK has always been dear to my heart because of all the work David (her late husband) and others have done for those less fortunate than ourselves through ADRA." (David was a volunteer for many years and took part in many missions -often under gunfire! - and also organised transport for the charity.



Anticipating the reaction of many doubters, Audrey says, "A speeded-up version of my five minutes is available on YouTube to prove that I actually do it." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKHNVNctIygwww>.

Audrey has been amazed by the final total and the generosity of her sponsors, and she is grateful to them for helping her raise funds for such a worthy cause. "Many of the donations have been anonymous, so I haven't been able to thank them personally, but I have been grateful for every donation, large or small," she says, adding a heartfelt, "Thank you, everyone!"

LUTON'S ONLINE WORSHIP INVITES GC WOMEN'S MINISTRIES DIRECTOR

(Author: Don Roberts)

Luton North and Luton Central held a Friends and Family Emphasis Day on 18th July. The guest speaker for the day was General Conference Women's Ministries Director, Heather-Dawn Small, who joined the online worship via Zoom from her home in Maryland, USA.

Before her sermon, she shared that, despite the pandemic, she was "thankful for the blessings that God has brought out of coronavirus". She reported that she was fellowshiping more than she normally would if travelling in person to different countries, and that the word of God has been spreading around the world faster



than ever before.

In her sermon 'God Knows My Name', she looked at the various times 'GOD' is mentioned in the Old Testament with the name capitalised and examined the meaning in the original Hebrew text. "The names of God describe who He is and describe His character. God knows my name, but do I know His name?"

Small spoke about three names for God that have personally been a source of strength through her life - particularly during the current pandemic.

She started with 'El Roi', The God who sees me, found in Genesis 16:13-14 in the story of Sarai's maid Hagar, after she fled from her mistress. "He is the One who knows everything about us, and He still loves us". She then went on to 'El Shaddai', God Almighty, mentioned in Psalm 91:1-2 - "The God for whom all things are possible". The last

name was 'Immanuel', God with us, from Psalm 139:7-10.

During her presentation, Small gave an emotional testimony about a period in her life, years ago, when she was suffering from depression and "wasn't talking to God - but God wanted to talk to me". She described finally putting a Bible on her bed each day, over several weeks, and speaking to it, expressing her negative feelings and complaints to God. "When I had finished and thought that I had nothing left to say, I picked up that Bible and opened it. God began to speak to my heart; He began to heal me through His word. Because He wanted me to know that He sees me, He is Almighty, and He is with me wherever I go."

She concluded by encouraging the audience to reflect on the various names of God, "because the more we know Him, the more we trust Him; and as our trust in God develops, the more we want to spend time with Him".

PRECIOUS SOULS FOR JESUS: FIRST BAPTISMS SINCE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

(Author: Shirley Williams and Don Roberts)

As the UK Coronavirus lockdown begins to ease, churches in the SEC are looking to reopen their buildings and resuming worship activities. Following changes in the UK Government's guidance concerning full immersion baptism, it is now permitted (from 21 August) although with some limitations to reduce the risk of infection. Three churches have reported that they have conducted their first baptisms since the coronavirus pandemic.

On Sunday 23 August, Wimbledon Church gained two new members. With their church building yet to reopen, Pastor Vili Costescu conducted the church's first baptisms at sea, off Seaford Beach, East Sussex. One candidate made their decision for baptism as a result of listening to evangelist Mark Finley's online media ministry, "Hope Lives 365", and taking Bible studies from Pastor Costescu.

On Sunday 6 September, Heathrow International Church baptised three new members into the faith, with sea baptisms at Eastbourne beach conducted by Pastor Roland Bernados.

Lewisham Church had a baptism on Friday 28 August, and in the church's own baptistry! Five individuals were baptised by Pastor Kwadwo Kwarteng-Ampofoin. Despite the service being without the usual vibrant music, singing and packed pews, those present expressed that they could almost feel that all heaven was rejoicing.

One of the candidates shared her journey to Christ which began in 2012. While taking part in a month of prayer and fasting at a previous church, the candidate received an answer to prayer regarding a personal problem. This led her to conclude that God had set her free and that she was starting "a new journey with the Father".

"Knowing that God had literally taken me out of the hands of the enemy and showed me love, compassion and mercy, I wanted to know more about the Creator and so I asked God, after leaving my former church, to put me in a place



where I could truly learn and have a better understanding of who He is."

"The Lord sent me two Seventh-day Adventist ladies who took me under their wings and started Bible studies with me. After one or two years of study, I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. I never really understood much about baptism or how important it is in a Christian's life until the Bible studies and reading the Bible myself. "

"People sometimes tend to think things happen by chance, but I know that, with all that was going on in my life, God was working things out to get me where I am today. He wanted to put me in a place where I could really get to know Him and to understand what He did for me on the cross. When I got to this point of understanding salvation and what it entailed, I cried because I realised that, despite all that I had done, Christ, in love, died for my sins and took my rightful place. Once I understood this, I wanted to show God that I was sorry for all that I had done to Him, and that I was ready to leave the old life and start a new journey with Christ as my Lord, whatever the cost."

"I'm very happy that when the time came, it was the Holy Spirit that led the way, because I would have waited. But I am very happy to say I am baptised."

"If anyone wants to get baptised, I would tell them to focus their mind on God and allow Him to lead. Sometimes people can feel pressured to go ahead in order to please others, but I would say, put it to the Lord; be still and wait on Him to lead you."

"I pray, as we continue to bind together in these changing times, that God's word will move forward in earnest, bringing in the precious souls to Christ. Praise God! Heaven is rejoicing."

SEC PARL HOSTS MANDATORY VACCINATION PRESENTATION FOR CHURCH MEMBERS

(Author: Don Roberts)

On Sunday 6 September 2020, the SEC PARL (Public Affairs and Religious Liberties) Director, Dr Brighton Kavaloh, invited churches across the SEC to attend a Zoom meeting



in which he gave a presentation and answered questions on the subject of mandatory vaccinations in the UK. It was a follow-up to a presentation given by Kavaloh on 9th August, following the UK Government's publication (on 31 July) of the SEC's evidence submitted to the Joint

Committee on Human Rights Inquiry on the Government's response to COVID-19: Human Rights Implications. The submission, entitled, 'UK COVID-19 Vaccination - Human Rights Compliance: Compulsory or Consensual', outlined liberty of conscience considerations regarding "any purported mandatory vaccination", and stated that "a delicate balance needs to be struck between compulsion and consent for the common good of the whole society."

In Kavaloh's new presentation, he gave the background and reasoning for the document's submission to the Government. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the spread and control of the outbreak have been the uppermost concern of Governments throughout the world, and there has been a global race to develop a coronavirus vaccine and to bring it to the public.

Kavaloh revealed that, for several months, he had been dealing with concerns raised by church members who, through watching videos shared on social media, wrongly believed that the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 was changed on 27 April 2020, and that individuals can now be forcibly vaccinated. While verifying through Government and legal sources that reports of a change in the law were untrue, Kavaloh felt that there was still "a great need for the SEC to remain vigilant, not only giving advice to those who were being misled on social media, but to follow through any changes in the legislation" that could lead to mandatory vaccinations. As a result, the SEC submitted its evidence to the Human Rights Inquiry and gave its view that "the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, in the main, should be to safeguard the health and safety of individuals and communities, while not restricting personal freedoms more than strictly necessary to fulfil public health objectives."

During his presentation Kavaloh went on to highlight a recent development following a three-week public consultation, announced by the UK Government on 28 August 2020, which lays out proposals for changes in the Human Medicine Regulations 2012 to support the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines.

The changes primarily deal with the manufacture, import, distribution, sale and supply of a vaccine, including the temporary authorisation of unlicensed products to treat COVID-19, flu, or any future pandemic disease. Although not directly linked with the issue of mandatory vaccinations, Kavaloh urged the audience to "prayerfully read the Government's consultation document and respond with any concerns". He advised that, when responding to the new consultation, members should do so "with wisdom, discretion and calmness".

When dealing with the current situation or bigger issues to come, beyond COVID-19, Kavaloh urged the audience to follow biblical and Spirit of Prophecy principles, and he quoted the counsel of Jesus in Matthew 10:16 - "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

"God will allow the challenges we are facing today to provide us with an opportunity to witness for Him."

We are women...

**We are women we rise early each new morning
We are women we are motivated to do our calling
We are women we work hard every single day
We are women we carry on come what may**

**We are women of deep feelings and moods
We are women we love to cook and watch others enjoy our food
We are women intelligent, reflective and kind
We are women strong in body, soul and mind**

**We are women please treat us with due respect
We are women we laugh, we cry, we sometimes forget
We are women we are able to grasp the old and the new
We are women we do wrong and make mistakes too**

**We are women shaped and blessed by our Father above
We are women we have been called
to serve each other in love
We are women designed to carry every generation
We are women of every complexion, tongue and nation.**

Annice Thomas
September 2020



Waiting While Hurting

DEVOTIONAL

The service of baby dedication is one of the many pastoral roles that gives me great joy. The baby is dedicated to the Lord. The parents pledge to bring the child up in a knowledge of God. Families and friends come together from far and near to celebrate. All attention is focused on the bundle of joy. Grand celebrations are often planned as a follow-up to the church service.

As a pastor, I have also spent time in heartfelt prayer with couples who yearn to experience the joy of their own baby dedication service. Even with the advancement of medicine, and for various reasons, women are still having struggles to naturally bear a child. This is an agonising time for both the wife and the husband. Each spouse wrestles with their own pain and emptiness while trying to comfort the other. They are further challenged by well-meaning relatives and church families who reference the Bible text, 'Children are a heritage from the LORD. The fruit of the womb is a reward' (Psalms 127.3, NKJV).

In the Bible, the first book of Samuel opens with a focus on Hannah's desire to bear a child. Hannah's anguish was misunderstood first by her husband Elkanah, whose response to her despair was 'Am I not better to you than ten sons?' (1 Samuel 1.8, NKJV). Hannah entered into the tabernacle, where she brought her pain to God while silently weeping and praying, 'O LORD of hosts, if You will ... give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life' (1 Samuel 1.11, NKJV). Observed by Eli the High Priest, Hannah was initially chastised for being drunk. Eli then offered a blessing over her with the words 'Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him' (1 Samuel 1.17, NKJV).

After four years of marriage and three miscarriages, I recall praying Hannah's prayer. My husband looked on helplessly as my tears seemed never-ending. After each miscarriage my arms felt empty for the baby I longed to hold. The waiting while we were hurting meant that we had to wholly trust in God, not just

for self but for each other. We would often question if our prayer was selfish, while attempting to extend love to the children in our friendship circles. I can vividly recall the joy we both experienced when our daughter was born, and we dedicated our lives to bring her up in a knowledge of God.

I fully acknowledge that not all women experience this outcome, and the pain of empty arms still cuts deep within you. My prayer for you is that you experience the awareness of our faithful God who loves you and feels your pain. 'Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him' (1 Samuel 1.17, NKJV).



PASTOR MAUREEN ROCK

Director of Adventist Discovery Centre, UK & Ireland



DIGITAL MEDIA, DESIGN & PRINT SOLUTIONS

T: 0799 051 0069
0800 880 3082
E: info@icandoworld.com

Get in touch for any request.

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES

£2.00

For a guaranteed copy, please contact us using the details below

Tel: 01923 232 728 Email: communication@secadventist.org.uk
Address: 25 St Johns Road, Watford Herts. WD17 1PZ.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

If you would like to write to the Editor, please contact us at – communication@secadventist.org.uk.
Letters to the Editor will be published at the discretion of the editorial team.

Title: Forename: Surname:
Address:
Post Code:
Tel:
Mobile:
Email: Church:

Copyright © All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in part or whole without prior permission of the Communication Department of the South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists



MAKE A DIFFERENCE

TAKE A YEAR IN MISSION AND SERVICE AT
NEWBOLD, YOUR GATEWAY TO MINISTRY.

Spend a semester at Newbold as part of this gap-year style programme, preparing for a mission project which you will undertake in the second semester with one of our partner organisations. We will train you for ministry through mission and service and support you as you enter the mission field.

STUDY FOR FREE

The Trans-European Division offers fully-funded places in this programme for eligible students (usually those under 30 years of age, who go on to complete a mission project with the TED). Check the website for details.

A fully-inclusive (meals, accommodation and tuition) fee of £1,999 for the semester at Newbold applies for those who do not qualify for a funded place.

DISCOVER MORE

Apply now for a fully-funded place and start your new ministry in January 2021.

More information

E: info@newbold.ac.uk

T: +44 (0)1344 407492

W: newbold.ac.uk/mission