

SEC

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THE TEENS CHALLENGE

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BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF THE SAVANNA



THE TEENAGE CHALLENGE



PREPARATION IS KEY

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The views expressed in this magazine are opinions of the writers

Editorial

The phenomenal achievement of teenage tennis sensation Emma Raducanu at the US Open, in winning the grand slam as a qualifier, demonstrates the enormous potential and amazing talents that teenagers possess. Many other unsung teenage heroes, can also be found in a variety of disciplines around the globe – even though they haven't made it to the top yet.

Teenage success can be attributed to many factors, including the support they receive from significant others, their level of self-worth, their sense of belonging within their environment and the trust they experience in their relationships with others. These factors help them to grow and flourish.

However, there is no denying that teenage years can be the most awkward, frustrating, and challenging years of anyone's life. It is a period that exposes our imperfections. Adolescence can often expose teens to dangers that leave parents and society anxious and concerned. It is a time when teens often find themselves under stress as they experience physical and mental changes, including peer pressure in various ways.

Many teens are full of talent and demonstrate great potential which, if carefully nurtured, will produce excellent results. There are many examples of teenagers who have excelled way beyond all expectations. They want to be listened to and be free to share their opinions.

Seeking to fully understand teenagers can be a challenge, especially in settings which restrict their freedom. For many teens, the church is one of those difficult settings. However, a genuine desire to understand teenagers will involve understanding their basic needs and desires, including a sense of Belonging, Independence and Fun.

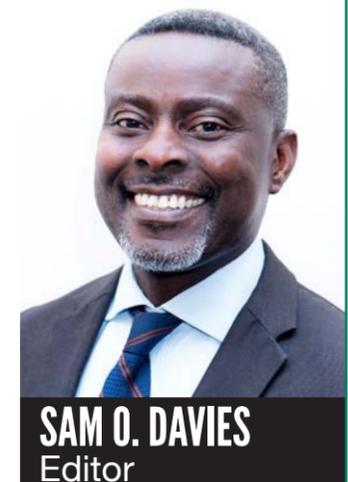
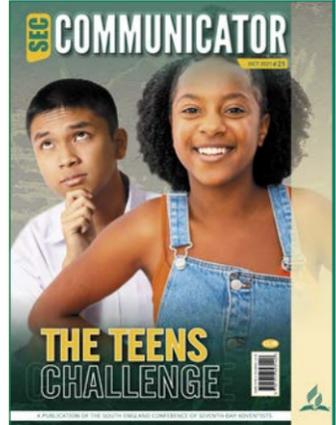
How can we ensure that our teens feel that sense of belonging in our churches which will enable them to experience their full spiritual potential? Teenagers are usually bursting with energy and offer great potential, yet many of them think the church is not interested in what they have to offer. Our teens often feel that they are misunderstood and marginalised.

This edition focuses on the challenges facing our teenagers and highlights how more awareness of their situation can help us to engage positively with this vital segment of our membership and their non-Adventist friends. Are we engaging sufficiently with our teens inside church and in their day to day lives outside church?

"May our sons in their youth be like plants full grown, our daughters like corner pillars cut for the structure of a palace." Psalm 144:12.



OUR COVER



SAM O. DAVIES
Editor

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SCAN ME

the President's Desk

DR EMMANUEL OSEI



Perhaps the most difficult years of one's life are the teenage years. The period when a person is no longer a child but is still not an adult. It's the most testing time. It's a time when the teenager experiments with drugs, alcohol, premarital sex, gangs, bullying, cyberbullying etc.

These are also difficult years for the family as parents try to get their teenagers to conform to the standards and principles which they have instilled in them as children. Navigating through these years is like a minefield filled with nasty bombs. Their bodies are changing physically and mentally as they come to terms with this. Sadly, social media hasn't always been used in a positive way to help our young people with these changes.

With everything the world throws at our teenagers, coupled with peer pressure, it is not unusual that many teenagers, upon entering university away from home and being exposed to different philosophies, decide to leave the church and the faith that their parents cherish.

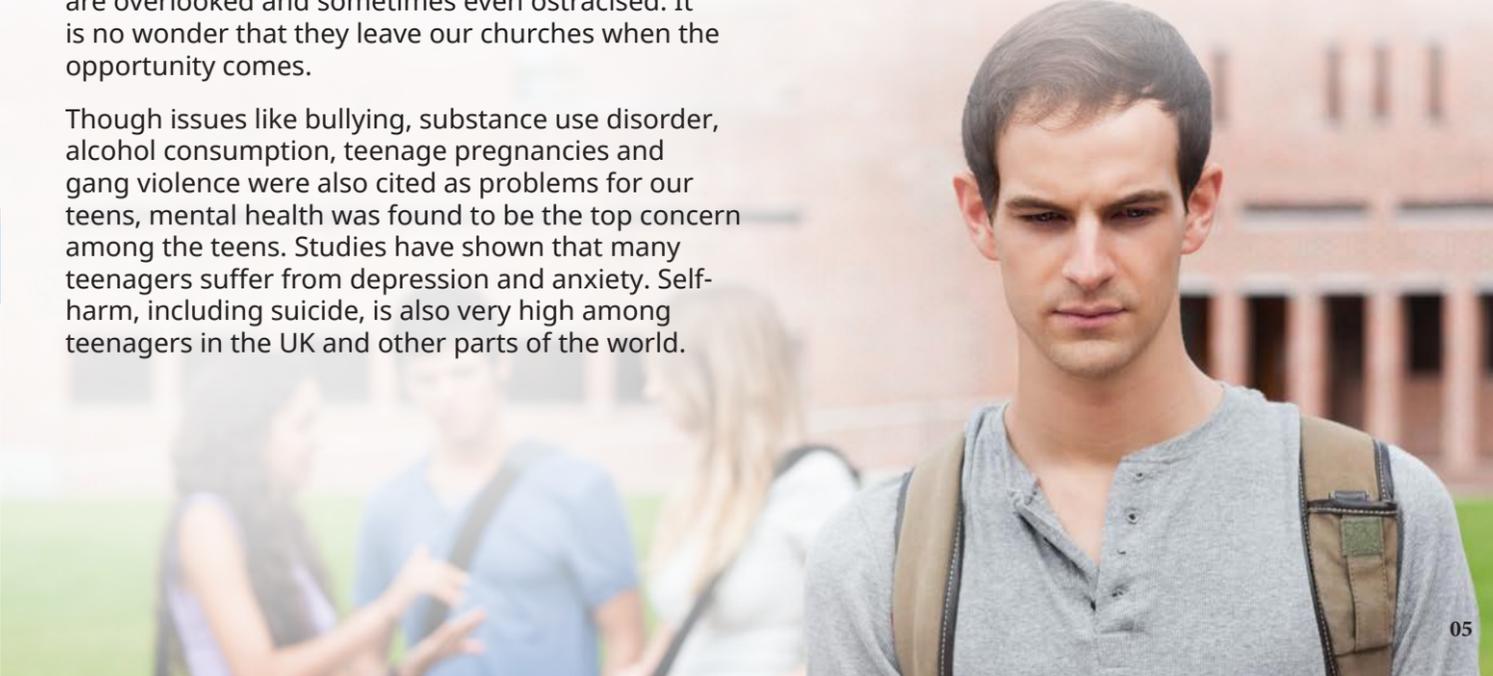
Teens Ministries is perhaps the most difficult department in the church, where one must minister to this age group. Too often in our churches, our teens are overlooked and sometimes even ostracised. It is no wonder that they leave our churches when the opportunity comes.

Though issues like bullying, substance use disorder, alcohol consumption, teenage pregnancies and gang violence were also cited as problems for our teens, mental health was found to be the top concern among the teens. Studies have shown that many teenagers suffer from depression and anxiety. Self-harm, including suicide, is also very high among teenagers in the UK and other parts of the world.

However, it is not all doom and gloom. Many teenagers see life as something that's about to begin. They are full of hope and optimism, envisioning futures of possibility, prosperity, passion, positive relationships and perfect happiness. Some teenagers see themselves as too young to be jaded. The optimism of adolescence can be a powerful resilience buffer when things get tough.

With all that our young people are going through, we need to pray for our Teens Ministries Department as they seek to understand and work with these precious souls. I thank God for Pastor Juan Carlos Patrick and his team who have been working tirelessly by producing resources and presenting programmes for our teens.

Someone has said that "teenagers are usually happier when they're satisfied with their lives and relationships, although nobody is happy all the time. ... It's also about understanding your emotions, taking part in different activities, having good relationships and social connections, finding meaning in life and feeling that you're doing well." As a church, we have this structure to make our teenagers happy. What a great opportunity we have as a church family to minister to our young people.





BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF THE SAVANNAH

One of the most nail-biting and thrilling scenes in Animal Planet is the cheetah chase, especially when the prey is a young lamb, deer or a baby iguana. The chase begins, and the scene leaves you on the edge of your seat the whole time. We take the side of the young deer; we look attentively at the screen; we hold our breath and put down the popcorn; we pray that it will make it and begin to whisper directions as if the

deer can hear our instructions through its own headphones. If the cheetah gets too close, we scream, *run!*

Finally, in the tension-filled final scene, the young deer outruns the cheetah! Now we are screaming to the top of our lungs, *keep going!* And the deer gets away – much to our relief!

Studies have shown that the predators do not choose their victims arbitrarily. Their primary

targets include solitary animals, the young, the sick and the vulnerable.¹

Whether the predators are technological, psychological, human or emotional, their primary targets are our young people – the sick, vulnerable, the forgotten and the isolated. That’s the nature of the savannah that we live in. But

¹ George B. Schaller, *The Serengeti Lion: A Study of Predatory-Prey Relations* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 257

it’s also the catalyst that pushes us to create a space where our young lambs can learn how to outrun the modern cheetahs, have a more fulfilling life and make it to Heaven. Here, in the South England Conference, we call that space Teens Ministries.

Recently, a well-intentioned person expressed why he felt that Teens Ministries is a waste of time and money. He said, ‘We all go through the same thing, therefore put them all together and save a few quid’. I agreed one hundred per cent with the first part, that regardless of age, gender, race or socio-cultural

background, in this savanna, we all go through similar things, in one way or another. However, I kindly reminded him that, while it is true that we all go through similar things, it is also true that we, and especially teenagers, do not process these things in the same way.

Seeing the world through the eyes of a teen is one of the topics we discuss in our monthly webinars. We have seen that, although a teen’s brain is the same size as an adult brain, a teen’s brain works differently. This is because the rational part is not fully developed, and it won’t be until their mid-twenties.² Hence the need for guidance, support, supervision, love, and a structure designed to cater to their specific needs and major challenges.

Jesus understood these vulnerabilities and the nature of the savannah. So, when he was about to entrust his flock to the disciples, he wanted to remind them how dear and important the young lambs are to him. So, he gave Peter a three-fold command to feed his sheep, and the first of these three commands is ‘feed my lambs’ (John 21:15-17). In this verse, the Greek word for lamb

² See Catherine A. Sanderson, *Real World Psychology*, p. 289.

is ‘arnía’ and refers to a young lamb. It denotes the vulnerable and the weak of the flock. They are not as strong as the sheep and consequently become one of the main targets of the predators. Knowing this, Jesus said, ‘*Peter, feed my young lambs.*’ Jesus’ words are for us too, so let us join hands and create spaces in our homes and churches where we can teach our young lambs how to outrun the cheetahs of the savannah, and at the same time provide healing, love and support for them and one another.



JUAN CARLOS PATRICK

SEC Teens Director

TEENS *and our purpose* IN THE CHURCH

I think that as teens in the church, we often struggle to find a purpose. We go to church faithfully every Sabbath, sit quietly, listen to the sermon and then go home. Sometimes we are asked to present a reading, say a prayer, or deliver a musical item; but this still doesn't give a full sense of purpose. Only very recently have I felt I have proper purpose, the sense of really being able to contribute to the life of my church.

In January 2021, my friend Alistair and I were asked to become the Youth Leaders. We said 'yes' to taking this role with great enthusiasm, and over the past year we've organised several Youth Days and helped with the running of Zoom over the lockdown period. We are also planning a youth concert for January 2022 for the young people across the South West. Being able to organise all the events, and seeing how they have blessed other people, really makes me feel as though I have a true purpose in the church and that I am really serving God to the best of my ability.

However, all those events became possible because we were listened to; we were heard and supported in the things we wanted to accomplish. None of it would have been possible without that support from the church. So, I think the key to teens and tweens feeling a sense of purpose in their church, is to be heard and listened to. I feel as a teen in the church, we are often too shy or scared to share our ideas or

opinions, because we are surrounded by people we feel know better. But in reality, our ideas and opinions are often welcomed with great enthusiasm and very much supported, as I found out when I became a youth leader.

So, teens and tweens of the church, I encourage you today; if you feel you have an idea, big or small – an activity, an opinion you have on a decision made in the church or anything else – that you feel would benefit the youth of your church or even the whole congregation, to go and speak to the youth leader of your church or whoever you feel most comfortable talking to. You'll be amazed at how many people you'll bless through the grace of our Father Jesus Christ.



MOLLY JOHNSON

Youth Leader at Weston-Super-Mare Church & Student, BA in Music at University of Bristol

CHALLENGES FACING YOUNG PEOPLE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE CHURCH

Getting involved in the church as a young person has its pros and cons.

You might be thinking, 'cons – how could that be?' Well, experiences differ from person to person. Personally, being surrounded by people of the same faith has encouraged me to play the piano for Divine Services and Sabbath School. This has helped to grow my confidence, presenting to large audiences; and I have become a better pianist. Also, it may have encouraged other young people to get involved in church as well as me!

Although I had a positive experience in this area, other young people may not feel as needed; or they may feel scared like I used to be. This issue can be resolved with experience. The more you involve yourself in church services, the more you will feel comfortable participating in them, in the future.

However, as 'the church' is the people, not everyone will share opinions. For example, a common issue I've found is young people saying that church is boring. An adult may think that the child simply isn't paying attention or listening during church; however, the child may feel like he or she isn't involved during most parts of the service other than Children's Story.

Back in 2018 and 2019, Reading West held many separate Children's Church and Messy Church services upstairs to help tackle this problem, but ever since Covid-19 came, we have not had one of these services! We do have Children's Days where the kids lead out during Divine Service however.

One major challenge faced by everyone has been Covid-19, especially for the young people, as they have had exams (GCSEs) interrupted and missed an entire year of school. My personal experience with Covid-19 has been quite difficult, as it interfered with my first year of GCSEs: Year 9. It was in March 2020 when the first national lockdown started; and from then to September, I was off school with work unrelated to my GCSEs. I missed a lot of content that I needed for my Year 10 end-of-year exams, and it affected my grades and many other students' grades. It must have been worse for Year 11s and 13s during Covid, not being able to sit their GCSEs and getting graded based on classwork.

Experiencing isolation during the Covid-19 lockdown – I found it hard to socialize with others and started getting nervous when I first saw people. When church re-opened during lockdown,

these nerves slowly went away, as I was interacting with people more often. There weren't many pianists coming to church during this time, so I got to play the piano for the Divine Services more often. This also helped with the nerves, and by the end of lockdown, my nervousness was gone! I'm very sure other young people have had a similar experience of a 7-month lockdown, sat at home with nowhere to go.

In conclusion, young people have experienced many challenges, especially during the pandemic. The grace of God has helped us overcome these challenges and helped us to develop a stronger relationship with Him and with the church.



CHRISTOPHER ONDITI

15 year old, Year 11 student. A very talented musician who plays piano, drums and bass guitar. Attends Reading West Seventh Day Adventist Church with his Parents Dr and Mrs Onditi and his brother Robert.



THE TEENAGE CHALLENGE

What is it that happens to our children when they become adolescents?

The first time we hear Jesus speak, he is a 12-year-old adolescent. He questions his parents, referring to them as “you” and speaks of himself as “I”, “me” and “my”. “Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49, NKJV). How are we to understand this? Was Jesus being rude and disrespectful, or was he coming to terms with his own identity? The Apostle Paul says, ‘When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things’ (1 Corinthians 13:11, NKJV).

So, what is adolescence? Adolescence is God’s way of transforming a child into an adult. All adolescents, just like Jesus, begin to form their own identities. They

begin to think about who they are, what they believe and what kind of person they want to become.

Before adolescence, the child gains their understanding of the world primarily from their parents. Their parents teach them how to behave socially, how to understand the world and the difference between right and wrong. But when they enter adolescence, God gives them the ability to think for themselves. They begin to compare what their parents have taught them against their own life experiences.

Jesus understood adolescence. He understood the internal desire of every adolescent to experience life to the full. Jesus told the story of the Prodigal Son, a young man who wanted to experience life to the full. So, he left home for the big city and indulged in pleasures to his heart’s content.

As I write this article, I am conscious of the fact that I am 58 years old, and that I wish I could be a teenager again. My teenage years were among the happiest of my life. I loved to think about all kinds of moral and ethical issues – care for the environment, abortion and pro-life, IVF treatment, human cloning, equality of races, gender, sexuality and disability. In my teenage years, I discovered girls and experienced both my shyness and my boldness. I recall the first girl I asked to dance with me at the end of year school disco; and how my heart leapt for joy as I held her in my arms. But I also recall drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes and playing 3-card brag in the playground with the other boys.

Looking back, I can see that, just like the Prodigal Son, I had an internal desire to experience life to the full; but I did not have the life experience to determine what was good for me.

The wise man said, ‘Train up a child in the way he should go’ (Proverbs 22:6, NKJV). As a parent, it was both a challenge and a blessing for me to see my two sons go through adolescence. I did not want them to go through the difficulties or make the same mistakes I had.

There came a point when, just like Jesus, they questioned my decisions and asked me to explain my reasons and rationale. They spoke about themselves in the first person – ‘I’, ‘me’ and ‘my’.

When they were children, I could simply say ‘No!’, and that was the beginning, middle and end of the discussion. But when they became adolescents, I could no longer do that. I had to change my parenting style from ‘Thus says the Lord’ to ‘Come now and let us reason together.’

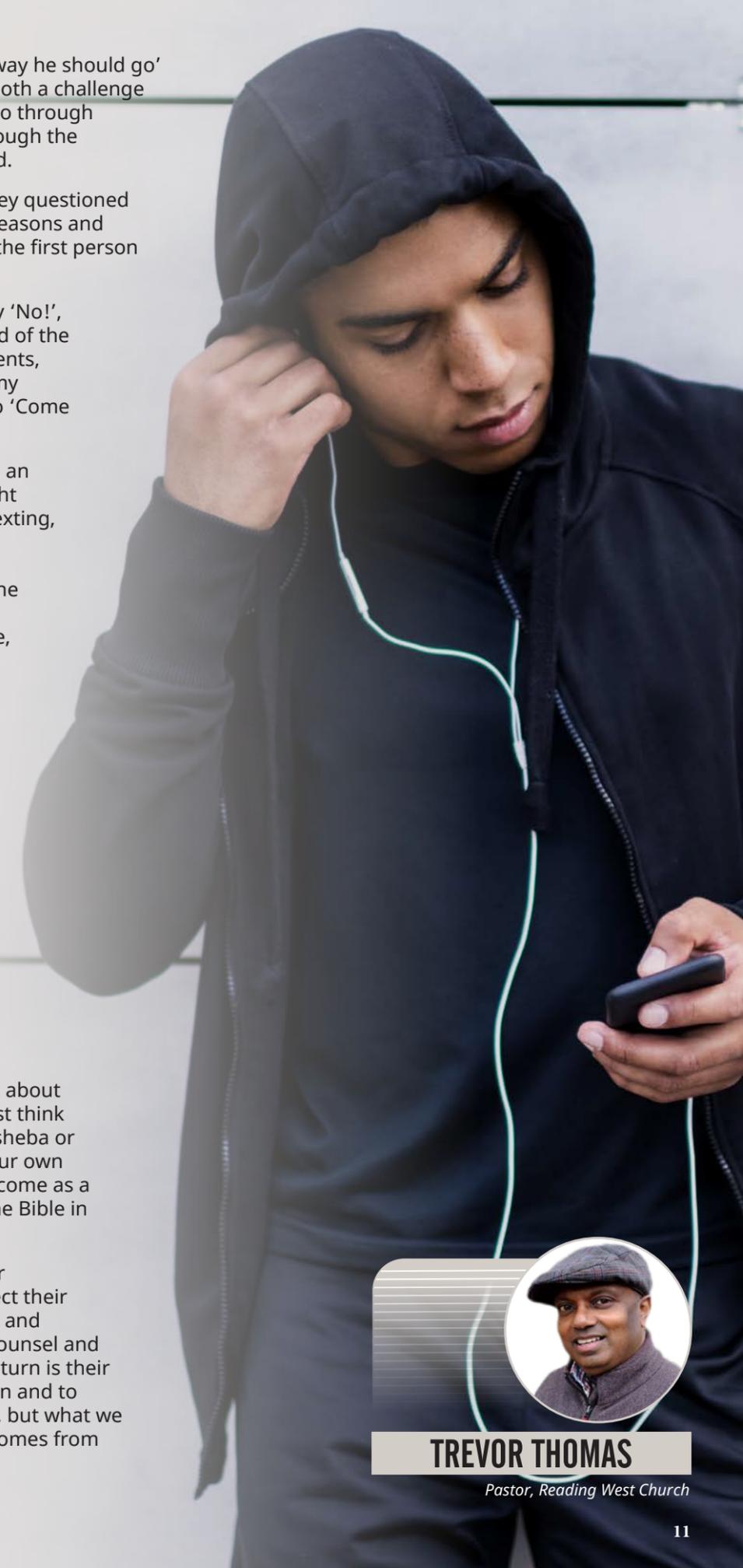
When Pastor Sam Davies asked me to write an article on ‘The Teenage Challenge’, I thought about the internet, the pornography, the sexting, the cyber-bullying, the immoral influence of complete strangers. I thought about the influence of the education system here in the UK that has normalised aspects of human relationships. I thought about youth culture, the music, the drugs and the sexual abandonment.

These are all massive challenges, but perhaps the biggest challenge facing our teenagers is that of their relationship with their parents.

Paul says, ‘For whatever things were written before were written for our learning’ (Romans 15:4, NKJV). The Bible is a book of stories, and Jesus was the greatest storyteller. Somehow, Jesus understood that people don’t like to be told what to think; so instead, Jesus told them stories and then allowed people to think about the meaning of those stories for themselves.

The Bible tells stories that cause us to think about all kinds of moral and ethical questions. Just think about the stories of Dinah, David and Bathsheba or Naboth. And what about the stories from our own life experiences! The values we hold today come as a result of the lessons we have learnt from the Bible in conjunction with our own life experiences.

It takes time to build a relationship with our adolescent teenagers – to accept and respect their individuality, to speak with them as a guide and mentor, a friend they can turn to for wise counsel and advice. It takes time, but what we gain in return is their trust, their respect, their willingness to listen and to consider what we have to say. It takes time, but what we gain in return is a loving relationship that comes from their individual choice.



TREVOR THOMAS
Pastor, Reading West Church



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ADVENTIST TEENAGER IN THE 21ST CENTURY

What is it like to live as an Adventist Christian teenager in the 21st century? It can be fun and yet can be challenging to stay on track. It is so easy to get carried away with worldly pleasures nowadays. With the technology we have now, it seems everybody wants to fit in. Romans 12:2 strongly urges to not be conformed to this world. There are many things in this world that have become acceptable, and people have been blinded by this, not being able to tell what is right and what is wrong. Only by God's strength can our minds be completely transformed to overcome the temptations and fears of this earth. It is simple to say that it would have been easier being a Christian teenager many years ago rather than to be one now, as we are always exposed to earthly pleasures. Exposure to things such as technology and social media can turn into a distraction as we grow. It seems like every day the list of things we should avoid just gets longer. What we are facing is real!

As an Adventist teenager, I believe that one of the things that we need to be careful of is social media. Social media has its ups and downs. We can use it to contact our friends and family and for

entertainment; but things can go wrong very quickly. It can become a distraction and be deceiving. Seeing other people and doubting ourselves can affect our self-esteem. Too much time spent on social media can lead to a halt in quality communication with friends and family. There are people who use this platform to influence our thoughts and principles; and if we are not careful, we can be easily swayed until we no longer know what is right and wrong. God's principles should always be the standard we need to follow in all aspects of our life.

Another issue that we are facing is the pandemic. No one could have predicted this notorious virus, the COVID-19 outbreak. It has affected so many people - families, the young and old - and I am no exception. I can vividly remember March 2020, when the first lockdown was announced due to this virus. There was a sudden change in people's lives - the "new normal", they called it. Wearing a mask at first was uncomfortable, making it a bit hard to breathe. But in order to prevent my family and me from catching it, I had to wear it. I couldn't go to the shops, I could not see my friends,



LUCAS DE GUZMAN

Lucas is a member of Luton Central Church and a Secondary School Student in Year 10. He is active in church and plays the violin. He wants to be an Engineer.

and I could not go to school. Online learning became the new form of education. All homework was done online. The downside of this type of learning was sitting in the same place for several hours and straining my eyes. I became tired of it. I missed going to school and doing the activities there. I missed going to church, and although zoom is used, it's quite tempting to lose focus on the service. Covid-19 has claimed many lives. Many families have mourned for their loved ones; people lost their jobs; some teenagers have lost their focus with their studies; and some have lost their interest in spiritual things. Where do we go from here?

To all Adventist teenagers, I encourage you to be vigilant and keep the faith. The devil is like a roaring lion, looking for us, so that he can easily make us leave our faith. Satan's scheme is subtle and yet very dangerous. To our beloved SDA church, pastors, elders, deacons and parents/guardians, we ask that you include us in your prayers. There are times you may see us taking the wrong path or behaving in a way that Adventists shouldn't. We ask that you do not ignore us but instead, lovingly and firmly remind us. Let us all make a conscious decision to follow God's principles wherever we are. The Lord does not want anyone to be lost. Lastly, let us ponder on this verse: Ecclesiastes 12:1- 'Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth, or ever the evil days come, and the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them'.

INCLUSIVE MATERIALS

Come join us for this webinar and let us explore:

- Practical tips to start right
- How to transform problems to programmes
- Sources, ideas and data collection
- What they need versus what I think
- How to make it practical, fun and spiritual
- And much more



WHERE ARE TEENS AND TWEENS?



What are Teens and Tweens?

Teens and Tweens is a ministry which aims to bring together young people and their families in interactive worship and fellowship, to increase the circle of friendship for all our young people and, hopefully, to increase the probability of retention of our young people in church as they grow up. We strongly believe that there is more reason for young people to come to church, to stay and develop faith, if there are strong existing friendship bonds in place.

By the way, just to be clear, a 'tween' is a young person who falls into the age range of approximately 8 to 12 years, but fast approaching those teen years.

How Did It Start?

Back in 2014, my wife and I observed within our own home church of Cheltenham that our own young people needed to broaden their network of friendships within SDA circles. So, we had an idea to have a day of fellowship for them, whereby they could invite friends (and their families), and we could all enjoy a day of worship and fellowship together.

What Does a Teens and Tweens Day Look Like?

The emphasis on a Teens and Tweens Day is very much about interaction and inclusivity, so a theme for the whole day is developed, the Sabbath School

lesson is dispensed with, and we focus on the single theme. The young people are involved in the services as much as possible, with particular emphasis on musical participation; however, one of the key elements is for the speaker to involve them in the message time. It is not a time for them to sit and listen. Pre-pandemic, all were encouraged to bring lunch and then engage in an afternoon walk, followed by vespers and tea together.

If you want to have more of a taster, please look at the following Youtube clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdIX7KfzWzI>.



Progress and Dealing with the Pandemic

That first Teens and Tweens Day, we had an attendance of about 75 (still bigger than our usual congregation in Cheltenham). Since then, our own Teens and Tweens days have witnessed attendances of up to 170. Other churches have taken on the Teens and Tweens idea and have had even bigger attendances.

Once Covid-19 hit, we were forced to put programmes on Zoom. These have still been attended and, depending on the time of year, we have had as many as nearly 150 devices.

Benefits

Key benefits can be summarised as follows:

- Memorable worship and fellowship for many young people and their families.
- We believe that Teens and Tweens has been responsible for keeping some young people in their faith.
- We understand there have been a few baptisms which have been attributed at least in part to this ministry.

Challenges & The Future

There have been very few challenges, thankfully. Usually, the nice problem has been finding a venue big enough to cater for the number of families who have wanted to attend. However, we also acknowledge the challenge of not knowing how Covid will affect the future of T&T. We will leave that in God's hands.



We are grateful for the many compliments received from young people, parents, pastors and administrators on the effectiveness of Teens and Tweens, and the need for such a ministry. We thank God for giving the inspiration. Long may Teens and Tweens continue!



MIKE BEAMISH

Mike Beamish is from Cheltenham SDA Church and has spent many years working with young people, children and families, all of which he continues to have a great passion for.

PREPARATION IS KEY

Preparing for the unexpected is a statement that has been around for a while and at the forefront of every Christian's mind in relation to the second coming of Jesus. The SEC Teens Ministries department strategically adjusted our programmes to equip the teens and tweens with additional skills on how to be resilient, how to build their confidence and encourage them to use their talents within and outside the church environment.

According to paediatrician Dr Gary Freed, "Isolation during the pandemic may be triggering new problems for some teens, but for others, the situation has exacerbated existing emotional health issues".¹ It was a struggle for the adults to adjust to this unexpected event, however, we feel that the teens were affected by this even more.

This became our focus, and we had to quickly adjust and re-think the way we reached out to our teens and their families during this pandemic. Lots of challenges were experienced during this time, however. Fasting, prayer and consistent commitment of the team gave us the wisdom, renewed strength, and tenacity to keep the teens at the forefront of it all. Our verse of strength was Philippians 4:6-7: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (ESV).

¹ Webmd.com, 'Pandemic Has Harmed Mental Health of Teens', by Robert Preidt, HealthDay Reporter, 15 March, 2021

The "Breaking the Cycle" series and the Prayer and Faith Conference with various speakers, reminded our teens of who they are in Christ, remembering that they are loved with an everlasting love and that through this pandemic, Christ can still be trusted; that despite the challenges and addictions they may be facing, God is able to bring them through. Our virtual retreat was on "Guard Your Heart", with main speaker Dr Chidi Ngwaba, continuing this theme from a holistic point of view. We were able to signpost our teens to the CCS counselling service as another way of dealing with their challenges and getting the help they needed. These were just a few of the many ways that we, as the SEC Teens Ministries team, were able to provide spiritual support and encouragement. Our social media pages were also used as a tool to engage, encourage and provide practical self-help guides during this pandemic.

Our teens and parents have been richly blessed and have felt supported because of the various ways we have been reaching out to them, including through our social media platforms. As everything is starting to return to a sense of normality, we continue with the work God leads us to. Ellen G White says from her final vision, "Now is our time and opportunity to labour for the young people. Tell them that we are now in a perilous crisis, and we want to know how to discern true godliness. Our young people need to be helped, uplifted and encouraged".²

² The Review and Herald, April 15, 1915, 'A message for Our Young People', paragraph 3,



SEIMONE GUNTER

Area 7 SEC Teens Ministries Coordinator

TEEN LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Teen Leadership Training or 'TLT' is proudly one of the flagship programmes in the South England Conference Pathfinder movement. Why do we say this? Because since its inception in 2012, we discovered that this valuable course (inspired by the North American Division model) made a vast difference in the lives of teenaged young people. This 4-year programme, which teens can commence from the age of fourteen, is designed to prepare them for leadership in church, as well as in academic and workplace settings.

However, as teens prepare for leadership, they become aware of their leadership style and are often challenged to look at the impact it has on others. As one TLT graduate reflected: 'Most of all, it leads one to pray for God to take control of every circumstance that presents itself'. '...The course provided me with confidence through public speaking, delegating and appreciating that, although it is so easy to want to do everything on one's own, it is an exhausting way to lead. I found that people have amazing ideas, some that you aren't able to think of yourself.'

So, the programme makes the right impact to prepare teens with the relevant life skills. Participants continue to express the fact that the programme has shown them that it is possible to be a leader. The course makes this possible and provides a platform to lead. As another graduate expressed, 'These are valuable lessons learned.'

Throughout the four years in training, a TLT student may experience moments of mental fatigue from the challenge of having to complete their course requirements to a high standard, whilst juggling other personal commitments. Recognising this possibility, the TLT programme has a built-in robust mentorship element to support every participant.

One senior TLT participant commented, 'The mentorship aspect of the programme really helped me to navigate through the four years. Hence, having a mentor assigned to me was paramount. While I was building a good rapport with my mentor, we learned together the art of communication which helped me to develop confidence and resilience in those periods when I had low motivation and fear of failing.' The TLT

Social Equity
Cultural Vitality
Economic Prosperity
Environmental Sustainability



programme gives great consideration to the provision of sessions on 'Mental Health & Coping Strategies'. Participants are able to converse with professional and volunteer counselling services within a group forum or in individual sessions.

Although the programme is essentially designed to prepare our teens for present and future leadership, another Master TLT commented on their lack of life skills, and expressed appreciation for the impact of the programme, in preparing them for these elements. 'It was only as I transitioned through each level, that I developed those necessary life skills and found them to be fundamental to my everyday life. I cannot praise the programme enough.'

Level 4 TLTs, who by this time are 18 years old and preparing for university, continue to express appreciation for its value: "Becoming aware of the skills offered on the programme, I was able to consider and confidently sign up for opportunities I would have previously evaded". As a result, we have seen that Level 4 Master TLTs are reaping the benefits in their careers. They recognise that organisational and budgeting skills, for example, gave them 'an edge in the workplace'. They are even more punctual and better equipped at 'on the spot' decision-making. The skills they learned and practised are included in this list, which is by no means exhaustive: communication, organisation, planning, teamwork, punctuality, people management, time management, budgeting, procurement, public speaking.

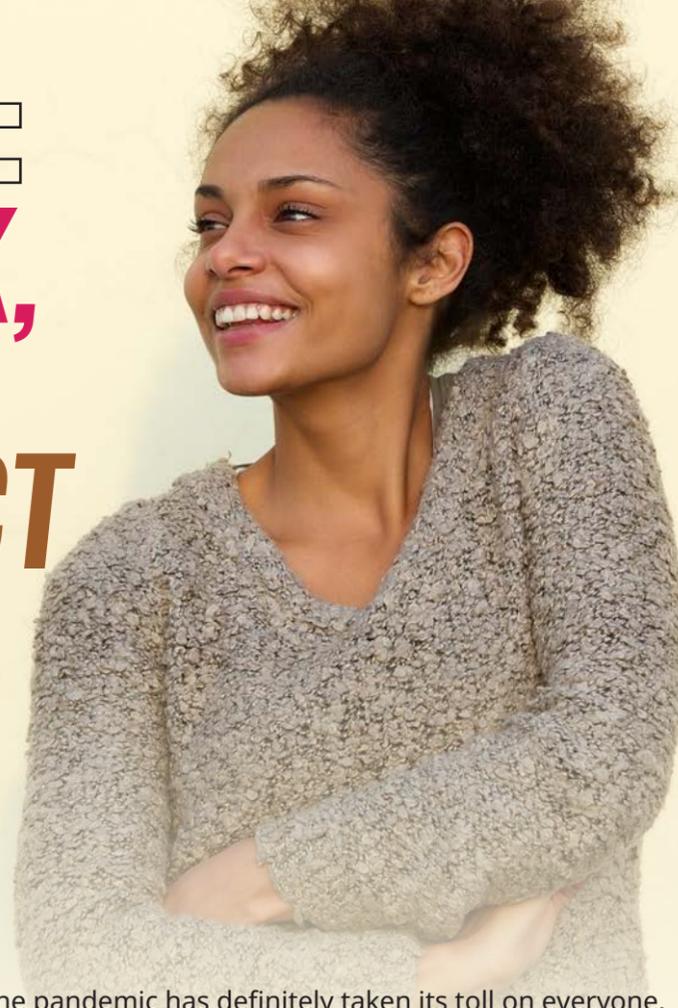
We believe in and recommend the TLT Programme, because we believe young people thrive when challenged, excel when given opportunities and flourish when empowered.



CLIFFORD HERMAN

SEC Pathfinder Director

TEENAGERS: LET'S THINK, FEEL, THEN ACT



Teenagers have things they need to do to look after themselves, like getting enough sleep, eating well, taking care of their personal hygiene, how they present themselves, and finding who they are in the process. Staying on top of these things can make them feel good and give them a great sense of their present and future self. But when they are feeling down, they might find looking after themselves more difficult and thus feel unable to take on life's challenges.

According to Mental Health England, teenagers' mental health is under severe pressure as the pandemic continues; and new research has found that teens are feeling 'nervous, anxious or on edge' and resorting to behaviours of easily being annoyed or irritable'.¹ The consequences are that they have insomnia, and trouble concentrating on things like schoolwork, reading and watching TV, which can lead to:

Anxiety – feeling worried, nervous or panicky all the time.

Depression – feeling down all the time, unable to enjoy life, having a lot of negative thoughts.

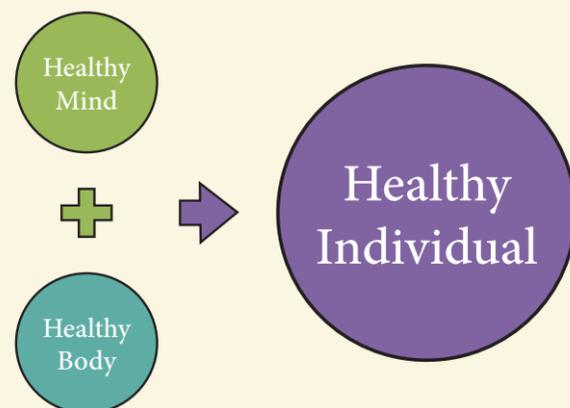
PTSD – changes to mood and behaviour after experiencing something extremely frightening, upsetting or a life-threatening situation.

Psychosis – experiencing 'out of the ordinary' things, like hearing voices or having hallucinations. In some cases, psychosis might also be a sign of schizophrenia.

Bipolar disorder – having very extreme mood swings.

The pandemic has definitely taken its toll on everyone, but teens have been left with a lot of unanswered questions. Even though parents/guardians may try to answer some of these questions, it can be difficult in uncertain times.

Mental health comprises emotional, psychological and social well-being. A teenager's mental health determines how they handle feelings of nervousness or anxiety, cope with stress, relate to others and make choices. It is just as important as their physical health. Just as optimal physical health is achieved through a good diet, quality sleep and regular exercise, optimal mental health requires caring, by spotting and addressing signs of stress and anxiety in the first instance.



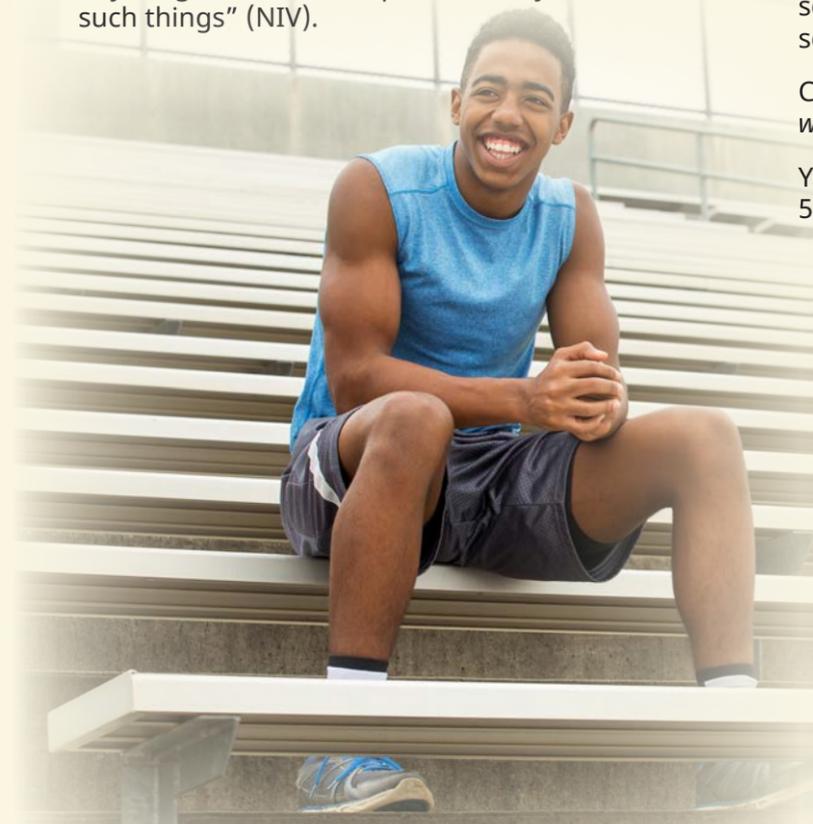
Looking after teenagers' mental health includes looking after their physical health in order for them to function. When these two areas are looked after, it allows teenagers to be able to process their emotions, look at how they feel, what they think about themselves, how they act towards others, and what they do.

The world has become a place of action, so most of the time we are told to do something about situations. The process teenagers then go through is, doing something straight away. This is the action. Then they go away and think about what they did and how it was perceived. Then they start to overthink what people thought of them. This then drags up emotions that may have hurt them in the past.

Teenagers are not asked how they feel. Rather, in most cases, they are told what to do, which for teenagers can be confusing, as their growing minds want to know how they feel.

Emotions serve a purpose. They are messengers of information that guide their decisions and actions. They keep them safe by letting them know if they feel safe or not; telling them who they are, letting them know their likes and dislikes; and helping them to communicate with others.

Feelings serve important roles in effective living, as feelings turn to thoughts. Teenagers' minds are powerful, and their thoughts shape who they are and what they will become. Philippians 4:8 says, "Whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things" (NIV).



FEEL THINK ACT
IS EVERYBODY SAFE?

CHECK REALITY

NO DANGER? DISOBEY THE FEELING'S COMMAND

FEAR OR SHAME SAY "RUN"
FACE FEAR AND SHAME
SADNESS SAYS "GIVE UP"
STAY THE COURSE
ANGER SAYS "FIGHT"
DARE TO MAKE PEACE

WHEN NEEDS CONFLICT FIND COMMON GROUND

RIGHT THE WRONGS YOU CAN
KNOW YOUR CHOICES
REMEMBER WHAT MATTERS

LET GO OF WHAT YOU DON'T CONTROL

ACT WITH HONOR

KNOW WHAT IS POSSIBLE

Teenagers need to be more aware of the environments they find themselves in, the information that comes from different sources and the activities they engage in. All of these go a long way to affect their emotions in positive or negative ways, leading them to try understanding by taking some time to think about the situation, and what they want from it. They can then act in a way that aligns with their belief of who they are or what they want to be. Just taking a few minutes to write down their thoughts and feelings can help our teenagers to be mindful of how they think, feel and act.

If your teenagers tend to overthink and have a lot of negative feelings, it may be helpful to get some help. Contact your GP and the school if it is impacting their school life. Counselling can be arranged through the school or the parent can directly contact a counselling service that works with teenagers.

CCS has qualified counsellors. - 0207 723 8050. <https://www.ccscounselling.org.uk>

Young minds also have a free parent helpline: 0808802 5544. <https://youngminds.org.uk>



HANNAH COMMODORE

Counsellor and Trauma Specialist
www.ccscounselling.org.uk
Email: connect@ccscounselling.org.uk
Tel: 02077238050

¹ Mental health.org.uk, from nationally representative data based on survey of 2,395 British teenagers aged 13-19; Field work from 17 Nov to 1 Dec 2020



DOES THE CHURCH VALUE ITS TEENS?

How to make our teens thrive in church? You may want to pay attention to church culture and attitudes that tend to undermine faith development in our teens, and what we can do about that.

It has been many years since the Lord inspired and led me and my team to create what we now refer to as 'Teen Ministries'. The question can be asked, has the introduction of Teen Ministries done anything to value, involve and keep our teenagers actively and meaningfully engaged in the life of our church community?

There is an ongoing challenge of how to involve teenagers in the life and ministry of our church.

The philosophy which motivated and guided us back then, seems to have been lost along the way. That philosophy was simply this: "Meet them where they are, and journey with them to where we believe that they could be" under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit." The focus seemed to be on pushing the teens toward spirituality, while disregarding the journey that they were travelling on.

But the church has not harnessed and capitalised this approach

because it seems they felt it was too risky. It pushed the boundary too far beyond their comfort zone. The result is that ministry has been stagnated and possibly has lost its cutting edge and relevance to teenagers.

The challenge we face is not new but does require a new approach and outlook. The church body and leadership have to be willing to listen to teenagers, to accommodate their views and perspectives on how they could be incorporated in the life of the church at large, and how they would like to see things done — which is risky to the church at large!

The church leadership must dialogue with our teens, to ascertain how they would like to see their involvement in the life and mission of the church. But too often we say that we are listening, when in actual fact, we have our own agenda that we impose upon the way the ministry is done for them.

We as the adult church have to be willing to take the risk with them. It is unreasonable that we should expect them to 'behave themselves' and conform to the way we want them to be, and what we would allow them to be involved in. Our teens need space to be allowed to experiment,

to explore and try new things, like the pioneers of our church did since its birth and inception.

In the old days, when I was a teenager, there was something we called 'youth club'. I am not proposing that we bring back youth club; not that this reintroduction would be a bad thing, for it wasn't only the events of the club that made the difference for me and my peers. It was the fact of the older folks rallying around us, playing table tennis, slamming those domino cards on the table, with both old and young fellowshiping together. Those times spent together affirmed that we were valuable to the church family. It said that they wanted us around. This is the message that we need to 'show and tell' the teens of our churches!

I am a firm believer in 'socials to save'. Let there be more social events as part of the church programmes. Let there be outings, which the teens can be involved in planning and executing. Let there be socials with a spiritual emphasis. Let them see that everything we do with them has a bias toward them becoming increasingly involved in the life of our church communities, while nurturing them in their faith journey.

To the church leadership, I want to challenge you to dare to be different in shaping our local church ministry toward becoming more teen-oriented; toward inclusion of those precious teenagers and not to plan and do everything in the church programmes around the older folks and adults. Dare to involve the teens in planning meaningful ministries that reflect the progressive mindset so needed to show young people that they are more valuable as the ones for whom Christ died, and thus more important than the maintenance of church programmes, departments, buildings and all the paraphernalia that props up the church.

Our model of youth ministry is now so dated! The model we have, which other churches have used for generations, is now a model of the past. Those churches have moved on. They have allowed the young people to influence and shape the way ministry is done for teenagers. We should become more ministry focused, with more activities that express more compassion for others and not just coming to church afternoon services and programmes that are so lacking in creativity and are therefore ineffective at capturing and holding the interests of our young people, teenagers and children.

I have heard it said that a definition of insanity is 'doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.' If true, then that is our

church is in desperate need of some creative investment which will break the mould of habits, traditions and rituals, to produce different results that will catapult the church into the paradigm shift that will see the young people and teenagers galvanised into a life that will highlight the church in the public's eyes.

COVID-19 and the lockdown afforded us such an opportunity. In my last church (Edmonton) the Pathfinder leader and his team pooled the Pathfinders together to do some meaningful ministry to the folks of our community. They handed out what became known as 'bags of blessings', containing various items of food and other useful products. This was one way of meaningfully involving the teenagers in doing something of benefit to the community around the church.

Why not try something new; think outside the box and see the power of the Holy Spirit at work, as a passionate group of young people pool their energies together for the benefit of people for whom Christ died; for whom He will be returning soon – His faithful church families – to bring them home.



DR DES BOLDEAU

Former BUC Youth Ministries Director, Educator and blogger. MA, BA, P.G.C.E.

method we all use in our lives; however, we don't apply it to everything. Of course, a crisis will push us to consider lifestyle changes or challenge our fiscal operations, and we deal with such issues as they arise. However, we don't wait until we have eaten every morsel in the house before restocking our supplies. We don't wait until we have run out of fuel before including a filling station to our route. We anticipate needs, obstacles, and variables in advance. We book ahead. We put money aside. Mission work is an organic activity; we do not work alone lest we burn out, nor do we "scorch the earth" lest we destroy productivity.

To engage mission, from an organic perspective, is to maintain flexibility and agility while planning, as best we are able, for the context within which we work. And we are ever mindful that, as co-gardeners with God, there are things we should and should not "do". We need to know our sphere of work, and remain out of God's. The parable of the growing seed in Mark 4:26-29 (NIV) reminds us, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain— first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come." Sound pretty organic to me!



WAYNE ERASMUS



"Is this Organic?"

In June 2020, amid the COVID pandemic, my family and I moved house. Some readers will find resonance with the implications of relocation during wider change and insecurity. Too many families have had to manage sudden and unplanned change to their lives over the past 18 months. Change is unsettling and can be difficult to navigate. At times, change also brings new opportunities and serendipitous experiences.

While relocating, I put my name down for an allotment with the Parish Council. The waiting- list for allotments all around the country are notoriously long, and one can wait months, even years, for the opportunity to become an allotment tenant. To my surprise, it was only a matter of weeks before I was invited to come and view the allotment site and to select one of the available plots. And just like that, I became an allotment tenant with an organic allotment association.

Organic is close to my heart. It means paying attention to things like interdependence, multiplication, symbiosis, sustainability, energy transformation and fruitfulness. It means being local, being tuned in and remaining connected to that local community. But it also requires one to be cognisant of organic rhythms, including cycles of preparation, nurture, growth and establishing work. Organic encourages intentionality around cycles of activity and rest that rely on

daily, weekly, monthly and annual rhythms. These principles are true for allotment tenants, for church plants, groups, and established congregations alike. Such natural cycles also find resonance in the Scriptures (e.g. weekly Sabbaths, Sabbath years and Jubilee years).

Working organically does not preclude strategic thinking, the challenging of our assumptions, or the need to periodically take time to check that we are not inadvertently getting away from true organic mission work. Working my allotment reminds me that, despite my grand ideas and high hopes, there are some things that don't and won't grow well in my location. This varies across the allotment site, not just the local area. The height of the water table and being in a "frost pocket" means that some plants just won't do well on my plot. Being on the edge means that some local fauna will gobble my veggies before moving on to other plots. Avoiding pesticides and herbicides means that I must find other ways to deter the bugs and address the ever-present creeping buttercups! But it also invites me to make peace with my environment as I get to know it, working symbiotically with the flora, fauna, and fellow plot tenants.

To work according to organic principles is not an excuse for chaotic operations or poor planning. There will also be issues that will need to be addressed "as they come up". This is a management



SEC DEPARTMENTS

Reports & Articles



WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

Picking Up the Pieces

It all started with the sound of rain drops on the windows and on the roofing of our homes.

The night had come, and we were all tucked into bed after our evening prayers.

I woke to loud noises and the crackling sound of lightning.

The sound of the thunder echoed through our homes as the thunder rumbled through the night. As my brother and I clutched onto Grandma's arms, Grandad was calmly assuring us that all would

be well; it was only a tropical storm.

I never forgot that night, as the fear remains in my heart. The following day there was damage to several homes in our neighbourhood, but God had spared ours.

It took months to repair the damaged homes and, as for me, I remembered always in fear when rain started to fall. However, my community picked up the pieces of our broken homes and started all over again.

Like the storm COVID19 came upon us unexpectedly. Many families lost loved ones, and many are in mourning. We are all trying to pick up the pieces of brokenness that COVID has left.

With this in mind, the SEC Women's Ministries Department have now changed our approach to ministry. We started the year with a thanksgiving programme – "A new start in the new norm" – encouraging women to stand firm in their faith despite all that is going on around us. We are to remain faithful, trusting God in every way. Even though we are facing times of uncertainty, we will continue to thank God for spared lives and remain placing our trust in God, come what may. To God be the glory! We had a total of 2,219 views for that programme on YouTube.

Our next programme was a week-long series of evangelistic meetings, "The gates of hell shall not prevail", with guest speaker Pastor Sherry Augustus from Canada, who reassured us that, once we are in Christ, Satan has no victory in our lives. We ended the campaign with our Sabbath programme, focussing on our mental health, with six psychologists and mental health workers participating.

Not long after, there was a call for women to present programmes on our Adventist Radio London and committed women from culturally

diverse backgrounds answered this call. Every Sunday from March to July 2021, a series of themed programmes were broadcast to give hope and encouragement to women.

In April 2021 Esther Mbruani provided discipleship training to our women, teaching us how we can become effective disciples for God right in our communities. This was well attended, and the women were all blessed by this presentation.

In June 2021 we provided a week-long workshop within the SEC Camp Meeting. These were presented by an Emotional Intelligence therapist and themed, 'What Next?' The presentations were on how to move forward after this pandemic.

In June 2021, we began presenting training – General Conference Leadership Training for Women – where they learned how to be effective leaders in their community.

The course also gave insight into the new Women's Ministries Leaders on how to lead their ministry in their various churches. Over 30 women graduated.

We ended the year with our End It Now programme, where the BUC President and SEC President, along with various departmental directors from both conferences, took a stand and spoke out against Domestic Violence, Sexual abuse, and Pornography.

This was presented on the Zoom platform, where over 2000 viewers from far and near were



able to understand the impact of pornography among the youths and its far-reaching effects. Two brave women shared their experience with domestic violence and sexual abuse. Their story was the hard-hitting reality of the change that needs to occur, where women can live in happiness and freedom.

We then followed with our Great Reunion Retreat, the very first after the COVID19 lockdown. Women came together, 150 strong, thanking and praising God for their spared lives.

A song was written by Janet Williams for this special occasion, themed, "The Great Reunion". This retreat was a little foretaste of heaven, and the atmosphere was thrilling; joy and happiness was felt throughout Hays Wood. We then ended with a banquet where women were able to dress up and come together and dine in love and safety, thanking God for all his mercies and goodness.

As a token of love and inspiration, the women were gifted a 52-Inspirational-Bible-Promises Prayer Journal, written by the SEC Women's Ministries Director, Jacqueline Otokpa.

OUR AIM AT THE SEC WOMEN'S MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT IS TO SHOW CHRIST TO ALL, AS WE MUST WORK THE WORKS OF HIM WHO SENT US WHILE IT IS DAY, (JOHN 9:4) THE NIGHT IS COMING WHEN NO ONE CAN WORK.



JACQUELINE OTOKPA



SEC TEENS MINISTRIES PRESENT

Prayer and Faith CONFERENCE

25 - 30 OCTOBER 2021
10-11AM | 7-8PM

for more information visit

WWW.SECTEENS.ORG

Contact: **01923 232728**

Email: **teens@secadventist.org.uk**



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PERSONAL MINISTRIES

Essential Partnerships in Discipling Teens

Christ's training in Luke 10:1-9 underscored two important factors in making others His disciples: It is both a partnership and a process. An effective disciple maker must partner with other disciples by working in teams, and also partner with the Holy Spirit through prayer. The process of making disciples requires that we intercede, interact, intervene, and invite others to be the disciples of Christ. During this year's school break, we experienced the value of partnership in the discipleship process.

For four weeks during the school break this year, we were blessed to facilitate a summer camp at the Stanborough Secondary and Hays Wood Retreat Centre for teens, juniors and their friends from the Kenyans in Hertfordshire community. The camp at the school ran every Tuesday and Thursday (10 am-2 pm) and had about 50-60 youngsters and 15 adults participating in the different activities. 24 youngsters and 8 adults participated in the residential camp at Hay's Wood from the 4th to the 6th of August.

The camp featured numerous activities geared to instilling life skills and values, such as teamwork, discipline, concentration, observing the rules etc. The programme started with outdoor activities like football, basketball, dodgeball run and others. These were followed by a time of learning, where individuals in groups explored the themes of faith, friendship, fitness or health, and finances and careers. The final session featured group activities, such as bread making, cake decorating, hut building and tournaments. Between the session, there were water and fruit breaks. The day concluded with eating together some favourite Kenyan dishes and everyday teenage snacks.

During the two days residential camp at Hays Wood Retreat, the teens and adults played at the Sandringham play area, swam at the Heacham Beach, told stories around the campfire, and shared in a treasure hunt in the woods. They explored the themes of hope, health and happy relationships. Among the questions discussed were – what is health? – why do we need to be healthy?



– and how does health come about? Biblical insights on the matters were shared in a fun and interactive way. The camp offered the opportunity to affirm, expound and expand positive values and skills among the young people.

The programme succeeded because of the involvement of volunteers and facilitators. Pastor Clifford Herman led the learning on faith, friendship and teamwork at Hays Wood. Judy Clements, Children Ministries Director, facilitated the training of volunteers on matters of safeguarding. Sports trainer Samir and entertainer Lydia helped with the outdoors activities and bead making. The local Fire Brigade and Police Officers facilitated sessions on fire safety in the home, and law and order in the communities. The teens asked questions on racist or hate incidents and crime.

The programme provided an opportunity to interact and intervene in the everyday learning and challenges of our youngsters. This interaction created the environment where they could tell their stories and share their struggles. The stories offered opportunities to bring healing and the sharing of our own stories of God's healing in our lives. They offered a bridge to tell the stories of Jesus and the plan of God for our lives, families, and communities.

The programme opened doors to continue working with the families and the communities. Parents have requested that we organise activities for their teens during their breaks. We hope to support parents with seminars and further interaction on matters of parenting. Other entities, like the local Councils, the Police, the Fire Brigade and sports organisations, are keen to support any activities we do.

Every disciple and church must endeavour to be relevant to their communities. A community-relevant church is visible, valuable, and available to her communities. There is much we all can do for our communities (intercede); do to our communities (interact and intervene); and do with our communities (teamworking and partnerships). I believe that this is part of what Christ called His followers to be in Matthew 5:13-16, when He said, "You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world."



MICHAEL NJAGI MBUI

PATHFINDER BAPTISM CELEBRATION AT WATFORD TOWN

(Author: Watford Town Church Communications Department)

Entering the sanctuary with a guard of honour by her fellow Pathfinders and Adventurers, Riva Ramberan publicly declared her love for Jesus by her baptism on Sabbath 7th August. This was the second baptism for the Watford Town church in as many months, following an extended closure over the lockdown period.

Local Pastor Valentine Roach encouraged Riva and the waiting congregation with the exhortation that following Jesus is the single most important decision one will ever make and is for eternity. Since March 2020, Riva has blessed the church throughout the lockdown by sending the church WhatsApp group a hymn, beautifully played by her, each Friday, encouraged by her supportive mother, Sharon.

Riva gave her testimony of how she made her decision for baptism at the last TED camporee, but she wanted to be baptised in her home church. After extensive Bible studies with Caroline Kamara, local Pathfinder Leader and Richard Henry, local elder, she prepared for her special day. A special slideshow, with music played by Riva, showed her progression from baby to teenager, and now a baptised member of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Pastor Clifford Herman, SEC Pathfinder Director, was in attendance and encouraged Riva with the text 1 Timothy 4:12 – “Let no one despise you because you are young”. Riva was also presented with an AY pin by Pastor Herman. Also in attendance was Pastor Michael Mbui, SEC Personal Ministries Director, who was blessed to see young people dedicating their lives to the Lord.

It was the first time that some of Riva’s family had attended a baptism by immersion service, and many of them commented on how special the service was.

Riva will continue her studies and is looking forward to becoming an active member of the Watford Town Church family.



BE MADE WHOLE

(Author: Darell J Philip)

On August 21st, single Adventists from several churches across the SEC gathered together at the Central London Church for SOLOFEST 2021 – the 8th Annual Day of Fellowship for single SDAs. The theme – *Be Made Whole* –

made the links to finding wholeness through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

An exciting Sabbath School panel discussion led by Ruth Pearson and Arnold Best considered the compassionate treatment and caring response God gave to the prophet Elijah during his spell of depression, with the message that God can make us whole and we should also seek professional help (Cornerstone Counselling Services) when necessary during times of severe crisis.

Singing Evangelist Lois Moodie’s rendition of *Great is Thy Faithfulness* served as a reminder of all the good that God has done for His people, as they begin to slowly emerge from the global Covid-19 pandemic.



Stepping in for guest speaker Nathaniel Peat (due to health reasons), Pastor Vili Costescu, basing his message on *Matthew 1:18-21*, encouraged single Adventists to adopt the characteristics of Joseph and Mary who were both willing to put their status and reputation on the line, in order to follow the call on their lives that led to the miraculous birth of the Messiah.

As those present were anointed by pastors and elders, this good news of salvation was then taken and spread throughout Marble Arch (Central London), to those needing to know that Jesus is the answer for the world today.

The day then came to a fitting conclusion with *The Vaccine* – a play written and directed by S.N.A.G.D. SDA Singles Ministries Director, Anell Smith – which gave a modern interpretation on the themes explored within *The Great Controversy*. The message was that love had falsely been dubbed a virus and was now being attacked by a sinful plot to stop love, by administering the Freezer Vaccine which aimed to wipe out love forever. Receiving ‘The Love of God’ was heralded as the antidote to a loveless society, obtained through a committed relationship with Christ and which ultimately brings wholeness to sin-sick souls.

With many also watching on from the *YouTube* and *Zoom* social network platforms throughout the day, *SOLOFEST 2021* was a day that will be remembered for many years to come, and for some, with anticipation for what’s to come this time next year.

THE PANDEMIC WON’T STOP US

(Author: Errol Anderson)

Like many other churches, we at Balham Church have been determined that the Pandemic won’t stop us from having church. With this in mind, we pursued our plan to hold an annual campaign (albeit with a little twist).

The evangelist from the USA, Claude Edwards, wasn’t able to travel to the UK, but by the use of technology joined us each day for two weeks, August 7th-21st, as he presented the messages and also sang each night online. Edwards, who resides in Florida but was born in Jamaica, is well known as a singer, author and motivational speaker. He was supported by a singing evangelist from the UK, Paulette Prendergast. We watched the meetings on the screen at Church and others, including several visitors, watched online in their homes.

The campaign started with a concert, featuring various artists from home and abroad. Once again, we took advantage of technology, as people presented their items live or pre-recorded. Other artists also participated each night, and we also viewed the Life Colours health videos by Dr Chidi Ngwaba.

The campaign ended with a baptism of four persons. Some candidates had been preparing for months, including the son of the singing evangelist. Those in attendance at church and viewing online celebrated as we knew that God had done it again, despite the pandemic.



FIRST BAPTISM OF 2021 FOR HANWELL CHURCH

(Author: Angela Pinnock)

It was beautifully warm and sunny on the Sabbath of August 14th 2021, as if God Himself was enveloping us – those attending Hanwell church, and all within the neighbouring vicinity and beyond – in His loving arms of care. A truly wondrous and joyful occasion awaited the Hanwell church members, family and friends, as we eagerly anticipated the baptism of the candidate Priscilla Ndlovu, in what would be Pastor Steve Robert’s first baptism of 2021.



In Priscilla’s search for just the right place to worship, where she felt that she really ‘belonged’, she attended a Pentecostal church and various Sunday church denominations. In 2019, Priscilla started visiting Hanwell Church and commented how she very much appreciated how the members of the church always made her feel so welcome.

During this time, Priscilla’s close friend and work colleague Annette, who worked with her at the University College London Hospital, had been a great mentor and offered her a lot of encouragement. Annette, a member at the Stratford Seventh-Day Adventist Church, has known Priscilla for seven years and has been helping Priscilla however she could, printing off Sabbath School lessons her. After some time, and in preparation for her baptism, Priscilla started studying the 28 Fundamentals of the Seventh-day Adventists with Elder Elliot Odle.

HACKNEY FOOD BANK: A LIFELINE TO THE COMMUNITY

(Author: Darell J Philip)

Members of the Hackney Seventh-day Adventist Church have been assisting in the running of a food bank, meeting the needs of hundreds within the community. Beverley Daley, an assistant in the food bank, saw the need after members of the community had asked why the church doors had been closed. “Many members of the community were asking why the church had closed and expressed various needs which they felt we could meet. So, that’s when we decided to reopen our food bank,” said Beverley.

Running two days a week – Mondays and Thursdays from 3-6pm – the food bank has attracted various members within the community facing extreme hardship, including single parents, the unemployed and those who are homeless. Miriam Barham, a member of Hackney and a

retired NHS worker, expressed pleasure in giving her free time to serve the needs of those within the community. "It is a privilege to assist in the running of the food bank and to give something back to those in great need," she said, before adding: "The food bank is an important service to the community because it serves everyone – all echelons of society. There is no shame because at some stage we all fall on hard times, but when we do, it's good to know that the church doors are open and that someone cares."



Marcus Arnold, a member of Hackney Church, delivers food packages to members of the community who find themselves housebound. He said: "I help with the lifting and delivering of food packages to members of the community who are housebound and unable to get out to the food bank. We also deliver food packages to local hostels and the homeless. OAPs are particularly appreciative of the service we offer them, and it's a pleasure to know that we can assist them in this way."

Hackney Church Pastor Joojo Bonnie says the food bank has been a lifeline to members of the community throughout the pandemic: "We have seen the numbers of those accessing the food bank steadily rise, with the number currently standing at 80 individuals per week and counting. We see it as our Christian-bound duty to show the community that we care and that we are available to meet their various needs as much as we can."

PORTSMOUTH'S DOUBLE CELEBRATION

(Author: Portsmouth Church Communications Department)

Portsmouth Church held two baptismal services on consecutive days, one week after re-opening its doors for worship, following 16 months of the Government's COVID-19 lockdown. A total of 9 souls were baptised, following months of Bible study. 3 candidates from our Romanian Church Plant were baptised in the church baptistry on Friday evening 23rd July, whilst the remaining 6 souls were baptised the next day at the Southsea beach.

Both baptisms were conducted by Portsmouth Church Pastor Elliott Williams. For the Romanian Church Plant, twins Patricia and Denisa made their decision to follow Christ around 2 years ago when they started to personally study the Bible more seriously and read the doctrines. The girls decided that they wanted to be baptised so that they could continue in their walk with the Lord and wait for His return.

Reinhard, also from Romania, was born and raised a Seventh-day Adventist and his father is a church elder. During the pandemic, Reinhard noticed that God had changed things in his life that allowed him to see how far away he had drifted from God. From that moment, he desperately tried to get to know Him and His will better. Reinhard was prepared to get baptised in December but had to wait for the pandemic to ease and lockdown restrictions to be lifted.

Sabbath's sea baptism at Southsea beach was broadcast live on Zoom for church members, families and friends who were unable to attend in person. Several members gathered at the church and watched together from there.

A feeling of peace and joy was reflected across the candidates' faces as they emerged from the water. As one was lifted from the water, she raised her hands towards heaven and shouted, "Praise the Lord! I feel like a heavy burden has been lifted off my shoulders. I feel light."

Amongst those baptised were 4 Pathfinders. In true Pathfinder style, their leaders and councillors came dressed in full uniform to show their support. After the baptism, one Pathfinder, Ashley, said, "I feel like I made a really good decision and I'm excited for my journey". Another Pathfinder, Nathan, said, "I feel different with an overwhelming feeling."

Pastor Elliott Williams was joined and assisted by Pastor Mohan Abbasari during Sabbath's baptismal service. Abbasari was the visiting speaker for the day and had earlier delivered a powerful sermon entitled, "Why Am I Here?", on how to navigate identity and true purpose in these end times.

We want to extend a heartfelt congratulations to the 9 candidates who made the decision to follow Jesus. In a time where people are trying to find their purpose in life, and questioning why they are here, we have seen where God has moved to change individual lives. The candidates will continue their Bible studies, and we praise the Lord for the wonderful things He is about to do in their lives. Portsmouth Church is currently holding several weekly Bible studies with further baptisms planned for later this year.



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POEM

Sometimes the church can be so unattractive, and then we wonder why our members are not active when half of the pews are asleep, and all the youth are tryna leave. The house of God should feel like a home.

Because where two or more are gathered He is there also, but how can God be a resident if we are just tourists...passing through with our departure in the back of our minds? Instead of investing in other people's business we should invest in our faith and keep our interest in the Lord.

Because the church is just a 6-letter word if God is not at the centre of it. The church should revolve around God, not our internal hierarchy that places young people right at the bottom,

Forcing them to carry the weight of every wrong on their shoulders, and when we stumble you mumble our names in board meetings... Have you ever wondered why youth leave? Why so many of them stop coming after their parents stop dragging them? Why they start pulling away from church as teens, like a Best Before date?

Sometimes the church can be so unattractive. The church should not be a symbol of endless propagandas: a long list of shoulds and should nots, The church is meant to be family, a safe community Not a building piled up in restrictions and constrictions You con us into your jurisdiction Making people question whether your message is the work of fiction. Maybe we're just as blind as those we're tryna give sight to.

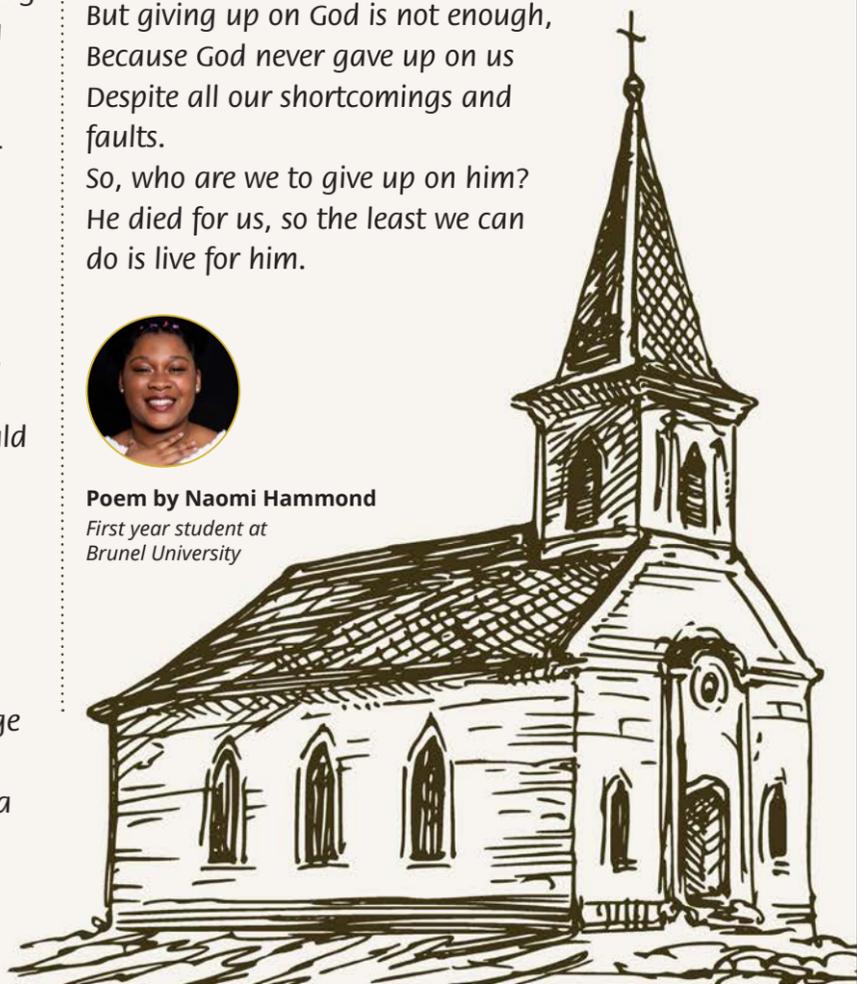
You say the church is a hospital, so why do you play the role of judge better than doctor?

Our role, is to bring people closer to Christ, not steer them away. Sometimes we allow our pride to coincide with our faith, but perhaps it's time we look inside You say to "come as you are", so let your actions speak for themselves And while we're on the topic of speaking, let my people speak, Let us share our ideas, engage us in some verbal diarrhoea Because church should be a home, where we can have open debates, Not closed dictatorships. Dictatorship.

Young people, don't let other people dictate your faith, For every church that may not meet your needs, there's one that will suit you perfectly, And it's your duty to find it. But giving up on God is not enough, Because God never gave up on us Despite all our shortcomings and faults. So, who are we to give up on him? He died for us, so the least we can do is live for him.



Poem by Naomi Hammond
First year student at Brunel University



Devotional

LEARNING FROM THE STORY OF EUTYCHUS: HOW THE CHURCH CAN SUPPORT OUR TEENS

When you read Acts 20:7-12, it tells the story of a young man known as Eutychus. He sat near the window at the third storey in an upper chamber where people were gathered to hear Paul preach. As the sermon prolonged and Eutychus was overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third storey. As a result, he was taken up, dead. Nonetheless, Paul (empowered by God) raised the young man from death.¹ Thus, he was able to live once again. It is interesting that this young man's presence was finally recognised by those in attendance at the gathering, once he had died. Therefore, having read this narrative, it is logical to ask the question why? Why is it that someone could not ask this young man to come and worship with the rest of the congregation? Why is it that it took so long for those at the gathering to eventually notice this boy? Why is it that it took the death of Eutychus to finally let them know of his existence?

It is ironic that, like Eutychus, we also have young men and women who often go unnoticed until something happens to them. To be more specific, these are the teens in our church. In an article by Jennifer Moore, entitled, 'What Are the Top Ten Problems Teens Are Facing Today?', she lists the top ten problems facing teens in the UK as the following:²

- Pregnancy
- Drugs
- Peer Pressure
- Alcohol

- School
- Virginity
- Family Problems
- Gossip
- Body Image
- Violence

One teenager, faced with family problems, stated:

'My parents have recently split and I'm about to do my GCSEs in a few weeks. My dad walked out but still wants to see me, but I don't. Has anyone been through anything similar or got any advice? I'm so anxious and stressed. As it is, I don't know what to do anymore.'³

Another teen faced with challenges in school elucidated:

'I have anxiety and I worry about the smallest things in lessons, like stomach rumbling and swallowing too loud or coughing; and I'm worried it's only me. Does anyone else get it or have advice?'⁴

These are examples of the various challenges that are faced by the teens, including those who are part of the church. As a church, we would do well to be proactive in the lives of our teenagers, as parents, pastors, elders, youth leaders, and the older generation in the church. This is so that, when faced with problems, we are able to provide assistance and support before those difficulties become worse. Philippians 4:13 tells us that we 'can do all things through Christ who gives us strength'.

Consequently, our teens need to be empowered and helped to know that, irrespective of whatever difficulties they may face, they can overcome them through Jesus Christ.

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