

SEC COMMUNICATOR

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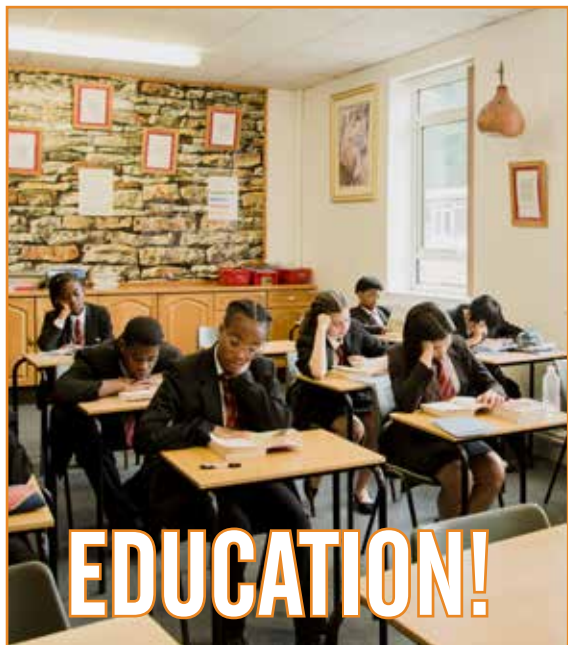
EDUCATION
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CONTENTS

03 EDITORIAL

05 THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

06 EDUCATION! EDUCATION!! EDUCATION!!!

- Adventist Education – Gina Abbequaye
- Primary Education – Laura Osei
- Secondary Education – Eileen Hussey
- Higher Education – Newbold College of Higher Education – John Baildam
- Choosing Secular Education? – Sherrile Hyatt
- Special Needs Education – Khyeiwah Bediako
- Is Home Schooling A Good Decision? – Sam Davies
- Christian Education And The Law – Brighton Kavaloh
- Emotional Intelligence And Your Child's Education – Jacqueline Hinds
- Coaching Your Child To Success – Mfakazi Ndebele
- The Real Burden Of The Home – Augustus Lawrence
- Artificial Intelligence Vs Artificial Intellects – Antonio Belgrave
- Why Adventist Education Matters
- Testimonies From Parents

26 ADVERTS

35 WHEN NATURE SPEAKS, WILL YOU LISTEN? – Onysa Collins

36 PROFILE: ARIS VONTZALIDIS

38 DEPARTMENTAL ARTICLES AND REPORTS

44 NEWS - Onysa Collins

46 DEVOTIONAL - Wayne Erasmus

Editorial

EDUCATION! EDUCATION!! EDUCATION!!!

The Seventh-day Adventist Church places a high value on education and this is obvious from the over 8,500 schools, colleges and universities it has in 115 countries. We believe that the philosophy behind the education a child is exposed to, has so much to do with the kind of worldview they later develop in life.

The Adventist church believes that when it comes to learning, our multidimensional lives require a multidimensional approach, and Adventists aim to provide the complete package. Education is not only about learning for the sake of intellectual growth. Adventists believe in developing physically, empathetically, socially and spiritually, too. Ideally, education should change and cultivate every aspect of our lives, bringing us that much closer to what God originally planned for us to have and to be.

In this issue we aim to highlight the significance of Adventist education; what makes it unique in a society whose educational ethos can sometimes be at variance with the Adventist philosophy of education; and the principles of faith-and-learning that are integrated into the life of our educational institutions.

In the book *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, Ellen G. White says: "the necessity of establishing Christian schools is urged upon me very strongly. In the schools of today, many things are taught that are a hindrance rather than a blessing. Schools are needed where the word of God is made the basis of education. Satan is the great enemy of

God, and it is his constant aim to lead souls away from their allegiance to the King of heaven. He would have minds so trained that men and women will exert their influence on the side of error and moral corruption instead of using their talents in the service of God. His object is effectually gained when, by perverting their ideas of education, he succeeds in enlisting parents and teachers on his side; for a wrong education often starts the mind on the road to infidelity."

We have choices to make for our children and ourselves when it comes to education. By all means, seek to pursue the best of education for your child and also for yourself. However, it is essential to consider pursuing a purpose-driven education. An education that prepares us not only for this life but also for God's kingdom, should influence our choices.

Please explore this issue for a broad view of some of the different challenges currently facing Christian educators and parents across the changing landscape of education in the UK; and consider the schools within our conference, from primary schools through to secondary and higher education, as the first choice for the education needs of your child.

1. Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Assn., 1923), 541.

OUR COVER



Cover Photo: Onysa Collins



SAM O. DAVIES
Editor

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Adventist Radio London

SHARING THE HOPE



On DAB



the President's Desk

DR EMMANUEL OSEI

The ancient Greek Philosopher, Aristotle (384 – 322BC), once said: *"Give me a child until he is 7, and I will show you the man."* Although others attribute this statement to Saint Francis Xavier (1506-1552) or the Jesuits (around 1540's), the idea refers to how important early childhood influences are to the development of character. Perhaps these great minds finally caught up with Solomon, the wise king of Israel who wrote centuries before, *"Train up a child in the way he should go and, when he is old, he will not depart from it."* (Proverbs 22:6, NKJV)

As Seventh-day Adventists, we place a strong emphasis on education. In fact, we put forward the argument that character formation begins when the child is conceived in the womb. Pre-natal influences contribute to the development of the child. In the 1800's we were directed under the inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy that our children should be withdrawn from the state schools and educated at the feet of godly teachers. Many Adventist parents heeded the directive and home-schooled their children. Before long, Adventist schools were set up to train children for the work of evangelism, missionary work and education. Today, our state schools are under tremendous pressure to bow to the dictates of worldly-minded political leaders, pushing an agenda that goes against our Christian beliefs, especially as regards sex

education, sexual preferences, and transgenderism.

Since more and more of our children are attending state schools, one of the great ministries that we have within our church is the Pathfinder and Adventurer Ministry which aims to fill the spiritual gap that state schools are unable to do. The Adventurer Club is a special programme open to all families of children aged 6 to 9. This provides the opportunity for parents to learn and grow with their children. Using arts and crafts, outdoor activities, camping and field trips, the Adventurer Club provides the chance for children to engage in community service projects. This programme enhances the child's natural abilities and opens their eyes to a wider world view.

As the children grow older, they are introduced to the Pathfinder Club where they are taught life skills. The Pathfinder programme is designed for children aged 10 to 15. These young people are encouraged to develop a relationship with Christ by participating in various enjoyable and challenging activities.

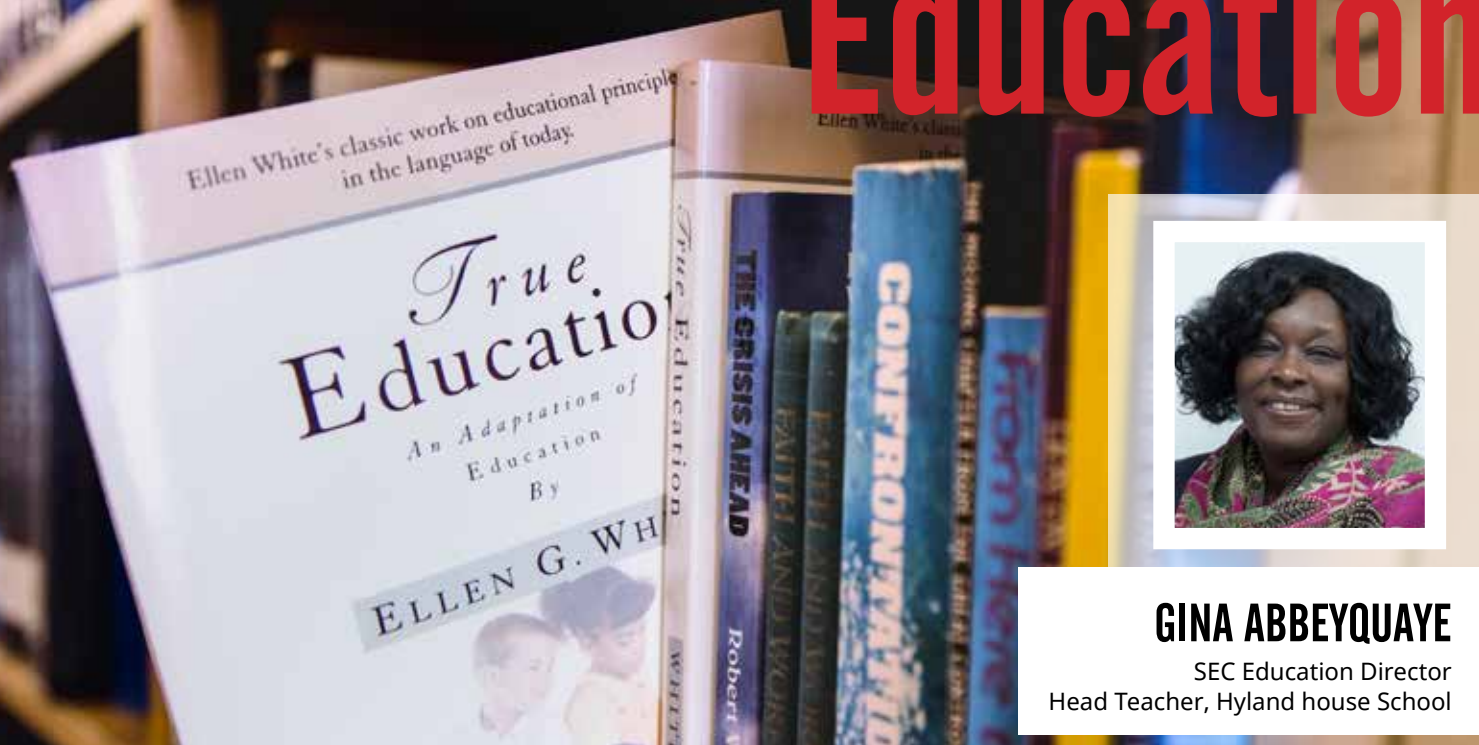
I was privileged to attend the Pathfinder Bible Experience last month where I witnessed young people from the UK, North America and Canada come together in one venue to fellowship and share God's word. There were 186 teams, each

consisting of 5 or 6 Pathfinders. They had spent that year studying the Books of Daniel and Esther, as well as the introductions to these books from the SDA Bible Commentary. These young people were examined on what they had learned by answering 90 questions. The purpose of the Pathfinder Bible Experience is to promote and encourage in-depth Bible study and memorization so that their understanding of scripture will increase and their relationship with Christ will grow.

In an age where secularism is prevalent, it was thrilling to see young people excited about studying God's word and enjoying discussing what they were learning. I thought to myself, the future of our Church is safe and secure in the hands of these young people. Indeed, many members are enjoying a loving relationship with God today because they had the benefit of participating in the Pathfinders and Adventurers Club in their early years.

If more of our children would attend our Adventist schools and if the Area churches would set up Church schools to meet the spiritual and educational needs of our children in each Area, the impact on the future of our church would be a powerful catalyst to evangelise our communities and usher in Christ's Second Coming.

Adventist Education



GINA ABBEYQUAYE

SEC Education Director
Head Teacher, Hyland house School

Wouldn't you like your children, grandchildren, nephews and nieces to be great, successful and wealthy in life? Who wouldn't?

Success is not a term that can be easily measured as it means something different to each person. Some envision a successful student as one who has pristine grades. Others may picture someone who excels at every test, but more often than not, a successful student is one that is motivated, passionate and constantly learning, which is a goal anyone can reach.

Experts have debated back and forth about the formula for success, yet there is not a universally agreed, clear-cut formula for academic success. Can you recognise or name the formula rule below?

$$\int_{x_0}^{x_n} f(x)dx = h[(y_0 + y_n) + 2(y_1 + y_2 + \dots + y_{n-1})]$$

If you are as baffled as I first was, when my son introduced it to me, please don't let it worry you! Because I hope to share with you the formula for true Educational Success.

SET YOUR PRIORITIES IN ORDER

Before our children can even begin to work towards being successful, they must set the right goals. Setting the right goal gives them direction and purpose. To reach physical and spiritual success, they must begin with the right goals. As Christians, our main goal should be to seek first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). After all, our main duty is to fear God and obey His laws (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Adventist Education proclaims *"The Lord is the Master of our schools"*

OUR MISSION

To enable learners to develop a life of faith in God, and to use their knowledge, skills, and understandings to serve God and humanity.

MAINTAIN A HEALTHY DISPOSITION

This principle of achieving and preserving good health—physically, mentally and emotionally—is one that can easily be neglected; but it is vital. Can you be truly successful if you are continually ill? To reach physical and spiritual success, you must begin with the right goals. Glorifying God in our bodies includes maintaining our health (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Since our main goal should be to enter into God's Kingdom, then this principle would also include maintaining our spiritual health. In our Adventist schools, we promote a truly unique and successful Health Message.

ENDURANCE

To be successful at reaching their goals, our children are taught that they should never give up. Our Christian life is compared to running a race (1 Corinthians 9:24; Hebrews 12:1). To successfully enter into God's Kingdom, they must endure until the end (Matthew 24:13).

CHOICE OF EDUCATION

In order to be successful, they must make needed preparations and acquire the necessary education that is required to reach their goal.

Another aspect of becoming educated is to find the best sources to gather information. As they strive to become better Christians, their best source in acquiring knowledge is the Bible. Second Timothy 2:15 implies that we are to study to be approved by God. We also find several proverbs that urge us to gain wisdom and understanding (Proverbs 1:5; 9:9; 16:21-23). Wisdom can be gained by requesting counsel from those who are qualified to give advice (Proverbs 15:22). In our Adventist schools, children learn and succeed at the feet of qualified, dedicated, committed Christian teachers, whose Vision is...*For every learner to excel in faith, learning, and service, blending biblical truth and academic achievement to honour God and bless others.*

THE APPROACH AND PHILOSOPHY OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes God as the ultimate source of existence, truth, and power. In the beginning God created in His image a perfect humanity, a perfection later marred by sin. Education in its broadest sense is a means of returning human beings to their original relationship with God.

The aim of true education is to restore human beings into the image of God as revealed by the life of Jesus Christ. Only through the guidance of the Holy Spirit can this be accomplished. An education of this kind imparts far more than academic knowledge. It fosters a balanced development of the whole person - spiritual, physical, intellectual, and social-emotional - a process that spans a lifetime. Working together, homes, schools, and churches cooperate with divine agencies to prepare learners to be good citizens in this world and for eternity.

CORE CURRICULUM GOALS

- Learners will choose to accept God as the Creator and the Redeemer.
- Learners will grow in their knowledge and understanding of God's creation.
- Learners will creatively apply their spiritual, physical, intellectual, and social-emotional knowledge.
- Learners will demonstrate their commitment to the Creator through service to others.

These principles show the way to True Educational success. By following these principles, we can claim success for our young ones. They can be successful in this life and, more importantly, reach their awesome potential in the next life! And by the way, I can confess that I needed my son to tell me that the aforementioned formula is in fact the Trapezium rule; indeed, True Education is constantly learning something new each and every day!



Primary Education



Laura Osei

Headteacher, The Eden
Seventh-day Adventist School

Educating Primary Children for Eternity



Recently a young, 17-year old mother was arrested for giving her 12-month old child cannabis to smoke. The video went viral on YouTube.

In the first three months of 2018, the murder rate among black youth in London surpassed that of New York - black children killing black children! As a teacher with 40 years' experience, I never thought I would reach the stage where I would throw my arms in the air with exasperation at the state of education and at the deaths of so many of our young people. My prayers have radically changed to pleading: 'My God, come now; it's too much!' I'm at a loss, dumbfounded, and so deeply despairing. I am tempted to run away from it all. It's that bad! It just can't seem to get any worse!

But it does get worse! In our UK state schools, children are being taught to accept and appreciate alternatives to a heterosexual relationship as common with British Values. Even elementary school children are not exempt. The books that are being introduced in the nursery and primary schools now focus on the alternative nuclear family. Children, at an ever-younger age, are being taught about the sexual

act with pictures and sexually explicit terminology; and Sex and Relationship Education will be a mandatory for our children, beginning at age 5.¹ Our children being force-fed sex.

Do we now understand why God asked us, the Adventists, in the 1890's, to take our children out of the state schools and to eventually move out of the cities? Come on, take a good honest look at the condition of state education and the condition of our youth today. Did God get it wrong? Did our Lord get it wrong when he made this request? Sadly, we knew better; so, we ignored his commands and placed our children in the top league table state schools with the best SAT results.

We turned up our noses at Adventist education. We looked down on our simple schools, laughed at the poor buildings our schools were housed in, criticised the teachers for not being as qualified as the state school teachers, and boasted about the state-of-the art, high tech resources and facilities that our children were now using. We may feel it is worth the risk of disobeying God's warning to take our children out of the state schools because we know best. We may pride ourselves in our

sons and daughters attending the best state primary schools, but what does it profit our sons and daughters if they gain the whole world and lose their own souls?

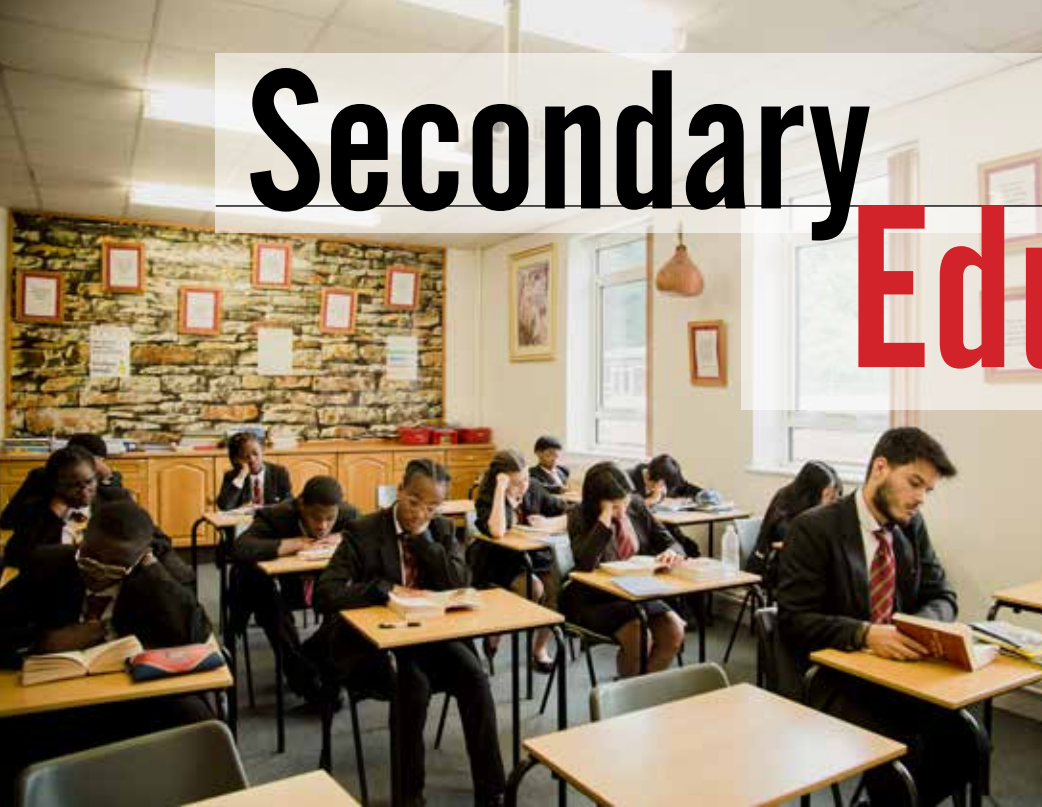
If we are going to learn from our past mistakes, no Adventist child should be educated in a state school. I know we can bring up a hundred reasons why we cannot pull our children out of the state schools, such as, for example, the financial challenges, or the availability of great and well-equipped state schools, or the lack of SDA schools in the local area. Writing in 1886, church leader, education pioneer and prophetess, Ellen. G. White wrote:

"Who knows what constitutes the most essential education, unless it is the education to be obtained from that Book which is the foundation of all true knowledge...To those who feel that their children must have what the world calls essential education, I would say, Bring your children to the simplicity of the Word of God, and they will be safe."²

Think about it- Would you rather that your children were taught in an Adventist school or at the 'feet of the ungodly?'

1. "Children in Wales Will Receive Sex and Relationship Education from the Age of Five", Education Section, Wales Online, 22 May 2018
2. White, Ellen G., "Fundamentals of Christian Education, R&H Publishing, 2011, p.532.2

Secondary Education



VALUES DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Does a Christian education really make a difference? How will educating my child in a Seventh-day Adventist school benefit them in the future? Parents ponder over these and many other questions, as their children embark on the long, sometimes tumultuous journey of education. Most children will spend between twelve and fourteen years in school, so it is imperative for parents to think about, and make informed choices about, this important aspect of their children's lives.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Stanborough School believes in a holistic approach to education and is intentional in developing every aspect of their students' lives. The school's motto: *'God is the Master of our School'*, and their core values of excellence, respect, courage and resilience, along with British values, underpin the work that they do in the school. A further six values are taught each year. This means that students are exposed to thirty values over a five-year period (Years 7 to 11) which will have a far-reaching impact on the development of their characters. The school leaders, teachers and staff are all determined to nurture and grow responsible global citizens and prepare students for the world of work and the world to come. The school has a fine reputation for its excellent pastoral care for both the secondary and international students.

A COMMUNITY

Stanborough School was founded in 1919, initially for the children of overseas missionaries. In 1991 a new building was constructed which housed more spacious classrooms, a beautiful assembly hall, canteen and boarding facilities. The school is nestled in forty acres of lush green fields and has a small woodland area. It shares its campus with Stanborough International School and its feeder school, Stanborough Primary School. The British Union Conference offices and Stanborough Park Church are situated *'on the park'*, further enhancing that community feeling.

Visitors and even government inspectors often comment that the students are friendly, polite and respectful. Students have the opportunity to participate in Community Service Days where they are all taken off timetable to participate in different social action projects: hospital visits, making packages for Small Acts of Kindness charity, collecting donations for Mencap, painting fences and packing shopping at ASDA. They also pack ADRA gift boxes for overseas recipients every year, and the Year 10's have the opportunity to go to India on a humanitarian trip each year. A healthy lifestyle is encouraged and promoted through various activities, like regular exercise in P.E classes, cross-country, sports day, an annual swimming gala and after-school clubs and sports.



Stanborough School

Scholarships and bursaries are available.

Please see the schools' websites: www.spsch.org and www.stanborough.international for further information or contact the Registrar, **S. Poddar**.

Email: spoddar@spsch.org Phone: **01923 673268**

Some Years 7-9 places are currently available for September 2018



Eileen Hussey

Assistant Head Teacher
BA English (Teaching), PGCE, MED

Eileen is currently celebrating ten years at Stanborough School. She loves working with young people and is passionate about teaching. She teaches English Language/Literature and Business Studies.



HIGHER EDUCATION



Dr John Baildam
Principal, Newbold College of
Higher Education



Although owned by and serving the whole of the Trans-European Division (TED), Newbold College of Higher Education is situated on 80 acres of land just outside Bracknell in Berkshire, in the heart of the South England Conference, from which it particularly welcomes students. Founded in 1901 in London as Duncombe Hall College, with the aim of preparing pastors for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is the senior college for the TED and is part of the world's largest Protestant Christian education network, catering for almost two million students in some 200 countries, in over 8,000 educational institutions, 115 of which are institutions of higher education.

The College's educational base

has broadened considerably since its founding. In addition to its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Biblical and Pastoral Studies, Religious Studies, Ministry and Mission, and Theology, it offers programmes in Business Studies, Humanities and Leadership, as well as operating a thriving English Language Centre.

Newbold offers its degrees through Andrews University; Washington Adventist University; the University of Wales Trinity Saint David; and Theologische Hochschule Friedensau, Germany. Additionally, the College is reviewed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, and accredited by the British Accreditation Council for Independent, Further and Higher Education, and by the Accrediting

Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges and Universities.

The staff and students at Newbold hail from a variety of backgrounds, representing up to 60 different countries. A typical academic year caters for some 225 students, supplemented by groups attending Intensives or short programmes. For example, this summer the College will be hosting 25 Doctor of Ministry students; 50 MA Leadership participants; a reunion of over 100 alumni from the 1970s; a summer language programme of over 120 students; and several groups of Brazilian language students, each group at least 165 in number.

The College's ethos is to provide education for the whole person. One of its key objectives is to widen

participation in higher education and to maximise opportunities for non-traditional students. It strives for educational excellence and aims for social inclusiveness, the development of critical abilities, and a strong commitment to its students. Newbold's mission is to foster a Christ-centred and diverse learning community that prepares students for service in an ever-changing world. We are proud to be a life-changing, faith-affirming provider of higher education.

Statistically, as many as seven out of every ten of our youth will leave the Church. We cannot promise that a period of study at Newbold will guarantee that they stay with the Lord, but they stand a far better chance of doing so, if they sample the higher education provision

which the College offers. Every year, students commit their lives to Christ as a result of Newbold's opportunities for spiritual reflection and growth.

I regularly receive reflections from those who have been impacted by our students and staff, as epitomised by the following testimonials:

- My experience with the youth from Newbold, who came from all the continents of the world, was the best I have had in recent years! ... People so different, but with one common thing - their love for the Heavenly Father! (*A young person in Greece*)
- Baptism truly seemed like a good ending to the incredible spiritual, social and educational

experiences I had at Newbold. (*A recent student*)

- As a student myself, I just want to tell you that you have a wonderful institution! (*An external accreditation panel member*)

I encourage our young people to taste and see that Newbold is good - if not via a full degree, then by means of a short programme such as our new, intentionally missional, Year in Mission and Service which we will be offering from September 2018.

Do visit our website (www.newbold.ac.uk) or sign up for our free 'Visit Us' taster programme - and I look forward to welcoming you to the attractive Newbold campus.

Choosing SECULAR EDUCATION?

When it comes to choosing where to educate our children, one thing is certain- we all want the BEST for our children. However, an Adventist parent faces a dilemma: Adventist education or secular?

When I first came to work as a teacher in East London in the 1980s, I was constantly asked at church what I did for a living. Without fail, when I said that I was a teacher, the very next question was: "Do you work at John Loughborough?" This was very perplexing until I rationalised that there needed to be some Adventist input into mainstream education in the UK.

My experience showed me, time after time, that God wanted me in the secular education system. Only when the records are opened will the full extent of God's plan be revealed. As a female of Jamaican heritage, who has worked in a boys' school for over 25 years, I believe that I might be able to steer parents as they try to manoeuvre the minefield of the education system, which can often appear mysterious and complicated.

In an ideal world, an Adventist parent would choose an Adventist school for their child. But what if that isn't possible? No parent or child should be pressured in their choice of school. There are many factors which come

into play: distance to travel, options offered for study or even friendship groups. Often, the link with the local community is a key consideration for a feeling of continuity and wellbeing for the child.

Here are my tips for the child that attends a secular school. Of major importance is that you guard the mind of your child:

In the Primary Sector

- As much as possible, build a relationship with the school. Know who the class teacher is and speak informally with them outside parental evenings.
- Try to attend events at the school or take part, whenever possible, in activities where parents are invited.
- Primary schools encourage parents to be more 'hands on'. Take any opportunity you can to engage with the school. Why? because you are likely to have more influence and be listened to.
- Know what books are being read. You might feel Harry Potter stories are not for your child. Make this known to the teacher.

In the Secondary Sector

- Although the secondary school appears less inviting, much of what applies to the primary sector applies here:
- It is essential that you scrutinise the

Sherrile Hyatt

Retired Teacher and Elder
Edmonton Church



- curriculum, so you are clear what your child is learning. Of essential interest to the Adventist parent are:
- Science for obvious reasons (evolution), Personal Social and Health (PSE or PSHE) which could cover Sex education and the LGBT agenda, Religious Education (RE or RS) for Creation and English regarding the recommended reading.
 - You are legally able to withdraw your child from sex education.
 - If you have the time, why not become a parent governor?
 - The more influence you are able to exert the better.

It is well to remember that we are the salt of the earth. We are there to influence the world for Jesus. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, secular schools, through our Adventist children and parents, can access a little of Jesus Christ. May we be the light in this area of the vineyard; after all nothing is impossible for God. As Mordecai said to Esther: "For who knows if you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this," (Esther 4:14, ESV). Let us hold fast to our faith, wherever God places us. Let us do the best we can in whichever to represent Jesus. Education in a secular setting can be richly rewarding, as long as we place our hand firmly in the hand of God.



Khyeiwah Bediako

BSc, PGCE, MA
Psychology & Special Educational Needs

The way we deal with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in school has changed over the years. I am no expert on the subject, but the designation of SEN has continued to be more and more broadly applied over time. Teachers can find that pupils with a Special Educational Need are challenging to work with, however, this is purely because of the way we perceive behaviour. I am a teacher by profession, and every day I do my best to facilitate an inclusive learning environment for those around me. Yes, that includes teaching a class of 24 (in most cases 30-plus) children, some of whom have a SEN. It is vital to understand the history of SEN teacher training in order to understand why we do what we do.

Government policy has focused, and will continue to focus, on inclusion within educational institutions as a means to produce greater cohesion amongst all communities. This has ensured that if a child has an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan- previously, a 'Statement') the school is provided with extra money to help them overcome any barriers to their learning.

Overcoming such barriers could necessitate anything from provision of a ramp for a child with Cerebral Palsy (CP) to access their classroom more efficiently, to assigning an extra adult during the school day to a

child on the autistic spectrum (ASD). The support given therefore varies, as children, like adults, all have their individual needs.

An average day for a child with SEN, if they are attending a mainstream school, would include a number of activities (Foundation subjects, play and lunch) with their peers. However, to ensure they reach the progress goals required, they may attend a smaller group during core learning (Maths and English, for example). Remember that every child, whether SEN or not, must make progress each academic year. To accomplish this, it may entail that a child be taken out of class numerous times throughout the day to reinforce what they have learnt, depending, as already mentioned, on the needs of the child. A child with ADHD

(Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) may need to fidget a little; others may need to shout out in class, play with a bit of blue tack, get up and walk around, or, in some cases, exhibit anger, and the list goes on. The best way I have heard the SEN environment described is like this: Imagine you are out in a green space or on a

beach, enjoying the sun, and, regrettably, you fall asleep. Suddenly, you awake to find yourself covered in ants. What would you do? Would you calmly get up and wipe them off? Or would you jump up and maybe let out a little scream, as you brush yourself off vigorously? Then, even after they have gone, you still feel them crawling all over you. Now imagine experiencing this every day and, in the case of a child with ADHD, multiple times a day. If you are a parent, you are patient beyond words and are doing an amazing job. If at any point you doubt this fact, then you have the right to request a meeting with your child's class teacher at any time throughout the year. If you have a child with SEN, you may wish to see the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) as well as your child's teacher. Remember, you have a right to get regular updates about how best to support your child. If you do not have a child with a SEN, but you do know of children with SEN in your church, please think hard before you speak and remember to listen. In conclusion, we are all a part of God's family, therefore I am confident that we will continue to try and see things from each other's perspective. In order to interact with others, we need to observe their patterns and then fall in line, or act in a way that is complementary to them. Only then can we build a relationship with another person. Once we have achieved this, I am sure our churches will be more inclusive environments.

Special Needs EDUCATION



Apply Now!

£1999 all inclusive*

Develop new skills that will help you become a successful missionary, and witness to the people and communities you serve.

This programme is divided into two parts:

- Preparation and training (theory) in the form of four modules taught at Newbold
- Mission and service (practice) from one of the following:
 - TED/BUC Irish Mission Project
 - An ADRA-UK project
 - An Adventist Frontier Missions project

This programme is for students who are 18+ and who do not require a visa to study in the United Kingdom because the modules are not taken to gain/and or transfer credits.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
NEWBOLD.AC.UK/YEAR-IN-MISSION-AND-SERVICE

FOR ENQUIRIES EMAIL: INFO@NEWBOLD.AC.UK

YEAR IN MISSION AND SERVICE



IS HOME SCHOOLING A GOOD DECISION?



Sam Davies

Communication & Media Director

Home schooling or home education is when a child is educated at home rather than at school. In the UK it is perfectly legal to educate your child at home, and you do not need to be a qualified teacher to do so.

According to a recent BBC investigation on home schooling, which was published online on 26 April 2018, the number of children being home schooled has risen by about 40% over three years. It stated that, "Across the UK, 48,000 children were being home-educated in 2016-17; a figure up from about 34,000 in 2014-15."

The report cited mental health issues and avoiding exclusion as two of the reasons parents gave for removing children from classrooms.

The government will publish new guidance on the "rights and responsibilities on home education" but councils want more monitoring powers. They are concerned about the quality of the education home schooled children receive as well as "safeguarding" issues, such as the ability to properly protect children from abuse or maltreatment. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-42624220>

There are various reasons why parents decide to pursue home education for their children. It may be for philosophical or religious reasons, or due to their own positive experiences of home education.

The current guidance on elective home education, which was published in 2007, states that parents may choose home education for a number of reasons, including:

- distance or access to a local school
- religious or cultural beliefs
- philosophical or ideological views
- dissatisfaction with the system
- bullying
- short-term intervention for a particular reason
- child's unwillingness or inability to go to school
- special educational needs
- parents' desire for a closer relationship with their children. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/elective-home-education>

Under current rules, parents do not need to register their child with their local authorities. The same is true with Seventh-day Adventist parents in the UK who have chosen to pursue Home Schooling for their children.

Some parents know from an early stage that they want to home educate their child; but here are a few ideas to bear in mind, if this is the choice you are considering for your child:

1. You may want to examine the reasons for arriving at your decision. Consider

critically the pros and cons and whether home schooling will be in the best interest of your child

2. How will you meet the social needs of your child?

3. Have you considered identifying a support network?

4. The council can make an 'informal enquiry' to check if your child is getting a suitable education at home.

5. Your council may be able to help if your child has special educational needs and you want to educate them at home. You only need to tell them if your child has an education, health and care plan (EHC).

6. Though not compulsory, will your local council be aware that your child is being home educated?

Speaking in Parliament, Education Minister Lord Agnew said many parents home-educate for "positive reasons" and it should be allowed to continue "with a minimum of fuss and bureaucracy".

Whatever the reasons are for educating your child at home, you need to be sure that they are getting the best possible schooling outside the traditional school environment.

Christian Education

AND THE LAW

The purpose of this article is to analyse the definition of 'suitable' education as cited in Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 and to explore tension between both church and state ideologies from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective.

In April 2018 the Government issued elective home education [home schooling] guidance in England and Wales for parents to undertake as their obligation in relation to home schooling. The draft version published for consultation states that:

To be 'suitable', education at home should not directly conflict with the 'Fundamental British Values' defined in the Government guidance.

This stipulation, though only guidance, should not be ignored or overlooked by the Seventh-day Adventist community. It is therefore very important, primarily, that those who have opted for home schooling their children should be equally well-versed with this government guidance and provide a clear, constructive and measured response that demonstrates our Christian school ethos.

The government's draft guidance for consultation on elective home education should be understood in the context of pronouncements by Sir Michael Wilshaw, Dame Louise Casey and Lord Clive Stafford Soley. Sir Michael Wilshaw (former Chief Inspector of Schools) raised concerns about a

link between the growth of unregistered schools and an increase in the number of home educated children. He suggested that officials from Ofsted and the Department for Education should work together to consider how the current legal framework around home education should be strengthened.

Dame Louise Casey (Author of the Review into Opportunity and Integration) noted there was no definition in law of what constituted a 'suitable' education. However, she acknowledged in 2007 that the Department for Education had issued guidance using a definition which had been taken from a judicial case, *R v Secretary of State for Education and Science* (1985), and she argued that the 30-year-old case ran counter to British values. She concluded that if Independent Schools were requested to teach fundamental British values, then that should also apply to home educated children.

Lord Clive Stafford Soley introduced a Private Members' Bill in the House of Lords. His motivation for this Bill, he noted, was to prevent home-schooled children from "radicalization, exposure to extremist material and child abuse."

The views of Sir Michael Wilshaw seem to have laid the foundation for current thinking on the home schooling legislative process. This was built upon

by Dame Louise Casey, who recommended that fundamental British values be introduced into home schooling. Furthermore, the activities of Lord Soley in the House of Lords led him to sponsor the current Bill to bring about the changes that Wilshaw and Casey had previously endorsed.

Following the introduction of the legislative process, the impact of potential changes to home schooling in England and Wales are huge. This is due to the added emphasis placed on 'suitable' education which includes 'fundamental British values' as defined in the government guidance, the violation of which could result in sanctions from the Local Authorities. How would this impact our Seventh-day Adventist religious liberty? The approach taken by the Adventist Church organization to navigate through a possible clash with the state over what entails a

'suitable' education is crucial. The government acknowledges that some parents choose to home school their children for 'religious and cultural beliefs' and thus ensure that their education is aligned with it.

Moving forward, I suggest a two-pronged argument in response to the government, comprising legally protected parental rights, followed by a clearly defined, Biblically supported philosophy of SDA education:

A PARENT'S DUTY

1. (a) Argue that Section 7 of Education Act, 1996, gives a parent [guardian] a statutory right to home educate and to provide 'suitable' education for the child at any stage up to the end of compulsory school age. This also applies to a child with special needs (SEN).

2. (b) Argue also that the First Protocol, Article 2, of the European Convention on Human Rights, which provides a Right to Education states that: "No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education, and to

teaching, the state shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions." This means that the state must respect the wishes of the parents, albeit the state has limited discretionary powers to intervene when necessary to do so.

1. Include the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26(3): "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."

ADVENTIST PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

The Adventist definition of 'suitable' education states:

"True education means more than the perusal of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is...It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come."

This philosophy of education should be viewed in the light of the current working definition of the government's

guidance, based on the case law that characterizes 'suitable' education as that which:

"primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he is a member, rather than the way of life in the country as a whole, as long as it does not foreclose the child's option in later years to adopt some other form of life if he wishes to do so."

It is interesting to note the case law definition of 'suitable' education relied upon by the state for guidance, affirms that 'equipping' the child takes place within the proximity to which the child is a member [community] and not to the country as a whole. Against this backdrop, the Adventist definition is very broad and suggests a form of education that prepares children for service in this world and for eternity from a Judeo-Christian tradition. This is not in contravention of the overall working definition of the state, but only goes further because of the community's emphasis on service in this world and 'for the world to come'. Seventh-day Adventists ought to use this common ground to foster unanimity.

The inclusion of 'fundamental British values' in the definition of 'suitable' education infers adherence to the axioms of

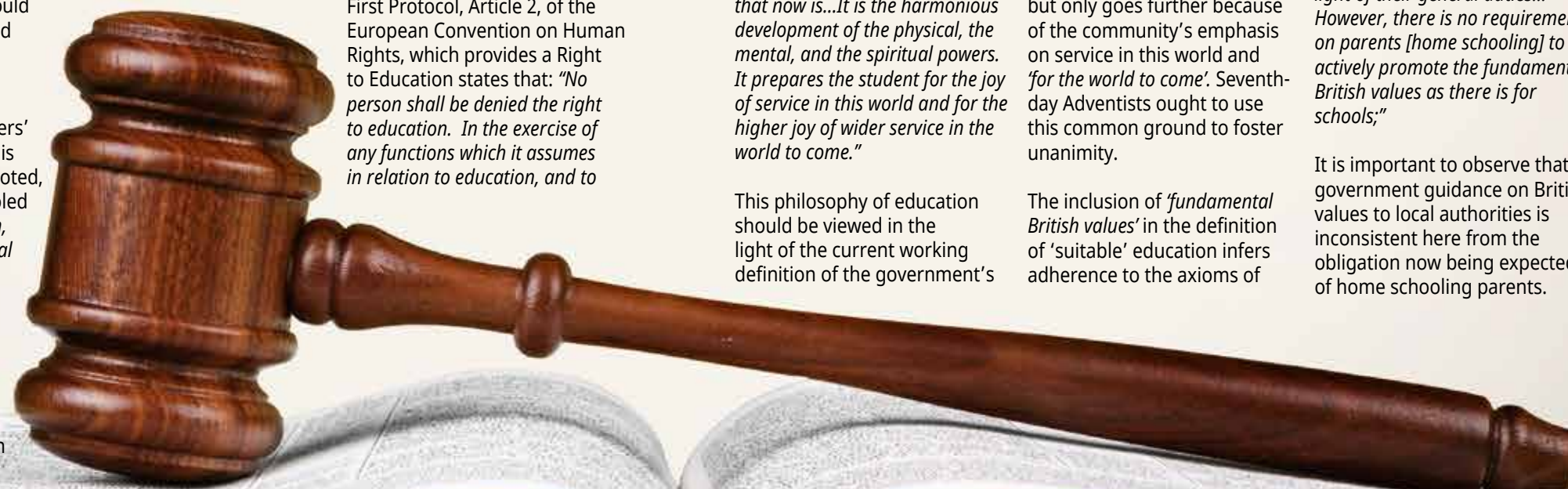
democracy and civility that law-abiding citizens, along with the Adventist community, welcome, including values of individual liberty, anti-discrimination, mutual respect, and tolerance and understanding of different beliefs. However, when fundamental British values, as defined in the Equality Act, 2010, pitches the protected characteristics of 'religion or belief' and 'sexual orientation' as two competing interests, the resulting clash raises issues of religious liberty among Adventist proponents of home schooling. Suffice it to say, the recent Elective Home Education guidance for Local Authorities stipulates: "c. local authorities should interpret 'suitable' in the light of their general duties... However, there is no requirement on parents [home schooling] to actively promote the fundamental British values as there is for schools;"

It is important to observe that government guidance on British values to local authorities is inconsistent here from the obligation now being expected of home schooling parents.

Finally, I kindly request that as many of our leaders (pastors, parents, teachers) and our members, who are able, to actively take part in the government consultation on home schooling, launched by the Department for Education (DfE) on 12 April 2018 till 2 July 2018. This is your time to air your views. You need only tackle the questions that you feel able to do answer. Also, see it as a form of witness; as an ideal and not an ordeal. This consultation presents an opportunity for our church community to share with the state, in a cordial and amicable manner, what we believe. Take it as positive dialogue, not taken as a nemesis. Your contribution might influence the government to accommodate your view. Visit www.adventrlp.com or www.adventrlp.com/useful-links to access the home schooling consultation details underway for England and Wales.



Dr Brighton Kavaloh
Retired Pastor



Emotional Intelligence

AND YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6, NKJV)

How much importance do you place on your education and that of your loved ones? Is there a point in your life where you can say, 'I've reached where I need to be; I've had enough of studying, and what I've got is enough for where I need to be in my life or my career'?

THE EDUCATIONAL SPECTRUM

Education is out there, readily available for everyone. There is no point in one's life's journey where there is a 'last stop for learning', forcing one to disembark. In my role as coach and trainer, differentiation of the knowledge I disseminate allows that knowledge to be accessed by participants of different ages, abilities and dispositions along the educational spectrum.

As a mother, my role as an educator differs from that of my work. I have been using Emotional Intelligence (EI) techniques with my son, who will start secondary school in September. Talking with him about his thoughts and feelings on attending 'big' school, he said that he is fully aware that he'll be the 'little fish in the big pond', but still, he feels ready. I realise that as he grows, so will his knowledge and understanding around EI and its importance in helping people relate to each other. Being able to tap into one's own emotions and understanding the emotions of others is an empowering knowledge and an advanced social skill.

A LEARNING CURVE

We ought never to give up learning or educating ourselves or encouraging others to gain knowledge and understanding about the world sometimes deemed irrelevant. It is never too late to educate, edify or empower ourselves with knowledge. Lifelong learning is vital. Many people may want to gain further formal knowledge but are too fatigued with life to pursue it. After gaining my MA, I decided that I had acquired the necessary qualifications and did not need further education; but God had other plans for me. I went along with His plans, without questioning, and have thoroughly enjoyed the journey.

I pray that as we seek wisdom and knowledge for our own edification and growth, we will not forget that it is more rewarding to share our learning with others, enabling them to feel empowered and motivated to develop and grow.



Jacqueline Hinds
MA (HRD) CEIC MCIPD
Emotional Intelligence Coach
& Leadership Consultant

COACHING YOUR CHILD To Success

Coaching is all about helping people achieve their full potential. As a parent, you have an important role to play as a coach. Why do I say that? One of the architects of the education system, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, in his address to the German nation in 1807 stated, *"Education should aim at destroying free will so that after pupils are thus schooled they will be incapable throughout the rest of their lives of thinking or acting otherwise than as their school masters would have wished... When this technique has been perfected, every government that has been in charge of education for more than a generation will be able to control its subjects securely without the need of armies or policemen."*¹

Later, the influential American politician and educator Horace Mann (1796-1859) utilised and extended this model to include the concept that *"the state is the father of children"*. This was music to industrialists who dreamed of:

*"Limitless resources, and the people yield themselves with perfect docility to our molding hand. ... We shall not try to make these people or any of their children into philosophers or men of learning or of science. We are not to raise up among them authors, orators, poets, or men of letters. We shall not search for embryo great artists, painters, musicians. Nor will we cherish even the humbler ambition to raise up from among them lawyers, doctors, preachers, statesmen, of whom we now have ample supply."*²

While things might have changed somewhat, we are still, essentially, dealing with a system whose object is to put citizens in a box and constrain their ability to think for themselves, thereby limiting their ambition, aspiration and development. True education, by contrast, seeks to empower the individual, to

unleash their full potential by teaching them to think intensively and critically for themselves and not just to be like cogs in the machinery of industry-docile, obedient subjects of the ruling elite.

That is the reality we are dealing with. Our response, I believe, as parents, should be to adopt a coaching approach to education. In effect, it is about undoing some of the 'damage' inflicted by 'education' and 'society' to your child. It is time to remove the brakes that have been, or are being, applied to children's development, and the limitations placed upon their ambition. The goal of coaching would help children visualise and fulfil their full potential. It is about encouraging a desire and developing confidence that they can step into their God-given greatness. Most importantly, it is about helping them develop critical thinking, the ability to analyse situations, problem solve and make decisions for themselves, and to be architects and masters of their own destiny.

Here are the coaching principles you can adopt, outlined in Foundations of Christian Education³

1. Train children to think for themselves: *"as their own capacity and turn of mind will allow, that by this means they may have growth of thought, feelings of self-respect, and confidence in their own ability."*⁴

2. Respect and direct, not control, your child: *"The education of children, at home or at school, should not be like the training of dumb animals; for children have an intelligent will, which should be directed to control all their powers"*⁵

3. Develop your child's confidence, self-belief and self-worth:

a. Help them to *"see and feel that the power lies in themselves to make men and women of firm principle, qualified for any position in life."*

b. *"Direct and discipline them with respect to their peculiar constitutions and capabilities of mind."*

4. Expect the best from your child:

a. direct them to put forth their strongest powers when required;

b. give special attention to the cultivation of the weaker faculties, that all the powers may be brought into exercise.⁶

5. Adopt a holistic approach: *"Many children have been ruined for life by urging the intellect and neglecting to strengthen the physical powers."*

a. Control time on the internet and in front of the TV.

b. Encourage exercise and creativity. True education has to do with the whole person. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers.

"Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it". Proverbs 22:6 (NLT)

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2. Gates, "Fredrick T., The Country School of Tomorrow," Occasional Papers, no. 1 (New York: General Education Board, 1913), p. 6.
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THE REAL BURDEN OF THE HOME

The goal and task that every parent face in the 21st century is both challenging and incredibly complex: raising responsible children who will be able to handle the real world that awaits them.

We live in a society that depletes and drains families, yet the risk must be taken to send children into a world where they have to make life and death decisions. Some of the temptations that our children face includes: the pressures of secularism, campus rape, cell phone addiction, consumerism, premarital sex, alcohol, internet pornography, homelessness and loss of faith. The statistics on teen depression and suicide clearly show the seriousness of the parental task. These risks can sometimes force parents to feel paralysed and hopeless.

The real question is, what is the greatest good that parents can do for their children? Can parents really keep their kids safe from danger? And while I believe that this is hard, I know that, with God's help, it is possible.

First, we can prepare them by modelling a life of joyful, worshipful service. Although, we can't protect our children or shield them, parents can model the empowering principles of faithfulness in service to others. This will look different for every family, whether it be serving or loving their neighbour, managing a small business or serving the less fortunate. Each home or family can be part of greatness by modelling a life of joyful, worshipful service in small things. Faithfulness in service has the capacity to provide for the greatest good of children.

Second, we can prepare responsible children through developing relationships based on love and respect. Love matters because it is essential to brain development in the early years of life. Early interactions between babies and their parents have lasting consequences. We should talk to our children kindly, tenderly and lovingly.

Third, we should teach children that every mistake, fault and difficulty conquered becomes a stepping stone to better things. It is through such experiences that success is achieved. Honesty, courage, being peaceable, self-reliance, discipline, fidelity and chastity are values that prepare children for the future.

Finally, preparing children for the real world requires modelling examples of trustworthiness, loyalty and dependability, unselfishness, friendliness, justice and mercy. These are not easy tasks for any parent preparing children to thrive in an incredibly complex and fast-paced age. Parents today have to work quickly because survival is essential. In 1789 Abigail Adams, wife of American President John Adams, wrote this sage advice in a letter to her son John Quincy Adams:

These are the times in which a genius would wish to live. It is not in the still calm of life, or the repose of a pacific station, that great characters are formed. The habits of a vigorous mind are formed in contending with difficulties. Great necessities call out great virtues. When a mind is raised, and animated by scenes that engage the heart, then those qualities which would otherwise lay dormant, wake

into life and form the character of the hero and the statesman.¹

We can succeed because we have this promise: If God is for us, no-one can successfully be against us. *"In all these things, we are more than conquerors".* (Romans 8:37, NIV)

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Dr Augustus Lawrence
Family Ministries Director

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE VERSUS ARTIFICIAL INTELLECTS



THE ROBOTS ARE COMING!

Like me, you're probably noticing that one of the biggest conversations of our time is the one about Artificial Intelligence (A.I). The super-smart robots are no longer coming, they're here! I personally find the advances in A.I. fascinating and a little scary, all at the same time. A.I. is flying passenger aircraft, performing brain surgery, pulling together complicated legal cases that once would have required an army of junior lawyers, and dare I say it, influencing election results. If that's not enough, rapid advances in the technology mean that most car manufacturers expect to have driverless models on the road by 2025. Now might be the time to consider Plan B if you drive a taxi for a living.

The jury is still out on whether the advances in A.I. and robotics represent an existential threat to humanity or whether they will usher in a new golden age. This leaves plenty of room for debate on its impact on jobs, wages and skills required by the future workforce. As I write this, BT have just announced 13,000 job losses only a few weeks after ToysRUs and Maplins vanished from the high street. Is this the start of a great disruption?

THE OLD FORMULA IS NOT WORKING ANYMORE

There are a couple of questions that I'm holding on the subject of artificial intelligence. What are the implications for society and the future of work? How do we even begin to prepare our children for it?

Some parents think that they can get round this by teaching their kids how to write computer code, but the A.I. is even doing that these days. I'm starting to hear the roar of tiger mums everywhere, as they pick up their sledgehammers ready to smash a robot's head in; anything to

prevent all that extra math and computer science tutoring from going to waste.

All of a sudden, the once tried and tested formula of- *I will do my GCSEs, then my A-levels, then a degree, and then find myself a fat job*- is starting to look really artificial. Even those aspirational jobs like medicine and law, once the embodiment of all that was secure, well paid and untouchable, will not escape the A.I. land grab. So, what now?

ARTIFICIAL INTELLECTS

One thing's clear: the challenges presented by artificial intelligence cannot be met by artificial intellect.

By *'artificial intellect'* I'm referring to one that lacks substance. It is the product of a system that teaches young people how to take tests, rather than giving them real understanding of how the world really works. It creates people who consume everything but are capable of building nothing of lasting value. It produces a mindset where minor setbacks are inflated into catastrophe instead of being a learning experience. It places value only on the here and now and ignores the everlasting.

THE COUNTER TO THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLECT

Where there is light there can be no darkness. In this same way, an artificial intellect is impossible where God is present. Proverbs 9:10 tells us that *"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."* (NIV)

What if there was a system of education that tapped into this source of knowledge and true intellect? A system committed to creating future-ready kids, prepared not

only for this life but also the life to come? A system capable of creating lives filled with purpose? What if this system could produce young people with independent minds and the entrepreneurial prowess of the woman described in Proverbs 31. What if there was a system that recognised that we are all children of a King, which makes us princes or princesses and not commoners?

Thankfully such a system does exist. It's called Adventist education and if we let it, it can be the big game changer for the Evangelism of Everyone Everywhere. Why not support a child in your congregation or a non-Adventist member of your family with a place in one of our schools for the new academic year? Can you turn up the volume on your involvement in Sabbath School for the teens or youth at church? Is it time for you to reinvent family worship in your home? It's all Adventist education!!

So, there's no need to worry about artificial intelligence and the complex future it presents. Instead, lean in and ask God for wisdom, courage and strength, to counter even the possibility of artificial intellects developing where you are present.



Antonio Belgrave
Strategic Development

Why ADVENTIST EDUCATION Matters



Karen Maughn
Non-Adventist Parent

A REAL BLESSING

I was thrilled to have been approached by the headteacher of Hyland House School to share my experience, as a non-Adventist parent, about Adventist education and Hyland House school. I could write a book about the 7 years my son attended the school but will keep my account transparent and succinct.

My husband and I were first introduced to Hyland House School by one of its teachers, Mrs M. At the time we decided on the move as a means to reduce and save costs on private nursery until our son was ready to start mainstream primary school.

At the interview, Mrs S, the nursery teacher at that time, made us feel very welcome, and I was very impressed even at this nursery level. I valued education and bought toys which were fun and aimed to enhance learning. I was impressed with the assessment she gave our son to do, how she identified his needs and prepared how best to meet them. Mrs S communicated every aspect of my child's learning through the famous education packs that are given

every new school year. These packs contained the curriculum, timetable, the home-school agreement and parental information to assist with supporting our child's learning at home. We felt part of our child's learning journey, and Mrs S was readily available if we ever needed to discuss anything relating to our child or his progress.

The end of nursery came, and it was decision time again. We were so impressed with our son's overall development in that short space of time and with how much more this already bright boy had achieved and flourished. This transformation was not only through class work but also through involvement in the wider school life, like Christmas and graduation recitals. We knew, without a doubt, that the only decision we could make was to keep our son at Hyland House. And so, our Hyland House journey began, and the school did not disappoint, year after year.

The teachers are very dedicated, not only to the education of children, but also to the overall development of each and every child. This was evident at every

stage of my son's learning and development. To give an example, when there were changes in the National Curriculum and certain subjects within the curriculum, the headteacher formally wrote and invited the parents in to allay fears and to explain the new changes. Most importantly, however, they explained how they, as a school, would equip themselves to deliver the new curriculum, and ensure that each child's learning would not be compromised.

Behavioural management is important for learning, and although this may be strict, I find it fair and transparent. The issue I had- YES! I had an issue, regarding a non-behavioural matter, and it was resolved in a professional and timely manner.

Our son is now in his final year and, looking back, I can honestly say that we have received top value and more for money well spent. It has been an invaluable experience. I will recommend the school 100%, and I will remain a parent of Hyland House and Adventist education.

“

What parents say...

"I'd like to believe that my husband and I can ensure that our daughters want to have a personal relationship with their Lord and Saviour, that they will grow to value the Seventh-day Adventist faith, and that they will learn to treasure our church. But we don't consider these a given. Of course, we will do all that we can, but we know how children learn from others who are not their parents, especially in today's world. As parents, we can use all the help that we can get. Hyland House is a school where we are secure in the knowledge that our daughters will receive the very best education from highly motivated and skilled staff. At Hyland House, mediocrity is not an option. The school is a breeding ground for excellence. But above all, there is an overriding sense of Christian values within the school."

Parent of Two, Mrs Jada Iyayi

"Four of my children have been, and are still being, educated at Hyland House School. From my experience, the teaching that they have received has been exceptional! The family-like atmosphere and the support that the teachers give, provide a positive environment for children to flourish, and the results can be seen in their academic achievements and exemplary behaviour. During school holidays, my children are often begging to go back to school. As a faith school, I am happy that the Bible based Christian principles are demonstrated and taught to the children. However, I am equally happy that respect and awareness is shown to those who are of other denominations or of no religious faith. I personally find that teachers do not only teach, but always go over and above their duty and are as loving parents to the children in their care. Choosing to privately educate children is a costly financial decision, but I have no regrets in choosing to send my children to Hyland House School. I will always recommend an Adventist, Hyland House education for any parent wanting the best for their child!"

Parent of Four, Mrs Desreen Douglas-Jones

”

Education...

Education has been taught to be the key to life. How can we unlock eternity if we don't teach about Christ? Teach about the way that He can help us in our strife. Teach about the place He's offered after this life.

Teach the world about it with every breath you breathe, Because I'm sure if youth knew this, they wouldn't want to leave. You can't blame us when trials come, and we end up all naïve. Naïve about the fact the devil comes just to deceive.

The church will be empty if we don't swallow our pride. The church is just a building if we enter, dead inside. We can't just come to church and be like Jekyll and Hyde, Come to church GOOD while you're dying inside.

But don't just use your words, use your actions too; Because with every word you speak, your actions have to prove. Your actions must reflect the things that you have gone through. Show the ones around you that you've gone through it too.

Because... I don't want you to fake it, I just want you to be real. Be real about the fact that all people feel, That mistakes are ok, it is not a big deal. The only real mistake... is not learning to heal.

If you really told your testimony, told me just your story, If you did it, not for publishing, but did it for His glory, If you didn't do it for the world, you did it for me only, Then maybe, just maybe, I might "swim" to God, like Dory.

Education is not a pit-stop, it's not a vacation. When you think about it, don't forget God's incarnation; The fact He came to Earth just to offer us Salvation- The gift that marks Heaven as our final destination.

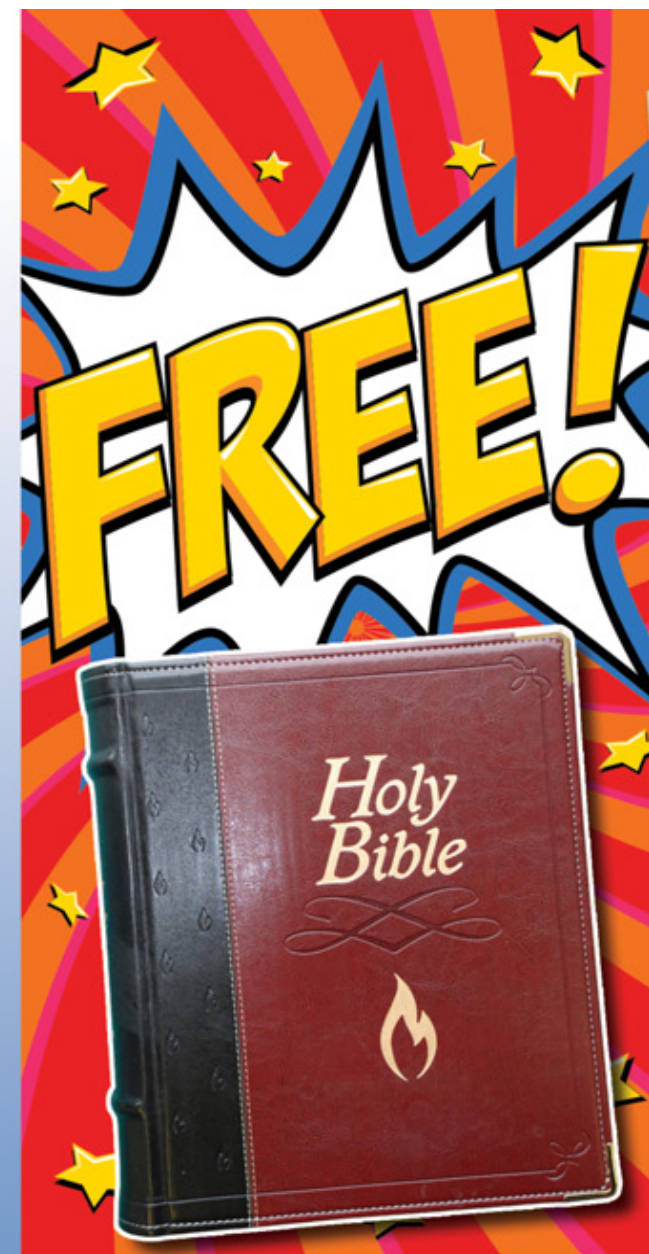
By Naomi Hammond, a 13-year-old



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ONYSHA COLLINS and NORMA BORRETT

JOIN SEC COMMUNICATOR EDITORIAL TEAM

We are delighted to welcome Onysha Collins and Norma Borrett to the editorial team of the SEC Communicator as we bid farewell to Natasha Pujos, Lynette Allcock and Vili Costescu. We are grateful for their contributions since the relaunch of the magazine in January 2017 and wish them well in their new endeavours.



Ms Collins joined the Communication and Media Department on 4 April 2018 and occupies the full-time role of Communication and Media Assistant. She was born in London and went to Stanborough School for her secondary education. She studied at Reading University where she obtained BA Hons in Philosophy and Politics for her first degree before pursuing a BA Hons degree in Filmmaking at The Met Film School, London. She hopes to make a contribution to the vision of the Conference – *'Evangelism, Everyone, Everywhere.'*

Part of her job will involve engaging with Communication Secretaries across the Conference for news stories, news editing and news production. With her background in Film production, she says, *"I relish the opportunity to serve within the SEC and put my creativity and skills towards advancing the Church and assisting the Communication and Media Director in co-producing online and TV productions."*



Mrs Borrett originates from Cardiff, South Wales, but comes to the SEC via California, where she has lived for two decades. She obtained a BA (Hons) in English Literature at the Sheffield University, before completing postgraduate studies at Manchester's Didsbury School of Education. She spent 6 years in Bristol, teaching high school English, PSE, and Drama, before moving to California, where she obtained a California Teaching Credential in English and Language Arts, and continued teaching in public, private and independent home schools.

With her background in education, writing and ministry (her husband, Mark, is the newly appointed minister for Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft churches), Norma is honoured to join the Communicator team as a copyeditor, and excited to be able to *"serve the cause of the gospel in a new and creative way."*

We wish both well in their new roles.

ADVENTIST SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTH ENGLAND CONFERENCE



WHEN NATURE SPEAKS WILL YOU LISTEN?



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"Everything is as it was; yet everything has changed."

It was 2007 when I first read this melancholic paradox. Taken from the novel *'Spies'*, author Michael Frayn wanted to convey the delicate nuances of life that, at face value, seem completely normal, yet an indelible change has occurred. Ten years later in August 2017, I experienced the gravitas of Frayn's statement, when Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma tore through the Caribbean. As a second-generation islander, I was distraught, until the coup de grace - Hurricane Maria. The storm brutalised the island of Dominica, a place I had long considered home.

The plight the Caribbean faced isn't unique to the region. Shortly after, Mexico was hit with a succession of tremors and earthquakes. In fact, the last 30 years has seen the proliferation of *"natural disasters"*.

Whenever reading the latest environmental articles, I'm often disappointed. Write headlines stating that humans are destroying the planet, I exclaim, or that our actions are killing marine life. Instead, I read from The Environmental Defense Fund that *'Climate Change Plunders the Planet'*, or that *'Climate Change is Becoming the Top Threat to Biochemistry'* from The Scientific American. It makes me wonder: If we continue personifying climate change as a thing which acts upon its own volition, aren't we abdicating responsibility for the earth's deterioration? We know not to print paper carelessly, to recycle religiously, or to switch off lights when not in use. The greater issue is accountability.

In Eden, God gave Adam the privilege of having dominion over the earth. God then created Eve to help Adam achieve that mission. God Himself gave them that instruction to cultivate and be fruitful, and so He held them accountable for achieving it. Similarly, whether it's a baptism, a wedding, a recovering addict, a school, a hospital, a working environment; everyone has an accountability partner in some way. One person may hear, *"Why aren't you completing your homework?"* Another person may hear, *"Why didn't you come to work last week?"* Every environment demands some level of accountability. This then encourages us to be responsible.

The same applies to the planet. Scientists report that there is no reversal for climate change; it's only the expediency of the earth's demise that can be delayed. It's interesting that out of the seven plagues listed in The Book of Revelation, four of them are environment-related. Scripture and science agree on one thing: everything may seem to be the same; yet everything is changing. This shouldn't fill you with despair but spur you to work more fervently for the Kingdom, because climate change is reminding us that Christ's return is imminent. So, when nature speaks, will you listen?

Onysha D Collins
SEC Communication and
Media Assistant



PROFILE

Aris Vontzalidis



Certain people are imbued with warmth and a heart for service. Aris Vontzalidis has these traits. *“I want to be known as a loving child of God; someone who cares for others and his family,”* he says. Then adds: *“The work I’ve done couldn’t have been possible without the help of my wife, Sophia. She’s been a rock.”* And how would Sophia want to be remembered? As someone who has been faithful, she smiles; *“someone who has helped people and helped my husband.”*

On a sunny day, in their quaint Watford home, Aris and Sophia sit beside each other, surrounded by memorabilia of their homeland, Greece. They take me on a journey of their lives, through ministry, marriage, and their current mission of impacting their local community.

“It wasn’t easy. I was seen as the turtle who sticks out its neck,” says Aris, pensively, alluding to himself as the steady man who consistently ruffles feathers by challenging the norms. His mentor, David Cox, was one person who helped support and affirm his path, by sharing experience and knowledge. It is from his mentors, as well as from his work, that he draws this counsel to millennials interested in ministry: *“Be respectful to all those around you, whatever*

their position, and make sure that your calling is really from God.”

The calmness of God’s presence fills Aris and Sophia’s distinctly Mediterranean living room, with its open plan living space, ample windows, and walls displayed with Grecian décor. Their homeland, so long a revered pillar of Western culture and influence, now seems tragically upturned and disordered, as if by some ancient curse, like the fabled albatross. I can recall my first visit to Cyprus at the turn of the millennium; then my visit to Athens fifteen years later, after the economic crisis hit. Greece went from being a land of welcoming people, tantalising foods and a vibrant past that was worth every historian’s time and effort, to a place struggling to survive; it’s rich attractions now barely sufficient to provide its basic needs.

Understandably, this is why Aris asserts his determination to continue to help those in Greece who are struggling financially. He pauses, empathetically. Clearly a patriot at heart, he has taken on the burdens of many. I am keen to learn how he presents Bible prophesy to his fellow Greeks, especially considering the fact that, while Greece’s past is celebrated in the West, its references in the Bible are

relatively few. *“My initial contact with the Bible was to prophecy.”* I smile at the irony.

“Daniel 2 was the first chapter that came to my attention. Most people have reconciled the glorious past of Greece to its present-day reality. Greece, like any other nation, has had good leaders as well as those who have fallen short. In my conversation with Greeks, when I talk about God and prophecy, I don’t find a lot of resistance to the idea that Greece has failed. They have the present situation to deal with, which is tragic.”

Within the SEC Aris worked for 26 years to accomplish a specific vision, namely, to guide people within the Adventist church to the understanding that we are all ministers, even though we do not all carry the title of Pastor, Director, or Elder. Starting in the knowledge of God’s character of Love, Aris believes this provides the impetus for one to do one’s part, and not remain idle in the cosmic conflict occurring between God and Satan; for it is a conflict concerning God’s character. As both Director of Personal Ministries and Director of Church Growth, he reiterates the importance of every member understanding the talents that God has given them and using those talents for the extension of His Kingdom and the betterment of the local church. *“Community,”* he enthuses, *“is the stronghold of Church life, and the latter arises naturally from members implementing the former.”*

Aris reminisces on the time he became Personal Ministries Director, before the SEC had a Church Planting Department. The opportunity to fill this need inspired the vision of where people could be placed and what could be done. Aris saw people utilising their talents powerfully for God and, subsequently, with the help of others (few in number, but gifted), they grasped and executed the vision. Today, he draws significant encouragement from looking at the Dunstable plant, amongst a host of others. *“Those leaders have given their time, life and energy to extending God’s Kingdom to people who don’t know God. It’s much easier to speak to other Christians than to speak to people from secular society,”* he states. Evidently those ministers have continued the legacy of Aris’ vision in the work he helped to institute.

Now retired, both Aris and Sophia look back on their ministry within the SEC. Reflecting on the account of their work, and Sophia’s beam only grows. When asked if she would have felt as much joy doing her work individually as collaboratively, she responds, *“I think there is strength in doing things together because one can complement the other.”* Recalling Paul’s encouragement in Philippians 4:13 she adds, *‘I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me’.* Sophia admits, *“It was lovely working together - not just my husband and myself, but all the people on the team whom we worked with and who helped out a lot.”*

Despite the numerous challenges they both faced in ministry, the rewards have been, and continue to be, numerous. Aris credits Joshua 1:9 as the source of encouragement that saw him through the *“fires”* and *“waters”* of trial throughout their ministry. Their track record is a testament to Christ’s strength, God’s presence and submission to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Not only has God’s Kingdom been built up through the ministry of Mr and Mrs Vontzalidis, but His workers have been richly blessed and fulfilled in the process.

“I want to be known as a loving child of God; someone who cares for others and his family,”

DEPARTMENTAL

Reports & Articles

Inspirational Writing Competition

ADVENTIST RADIO LONDON

Since 8th April, we have been broadcasting live to London and beyond. Adventist Radio London (ARL) has been listened to on DAB radio, on Facebook, on the Adventist Radio London website, and on various radio apps, including our own Adventist Radio London App. We are being heard from across the world including South America, North America, Europe and even as far as Australia. These are small beginnings and early days, but we are all encouraged by the blessings that God has already sent our way and we look forward with keen anticipation to the execution of the plans He has for Sharing the Hope of the Gospel commission.

It is our desire at Adventist Radio London to involve you in this exciting ministry. Pastor Julian Thompson, ARL's Religion Editor, tells us how, and shares this message:

One of the questions we've been asking at Adventist Radio London is, how can we create more opportunities to partner with you, the wider church? After much planning, preparation, and prayer, we are very excited to bring you news of our latest endeavour -

The Adventist Radio London Inspirational Writing Competition 2018.

Do you have a passion for the Gospel and a gift for writing? Why not enter our competition, write devotions for ARL and have the opportunity of having them broadcast to London and beyond! Entries will be judged in 3 categories, Young Writers (11 & under), Junior Writers (12 - 17), and Adult Writers (18 +). All broadcastable entries will receive £10, and you can submit as many entries as you like. An expert panel will select the winners, and in addition to a generous prize, each winner will be invited to the ARL studios for an interview to discuss their entry. Your devotion may be the one that convicts someone to change

their life, gives hope to someone in need, or leads someone to make a decision for Christ. Enjoy the process, share the hope, and allow God to use you!

"The pen is a power in the hands of men [and women] who feel the truth burning upon the altar of their hearts, and who have an intelligent zeal for God, balanced with sound judgement. The pen dipped in the fountain of pure truth, can send beams of light to dark corners of the earth, which will reflect its rays back, adding new power, and giving increased light to be scattered everywhere ..." Ellen White, Life Sketches, pp. 214-215. (1915.)

Entries must be received by 30 November 2018. For more information on how to enter, and to view the Terms and Conditions, please visit our website www.adventistradio.london.

God bless you and always remember to be *"confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ"* (Philippians, 1:6, NKJV).

MICHAEL HAMILTON



Another Perspective on Education by Regina Jele-Ncube

It’s interesting and easy to learn a new concept, skill or even a new theory. But... how about learning and discovering the real you? It’s scary, and one wouldn’t probably expect to get any surprises.

Last year I embarked on a journey that I hope will lead to my gaining a qualification in counselling. The training offered by Cornerstone Counselling Services (CCS) has given me an insight into who I am. It is a journey of self-discovery or, if you will, a self-awareness expedition.

Getting to know myself has been both eye-opening and scary. I’m not sure about you, but have you ever seen how you react when you look at yourself in the mirror on some days? There is a little surprise and that wide-eyed look of disbelief at what the mirror reveals. My self-awareness has also brought the same reactions. Unlike the mirror scenario, which revealed defects that I was already aware of, the self-awareness journey has been somewhat different. It has brought to light and reflected who I am.

While it has been rewarding to become more self-aware, the acceptance of this new awareness - what to do with it and learning how to manage it - has required something more. I have become aware of what blocks me from listening and hearing people and aware of my prejudices.

Throughout stages of life, people find themselves standing on the ‘precipice’ as it were, overwhelmed and vulnerable. They could use a listening ear, one that will hear and understand.

When I was growing up, I was constantly in trouble with my mama because, as far as she was concerned, I was ‘hard of hearing’. She would say one thing and

I would do the complete opposite. My hearing was fine, I just chose not to listen and got myself in trouble unnecessarily.

As an adult, I find myself learning about listening differently. I might not get myself in trouble now for not listening and hearing, but I run the risk of leaving another individual feeling all alone and overwhelmed. That is a risk I am not willing to take and, thanks to the impact of this training, empathy has a whole new meaning. I pray that God will continue to work within me, so I can be a better person.

This is just a taster of what the course has offered me so far, and I’m looking forward to finding more about who I am and to acquiring more skills. It’s good to talk, but it’s better to listen.



THEMBIE MAPINGIRE

Training is about observing, participating and facilitating under observation. The absence of adequate training structures, models and routines is one primary reason the church in the South England Conference, and across the globe, is struggling to mature new disciples and to involve the whole church in its full mission. Churches that invest in developing and continuing effective training models will reverse or defy stagnation.

The mission of Christ was to “seek and to save the lost”. Christ came to save and to heal every willing human from a self-centred life and transform them into a Christ-centred one. His methods involved three interrelated actions:

- 1. Christ revealed the Father’s character through acts of kindness and mercy - healing, feeding, touching and sympathising with the suffering (Matthew 4:23-25, 7:28-29);
- 2. Christ’s message was that the kingdom of heaven sought to explain the character of God’s rulership in the personal life and community (Mark 1:14-17, 10:45);
- 3. Those who responded, Christ schooled or trained to live out and share the principles of the kingdom (Mark 3:14, Luke 6:40, 9:1-2, 10:1, 17, John 13:13-17).

Christ chose disciples so they could observe and learn from Him. He involved them in his ministry. He let them replicate his actions and eagerly listened as they shared their experiences (Luke 10:1-17). He then affirmed and expounded their understanding.

Every church that is committed to reflecting the mission of Christ must also embrace the methods of Christ. Such a church must learn to show the gospel, share or speak the gospel and school or train those who respond to live out the gospel. Most churches do well in speaking the gospel but are failing in showing and training disciples to live the gospel.

Effective training in the local church requires leaders willing to learn how to articulate, model and mentor others in Christ’s mission and methods. This was Paul’s message to Timothy: “Be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (See also 2 Timothy 2:2, Ephesians 1:17-19, 4:11-16, Hebrews 5:11-14).

Every church should endeavour to provide at least three levels of training- not just classes or teaching series.

1. The Disciple Makers Training: This training empowers and enlists every maturing disciple to be a disciple-maker. Part of the training involves working with a new disciple to grow them in Christ and working with a seeker to grow them to a disciple.

2. The New Disciple’s Training: This training empowers and enlists every new disciple or new believer to ‘glow’ with Christ as they grow in Christ.

3. The Seekers Training: This training empowers and enlists seekers to become disciples of Christ.

The SEC Personal Ministry Department is here to support every minister, ministry leader and church in realising God’s plan to be a training centre. “Every church should be a Training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath school classes, how best to help the poor and to care for the sick, how to work for the unconverted.” EG White: The Ministry of Healing, p. 149.



MICHAEL MBUI

Sowing and Growing (Part 1)

Jesus says, “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.” (Mark 4:28,29, NIV)

Many commentators view the parable of the growing seed as an extension of the parable of the sower. It is an encouragement to those who are out “sowing the gospel seed” and not seeing the kind of results they were hoping for. A reminder of the truth that things are happening, even when it doesn’t look that way.

The seed is sown (“cast upon the earth”) when families pray together; when our children gather in their Sabbath School classes, and as they engage with their Adventurer leaders. Virtually everything we do for our children is evangelistic, as we sow kingdom seeds into their hearts and lives. And as parents, teachers and leaders go about their functions, kingdom seeds are being sown in adult lives as well.

We sow seeds in the Pathfinder programme; through the Youth events, through Vespers and the Friday evening Bible Study groups. We sow Kingdom seeds in our Adult Bible Study Classes and through our worship services.

Through the Seniors and Singles Ministries; Parent and Toddler Groups; the Feeding Programmes and Night Shelters, we scatter kingdom seeds into the hearts and lives of our community. In our workplaces, along our streets, in our supermarkets; through our College and through our School, we are scattering the Gospel seeds through our conversations; our compassion and generosity. We sprinkle seeds of the Kingdom as we go, dropping them onto the highways and byways of our lives.

The “man” or “farmer” has not accidentally scattered the seed. He has done so with intent. And yes, in the parable of the Sower, the seed falls in some less than productive places. But still, the seed has been scattered with intent.

The parable gives us a glimpse of what the Kingdom of God is like. We scatter

gospel seed into the lives, the hearts, the minds of family members, of friends, even total strangers. But we do not make the seed germinate.

Germination is not the work of the Farmer; and spiritual germination is not in our remit. We cannot change another person’s heart, nor can we give someone else a new birth experience. Our remit is to plant seeds and cultivate them. God alone does the work of renewal, new-birth, and spiritual germination (John 3:8).

Allow me to challenge you: Be more intentional with the gospel seeds at your disposal. Get involved in a ministry. Prayer walk the streets around your home. Seek to sow a seed a day. It might not always be a doctrinal seed, and that is ok. But offer a prayer; speak a word of encouragement and blessing; share a short testimony; do the Christlike thing. And you will be sowing gospel seeds into the lives of those around you!



WAYNE ERASMUS



Our theme this year is: ‘Restored in His Image, Reclaiming the Power’, under the umbrella of the Conference’s Reclamation theme. We began the year by continuing with our ‘Woman of Faith’ leadership programme, in association with the School of Evangelism. The programme focuses on women developing their current skills, discovering spiritual gifts, and creating and maintaining resilience and emotional wellbeing. We are in our second cohort since the course started in 2017.

We have continued to sensitively address the issues of Domestic Abuse. Lorraine Anderson (member of Croydon Church) gave a short presentation at our Evangelism Expo at Newbold College. At our ‘Breaking the Trend’ Day of Celebration (27th January) at the Rock Tower, Holloway, we addressed abuse again in a more detailed workshop. The topics included

- (a) Defining Abuse,
- (b) The Different Forms of Abuse, and
- (c) Practical Tips on How to Respond to Disclosures of Abuse.

We have established links with a local Woman’s Refuge and raised £500 in support of abused women. Two resources were produced through these efforts: a booklet and a bookmark that we hope will help educate people about

the issues of abuse. Please contact our department if you are interested in ordering our resources.

I am happy to report that our Easy Sew School at Balham and Luton Central are going strong. In fact, the sewing school has mushroomed since a number of our churches have started their own sewing schools. Sewing is truly a lost art; it is a therapeutic craft proven to be good for motor skills, such as hand-eye coordination and it also relieves stress and anxiety. More importantly, it is a fantastic way of mentoring and building relationships with children and young people, and it can be used as a witnessing opportunity, in a relaxing environment, to educate women and men about Jesus. Currently we have approximately 2 to 3 persons from the local communities in our schools. Our Sewing School at Balham is run by Margaret Watson, the Community Services Leader, and our Luton Sewing School is run by Mobrey Holness. Both Margaret and Mobrey will be at our Camp Meeting Sewing School this year.

In March we worked in partnership with the Area 7’s Women’s Ministries team and held International Women’s Day of Prayer at the Luton Hightown Methodist Church. Our focus was to simply strengthen spiritual bonds, learn more about prayer and reconnect with God. Over two hundred women attended the

event despite very poor weather conditions. In the afternoon we tackled ‘depression’, what it is, how it affects the mind and body, how to spot the signs of depression, and how to seek help.

I congratulate the women in our churches who are working tirelessly to touch lives. We are thankful for our Women’s Ministries Leaders and their teams who have continued to hold various programmes on prayer, healthy living and social activities that have benefited the entire church family and their local communities. May God continue to strengthen us in all we do in His name.



MASLIN HOLNESS

ADVENTIST RADIO LIVE

Months were spent planning, researching, and marketing before the launch of Adventist Radio London on Sunday 8th April. With radio being a powerful tool for communication, Pastor Michael Hamilton, ARL Director, was keen to capitalise on the opportunity by stating, “We can share the everlasting Gospel commissioned to this Church, with emphasis on the millennials. We’ll empower them to make Christ their choice.”

Under Hamilton’s leadership, seven core team members collaborate in brainstorming relevant topics and organising impactful radio sessions, one of which was an interview with Adventist Dr. Neville Lawrence, father of murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence.



The former SEC Media director, Vili Costescu, and the SEC Media team would be pleased to see their combined efforts ensure Ofcom grant the station their DAB licence. Viewers can listen to ARL here: <http://adventistradio.london>. They can also listen on DAB radio on Facebook and through the App.

SEC STUDENT DAY OF FELLOWSHIP

On Sabbath 14 April SEC Campus Ministries burst into the South England Conference with its inaugural event - the ‘Student Day of Fellowship’. Over 160 students attending the event benefited from inspirational messages, encouragement and empowerment led by Pastor Juan Carlos Patrick, the SEC Teens Ministries Director. Sensing a dearth of guidance for

students within secular campuses and places of study, Pastor Juan organised the event to facilitate an opportunity for students to be involved in a ministry, which differentiated from the already established Teens and Youth departments. It was evident that the intention was to push beyond the superficiality which often plagues student spheres. This came across in the morning session as students split into groups to discuss the most common problems students face, including depression, alcohol abuse, loneliness and how to deal with them.



LONDON MINISTERS’ CORE RESIDENTIAL

The annual Ministers’ Core Residential took place for two days at the De Vere Denham Grove. From Tuesday 1st May there was an array of gifted and diverse speakers. It was a beneficial time not only for ministers to work, discuss and share together but to receive powerful and insightful messages to challenge, encourage and educate.

With up to 50 ministers and lay members from the London region in attendance, these meetings paved the way for the annual Core of Adventism which commenced on the 7th May across Greater London and some provincial churches. The Residential was sponsored by the London Ministers Council (LMC) under the leadership of Pastor David Burnett. It required effective preparation and planning between the LMC, London Area Coordinators, and the BUC and SEC Evangelism Departments. Key topics included ‘Africa and God’s Ecumenical Vision: Rethinking the Remnant’, and ‘Africa in Prophecy: Reinventing Babylon’.

HACKNEY & CROYDON MARCH

Churches within the London borough marched against the spate of violent crimes in London. On separate occasions both Hackney SDA and Croydon SDA churches gathered hundreds of community members for the peaceful protest. For Hackney, the Pathfinders, the Hackney community, church members, and the Conference President, Pastor Emmanuel Osei, participated in the demonstration.

Among the sixty- two victims of knife crime this year, a quarter were Hackney Residents. Recently re-elected as Hackney’s Mayor, Philip Glanville said: “It was a pleasure to be part of something which brought people together. Meetings like these – where people are visible with one mission in mind - are important. Today was about reclaiming the streets of Hackney, and it was encouraging that many young people took a lead in this.” While in Croydon the procession marched through the busy town centre

carrying banners calling for prayer. Croydon’s Youth Pastor Alex Mareniuc took the opportunity to begin discussions with the Area Chief Inspector of Police, exploring the ways in which they could forge stronger working relationships.



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Responding to Mental Health Awareness Week, the SEC Disability and Diversity Department produced a resource called An Insight into Mental Health Problems. As 1 in 4 people face mental health problems, there was an increased need for the local churches and communities to become more aware and sensitive to the support and impact offered to those living with mental health problems. The resource provides some guidance on how to build bridges through both personal stories and resource information provided. Copies can be purchased from - Lbuzac@secadventist.org.uk or snicholls@secadventist.org.uk at £5.00 per copy

AREA 7 & SEC WOMEN’S DAY OF FELLOWSHIP

In spite of treacherous weather below zero, a flock of women attended the Area 7 & SEC Women’s Day of Fellowship. Teens, Rutendo and Lady Jo, wrestled with the demands of being transplanted from one culture to another and convincingly conveyed the distance between what their elders say and what they mean. Pastor Maslin Holness took the role of the mid-lifer. In response to her query “Mirror, mirror on the wall, who’s the fairest of them

all”, the answer came back, “Not you!” The SEC Women’s Ministries director went on to demonstrate the challenges of a midlife crisis, including the many uses of a pair of tweezers in countering sprouting hair in unexpected places. Next, both compassion and humour rose to the surface as the complexities of old age, dementia and loneliness were dramatised.

CHINESE NEW YEAR



At Fletewood Primary School, Plymouth, students took the opportunity to celebrate its large Oriental community by participating in Chinese New Year. A number of parents offered their time, skills, and cultural knowledge to help pupils as young as five celebrate in style. Through talks about the customs and traditions students learned about Chinese history, fashion, and the language. Culminating in a feast of fellowship, students ate traditional and contemporary Chinese dishes before being treated to entertainment in the form of dragon puppetry.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION

Brixton, Willesden, Peckham, and Holloway were treated to a weeklong session from Canadian Pastor Matthew Feeley on the seven Churches in Revelation. Topics drew relevance by simultaneously personifying each Church as a Bride and a contemporary TV show. The penultimate sermon titled ‘The Final Wedding’ coincidentally tied in with the Royal Wedding, but was delivered

as a reminder to congregants that the best is yet to come.



PAUL LEE AT THE ROYAL WEDDING

Paul Lee, Assistant to the SEC President, sang a dazzling solo at The Royal Wedding in Windsor on the 19th May. Under Karen Gibson, Founder, Director, and Music Conductor, the choir delivered an enchanting rendition of Ben E. King’s ‘Stand by me’ to Prince Harry and Megan Markle. Paul Lee’s background in music spans over 40 years during which, on a professional basis, he has been singing and performing in a range of genres. His musical prowess was discovered at the young age of eighteen when he created a jingle for Metal Mickey and was subsequently recognised on TV. Although asked by Gibson to perform two months prior to the wedding, basking in excitement wasn’t his first response because Gibson could not reveal the details of the event to Paul, due to confidentiality protocols. Now a week later, with over 4 million cumulative views on YouTube, the event continues to be full of surprises for Paul.



The Learning of the Heart

It is a startling interaction, the one we find in Acts 19. A group of young men from a prominent priestly family had been watching and learning. Watching Paul and studying his ministry, they began a ministry of their own. They too began to “cast out demons” with some success (Acts 19:13-14). Using the words and demeanour of Paul, the seven sons of Sceva conducted their ministry in and around Ephesus, casting out evil spirits in the name of Jesus.

Until one day (and this is the startling interaction) the evil spirit responds to their demand:

“Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?” (Acts 19:15, NIV)

The episode concludes in a few short sentences, leaving the young men overpowered, beaten, bleeding and naked! Talk about a surprise ending!

The young men had been observant, taking careful note of the words that Paul used, and being careful to invoke the name of Jesus. They had some excellent information. But they were missing something. The words without the qualities of Jesus were only words – and clearly dangerous ones at that!

The English poet and essayist Samuel Johnson once remarked: *“A little knowledge is a dangerous thing - it only hastens fools to rush in where angels fear to tread”*. Perhaps he had the seven sons of Sceva in mind?

Knowledge is a wonderful and beautiful thing. And like all wonderful and beautiful things, it can be misused. The Psalmist exclaims: *“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”* - (Psalm 119:105, NIV)

As a child, I spent a great deal of time with my grandmother. Always careful, she would carry any number of “just in case” items in her handbag - among

them a torch to light the path ahead if it became dark. I would beg to hold the torch and shine it ahead of us. At first, all would be well. But it would not take long before shining the torch beam into the trees, and the bushes, and under my chin, and up my nose became much more interesting to my young mind. My antics usually ended the same way; I needed to surrender the torch to my grandmother!

Our knowledge – even of spiritual things – works in much the same way. We may learn the right words, memorise the “proof texts” and articulate the “exorcising” phrases. Like the seven sons of Sceva, we may even become confident with a measure of success. But knowledge without the qualities of Jesus is like a young boy shining light in all the wrong places. Torchlight shone on the path is helpful. Torchlight shone in the eyes is blinding.

Jesus speaks to this very point in John 5:39,40: *“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”* (NIV)

Clearly, it is possible to study the Scriptures diligently and yet miss the Messiah. Truth is not only propositional; it is also relational. Jesus is a person, not merely a collection of principles or quotes.

As we make our plans and initiate our programmes, let us learn from the seven sons of Sceva and be wary of form over substance. And as we move into our neighbourhoods, armed with scripture-knowledge and with the desire to lift up Jesus and shine light into the dark spaces, perhaps we could hear a helpful word from my grandmother: *“Shine the light on the path ahead [Wayne] and not in my eyes!”*

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