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The views expressed in this magazine are opinions of the writers

Editorial

Happy New Year!

I listened to the BBC Radio Four podcast, *"Moral Maze"*, last year where the discussion centred on *"Defining Gender."* It struck me after listening to the podcast that the topic of Gender and Self-identification is a problematic issue in our societies today and no less in faith communities.

The discussion developed in the context of a fierce, fast-moving campaign on behalf of transsexuals, intensified by social media and in light of news that both the UK and Scottish governments are considering making it legally easier for people to change their gender. Moreover, the suggestion that drag queens could go into primary schools to instruct children on transgender issues and pressure from transgender activists informed the conversation.

The panel acknowledged that there are complicated issues when it comes to understanding the question of transgender and how we define what the true self is; whether some people feel trapped in the *'wrong kind'* of person, and if such individuals are being cruelly judged. It was also questioned whether society is experiencing a collapse of traditional values?

Leading discussion questions explored the possibility that we are medicalising the complexities of identity, seeking drug and surgery solutions for people who often have a range of difficult mental health issues. The question

of when gender identity is formed - before, during or after puberty - was also addressed, as were the effects of telling children that gender is a choice of more than two options: did this approach serve to solve problems or create them?

Many people try to avoid discussions on the subject of LGBTQ+, and perhaps rightly so, because of the potential danger of wandering into a minefield and being labelled as hostile. How then should we relate to people who are LGBTQ+? Are they excluded from Jesus's invitation to come and dine with Him? In Matthew 22:9-10 Jesus told a parable that mandates us to *"Go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding"*. When the servants did as their master instructed, we are told that they gathered together all whom they found, both good and bad. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

The articles in this issue are not about debating the rights and wrongs of LGBTQ+; they are about the effectiveness of our ministry. It urges us to focus less on judgement and more on reaching all peoples for Christ. The Seventh-day Adventist church has statements on how we should approach the issue, and I would encourage you to read the statements for yourself. Ours is a ministry to point all human beings to Jesus Christ, who says in John 12:47: *"If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world."* ESV.

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OUR COVER



SAM O. DAVIES
Editor

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18-20 January 2019



the President's Desk

DR. EMMANUEL OSEI



The wise King Solomon wrote, *“There is nothing new under the sun”* (Eccl 1:9, NKJV), however, in light of what we see in our world today, one cannot help but think that we are living in uniquely challenging times. Was there ever a generation in the history of mankind that was faced with questions relating to gender reassignment? Was there ever a time where Christians from all denominations came together and called for a time of fasting and prayer as the world faces the debate over sexual orientation and sexual identity? Many people have been incensed by the views articulated by others. In some circles people have been ostracised and persecuted because of their position and practice on this subject. In extreme cases, some have even lost their lives.

As a Church we may choose to bury our heads in the sand like the ostrich, however, we are not immune from the challenges faced by some. There have been campaigns in some circles to stop the practice of same sex marriages. In some schools, children as young as four and five are taught that you can choose to be what you want to



be. In other words, boys can choose to be girls if they feel like it and girls can choose to be boys. If a boy chooses to become a girl, he can dress as a girl and vice versa. Young and malleable minds are being targeted and manipulated to become confused, thus changing the way society thinks and behaves.

Whether we know it or not, our children are having to grow up being taught that a family unit can be comprised of ‘Daddy and Daddy’ or ‘Mummy and Mummy’ and the children. This is a shift from a husband, wife and children. Thus, it is becoming the norm for children to embrace homosexuality or lesbianism as acceptable ways of life. The situation is

further confused as society embraces transgenderism, polygamy and polyamorous relationships.

We are blessed to be living in a democratic country where the government consults with and entertains input from, the public in the discussions surrounding same sex marriages, sexual identity and gender reassignment. In this society of religious liberty and freedom of speech, the Church cannot keep silent. As a Church, we affirm the Biblical position that marriage is a covenantal, sexual, procreative lifelong union of one man and one woman as husband and wife. We also affirm that the grace of God is sufficient to forgive and transform our lives, whether we are

transgender, attracted to the same sex, or having difficulty in accepting one’s biological sex and one’s self-perception as male or female.

What a great opportunity we have to be able to live and work with people from all walks of life. The Church of God is a hospital for all of us because we are all in need of a Saviour. None of us is beyond redemption. There is hope for each of us. God loves the homosexual as much as the heterosexual. God demonstrated this when Jesus said, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16, NKJV). Jesus died for each one of us. We are all included in the *“whoever”*. The Psalmist wrote: *“I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”* (Psalm 51:5, KJV). What we see and experience in our world today are symptoms of the sin problem. The reality is that sin has infected every single one of us, but thank God that, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is forgiveness for everyone who repents of sin. May God help us through these challenging times.

GENDER SELF-IDENTIFICATION



Dr. Brighton Kavaloh



On 11 April 2017, the World Executive Committee of the Seventh-day Adventist organisation voted to approve an interim policy on church and transgenderism. The lead-in statement reads:

“The increasing awareness of the needs and challenges that transgender men and women experience and the rise of transgender issues to social prominence worldwide raise important questions not only for those affected by the transgender phenomenon but also for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. While the struggles and challenges of those identifying as transgender people have elements in common with the struggles of all human beings, we recognize the uniqueness of their situation and the limitation of our knowledge in specific instances. Yet, we believe that Scripture provides principles for guidance and counsel to transgender people and the church, transcending human conventions and culture.”¹

The General Conference President Ted Wilson, in introducing the basis for the statement, conceded it was “not an easy topic... and we did not have anything in writing about this particular topic.”² However, Wilson hoped that “regional areas can use this biblical framework to give it a more regional application.”³

The purpose of this article is twofold. Firstly, to ascertain the United Kingdom government’s gender self-identification ideology and the legal timeline; and secondly, to seek to urge the Seventh-day Adventist local church community, particularly pastors and elders, to familiarize themselves with the GC Biblical Framework document for the benefit of its members and the public. The full story and voted statement are accessible on the following links:
goo.gl/c7zzgm

1 <https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story4988-world-church-executive-committee-votes-statement-on-transgenderism>

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

A BRIEF BACKGROUND

On 23 July 2017, the then Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities, the Rt Hon Justine Greening MP, formally announced proposals to ‘streamline’ and ‘de-medicalise’ the process for changing gender. Justine Greening observed that “Currently individuals need a diagnosis of gender dysphoria and have to provide evidence that they have been in transition for at least two years before they can apply to legally change their gender.”⁴ She argued that the reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 would end the complicated and intrusive medical process, making it ‘easier’ and quicker to secure a Gender Recognition Certificate [GRC]. Justine Greening’s sentiments were echoed by Prime Minister Theresa May in her Government statement “that changes will be made to the Gender Recognition Act in order to reflect updated attitudes towards being transgender.”⁵ She further added, “We have set out plans to reform the Gender Recognition Act and streamline and de-medicalise the process for changing gender, because being trans is not an illness and it shouldn’t be treated as such.”⁶

The process to reform the Gender Recognition Act 2004 was taken a step forward by the Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP, Secretary of State for the Department for International Development and Minister for Women and Equalities. She launched the Government Consultation on 3 July and officially ended on 21 October 2018. The Consultation Executive Summary noted that many trans people and the organisations that supported them felt dissatisfied with the legal recognition

4 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-action-to-promote-lgbt-equality>

5 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/theresa-may-transgender-not-illness-gender-recognition-act-lgbt-rights-sex-edution-homophobia-pink-a8008486.html>

6 Ibid

process, for “only 4, 900 people had successfully acquired the GRC,”⁷ and that was unacceptable. However, the statement also noted, “As we consult, the Government is mindful of how changing the requirements for a GRC might affect other areas of law and public services. We want to understand more about these relationships as part of the policy development process. In particular, we are interested in the relationship between the GRA and the Equality Act 2010.”⁸

TRANSGENDERISM AND THE LAW

Penny Mordaunt was mindful to stress that the Government consultation mainly focused on reform to the Gender Recognition Act and had no intentions to amend the Equality Act 2010 and neither the protections contained within it.⁹ It is important to note that both the Gender Recognition Act 2004 and the Equality Act 2010 provide trans people in UK legal rights and the framework to operate. However, the Equality Act 2010, Section 7 only provides Gender Self-Identification recognition for ‘proposing, undergoing or undergone a (personal) process of changing gender’¹⁰ (graph illustrated).¹¹ But note, the process does not require a medical supervision and neither is a gender recognition certificate issued. On the other hand, the Gender Recognition Act 2004, Section 9 (1), stipulates that “Where a full gender recognition certificate [GRC] is issued to a person, the person’s gender becomes for all purposes the acquired gender (so that, if the acquired gender is the male gender, the person’s sex becomes that of man’s and, if it is the female gender, the person’s sex becomes that of

7 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721725/GRA-Consultation-document.pdf

8 Ibid

9 Ibid

10 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/7>

11 <https://fairplayforwomen.com/transgender-rights-get-part-2-changing-legal-sex-status/>

a woman,”¹² but is only applicable to those:

- Who are over 18 years +
- Diagnosed Gender Dysphoria
- Have lived for a minimum of 2 years
- Must prove that they will stay that way until they die
- Gender Recognition Panel of Experts required
- Gender Recognition Certificate only then is Issued¹³

It is my opinion that the rationale of the Government consultation to focus on the reform to the Gender Recognition Act 2004 is intentional that it may annul the current GRA stipulations so that both statutes will no longer require medical supervision to acquire Gender Self-Identification status from 2018 onwards.

GENDER IDENTITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The GRA current process to acquire GRC is described by the proponents for change as bureaucratic, expensive, humiliating and invasive. The trans lobby groups strongly feel the restrictive conditions must go forthwith. However, the general impact on society following such envisaged changes on GRA, experts claim, will be huge as trans people’s numbers sharply rise. There will also be implications on services such as single-sex spaces, toilets, changing rooms, occupational roles, hospital wards, prisons just to mention a few. The non-binary (neither male or female), ‘gender neutral’, ‘gender fluid’ category will prove problematic to process travel documents such as passports. The liberty of conscience for people of faith may be compromised when expected to be inclusive to the non-binary in single-sex spaces only, for example during the ordinance of feet-washing before

12 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/7/section/9>

13 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/7/pdfs/ukpga_20040007_en.pdf

partaking of the Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion). An SDA Church educator and lecturer in London recently shared her concerns:

“I now teach learners who have changed gender, although they may still resemble the gender they do not want to be recognised as. For example, a young lady, looking very much like a young lady, changed her gender to male via birth certificate and, as a lecturer, I am expected to acknowledge her as a male and call her by her male name Charlie. This I found very difficult, and if I do not treat her as male, then there is the likelihood of a complaint against me regarding not respecting her for who she is. What do I do? There is an increase in these examples, and it is a sensitive area to manage and deal with as a lecturer. As a church we need some examples, instruction and guidance on how we can operate in a circumspect way as Christians and Seventh-day Adventists.”¹⁴

SDA BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK TRANSCENDING TRANSGENDERISM AND THE LAW

The General Conference statement addresses, as noted earlier, both church adherents and trans people. It states: “Yet, we believe that Scripture provides principles for guidance and counsel to transgender people and the church, transcending human conventions and culture.”¹⁵ Spiritual counsel and guidance from a renowned author states “We are to recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as a sacred duty, within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, we must obey God rather than men. God’s word must be recognized above all human legislation. A ‘Thus saith the Lord’ is not to be set aside for a ‘Thus saith the church’ or

14 Testimonial made available to the author

15 <https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story4988-world-church-executive-committee-votes-statement-on-transgenderism>

a ‘Thus saith the state.’ The crown of Christ is to be lifted above the diadems of earthly potentates”¹⁶.

And that said, I still implore the Seventh-day Adventist community, particularly church elders and pastors, to take the lead to carefully and prayerfully study the GC SDA Biblical Framework. It defines the key words ‘sex’ and ‘gender’, and the ‘gender identity disorder’ process, now . The implications of transgenderism for church life are highlighted and include overarching Biblical principles to spur discussion on the subject content. Among them Point 7 which states: The Bible commands followers of Christ to love everyone. Created in the image of God, they must be treated with dignity and respect. This includes transgender people. Acts of ridicule, abuse, or bullying towards transgender people are incompatible with the biblical commandment “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”¹⁷ I hope leaders in our local churches, where possible, can disseminate this valuable information to our members to enable them to engage constructively with the public square.

In conclusion, the Bible affirms complementarity as well as makes clear distinctions between male and female from creation. I can attest that the study of the GC dossier reinforced that premise enabling us to appreciate that the challenge of transgenderism can be met with Biblical fidelity and a Christ-like compassion.¹⁸ We are obliged, then, as Seventh-day Adventist church leaders, pastors and lay people, to be cognizant of the clarity of the Word of God and its power as sufficient to transcend transgenderism and transform broken lives through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

16 Ellen G. White – Acts of the Apostles (pg.68, para.2)

17 (Mark 12:31, NKJV)

18 Illustration on church transcending transgenderism composed by Dr Brighton G. Kavaloh, 2018



Dr Jeffrey O. Brown

A Victory

FOR GOD

I was working in Bermuda when the story broke: *“The cancellation of the Rosie O’Donnell cruise to Bermuda has become the hot topic on gay websites around the world. Homosexuals from the US to Australia are discussing the issue as an example of homophobia in the 21st century.”* Uncertain about the reception they would receive, O’Donnell’s company dropped Bermuda from its itinerary, causing Bermuda’s interfaith group to claim that this was *“a victory for God.”*

It made me ask the question—when it comes to our LGBTQ+ loved ones, what does a victory for God look like? I think we all know we are supposed to love them; but is it OK to hope and pray for them to change? If I accept him just as he is, do I ever point out that his conduct is unacceptable to God—or to me? Should I allow her partner into our home? How can I get my child back again? Try what I

call the U-CLAP strategy:

- Understand her endlessly.
- Contact him tirelessly.
- Love her madly.
- Accept him unconditionally.
- Pray for her relentlessly.

An entire article can be written on each point. Let’s look at number one - *Understand her endlessly.*

Don’t try to make her like you; try to make her like Jesus! Understand that the opposite of homosexual behaviour is not heterosexual behaviour; it’s holiness. Some, like Christopher (name changed), are striving for it:

“What did I, a stellar student from an Adventist home, know about homosexuality? Nothing.” It wasn’t until I started college that I noticed how different I knew I felt in a male community shower, compared to what I could tell everyone else felt. Even now, although it’s been years since I’ve made the

decision to be celibate, I know that if I allow myself to think in certain ways or to look in certain places, that nothing about myself has changed.

“While I have certainly formed an emotional attraction towards many women, I feel literally sick and repulsed at the thought of having a sexual relationship with one. As hard as I know it is for a straight man to imagine feeling sexual with another man—after all, both my brothers are straight, and we’ve discussed this issue many times—we will have no real traction with gay people until we acknowledge their condition.”

A lifelong commitment to celibacy is hard for anyone. God has surprised some who, while having a same-sex attraction, have become attracted to a member of the opposite sex and married that person. As one same-sex attracted man said, *“It is not required for marriage that*

I be attracted to all women; it is only necessary that I be attracted to one.”

To all who practice promiscuity, God requires a change of behavior; to all who practice condemnation, God requires a change of attitude. The Scriptures demand the highest standards of duty and display the deepest levels of mercy. They delineate the most exacting principles of obedience and demonstrate the most awesome acts of forgiveness. They preach the strictest code of law and practice the widest form of grace.

With regards to relating to our LGBTQ+ loved ones, our message is one of strictest standards and greatest grace; highest holiness and foremost forgiveness; perfect purity and marvellous mercy. Our message is the same for all persons across all spectrums: impossible standards made possible by incredible grace. I think this is a victory for God!

Jeffrey O Brown, PhD, CFLE is Associate Editor, Ministry Magazine and Associate Secretary, General Conference Ministerial Association



Erica Jones

You Are Worth DYING FOR



I gently unfolded the crumpled piece of notebook paper and read its contents. I had 70 pairs of eyes on me, waiting to hear the question—and the response. *“I’ve experimented with same-sex attraction, the note read, does that make me a lesbian? If so, am I going to hell?”* The room was full of teenage girls, girls whom I’d told could ask me anything and I would answer as best I could. Knowing they would be more honest if they could be anonymous, they had written questions and placed them in a basket. The first questions were about dating, school, and finding self-worth; those had simple answers. Same-sex attraction? Experimentation? Hell? I prayed silently and asked God to give me wisdom in that moment—to give me the words this young woman needed to hear.

First, I want you to know that you’re not alone, I began. And I’m so glad you felt you could ask your questions here. Being curious, longing for closeness, or even experimenting does not necessarily mean you’re gay.

Some girls and young women are primarily attracted to guys. Some may be more attracted to girls — yet still end up dating or later marrying a guy. It’s absolutely okay to be unsure, and it’s wonderful that you asked your question rather than hide it. By asking, you will help other girls who may be wondering the same thing. For some girls, being curious or experimenting is about desiring attention or affection from a friend they admire. This closeness may be a search for value, identity, or a sense of belonging. Such a girl may be seeking assurance to questions like *“Am I accepted?”* or *“Am I beautiful?”* Other girls may experience same-gender attractions during sexual development. These desires could be temporary, or they could indicate that a girl is sexually oriented toward the same gender. Time will tell. It is important that you not carry anxiety or urgency to figure it all out. It may take months or years to better understand your desires. Be patient and trust in God. Sexual experimentation won’t ever answer the question, *“Am I gay?”* Rest instead in Jesus, for His amazing love offers you all the assurance you need about who you are as a young woman. In Christ, we have certainty, assurance, belonging, AND confidence in our identity — not because of anything we do or don’t do, but because of His love for us.

Teen girls are discovering a lot about who they are. Due to rapidly changing hormones, many girls can’t understand their sexual orientation

with confidence until their 20s! In the meantime, no one should pressure them to decide. They don’t need labels—they need to know that God will love, accept, and care for them no matter what. Teens also need and deserve safe support. Sex is a gift — and a responsibility — that God has made. If they’ve been sexually involved with someone but decide they want to stop and ask for forgiveness, the guilt is washed away! They are free to get back up and keep pursuing sexual holiness. To accomplish this, they will need support from a trusted adult who can assure them of God’s love and help them further process their questions. The *gorgeous2god* blog was launched for just this reason: we provide a confidential forum where teen girls can ask questions without fear of judgment or condemnation. Our mentors are authentic, Christian women who genuinely care and want to journey with them as they wrestle with deeply complex challenges.

Our message at *gorgeous2god* is simple: life is tough, but you’re not alone. You matter—in fact, God thought that you were worth dying for.

Erica Jones currently serves as the Assistant Director of Women's Ministries for the North American Division. Her primary ministry and passion is mentoring teen girls and developing resources that address the real issues they face. One of Erica's greatest desires is to empower young women to have the tools to make wise choices, recognizing that the choices they make today can have lasting effects on their futures.

The Diversity of Brokenness

More than 1million people world-wide join the Seventh-day Adventist Church each year. The Holy Spirit is still at work healing broken people. Galatians 5:18-21 reminds us that our members come from very diverse backgrounds and experiences. Some were rescued from a life of sexual immorality, impurity and promiscuity; some from idolatry, witchcraft, hatred and rivalry; others from jealousy, outbursts of anger, quarrels, conflicts, factions, envy, murder, drunkenness, and wild partying. Though members are converted to Christ, the total transformation they desire, through sanctification, is the work of a lifetime not a moment. Hence, God's Church is like a hospital full of sick people with varying degrees of brokenness and different degrees of Christian maturity and sanctification.

A 21st century reality is that fewer Christians and non-Christians now follow the Bible's teachings on sex outside a heterosexual marriage. More and more of our members are practising heterosexual freedoms disapproved of by the church. Some, though they are celibate, have a homosexual propensity which was not taken away at conversion. Some were converted from the LGBT community, having undergone an irreversible sex change. Also, since 2015, LGBT marriage became legal in 50 states in the USA, and approximately 27 countries outside the US, including the UK, have legalized same sex marriage, while many more are discussing the possibility.

Therefore, some LGBT converts may have been legally married and have obligations to care for their children. The issues involved in dealing with such members can be very complex. They all, like us, need to continue to experience God's transforming love.

While we are committed to following Bible principles on sex and marriage, Galatians 5:14,15 reminds us that *"the whole law is summarized in a single statement: 'You must love your neighbour as yourself'. But if you bite and devour one another, be careful that you are not destroyed by each other"* (ISV). The UK Equality Act (2010) brought together different aspects of non-discrimination under one legislation to protect minorities and the vulnerable, and to encourage tolerance, friendliness and respect. God's Kingdom on earth is governed by superior laws and values. God also protects us and others from harm.

God requires us to love and respect people who are broken and damaged by sin and to give them a safe place to heal and grow. His love enables us to deal with brokenness and diversity within the church. He has given us a wonderful and winsome example of One who is *"longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty..."* (Numbers 14:18, KJV). The execution of judgement belongs to God, not to individuals, and we must be like our heavenly Father in the way we treat our brethren.



Dr. Elliott Williams
Senior minister of Central
London English and
Portuguese Churches

OVERFLOWING COMFORT

Be like Christ

As a believer who accepts Biblical creation and the fall of man, the consequential degeneration and anomaly connected to human experience is also a reality. The scriptures clearly testify that God works with human imperfection. As Christ's follower, it is only through humility that I can adopt the message and ministry of Jesus to love all people groups – heterosexuals and homosexuals alike – as my neighbour. So then, it is the overflowing grace of God which empowers me to be *'just like Jesus'*.

What does, doing it *'just like Jesus'* mean? In order to carry out this responsibility, the follower of Christ must first and foremost understand the formula for doing it *'Jesus'* way. The formula is found in 2 Corinthians 1:3 to 7. It is simply written thus: *'I am a recipient of comfort first for myself, then I share it with others.'* Paul calls it overflowing comfort. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4, HCS). For the purpose of this article, comfort is giving strength and hope to a person in any trouble. What this means is that, before I can qualify to share the message and ministry of Jesus by bringing comfort and grace to others, I should give particular attention to my own need for comfort and grace. My own wounds must first be attended to. When this has been done, then the believer is equipped to share the overflowing comfort of Jesus, in the charge to be *'just like Jesus'*.

Doing it *'just like Jesus'* suggests that we have a role to play in this present age, but we will only be effective if we do it *'Jesus'* way. What that means is, the call to *'do it just like Jesus'* empowers his followers to treat all humanity with dignity and respect, regardless of people groups and the personal situations of others. We must never forget how much we ourselves have been forgiven and from what we have been saved, as well as the cost Christ paid to win our salvation.

Furthermore, doing it just like Jesus teaches me to be ready to show and give loving support to others, as opposed to outright rejection and condemnation. As part of my Christian maturity, I seek to acquaint myself with all people groups. The believer's circle of friends should reflect this diversity – Adventist, non-Adventist, gay, straight. Indeed, the scriptural mandate, *"love your neighbour as yourself"*, is reason enough to do so.

Sitting with a group of 27 pastoral colleagues, we were introduced to a woman and her teenage daughter. The woman had agreed to share her family story with us. Her husband of 25 years had just disclosed to her and their children his new sexual orientation, along with his new boyfriend. Her 19-year-old daughter had also just started a relationship with another girl in their neighbourhood. Not long after

the father came out, he lost his high-profile job. Their once cherished circle of friends had deserted them and now did not communicate with them whatsoever. Slowly, this family became isolated. They didn't attend their local church anymore because of the situation. The local church experience was one of rejection with no support. As she shared her story, everyone in the room was silent and full of sadness.

Listening to this family, it became clear to me that there is a real need to intentionally dispense overflowing comfort. I, too, felt sad but with the realisation of my own need for comfort and grace. I begged God for comfort and grace to heal my own brokenness, to strip away my façade so that I could embrace the message and ministry of Jesus to bring overflowing comfort and grace to the many people groups in my community, including those represented by this hurting woman and her family. I recognize my pastoral responsibility to all groups of people that struggle in life, people whom God loves unconditionally, and who need our support and encouragement.

It is to this imperative I pledge to be a believer whose duty and responsibility finds its true fulfilment in being and doing just like Jesus – bringing overflowing comfort and grace to all humanity.

*She said,
"No one, Lord."
And Jesus said to
her, "Neither do I
condemn you; go
and sin no more"*
John 8:11

Dr. Augustus Lawrence
Family Ministries Director





GC Statement on TRANSGENDER

12 APRIL 2017
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, USA

The increasing awareness of the needs and challenges that transgender men and women experience and the rise of transgender issues to social prominence worldwide raise important questions not only for those affected by the transgender phenomenon but also for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. While the struggles and challenges of those identifying as transgender people have some elements in common with the struggles of all human beings, we recognize the uniqueness of their situation and the limitation of our knowledge in specific instances. Yet, we believe that Scripture provides principles for guidance and counsel to transgender people and the Church, transcending human conventions and culture.

The Transgender Phenomenon
In modern society, gender identity typically denotes “the public (and usually legally recognized) lived role as boy or girl, man or woman,” while sex refers “to the biological indicators of male and female.”^[1] Gender identification usually aligns with a person’s biological sex at birth. However, misalignment may happen at the physical and/or mental-emotional levels.

On the physical level ambiguity in genitalia may result from anatomical and physiological abnormalities so that it cannot be clearly established whether a child is male or female. This ambiguity of anatomical sexual differentiation is often called hermaphroditism or intersexualism.^[2] On the mental-emotional level misalignment occurs with transgender people whose sexual anatomy is clearly male or female but who identify with the opposite gender of their biological sex. They may describe themselves as being trapped in a wrong body. Transgenderism, formerly clinically diagnosed as “gender identity disorder” and now termed “gender dysphoria,” may be understood as a general term to describe the variety of ways individuals interpret and express their gender identity differently from those who determine gender on the basis of biological sex.^[3] “Gender dysphoria is manifested in a variety of ways,

including strong desires to be treated as the other gender or to be rid of one’s sex characteristics, or a strong conviction that one has feelings and reactions typical of the other gender.”^[4]

Due to contemporary trends to reject the biblical gender binary (*male and female*) and replace it with a growing spectrum of gender types, certain choices triggered by the transgender condition have come to be regarded as normal and accepted in contemporary culture. However, the desire to change or live as a person of another gender may result in biblically inappropriate lifestyle choices. Gender dysphoria may, for instance, result in cross-dressing,^[5] sex reassignment surgery, and the desire to have a marital relationship with a person of the same biological sex. On the other hand, transgender people may suffer silently, living a celibate life or being married to a spouse of the opposite sex. Biblical principles relating to sexuality and the transgender phenomenon must be evaluated by Scripture. The following biblical principles and teachings may help the community of faith relate to people affected by gender dysphoria in a biblical and Christ-like way: God created humanity as two persons who are respectively identified as male and female in terms of gender. The Bible inextricably ties gender to biological sex (*Gen 1:27; 2:22-24*) and does not make a distinction between the two. The Word of God affirms complementarity as well as clear distinctions between male and female in creation. The Genesis creation account is foundational to all questions of human sexuality.

From a biblical perspective, the human being is a psychosomatic unity. For example, Scripture repeatedly calls the entire human being a soul (*Gen 2:7; Jer 13:17; 52:28-30; Ezek 18:4; Acts 2:41; 1 Cor 15:45*), a body (*Eph 5:28; Rom 12:1-2; Rev 18:13*), flesh (*1 Pet 1:24*), and spirit (*2 Tim 4:22; 1 John 4:1-3*). Thus, the Bible does not endorse dualism in the sense of a separation between one’s body and one’s sense of sexuality. In addition, an immortal part of humans is not envisioned in Scripture because

God alone possesses immortality (*1 Tim 6:14-16*) and will bestow it on those who believe in Him at the first resurrection (*1 Cor 15:51-54*). Thus, a human being is also meant to be an undivided sexual entity, and sexual identity cannot be independent from one’s body. According to Scripture, our gender identity, as designed by God, is determined by our biological sex at birth (*Gen 1:27; 5:1-2; Ps 139:13-14; Mark 10:6*).

Scripture acknowledges, however, that due to the Fall (*Gen 3:6-19*) the whole human being — that is, our mental, physical, and spiritual faculties — are affected by sin (*Jer 17:9; Rom 3:9; 7:14-23; 8:20-23; Gal 5:17*) and need to be renewed by God (*Rom 12:2*). Our emotions, feelings, and perceptions are not fully reliable indicators of God’s designs, ideals, and truth (*Prov 14:12; 16:25*). We need guidance from God through Scripture to determine what is in our best interest and live according to His will (*2 Tim 3:16*).

The fact that some individuals claim a gender identity incompatible with their biological sex reveals a serious dichotomy. This brokenness or distress, whether felt or not, is an expression of the damaging effects of sin on humans and may have a variety of causes. Although gender dysphoria is not intrinsically sinful, it may result in sinful choices. It is another indicator that, on a personal level, humans are involved in the great controversy.

As long as transgender people are committed to ordering their lives according to the biblical teachings on sexuality and marriage they can be members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Bible clearly and consistently identifies any sexual activity outside of heterosexual marriage as sin (*Matt 5:28, 31-32; 1 Tim 1:8-11; Heb 13:4*). Alternative sexual lifestyles are sinful distortions of God’s good gift of sexuality (*Rom 1:21-28; 1 Cor 6:9-10*).

Because the Bible regards humans as wholistic entities and does not differentiate between biological sex and gender identity, the Church strongly cautions transgender people against

sex reassignment surgery and against marriage, if they have undergone such a procedure. From the biblical wholistic viewpoint of human nature, a full transition from one gender to another and the attainment of an integrated sexual identity cannot be expected in the case of sex 16 reassignment surgery.

The Bible commands followers of Christ to love everyone. Created in the image of God, they must be treated with dignity and respect. This includes transgender people. Acts of ridicule, abuse, or bullying towards transgender people are incompatible with the biblical commandment, “*You shall love your neighbour as yourself*” (*Mark 12:31*). The Church as the community of Jesus Christ is meant to be a refuge and place of hope, care, and understanding to all who are perplexed, suffering, struggling, and lonely, for “*a bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench*” (*Matt 12:20*). All people are invited to attend the Seventh-day Adventist Church and enjoy the fellowship of its believers. Those who are members can fully participate in church life as long as they embrace the message, mission, and values of the Church.

The Bible proclaims the good news that sexual sins committed by heterosexuals, homosexuals, transgender people, or others can be forgiven, and lives can be transformed through faith in Jesus Christ (*1 Cor 6:9-11*).

Those who experience incongruity between their biological sex and gender identity are encouraged to follow biblical principles in dealing with their distress. They are invited to reflect on God’s original plan of purity and sexual fidelity. Belonging to God, all are called to honor Him with their bodies and their lifestyle choices (*1 Cor 6:19*). With all believers, transgender people are encouraged to wait on God and are offered the fullness of divine compassion, peace, and grace in anticipation of Christ’s soon return when all true followers of Christ will be completely restored to God’s ideal.

[1] *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th ed. (DSM-5TM)*, edited by the American Psychiatric Association (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013), 451.

[2] *Those born with ambiguous genitalia may or may not benefit from corrective surgical treatment.*

[3] See *DSM-5TM*, 451-459.

[4] *This sentence is part of a succinct summary of gender dysphoria provided to introduce DSM-5TM that was published in 2013: www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Psychiatrists/Practice/DSM/APA_DSM-5-GenderDysphoria.pdf (accessed April 11, 2017).*

[5] *Cross-dressing, also referred to as transvestite behavior, is prohibited in Deuteronomy 22:5.*

<https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/statements/article/go/0/statement-on-transgenderism/>



GC Statement on HOMOSEXUALITY

17 OCTOBER
2012

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes that every human being is valuable in the sight of God, and we seek to minister to all men and women in the spirit of Jesus. We also believe that by God’s grace and through the encouragement of the community of faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God’s Word.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man and a woman. This was the design established by God at creation. The Scriptures declare: “*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh*” (*Gen 2:24, NIV*). Throughout Scripture this heterosexual pattern is affirmed. The Bible makes no accommodation for homosexual activity or relationships. Sexual acts outside the circle of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden (*Lev 18:5-23, 26; Lev 20:7-21; Rom 1:24-27; 1 Cor 6:9-11*). Jesus Christ reaffirmed the divine creation intent: “*Haven’t you read, he replied, ‘that at the beginning the Creator “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”’ So they are no longer two, but one”*” (*Matt 19:46, NIV*). For these reasons Seventh-day Adventists are opposed to homosexual practices and relationships.

Jesus affirmed the dignity of all human beings and reached out compassionately to persons and families suffering the consequences of sin. He offered caring ministry and words of solace to struggling people, while differentiating His love for sinners from His clear teaching about sinful practices. As His disciples, Seventh-day Adventists endeavor to follow the Lord’s instruction and example, living a life of Christ-like compassion and faithfulness.

This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Sunday, October 3, 1999 in Silver Spring, Maryland. Revised by the General Conference Executive Committee, October 17, 2012.

<https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/statements/article/go/-/homosexuality/>



SEC Women's Ministries &
Balham Community Services

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Register your interest with Ligia Buzac

☎ 01923 232728 or ✉ LBuzac@secadventist.org.uk

🌐 https://www.facebook.com/SECWomensMinistries

🌐 sda.life/secwomensministries

Balham Contact: 07861 713173



Adventist Connect

January - March 2019

by Catherine Anthony Boldeau



I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year, "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied, "Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light, and safer than a known way." May that Almighty hand guide and uphold us all. (Minnie Haskins)

Seventh-day Adventist Christians around the world will start the New Year with **10 Days of Prayer**. From the **9th -19th January**, let us pray for 'A Deeper Experience' - the theme for this initiative. It is likely that your local congregation will have a programme organised, however, if you can, do access the relevant resources at www.tendaysofprayer.org

Religious Liberty is an issue that has far-reaching implications for us as believers, and on the **19th January**, this should be the focus of our Sabbath programmes as it is **Religious Liberty Day**.

We start the month of **February** focusing on **Personal Outreach** on the **2nd**. Our mandate from Christ was that we 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel'. And on this day, the emphasis will be on what we can do individually to reach out to the many people who need to hear the Good News of salvation. Also, in February, it is **Christian Home and Marriage Week** from the **9th -16th**. What an excellent time focus on and celebrate the blessings of family life and conduct seminars and programmes that might also be beneficial to the local community.

On the **2nd March**, it is International Women's World Day of Prayer. 'Walking with Jesus' is the theme for this year's programme and resources for this can be obtained at www.women.adventist.org

On the **9th March**, we celebrate **Adventist World Radio**. From a local perspective, why not highlight the evangelistic reach of our very own Adventist Radio London www.adventistradio.london in your worship services, and encourage your members to listen to the informative and spiritual programmes that are broadcast on a daily basis.

The **16th March** is a busy day for Youth and Children. It is the start of the **Youth Week of Prayer** and it is also **Global Youth Day** and **Global Children's Day**. Make every effort to involve your children and young people in the activities that are planned for them by SEC Youth Department and the Urban Ministries initiative that will be run by ADRA-UK on this day.

Christian Education is the emphasis for the **23rd March**. 'True education is the harmonious development of the mental, physical and spiritual powers' - E G White. Consider all of these elements in planning for this special Sabbath.

The **ADRA-UK Appeal** starts on **Sabbath 30th March** and culminates on **Easter Sunday, the 21st April**. All members are encouraged to get involved either by participating in the door-to-door collection, supporting the numerous fundraising activities planned or through personal donations. For more information on the Appeal go www.adra.org.uk

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For information contact Vanessa Dawson
01923 232728 or vdawson@secadventist.org.uk

www.adra.org.uk/donate

 **ADRA** UK

Hi
I'm Margarithe
I live in Rwanda, and like many of my family, have never been able to read or write

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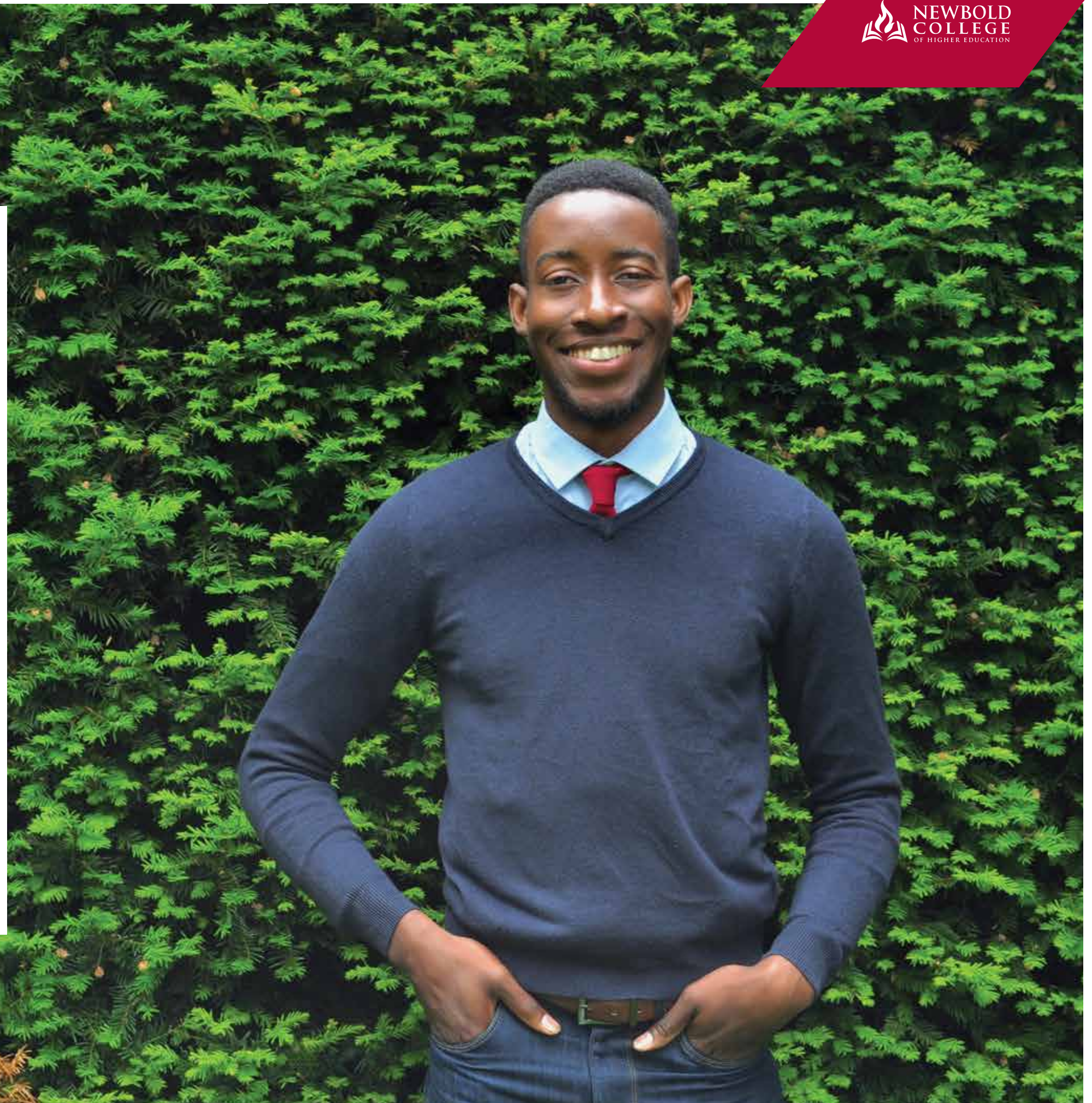
BA Biblical and Pastoral Studies

**“I AM A SECOND-YEAR THEOLOGY STUDENT
AND I BELIEVE IT WAS GOD’S PLAN FOR ME TO COME TO
THE UNITED KINGDOM AND BE HERE AND
NOT ANYWHERE ELSE”**

Like many people who have grown up in the Church, I used to live with the mind-set that I was ‘sorted’ when it came to knowing what it meant to be a follower of Jesus and a child of God. I had an insatiable hunger for Bible stories and my parents, who were employed by the Church, encouraged me to take part in Pathfinders, Bible knowledge contests and whatever else the Church had to offer. So, as I saw it, I was well along the road to heaven. However, in the lead-up to my coming to Newbold, I sensed that God was showing me that I didn’t know as much about Him as I thought.

My experience at Newbold has been a journey of unlearning, relearning, consolidating and building upon the basic truths that I know. In addition, God has used my time at Newbold to provide me with opportunities to meet a plethora of wonderful people of different cultures. This is a characteristic of Newbold that is unique in the Adventist academic world. I know it’s preparing me to be a pastor who will minister to people in a culturally diverse society.

It’s great to have lecturers who are highly knowledgeable, and passionate about showing us how to understand real-world implications of what we’ve studied. I believe that my time spent being mentored and guided by staff will provide me with the tools to accomplish that which I believe God is leading me to: sharing the good news of the gospel in a practical and simple way through the gifts God has equipped and will equip me with.



PROFILE

by Onysha Collins



Dr Robinson Addaih

It was a Sunday. The conservatory was chilly, yet Dr Robinson Osei Addaih was deep at work. Sat beside him was his client, a young woman who - like many before her - sought Addaih's legal help.

For over 30 years, Dr Robinson Addaih has been of service to people seeking to gain British citizenship. His expertise spans legal and civil cases and financial counsel. His clients, too, have a broad demographic, coming from various regions within the UK. With eidetic memory Robinson recites those 20 cities, one being Milton Keynes, the city where he resides, and the city where he was recently honoured by Life Word Church International in the presence of dignitaries, including the Mayor, Councillor Martin Petchey. Taking the stage in a regal Dashiki, his elegant wife Christiana by his side, Dr Robinson took the time to express his gratitude for the award and for the team members who had helped him.

The organisation, Life World Church International, had been scouring appropriate recipients for months, diligently making calls and researching, unbeknown to potential honourees. The organisation analysed the works of humanitarians and civil servants within The Somalian Association, The Nigerian Association and Milton Keynes Equality Council, as well as many other organisations. All are worthy of recognition, but the relevancy of Robinson's work is palpable. Within the West, the mesh of politics and the preservation of Western culture have seen incendiary attitudes proliferate.

Thus, I was keen to hear his thoughts on The Home Secretary's policies and if the change in political parties and policies over the last 15 years had helped or hindered his work. Robinson's sanguine response reflected his deep respect for the system. *"There is a rule of law,"* he tells me, *"to protect the country and show that there is an effective immigration system in place to keep people safe."* He adds that hurdles are always present within his line of work, but he works with the foreknowledge that God is above all man-made systems, therefore difficulties are not contingent on political parties but on God's will.

Another central part of Robinson's life is God. Lucidly, he weaves scripture into his answers, to veer the hearer closer to his Source of motivation. Often, in the case of humanitarians, they'll point to

a poignant moment where they were inspired to change the world, either based on an injustice they had witnessed or an injustice they had faced. Robinson, however, says *"I do this work because of my role model, Jesus, and the work He did."* He expands, saying that helping people with encouraging words and tackling problems bigger than himself allows him to fulfil Colossians 4:6 which reads, *'Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt'* (KJV).

Being able to calm people in their distress is one of the things Robinson charts as his success. He makes the point clear, though, that any seeming setbacks or unsuccessful outcomes are not his burden to bear, but rather he sees all his voluntary work as God's duty. Therefore, the glory all belongs to God, even when the outcome is unexpected. John 10:33 is one scripture he mentions, not only for encouragement but as a reminder to clients of incumbent trials: *"In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* He references a current case, where a woman without citizenship had her son taken away by the Council. The case file is huge and costly, but Robinson is adamant that it's a civil case he can win based on two things: infringements of the Children's Act and his faith in Christ's overcoming power.

Children are often linked in some way to the cases Robinson has worked on. A testimony was provided about one of his clients, who had had numerous setbacks

with their applications. With guidance from Robinson, they were granted indefinite leave to remain. This is just the surface; a glimpse through his mailbox shows a plethora of emails of the same ilk.

The conversation takes a turn down the personal route. Since his work has improved children's lives in so many ways, I wanted to find out how influential he has been in his children's lives, namely, in their work life, spiritual growth, and community involvement. The work he does, he says, should be a reflection on his work within the familial home. With three sons, the eldest studied Law at Leicester. Taken under his father's wing from youth, he spent time shadowing his legal cases. Now doing his master's degree in law, he often volunteers his holiday time to assist in Robinson's work, never seeing it as a 'work', but as an opportunity to be of service.

The same rings true for his other two sons. In Robinson's words, he shepherded them towards the altruistic route. A direct result has been that his children's friends have sought him for wise council, a reflection not only of their father's knowledge, but also of his approachable disposition. One son was full of warmth and hospitality when he welcomed me into their home. With a pensive smile, Robinson continues his answer, naturally providing a scripture to attest his methodology: *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"* (Hosea 4:6). Aiming to do the converse - for their children to be blessed by knowledge - Robinson

and his wife Christiana have imbued them with a zeal to deepen their Biblical understanding and civil insight.

This work in his home, with children, adults and the marginalised, has led observers to affectionately say, *"more grease on your elbow"*, a Ghanaian phrase which causes Robinson to erupt with laughter. He tells me it's a similar phrase to 'well done' or 'more success to come your way'. Growing up in Ghana, he reveals that the Twi phrase *wayè adeè* (phonetically: *why- ah- dhere*) was his favourite thing to hear. When translated to English, it holds similar meaning to 'more success to you'. From the ICGC Worldwide Charitable organisation awarding Dr Robinson a citation in 2014, to Life Word Church International awarding him one in 2018, it is 'palpable' that many, including myself, wish Dr Robinson 'more grease on his elbow.'



SEC DEPARTMENTS

Reports and Articles

CHURCH GROWTH & ADVENTIST MISSION

2018 Retrospective

As a mid-term appointment to the Church Growth Department, the past year (2018) has been a learning and growing experience for me. This is a department that has quite a bit going on – though much of it happens behind the scenes and out of the view of much of our wider Church family. As a department, our main work is to come alongside Church Plants and Groups as they seek to make Christ known in their respective contexts. For those who are not sure of the difference between a Plant and a Group, allow me to use the figure below to highlight the distinctions:

PLANTING AND TRANSPLANTING	
PLANTS	GROUPS
Seek to create something organic and is a fresh expression (unchurched)	Often seek to recreate what is familiar to us (churched)
Disciple-making	Decision-making
Relational Environments	Outreach
Modelling	Teaching
Obedience	Dctrine
Creating Community	Assimilating
Deploying	Attracting

Perhaps the most significant difference is one of focus and ethos. A Plant is intended to be overtly outward focused in that it seeks to go to great lengths to ensure that it is connecting with those who are not from a faith background. Because of this, it will “style” itself in less traditional ways and will be very conscious of the way words and phrases are used (jargon) and what is meaningful in their specific context. Plants tend to be focused on a specific geographic area and seek to embed themselves in the fabric of life in that locality. Groups are also interested in those who are not from a faith background but tend to be better placed to interact with those who are already “churched” in some way. A Group will tend to “style” itself in more traditional and familiar ways while using language in a way that is familiar to people acquainted with Church environments.

The lists below are intended to show emphasis and should not be understood narrowly. For example, it would not be true to say that Plants do not care about Doctrines or that Groups are not interested in obedience. But it would be true to say that the emphasis in each is placed slightly differently.

While visiting various programmes

among our Plants and Groups, I have been encouraged by the range of ministry strands that our members are engaging. Several engage their community by means of market stalls and health tents. These provide a focused activity point in areas where there is significant footfall. Some of our Plants and Groups engage collaboratively with their community, partnering with other like-minded people to offer services such as soup kitchens, debt counselling and food banks. Still others are working largely with children and families, offering after-school clubs, Holiday Bible Clubs and parenting support. Mixed in for good measure are community choirs, craft groups and cooking presentations.

It can be tempting to think of this kind of ministry as an “extra” – that the truly important aspects happen largely on a Sabbath morning – teaching, preaching and the like. And while it is true that Sabbath mornings are valuable time in the life of a Church Plant, it is also true that it is not the only time that the Church gathers to live out its faith.

Living faith in living communities is where we encourage our Church Plants and Groups to be focused. In a society that is moving steadily away from organised religion and centralised worship meetings (except for ceremonial events), we tend to find that the “*attractional*” approach struggles more and more. “*Attractional*” simply means that our main goal is to get you to come to our meetings or events or worship which, if greatly enhanced, might bring greater attendance. In more secular parts of our communities where there is no desire to “go” to Church (for anything), we are challenged to “*take the Church*” to where people are. This means creating neutral spaces for interaction and connection. One might even think of them as “*pastoral*” or “*discipling*” spaces where we live out faith in relationship with those who do not share it. This kind of ministry allows relationships to grow more organically but demands greater investment in developing the various listening and pastoral skills of our members. The growth of these skills will improve not only our outward ministries but also our ability to care for and love those who are already part of our faith-family.



WAYNE ERASMUS

WOMEN MINISTRIES

Church as God's Fostering Family

Restored in His Image, Reclaiming the Power, the SEC's Women's Ministries Retreat was held from 14- 16 September 2018 in Daventry. The keynote speaker, Dr René Drumm, Associate Dean for the College of Health in Southern Mississippi, delivered the uncomfortable and rarely discussed topic of domestic abuse in a calm and measured manner to the 180 women present.

Dr René's empathic style and approach helped the women to relax, using ice-breakers and social interaction exercises to stimulate and encourage the attendees to mingle.

Other speakers at the retreat included Claire Sanches-Schutte, TED Women's & Children's Director, who encouraged attendees to spend time focusing on mentoring younger women and girls. The successful programme 'Girls for Christ' seeks to bring the next generation of young women to the forefront, to nurture and direct them in finding

self-worth and value in Christ. Dr Sarah Itam from the Lewisham Church enthusiastically conducted an innovative live survey where everyone was able to take part and voice their opinions on the topic of Stress.

A self-reflective time of prayer based on the Lord's Prayer helped women to take moments of quiet contemplation on the topics discussed. Every aspect of the programme drew women to reclaim the power that God had given them and to work towards being restored. The Cornerstone Counselling Service provided counsellors to support those who needed it.

Like any good gathering, the Saturday evening's banquet brought laughter, smiles and fellowship. Karaoke was the highlight of the evening and showcased some extremely talented women within the South England Conference. To close, every woman present was lovingly commissioned to go forward and

be the change that they wanted to see.

Two new Easy Sew Schools opened at Stratford Church and Hyland House School (for children) in September. The sewing school is not just about stitching two pieces of fabric together. The overall aim of our schools is to enable learners to mentor younger women and children, to use the skills they have to serve the local community and, in the process, share Christ.

Our last training programme on Domestic Violence took place on Sunday 9th December 2018 at Balham Church. Our trainer Lorraine Anderson simplified this very difficult and complex topic into manageable sections. We were blessed to have a special invited guest and survivor of Domestic Abuse share their personal journey to freedom.

We continue to pray for all our Women's Ministries Leaders and our teams as we approach the New Year 2019.

The opportunity to lead the Men's Ministries Department has been a blessing since I took over as Coordinator in March 2017. I have endeavoured to focus on how the department can help equip our men within the South England Conference to become more resourceful, as we work with the theme of Evangelism Everyone Everywhere. The plan has also been to nurture spirituality among men so that we can be ready for the coming of the Lord.

The department set out some goals which include:

- Equipping men with tools that will boost their ministries;
- Organising workshops to help with the understanding of self-awareness;
- Encouraging our older men to mentor the younger men in the areas of leadership at home, church and the workplace.

In the past year, the department has been working to achieve these objectives by making available books and leaflets and by organising workshops to equip our men.

We organised three workshops that focused on Domestic Violence and Effective Communication. Being aware that not all our churches have Men's Ministry leaders, we have been encouraging all local churches to start up Men's Ministries departments.

Some of the emphasis has been to encourage men not to be afraid to be leaders but to become positive role models and mentors to the younger men that are growing up, not only in our churches but in the communities as well. We have always encouraged the men to be DBS checked before helping younger children.

We are delighted that we now have SEC Men's Ministry Facebook page which was launched November 2017. I would like to thank my right-hand colleague and friend Basil Lumsden for doing a great job in getting the page set up.

We also have the SEC Men's Ministry Logo which I am very proud of, as you can see. I would like to thank Natalie Bryan (Simon) who designed the logo which represents diversity in colour and ages.

MEN MINISTRIES



SEC Men's Breakfast

In November 2017 we had our first SEC Men's Breakfast at the Advent Centre, celebrating International Men's Day which I wanted all of us to recognise. We had music and talks and fellowship and, yes, plenty of food.

Men's Retreat

In September 2018 the Family Ministry department sponsored a Men's Retreat with Willesden Church. Our Speaker, Dr Spence from Canada, encouraged us to Unlock our Greatness; and what a weekend it was! 49 to 53 men attended, and all were blessed; and all said they needed to change what they did in their homes, in their local churches, and in other spheres. It was a blessing to see men fellowship, be educated, be equipped and encouraged to reach their potential.

We still have a lot of work to do, as some churches still do not have ministries for men, and some men, no matter what their age, have become less interested in God. As we step into next year, the focus will be retention. I am encouraged, as I travel to churches, that there are some strong Men's Ministries departments.

I just want to encourage you all, as I continue to work at the SEC Men's Ministry Department, to look after each other, lift each other up, talk to, and help each other, as I remind myself of a quote from George, in the book "Of Mice and Men" by John Steinbeck:

"I got you to look after me and you got me to look after you."

If one falls, we need someone to lift us up. Find somebody that you trust and can talk to and keep on doing your ministries in your local churches; but do not keep it to yourselves. Let someone else know.

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour. If either of them falls down one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV)

MASLIN HOLNESS

DEVON BOYD

Emotional Intelligence and Diversity

It has been said, ‘No man is an island’. On a daily basis, we engage in relationships and interact with others. The relationships grow and develop only as we allow ourselves to regulate and manage our emotions and seek to understand others by, firstly, recognising and acknowledging the diversity within the relationships; and secondly, as we accept the diversity that exists. Diversity goes deeper than we think.

At the mention of the word diversity, it is easy to only think of gender, race, beliefs and disability. We are diverse, as we bring into our multifaceted relationships the history of our life experiences and our reactions to life events. Who we become is shaped by our histories and our life experiences. Possessing balanced emotional intelligence gives us much-needed self-awareness and the important ingredient for healthy relationships- the ability to understand others.

When we fail to understand the diversity and difference in others, we run the risk of fractured, dysfunctional relationships, and that outcome says a lot about our lack of emotional intelligence. Recognising the diversity and difference in another creates the right environment for empathetic understanding of others and the issues they might be dealing with. Without emotional intelligence, we will struggle to value and recognise difference or diversity.

Furthermore, failure to regulate our emotions towards difference and diversity will lead to feelings of discomfort; of questioning and devaluing differences and using diversity, not



as a reason to embrace others, but as a weapon to wield against others.

This amplifies the struggle to cope with our already fast-paced life, challenged as we are, with pressures we place on ourselves and the expectations placed on us by others, through the diverse relationship we form in the different spheres of life, whether in the family, at work, in school, or in other contexts.

When life bogs us down and we come to a point of needing that listening, hearing and understanding ear, we all seek that one person (counsellor or friend) who possesses the emotional intelligence to be understanding and accepting that our personalities are shaped and formed by diverse experiences, having themselves reacted to life very differently.

Diversity challenges us, it is bigger than the sum of each of us and it digs deeper into who we truly are. It causes us discomfort only as we lack self-awareness and emotional intelligence. If we are true to ourselves, we all have to take stock and reflect on why we feel the discomfort towards diversity and difference.

At Cornerstone Counselling Service, we embrace diversity as it is paramount in order for us to fully meet the needs of our diverse clients, team members and the community around us.



THEMBIE MAPINGIRE

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique and recognizing our individual differences.

“I don’t get it!”
“That’s easy!”
“My child is an ‘A’ student.”
“Why doesn’t my child learn as quickly?”

Do you recognise some of these phrases? As a child, could you identify with some of these phrases? Or perhaps now, as a parent, you’ve said some of these about your child? It can be really frustrating if your child is not learning as rapidly as you may wish. It is important to know that every child learns differently. Some children prefer looking at photos, others like to listen, and some like to move around. That’s why it is important to understand that there are a diverse number of learning and teaching styles. And if we are able to explore these learning styles, we can arm ourselves with strategies to best support our children’s learning.

Learning Styles
Although different learning styles might develop as children get older, they generally learn in one or more of these ways:

- **Visual:** Children with a visual style of learning will remember information best when it is presented with pictures or graphics. Visual learners will often recognize numbers and letters better than their peers with another type of learning style.
- **Auditory/Verbal:** Auditory learners are best able to understand when they hear information. They are more likely to prefer listening to stories or telling stories as a way to understand information. Verbal

learners and auditory learners have similarities because they learn best from stories. As children get a little older, verbal learners prefer learning through reading, writing and listening to information. Auditory learners focus on music and sound but will not necessarily enjoy reading or writing.

- **Logical or mathematical:** These children tend to understand maths and science better than other students and focus on finding a pattern. As a parent, you could use reasoning to provide answers that help these types of children learn information.
- **Kinaesthetic:** Children with a kinaesthetic learning style learn best by manipulating objects and engaging in physical activities in order to learn.
- **Social:** Interaction with others is also a contributing factor in learning. Some children learn better in group settings. On the flip side, others are solitary learners. They understand information best when they are allowed to work out the problems without others offering input.

Everyone has a mix of learning styles. Some people may find that they have a dominant style of learning, with far less use of the other styles. Others may find that they use different styles in different circumstances. There is no right mix. Nor are our learning styles fixed. We can develop ability in less dominant styles, as well as further develop styles that we already use well.

By recognizing and understanding your child’s learning styles, you can use techniques better suited to support their learning experience.

This improves the speed and quality of their learning.

- The Seven Learning Styles**
- **Visual (spatial):** You prefer using pictures, images and spatial understanding.
 - **Aural (auditory-musical):** You prefer using sound and music. Verbal (linguistic): You prefer using words, both in speech and writing.
 - **Physical (kinaesthetic):** You prefer using your body, hands and sense of touch.
 - **Logical (mathematical):** You prefer using logic, reasoning and systems.
 - **Social (interpersonal):** You prefer to learn in groups or with other people.
 - **Solitary (intrapersonal):** You prefer to work alone and use self-study.

So, parents, aunties, uncles, grandparents, church members, let us spend quality time getting to know how best our individual children access learning. Then we can support them in achieving their absolute best. **Each child learns differently. Each child is unique and special. Each child is created in the image of God!** It is the exploration of these different ways of learning, in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment, that will bring out the best in our children.

“I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well”. Psalm 139:14 (NKJV)



GINA ABBEQUAYE

Dear friends,

I trust that this message finds you in good health. If it does, then just pause a moment to thank God...

Over the years, as a doctor, I've seen so much sickness and disease that I often find myself giving thanks to God for protecting me from illness and harm. As is often said:

"To go from Illness to Wellness, replace the 'I' with 'We' "

Together, the road to Wellness becomes easier. Together, we can find encouragement and support during our moments of weakness and perceived failure. It's so important for us to work together to reach the goal of physical, emotional and spiritual health - which is why I am so encouraged by what is happening around the South England Conference. Churches are leading out in their communities, providing wonderful opportunities to help the public with innovative health programmes. Congratulations and a big thank you to the Health Expo team led by Millie Williams. This vital service sows much needed seeds in the communities where we live. Many serious illnesses have been averted by members of the public attending screening sessions and being

told to contact their GPs as their results caused significant concern.

Some of my highlights include:

A marvellous health day put on by Eastbourne and Bexhill churches. Members of the public travelled from far to hear messages on how to beat diabetes, obesity and depression.

The Chatham health team transformed their church into a one-stop health shop. Lots of short presentations were given on important topics in different areas of the church.

Liskeard in Plymouth did the same. So many locals commented that they'd *"walked past this church for decades, and this was the first time that they had ever been inside."* One gentleman remarked that he would attend regularly. Given the membership of the church, I think that counts as a 10% increase in attendance! Many more said that they would like to come back to church.

Central London Church provided a very well attended Health day for the local community. I am still in touch with some of the locals who came.

Croydon's series of public health talks about reversing disease attracted much

interest from the local community. After the last evening, over 25 people requested follow-up contact or Bible study.

Gloucester Church reached out to the public from the unique and attractive Aylesbury museum hall. I really appreciated the atmosphere of trust created in this setting, as we discussed, quite openly, our own struggles with stress, anxiety and depression. So successful was this event that the church committed to creating regular future opportunities to created spaces to allow for smaller groups to connect, in order to encourage and support each other.

Finally, Bristol seems to reach further and further each year. The Community Health Day had local (vegan) MP Kerry McCarthy in attendance, who spoke positively on health and lifestyle. Local councilor Dr Carole Johnson also spoke (and sang!) to lift our spirits. Given that Miles Chambers (Bristol City's Poet Laureate) is an Adventist and there is an excellent Adventist-owned vegetarian restaurant in Bristol, we look forward to next year!

Here's hoping and trusting that 2019 will be a healthier year for you, your family, your church, and your community. God Bless You!



DR CHIDI NGWABA

Growing Communities of Disciple Makers

2018 was another exciting and productive year for the Personal Ministries and Sabbath School department in four key areas of our roles. First, providing material and financial supporting for the local churches in their nurture and evangelism programme. Second, in continuing and expanding the School of Evangelism to more areas and with more cohorts. Third, in moving the churches to reflect more of the mission and methods of Christ through the Disciple Maker Training. Lastly, in encouraging the churches to broaden the role of Sabbath School in the life of the church.

Financial and material support was extended to local and area programmes to assist with the nurture of members and in their community outreach. Community outreach programme in High Wycombe, Gatwick and Clapton received help with their Community Outreach while Stoke Newington Youth Revival and Peckham Evangelism were supported in their evangelistic endeavours. The Core of Adventism programme in May saw increased participation of churches and attendance in London and beyond. In a time of fake news and messages, this programme offered a timely affirmation of the core doctrines and mission of the church.

The School of Evangelism graduated a record number of members while increasing the cohorts and training centres. Over 226 persons graduated at the camp meeting and in other locations (Bristol, Reading and Ipswich for Area 8). In Colchester, Chelmsford and Ipswich, the local church pastors ran a cohort on Discipleship and Lay Preaching under the auspices of the School of Evangelism. The greatest joy of the school is to see former students become tutors. Mandy Fishley and Andrew Rock who trained under Helen DeCouteau-Grant at the Highland House, went on to tutor the Lay Bible Workers cohort in Bristol and Reading. This is the appeal of the Apostle Paul, in Hebrews 5:12, for learners to become teachers.

A new initiative of the department for 2018 was the Disciple Makers Training programme. It aims to sensitise and guide the local church in aligning all their plans and programmes to reflect the mission, vision and methods of Christ. The programme, facilitated on Friday evening and all-day Sabbath, helped clarify Christ's mission and methods, compared the coherence or agreement of the church plans to Christ's mission and developed models, structures and routines that create and continue Christ's mission and methods. Over 25 churches and local church leadership teams participated in the training. The department is working with the church minister to establish ongoing training to make the church a community of fruitful disciple-makers. That was the first promise and last commission of Christ to the disciples in Matthew 4:19, 28:19.

In September, the Personal Ministry and Church Growth Departments facilitated a training retreat on *"Essentials for Healthy Church Growth"*. The training was aimed to help local church leaders invest in areas that bring holistic growth, such as empowering leadership, inspiring worship, need-oriented evangelism, gift-based ministries, etc. Over 70 leaders who attended the training committed to a review of the current structure and routines, to reverse stagnation and declining growth.

The department continued to support and resource local church Sabbath Schools in bringing about fellowship and local mission alongside Bible study and overseas mission. This is all that the majority of our Sabbath school program currently offer. Reorganising the Sabbath School class timing can provide for the full purpose. In the first 10 minutes, class members fellowship through sharing and caring in pairs. The next 30 minutes of spiritual nurture occurs via study of scripture through the lesson. For the last 10 minutes, the class becomes an Action Team, by training and testifying on effective disciple-making.

We thank the Lord for His favour that brought about these outcomes. We express our appreciation to Dr Kirk Thomas (BUC Personal Ministry Director) for the excellent foundations on which the work is growing at a steady pace. His valuable contribution and support are still ongoing from his office at the BUC. We also acknowledge the input of volunteers as tutors, another area for their immense contribution

The department currently offers the following resources: Evangelism, Christian Service, GC Series & other books by E G White; Discipleship Handbook by GC PM/SS Department; The Big Four: Secrets to a Thriving Church Family by Joseph Kidder; It's Nice to be Nice by Peter Prime; The Missional Church by Adrian Peck; Making Mission Simple & Making Disciple Simple by Michael Mbui; Following Jesus: Disciple-Making and Movement Building by Peter Roennfeldt; and a set of 5 magazines put together by Dr Kirk Thomas the BUC Evangelism/Sabbath School Director: (a) Can Dead Things Grow? (b) God's PhD; (c) Ways of Wisdom; (d) Guardians of the Great Commission; (e) Mission for the Souls.



MICHAEL MBUI

Recounting some events that impacted families and relationships in 2018

The Family Ministries Department over the last twelve months worked to strengthen and support parents from various background by giving information and sharing strategies for impacting the lives of children in positive ways. The department also provided programmes to help couples prepare for marriage or enrichment strategies for their relationship, to review and improve their co-parenting by reflecting on areas of their strengths or weaknesses. The end result is to inspire hope, give encouragement and support families around local communities where our places of worships are located, offering a stable, nurturing and permanent environment for the benefit of all, including the members of the church.

Premarital Counselling and ‘Before I say I do’ Conferences

The Family Ministries Department took the opportunity to address the vital steps of preparing for life time commitment by offering the ‘Before I Say I Do Conferences’ to give enlightening and highly practical insights to those dating, courting or interested in love or marriage. The three one-day conferences were held on 11th February, 22nd April and 10th June 2018, at the Stanborough Centre in Watford.

Parenting Convention 2

Transforming thinking was the vein of the Parenting Convention held on Sunday 8th April at the Hyland House School. Several professionals came together to share with parents and carers their experience, knowledge and expertise on helping to change trajectories and thinking. The convention was held to give confidence and empowerment to parents and would-be

parents who sometimes feel ill-equipped to connect with their children in a society characterised by generational gaps and cultural and lifestyle changes. The attendees left with practical tools and renewed commitment and dedication to promoting good mental health that will impact the whole person.

Widowed Gathering

Widowed Gathering was the second banquet held at Hyland House on Sunday July 8th, 2018, for those whose spouses have passed away. The hall was beautifully decorated with a bright and welcoming splash of colour that lifted the spirits of the guests. The function was hailed as a much-needed avenue for encouragement and upliftment. It encouraged an open dialogue and shared experiences in dealing with grief. Over 160 guests attended both banquets over the last two years. It is interesting to report that a beautiful wedding was a result of this ministry.

Adventist Single Adults Ministry

The focus of this ministry is to encourage the local church to become aware and involved with the needs and issues of the single and single-again people all around the local community and the church. Angela Baker-Wright of Bristol Central Church has volunteered to serve as Coordinator. Slowly but surely, she has visited several churches promoting the agenda of Adventist Single Adults Ministry in the SEC. One banquet was held in August 2018 with many single adults present.

Divorce Care

Divorce has often brought untold hurt and pain to many families. This ministry seeks to give support, hope and healing to both parents who have experienced divorce as well as to the children involved. This year a Divorce Care seminar was held at the Stanborough Centre in July with 16 in attendance, including children. It is the hope of this department to continue to seek ways and means to bring hope and healing to those who seek help.

Family and Lone Parents Camp

These are one week long and held each summer at the SEC’s caravan site at Chapel Porth in Cornwall. The Lone Parent Camp is run jointly with the SEC Women’s Ministry Department. For some of our church families, no summer is complete without a visit to Family Camp, and this year was no exception. For all the families who attend each year, it is a wonderful opportunity to spend quality time together and to experience the joy of Christian fellowship in the beautiful setting of Chapel Porth. The creative spiritual focus, beautiful setting and healthy fun for all the family make these camps extremely popular. Unfortunately, due to the limited size of the site, applications consistently exceed spaces.

Marital Enrichment ‘Young Married Couples’

There were two marriage enrichment conferences held in 2018. The Family Ministries Department partnered with the ‘Rekindle the Spark’ team to host the ‘Marriage on The Rock’ in May, facilitated by Pastor Fredrick Russell and his beautiful wife Sister Brenda Russell all the way from Atlanta. 180 people attended. The other enrichment conference was held in November and it focused on Young Married Couples. Dr Myron Edmonds and his wife Dr Shanee Edmonds were the facilitators with 100 attendees. Four words: Love, cherish, cookies and oil described the weekend. Each day featured animating seminars on the process of marriage and how our marriages should be based on the gospel.

Visiting Local Churches

It has been a great privilege to minister in our local churches. Through sermons, seminars and workshops we have been able to address some of the needs of the local church, as well as sharing relevant resources to support the development of healthy relationships.

I’m grateful to the many people across the South England Conference who have been supporting the Family Ministries Department in various ways over the years. Your contributions have been overwhelming. Thank you!



AUGUSTUS LAWRENCE

Volunteers, Are you Ready?

In the October 2018 issue of the Communicator, the call went out for “...volunteers who are able and willing to dedicate time and talent” for the success of the ministry of Adventist Radio London, as we endeavour to ‘Share the Hope’ found in Jesus with London and beyond. Well, the time has come for you to ‘step up’. Step up to the challenge of being that volunteer who will give invaluable service as together we:

- Creatively produce high quality programmes fit for the people of this time.
- Passionately voice a ‘remnant’ message to a generation who need to comprehend it more now than in any previous generation.
- Powerfully write and structure scripts, outlining the plan of salvation that will change hearts for eternity.

It’s time to ‘step up’ because Adventist Radio London is recruiting volunteers. Do you have the passion to offer excellent service for a cause inspired by

results which are of eternal consequence? If it is yes, then sign up on our website, www.adventistradio.london.

For all those who make the grade, among other things, we commit:

- To provide thorough induction on the work of Adventist Radio London, its staff, your volunteering role and the training necessary to assist you in meeting the responsibilities of your volunteering role;
- To communicate standards of service, and to encourage and support you to achieve and maintain them as part of your voluntary work;
- To provide a personal supervisor who will meet with you regularly to discuss your volunteering and any associated problems;
- To do our best to help you develop your volunteering role with us and to be flexible in how we utilise your time.

Are you one who is willing:

- To help Adventist Radio London fulfil its mission to London and beyond?

- To perform your volunteering role to the best of your ability?
- To work in line with the ethos and principles of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?
- To work with confident maturity in dealing with sensitive information and persons?

Then, we invite you to apply to be an Adventist Radio London Volunteer. After the required initial interview and training, for those who are successful, the work begins and the rewards are out of this world. Together, empowered by the Holy Spirit, our service will enable Adventist Radio London to reach areas and people who may not have been reached otherwise. God alone knows the way forward. Prayer, dedication and surrender to his divine power and authority are the essential elements necessary for a successful radio ministry to this generation. God is with us and as we cooperate with him, we will soon see a finished work.

Happy Volunteering!



MIKE HAMILTON

END THE SILENCE



A play sponsored by the South England Conference Women’s Ministries Department took place in South London during the summer holiday. Written and directed by award-winning Director, Mark Grey, *End the Silence* tackles the themes of domestic violence and sexual harassment and in the current ‘hashtag Me Too’ climate, the story was one which clearly needed to be told.

The plot of the play focuses on Rebuild UK, a Christian-led charity which offers disaster relief to vulnerable individuals around the world. However, beneath the veneer of Christianity is the systematic and traumatic abuse of the vulnerable women the charity claims to help.

The play, which was put on by the Agape Theatre Company & Carmel Greystone, and which formed the final episode of the restoration trilogy, ran from the 15th-26th August 2018 in the Omnibus Theatre in Clapham Common. Like its two predecessors (*Asylum and Healed*), this final offering was viewed to critical acclaim.

“A story of love, betrayal, loss and restoration – *End the Silence* was not the easiest of subject to address, not the easiest characters to write and make sympathetic, but it is a story I felt needed to be told,” says the show’s director, Mark Grey. He added: “And in the current climate, I am pleased that we stuck with it and completed our journey.”

Those who run the charity thrive upon the silence of their victims, until one of the characters, Connie Harrington- played by Caroline King-Gadekah- decides to end the silence, followed by five other women, having undergone similar treatment. It was clear, by the response of those who watched the play, that the message it presented was one which needed to be told to as wide an audience as possible, as it is often a taboo subject within the church, among other major institutions, as well as within the domestic home.

LONDON ASIAN CHURCH

On the 13th of October, London Asian Seventh-day Adventist Church hosted a Christian musical evening at All Saints Church in Ilford. The programme hallmarked the first official event of the London Asian Adventist Church choir

which began the night with an Urdu song, encouraging the promulgation of the gospel. This, too, was the mission of the evening’s programme, as it became the launchpad to engage the community and other denominations in Christian music.

Performances from choirs, gospel bands, and talented musicians saw vocal skills and instrumental prowess brought to the fore. ABBRR, a Christian Asian band, performed two Urdu songs self- written and composed, while LAS’s own Timothy John, a child from the Church, delivered a piano rendition of ‘Trust and Obey’.

Soloist, Anayah Barki, at four years old wasn’t too young or shy to sing *‘The love of Jesus is so wonderful’*. After resounding applause, other youth followed suit, including All Saints Church of England youth choir and Walthamstow Reformed Church gospel band.

The organisers main point for celebration was the different denominations uniting in Jesus for music. Professional pianist Kendol Bacchus flew from St. Vincent, the Caribbean, to perform.



HOPE SABBATH SCHOOL IN BRISTOL

Pastor Derek Morris, known to thousands across the globe as the host of Hope Sabbath School, and the President of Hope Channel International, brought his unique style of Sabbath School to Bristol, at a special Hope Sabbath School Day of Fellowship.

Pastor Morris had been invited to come to Bristol, by local minister Pastor Royston Smith and Bristol Central Sabbath School leader, Prakash Pawar, and as Pastor Morris was coming over to the UK to visit family, he agreed, and a date was arranged.

Bristol has a particularly special place in Pastor Morris’ heart, as he revealed that he was born in Bristol, where his parents attended the Lodge Causeway church, before moving to Newbold College when Pastor Morris was 6 years old.

Seeking to reflect the diversity of the world, the Hope Sabbath School class consisted of representatives from over 9 countries. The discussion explored breaking down barriers in the Church, the importance of fellowship, as well as unity, in the Church.

Later, Morris spoke more about the purpose of Hope Channel while touching on the power of media to influence lives and introduce people to Christ, whether this be through the Hope Channel television stations, Adventist World Radio, or online or traditional media.

MALAWIAN WOMEN’S RETREAT

Malawian women from the UK gathered for a weekend retreat in Northampton. From the 2nd- 4th November, the theme, *‘The Powerful and Impartial God’*, was preached. Organised as a time for women to pray, encourage each other and connect, millennial, Cynthia Mkandawire elaborated on that from a youth’s perspective. Mkandawire spent time discussing how the women, many of them mothers, could connect with their children and young people in an approachable way.



Through group Bible studies and talks, the women were reminded of Biblical women, notably, one who touched the hem of Jesus’s garment and was healed by faith. Not just an event aimed at Malawian women or Seventh- Day Adventists, a Zimbabwean lady attended as well as a woman from another Protestant faith. She stated that “*the environment was different, the feeling of God moving was observed by the quietness and stillness of it all.*” According to the organisers, the intention was for the women to experience the Holy Spirit and to be in one accord.

LONDON YOUTH RALLY



Sabbath 27th October 2018 saw over 700 people gathered at the Rock Tower in North London for the South England Conference London Youth Rally. This annual event, titled

‘Joining Forces’, was full of the spirit of unity, enthusiasm and of compassion. The event captured the hearts of young people, through the sharing of real-life experiences faced by the youth, a fresh look at the scripture, and a genuine spirit to reach out to one another, to find God; and also praise Him. There was also a recognition ceremony for those people who are doing independent youth work in London and other cities. Furthermore, the day also saw the launch of the SEC uniform.

“For us to reach out to the young people, there is need to join forces with the people out there in the field, where work is already being done to elevate the well-being of our youth” said Ps Fuller.

LINGUISTICS FOR THE LORD

(extracted from article by Nana Sifa Twum)

Nearly twenty participants were taken through the rudiments of interpretation at the Advent Centre in London on Sunday 11th November. The training was held to enhance the contributions of church interpreters in the foreign language churches across the South England Conference (SEC). Led by Mrs Tamara Muroiwa, a professional interpreter and lecturer in translation, Tamara introduced attendees to professional interpreting techniques. This included interpreting note-taking, dealing with quotes and terminology, coping with humour and an emphasis on the need to know the Bible among other topics.

The diverse group of participants, some from the Hispanic, Portuguese and Ghanaian speaking congregations, were also given the opportunity to practice the various forms of interpreting with the skills that were taught during the workshop.

One of the techniques which caught the imagination of most attendees was developing the skill of focusing on the message rather than on every word that is spoken by the speaker.

During the feedback after the training, the attendees unanimously requested that further training be organised shortly to build on what they have been taught.

SEC Communication and Media Director, Pastor Sam Davies, who facilitated the training, commented that the work of the church interpreter is not valued as much as it should. He added that church interpreters are co-preachers and must be prayed for in the same way that the preacher is prayed for before they preach.



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DEVOTIONAL

Acceptance



"Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory." (Romans 15: 7, NLT)

We are different. We are different because God made us to be different. With His creativity, He painted our skins different colours. With His Hands, He formed different types of hair to sit on our heads. With His imagination, He shaped us to be different sizes and used various shades of blue, green and brown for different eye colours. So, diversity was part of God's plan.

However, we seek to be the same. We seek out those who look like us, think like us, speak like us and share the same ideas about God's kingdom.

But God wants us to accept one another as Jesus has accepted us, so that in our differences, we can bring glory to God.

I have been in ministry for many years. I have witnessed multiple times what it means to accept one another as Jesus accepts us. But what stands out most for me, was the way in which a particular congregation accepted me. You see, I am different. I am a female minister.

Some years ago, my husband (who is also a pastor) and I were assigned to a particular congregation. They were different to us in colour, culture and choice of food. I was sad when our ministry concluded, because, as a congregation, they had accepted us. I did not know how much until at our leaving meal, one of the church elders made a confession.

He said that having a female pastor was very uncomfortable for them. It was simply not in their culture to have a woman in such a position. He said that, for them, "...shepherdesses, were not meant to be shepherds..."

I was stunned. There are the usual tell-tale signs that show when members of a congregation do not accept a female pastor. But, in the whole time I ministered in that church, there was no indication that my presence was a dilemma for

them. They were so respectful and gracious towards me, that I marvelled at this group of people who differed theologically and culturally to me yet showed me total acceptance.

Our differences, then, do not have to separate us when we accept one another just as Christ has accepted us. Alia Joy is right when she says,

"He placed us in time, in place, in culture. He knew only a body of many different parts would ever be able to reflect His glory." (A Body of Many Parts: On Diversity and Unity, www.incourage.me)

Acceptance not only helps us to respect and value the differences in one another, but the by-product of acceptance is that God is glorified! And isn't that the one thing that we all want?

Let's choose then to be like Christ and not let our differences separate us. Let us choose to accept and not reject those who are different to us.

Do you want to glorify God this way? Then place the words of Romans 15:7 where you can see them. Focus on them each day for a month and invite the Holy Spirit to help you to accept others just as Christ has accepted you. Pray particularly for the ones who have differences that you do not want to embrace. Not only will you learn to accept those who are different to you to but through your prayers and actions, you will be bringing glory to God too!



Mary Barrett

Pastor, Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds, Lakenheath & Haverhill

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