



BUC NEWS

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Email Newsletter of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United Kingdom and Ireland

Contents:

- QUEUING TO SEE JESUS
- CHRISTMAS MESSAGE TO 'SHARE GOD'S GIFTS'
- SAME SEX MARRIAGE BACK ON THE AGENDA
- ANNUAL TOY SERVICE HELD AT STANBOROUGH PARK CHURCH
- TODA DINNER GIVES THANKS, PROVIDES HELP
- STANBOROUGH PATHFINDERS 'STAND FAST'
- PROGRAMMES TO WATCH THIS WEEK
- COMING EVENTS

QUEUING TO SEE JESUS [BUC News with Erica Hole] Also a [video report](#).



Everyone wants their church packed but to find visitors from nearby houses and estates queuing up outside was a special delight for the 150 Newbold church members involved in a walk-through nativity designed around the outside of their building on Sunday, 9 December.

As Isaiah prophesied (sometimes even in Hebrew), a young family took a new look at the Christmas story and groups of visitors followed the journey of the Magi, eavesdropped on the conversation between Mary and the Angel Gabriel, saw a troubled carpenter working through issues in his workshop, and rejoiced as the shepherds' fear turned into joy with the angels' message.

"This is amazing! So professional", stated Jamie, a young, unchurched mother who came with her family. It was her first time on the Newbold campus, but her reaction to the whole event could be seen in the smile on her face.

She was standing outside the stable where a smiling African 'baby Jesus' was cuddling with his parents. Nearby sheep, donkeys and goats became the centre of attention for many of the children.

"The actors in the nativity are multicultural", explained volunteer, Erica Hole. "There are some 'Wise Men' from Serbia and Croatia, and a black family from South Africa taking a turn to represent Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus." She hoped the event would help to expand an Anglo-Saxon view of the birth of Jesus.



"It's a great success. I'm really happy it happened", enthused Smilka Markek, primary organiser and enthusiastic motivator. She had heard about a similar nativity in America and felt compelled to try it in England. "It shows the church can bring a great multitude to a community project", she added. "It has brought the church family together and opened the door to the community."



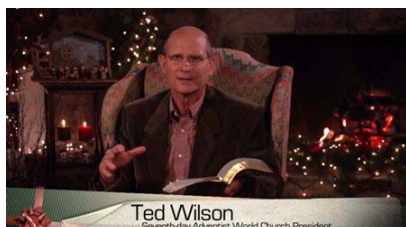
It took 150 people three months to put the event together, including a cast of 60. While the event was free, visitors were encouraged to donate to Sebastian's Action Group, a charity set up by a Binfield couple in memory of their son. This charity assists very sick children and their families and is now richer to the sum of £664.65 raised between the Nativity and the previous evening's community carol concert, 'Newbold Celebrates'.

The concert in itself was also a real witness with a crowded church packed with visitors, members, an orchestra, choirs, and musicians totalling over 120 performers. The mix of ages, musical styles, vocal and instrumental music so engaged the audience that nobody wanted to leave following the rousing singalong that concluded the event. Just as well, as mince pies and mulled wine kept the conversations going as friendships were made or deepened.

Nobody will forget the Anglican rector of Binfield, Rev Luke Taylor, playing a trick with a young schoolboy to show how great Jesus' undeserved gift is to all of us, or Newbold church senior pastor, Patrick Johnson, ripping off his own tie to show that Jesus' incarnation represented 'God with His tie off'.

A photo gallery of the concert and walk-through nativity is available on [the BUC website](#). Newbold Media have also produced a moving [six minute video](#) highlighting the nativity experience.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE TO 'SHARE GOD'S GIFTS' Enjoy [Christmas music](#) at its best.



Sitting in a warm, festive setting, Seventh-day Adventist World Church President, Pastor Ted Wilson offered the positive challenge to 'Share God's Gifts' over the Christmas season, as well as sharing the unity and diversity of the Church in a heart-warming musical extravaganza that covered the globe in its musical styles from classical Western choirs and orchestras to sitars, steel drums and pan pipes.

Enjoy the spirit of the season in [this video](#) from the World Church Communication department.

SAME SEX MARRIAGE BACK ON THE AGENDA



Culture Secretary Maria Miller has stated that "I am absolutely clear that no religious organisation will ever be forced to conduct marriages for same sex couples, and I would not bring in a bill which would allow that."

In her statement to MPs on Tuesday, 11 December 2012, she made clear that the government plans to introduce legislation to allow 'same sex marriage' before the next elections in 2015. This will include the possibility for some churches to 'opt-in' to be able to perform religious ceremonies although this will not be possible for the Church of England or the Church of Wales.

The announcement confirms the fears of those religious groups who, back at the start of the government's consultation period in March 2012, voiced

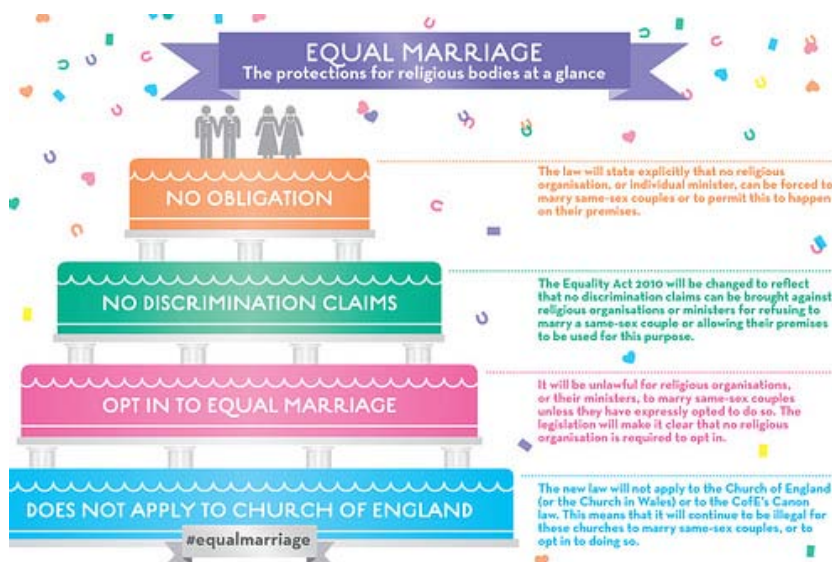
concerns that the push for civil same sex weddings would inevitably lead to a push for churches to perform the ceremony as well. Despite government assurances at the time this is exactly what has happened.

The pressure group, [Christian Concern](#) notes, "The Government's consultation on the issue pledged that same sex 'marriage' ceremonies would only be conducted in civil settings and that no religious institution will be permitted to participate."

On Friday, 16 March 2012, [BUC News stated](#): "Adventists are concerned about any change to the definition of marriage, and are equally worried that if this change is made, and despite the government's insistence on safeguards, that it will not be long before pressure comes to bear to insist that religious groups would have to perform such ceremonies."

Mrs Miller has announced a "quadruple lock" intended to ensure that churches which do not wish to conduct same sex 'marriages' would not be forced to. However, Conservative MP Anne McIntosh drew attention to similar protections for churches in Denmark which were later ruled as illegal.

"This is a process of continued pressure that is unlikely to stop with this legislation", states Pastor Ian Sweeney, President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the UK and Ireland. "A few years down the line, churches and individuals that choose not to 'opt-in' will likely be regarded as discriminatory and may well find themselves in a very difficult if not impossible position."



In the submission the Adventist Church made to the government, they joined other faith groups in stating that, "we would express a concern that while we understand that the government will ensure that religious organisations and celebrants will not have to register same sex marriages against their will, that this can nevertheless be the start of a process that may in the future be further changed thereby causing a potential clash between genuinely

held religious belief and the dictates of legislation." You can read the [full statement here](#).

Pastor Sweeney is one of many Adventists who will join with other, like-minded Christians, in writing to their MP and expressing their concerns. Sample letters can be found on the [Christian Concern website](#).

Pastor Victor Hulbert, Communication and Media spokesperson for the Adventist Church knows from experience that a well written letter works. "I wrote to my MP back in April", Pastor Hulbert states. "I received a polite but non-committal reply from him. However, I later found a newspaper article where he stated that he had changed his mind on the issue due to a letter from a constituent." His MP is likely to be receiving another missive this next week – and as well over 1,000 Adventists live in his constituency, it may be that the one letter could be multiplied by many more.

"MPs do listen, especially if they think they may lose your vote at the next election", adds Pastor Sweeney. "This is an important issue, and making your voice heard could make all the difference."

ANNUAL TOY SERVICE HELD AT STANBOROUGH PARK CHURCH [June Coombs]



Hundreds of toys are making their way to needy Watford children in time for Christmas - thanks to the generosity of the members of Stanborough Park church.

The annual Toy Service, held this year on Sabbath, 8 December, was started over half a century ago by the late Alf Kelly and is continued by his daughter, Pat Walton, with a lot of help from her friends! The toys are distributed by the Watford Women's Refuge, local Children's Centres, schools and clinics who are all responsible for looking after the welfare of children in the local community.

Many of these representatives actually attended the service and, according to Pat, were amazed at the selection and number of toys on display. "They were absolutely thrilled", she said, adding that she was very pleased with how well the service had gone - with significantly more toys donated than usual.

Accepting the toys on behalf of the Mayor of Watford, Councillor Ian Brown mentioned how he had attended the event many times before and, for him, it marked the beginning of the Christmas season. He went even further saying how it was one of the top three of events he attended and that the 'Seventh-day Adventist Church is right up there in what it does for the citizens of Watford.'

The address was given by Pastor Paul Lockham, Executive Secretary of the British Union Conference, who was following in the footsteps of his grandfather, Pastor J A MacMillan, who in 1967 performed the same task in his capacity as BUC President - with a young Paul sitting in the congregation.



Referring to the donated toys, Pastor Lockham pondered on what made a gift a gift, expressing the hope that they would bring joy to the children who received them. He then linked this to God's gift to mankind at the first Christmas; a gift not just for Christmas to be left forgotten for the rest of the year but one to make a difference to everyone's life - every day of the year as a gift that goes on. For us, this love is reflected in the toys given for those in need. We need to take time to know Jesus and pray that the spirit of God will enable each one of us to experience this wonder of love.

TODA DINNER GIVES THANKS, PROVIDES HELP [Nancy Josee]



Togetherness brings unity and unity is what we need in order to see God's miracles unfold. On Sabbath, 8 December, Central London church were gathered together in unity for a Toda dinner to raise funds for 'The Water Tap Foundation'. Toda in Hebrew means 'thank you'.

Toda included a three course meal and testimonies. Linda Haimbodi stated, "the main aim of the dinner was to say thank you to the Lord for what He has done for us and to remember our brothers and sisters in Malawi who don't have clean water." She added, "It is with no doubt that Jesus is the true hope of all nations, the hope for Malawi. And as we work together to share our love around the world let us also share the true water given to us from God, the water of life which is Jesus."

The Water Tap Foundation is an international charity whose mission is to provide clean drinking water to poor areas of the world, starting with a small village in Malawi. Clean water is something that in

this country we take for granted. However, nearly 1 in 6 people today live with no clean or safe drinking water. Waterborne diseases kill 1 in 4 children that die under the age of 5. The Water Tap Foundation realizes that everyone needs compassion. Central London church is a part of that love and compassion.

STANBOROUGH PATHFINDERS 'STAND FAST'



Stanborough Park church closed the Pathfinder Year with the theme, 'Stand Fast' during a weekend of activities on 1 and 2 December. The Sabbath School was coordinated by Deputy director Jacqueline Deane with Eva Papaioannou, an Explorer in the role of Superintendent and Deputy director Eileen Hussey presenting the Mission Report.

During the Investiture Service in her short preamble, Director Florence Allen stated that in spite of all the 'Red Seas' they stood fast and therefore, were celebrating the triumphs. The three speakers focused on Bible characters to encourage the congregation to be tenacious and stand fast. Adventurer Candace Tello highlighted the techniques that Queen Esther used to stand fast and save an entire nation. Joshua Anderson-Grey painted a picture of Joshua leading the Children of Israel around the Walls of Jericho standing fast for seven years. He brought smiles to the audience as he shared his own experience of standing fast at Stanborough School. Pastor Karin Wiczorek wrapped up the messages with an illustration of Abigail standing fast in the face of the fierce anger of King David and his men thus resulting in her being a queen.

Forty-one Pathfinders and fifteen Adventurers were invested. The awards were presented by Pathfinder Area coordinator, Warren O'Hara who reminded the congregation that once we train our children of today they will be leaders of tomorrow. Outstanding achievements in the acquisition of honours were Olufikayo Bright and Gabriel Opoku-Mensah (19) and Fonah Thomas (20). However, Aarinola Ayo-Ipaye who also received the award for "Outstanding Pathfinder of the Year" obtained 21 honours. The award for "Outstanding Adventurer of the Year" went to Ron Bernados. Of the fifteen Junior Counsellors who volunteered their services, three were nominated for "Outstanding Junior Counsellor of the Year", namely Zayne Mueller-Smith, Rhiannon Lee-Murray and Sophie Deane. Zayne Mueller-Smith who was also responsible for Drilling and Marching collected the award.

After a potluck on Sabbath afternoon, the Pathfinders and Adventurers marched into the local community to distribute Stanborough News. Later in the evening Sarah Stickland, an Adventurer, taught the audience sign language as the Pathfinders and Adventurers displayed their talents at a concert entitled, "Praises Go Up, Blessings Come Down". The package ended with a Pathfinder Fun Day on Sunday 2 December at the Stanborough School gym and the Stanborough Centre.

PROGRAMMES TO WATCH THIS WEEK



Our programme highlights for the coming week include a Christmas special as 'The Journey' takes us to the mountains of northern Portugal where we meet shepherds and find ourselves introduced to the meaning of 'The Angels' Song'.

On [Revelation TV](#) (Sky 581 or Freesat 692):

The Journey: [Why did Jesus have to die?](#) (rpt) – A small Exmoor church with a big message: Thursday,

13 December, 8:30 pm repeated Sunday lunchtime 16 December, 1 pm. Next week: [The Angels' Song](#). If the shepherds were surprised, so were the angels!

On Hope TV you can watch a wide variety of programmes on the satellite and [website](#). Next week's schedule includes the following UK produced programmes among its much larger international output including seasonal programming:

Friday 14 December: 8:00 pm: The Journey: [Lost in the Lake District](#),
 8:30 pm: FaithTalks: [Does faith make a difference in a marriage?](#),
 Midnight: Lost in the Lake District
 Sabbath 15 December: 9:00 am & 7:00 pm: Lost in the Lake District,
 7:30 pm: FaithTalks: Does faith make a difference in a marriage?
 Monday 17 December: 12:30 pm: [James Shepley](#) – Learning to care,
 9:30 pm: Viewpoint: [Is technology good or bad?](#)
 Wednesday 19 December: 8:00 am: Viewpoint: Is technology good or bad?,
 11:00 pm: [Alan Hodges](#) – A post-war childhood and a pastor's heart
 Friday 21 December: 8:00 pm: The Journey: [The Angels' Song](#),
 8:30 pm: FaithTalks: [Faith and Disability](#),
 Midnight: The Angels' Song
 Sabbath 22 December: 9:00 am & 7:00 pm: The Angels' Song,
 7:30 pm: FaithTalks: Does faith make a difference in a marriage?

COMING EVENTS For a full listing of Coming Events please visit www.adventistevents.org.uk

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