



Encounter in love

On your marks

Vol. 10 • Issue 1 • January 2014

Mental health: well-being tips

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Editorial

Dear Reader

In the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15), Jesus tells of a shepherd who leaves 99 of his sheep in the wilderness in order to go and find the missing 100th sheep. In my Bible it has added headings, with these verses headed by the title, 'Parable of the Lost Sheep'. But is the story about the sheep, or the actions of the shepherd? I put it to you that it is about the shepherd. With the religious leaders complaining that Jesus was eating and associating with sinners, Jesus told this story. Jesus was pointing out that shepherds (religious leaders) look after sheep (believers), and if a sheep does go missing (leaves the other believers), it is the job of the shepherd to go and look for the sheep.

Whether you are a youth or in youth leadership, it is good to look out for your friends, for those who attend church with you. May your new year be filled with the excitement of searching and communing with God, and may you have a desire to search for and commune with those who have wandered away from church and faith.

@ncounter is for youth and youth leaders, and we would love to hear from you about what you read in this edition. For more details about youth events and activities in the UK and Ireland, visit www.adventist.org.uk

Yours in Christ's service

Nathan

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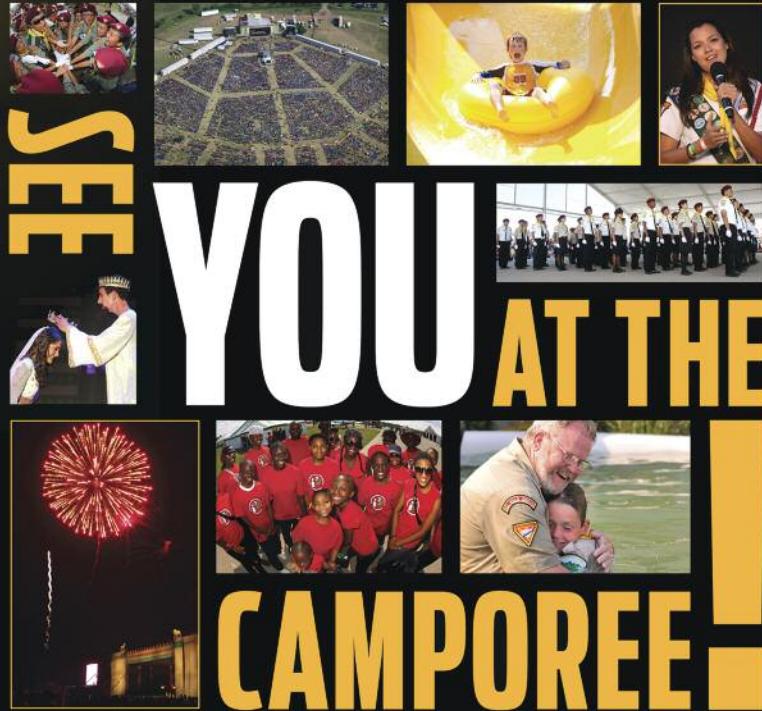
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Ron Whitehead
Director



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Encounter in love

I always knew I would be a student missionary. My parents had both served a year as student missionaries in Nicaragua in the early days of the AVS programme, and they filled my childhood with exciting tales of jungle life, complete with loads of photographs, exotic furs/skins brought out for display, and a few choice phrases in Mosquito Indian. Yet, despite all my romantic notions of saving lives in the jungle, I made a last-minute change to my placement and found myself in July of 1998 working in Crieff, Scotland at Roundelwood Health Spa. Crieff could not have provided a more Scottish welcome for this young American, as I happened to arrive while they were hosting the Highland Games. With Kilties walking about town and the skirl o' the pipes drifting in through the open window of my new flat – I was smitten.

My new community would include the Roundelwood staff/Crieff church, the ever-changing group of SMs (seven over the course of my year), and the Scottish Mission youth. Youth weekends were scheduled about once a month, with additional events organised on occasion. It was during these get-togethers that I met Chris Baker; and my strong intentions to not get involved with anyone during this year began to weaken.

Relationships are different when you know your time in a country is limited. But hope springs eternal, love is blind, and so on. So we tried to take advantage of the seven remaining months together almost as if I didn't need to fly back to the States and return to graduate school while Chris remained to start his career in Scotland.

But of course that day did eventually arrive. Now we fell into a different rhythm in our relationship: one with scheduled phone calls, old-fashioned, handwritten letters, emails, and about three one/two-week visits a year. As it happened, one of my flatmates was in the same situation after her SM year in Australia, which helped add a bit of camaraderie (they married two weeks after Chris and I did).

After three long years graduation arrived. And Chris proposed! After all this time in so many circumstances:

o Karen Baker

in the comfort of home, away from home, with family, away from family, on extended road trips/travels, and yet still together: of course I said yes! Chris was working for Motorola at the time and we were quite fortunate that they were willing to transfer him to the American branch of his team, thus answering the 'who-moves-where?' question. Two months later we were married in Crieff, where we were able to share this celebration with all those who had been part of our beginning. And then, following a reception with American friends and family in Denver, we dashed off to Austin, Texas for Chris to start work there.

We spent five years in Texas before relocating to our current home in Seattle, Washington. Last July we celebrated our 11th anniversary. Chris works as a software engineer and I am working as a paediatric physiotherapist. We have two sweet girls: Kendall (nearly 4 years old) and Eliana (just a few months old). Perhaps someday they will be student missionaries too. . . .



o Karen Plaatjes

over a year and immediately started craving some. I had to ask him for a piece of fudge. That was when I met my future husband, Phil.

The next evening I found myself next to Phil during a game of Uno and we ended up talking for hours. We both love roller coasters, so we agreed we would meet up one break to go to the amusement park in Seoul. I gave him my number and he phoned me the day after we got home from camp. We talked almost every day and six months later we were engaged. I knew after about two weeks that I would marry him (I even told him that: and he kept phoning, which was a good sign!).

As Phil is from South Africa and I was planning to go back to America, we had to find a compromise on where to live. My parents had moved back to the UK by this time and he was willing to come here, so we ended up marrying and coming to live in England. I now have the privilege of working for the Adventist Volunteer Service and helping other people go as volunteers around the world. I have two amazing little girls and a husband who is perfect for me. God gave me so much more than I expected when I stepped out in faith and followed His leading to Korea. Volunteering truly changed my life and I am so grateful for the opportunity.



Karen & Phil Plaatjes live and work in south-east England with their two daughters; Karen is the Adventist Volunteers Co-ordinator at the Trans-European Division.



Encounter in love

I grew up in Moldova, and when I was little my mother brought home a book about Gladys Aylward. Fascinated by the story, I decided that one day I too would be a missionary in a faraway land. Dreams are powerful things, because . . . after ten years I was on a plane to help my brother run a college shop at Helderberg College, South Africa.

A guy named Daniel Hopa was also on a plane that summer. He was an engineer working for LG in Poland, making good money, but he felt that something was missing: so he decided to volunteer his time at Stanborough School. Plans came together quickly and in two weeks he was on English soil, where he has been invited by the school to stay on ever since.

Meanwhile I decided to stay on as a volunteer at Helderberg College Library. It is amazing how much your relationship with God grows when you get out of your comfort zone. I learnt how a library operates and did some further studies. After a year and a half I pursued my childhood dream about China and was invited to teach English near Beijing. Teaching 1,150 students on a weekly basis, giving Bible studies in the evenings and squeezing university studies in between was a challenge, but I would not trade the experience for anything. Nothing compares to a deep

joy within your soul when you tell someone for the first time in their lives: 'Jesus loves



Liubov Hopa

you.' As my year neared to completion, my next move was to a librarian position at Stanborough School in England.

I knew God brought me to England, yet I told Him countless times I didn't understand why. If there is one thing I learnt from my years of volunteering it is this: God knows what He is doing. He has the whole picture while I just have a couple of puzzles.

Because there was no one to train me, I went in search of someone who knew passwords to the library system so that I could train myself. His name was Mr Hopa. After a while I learnt that he was the best person to seek out for all and any technical problems in Stanborough, and I had plenty of them! He was firm, but he was also kind, intelligent, organised and dedicated, and everything about him spoke about the strength of his character. When I met him I never even thought that this man might become someone more than 'Stanborough's IT manager'. However, slowly, he was winning my heart over and eventually he asked me out.

Many people tell you that they knew straight away that this person was 'the one'. That never happened to me and I was sure it never would. But, after two weeks of dating, a realisation hit me – 'I am going to marry this man.' It was so clear, as if God was in the room and said the words aloud. For a sceptic like me this insight was overwhelming.

I prayed about it, just to make sure God wasn't making a mistake, but all I felt was certainty and peace. Four months later we were engaged, and less than a year from the moment we met we were married.

The bottom line?

Get out of your comfort zone; get to really know God by going someplace where you will have to rely on Him; volunteer in different spots of the world – the experience of serving others will forever enrich you and change you. And you might meet your future husband or wife! After all, God has a sense of humour.

Liubov and Daniel Hopa live in Hertfordshire and both work at Stanborough Secondary School.



Read the full story at www.adventistyouth.org.uk



Andrew Layland

It was a bright autumn morning as the plane took off from Birmingham International Airport for Seoul, South Korea. After watching the 2002 FIFA world cup take place in South Korea and Japan only three months before, I found myself heading off to the Far East to serve the Seventh-day Adventist church school system in one of the fastest-growing economies and church territories in the world. After leaving my job in banking and finance I committed myself to work for the Church for one year. One thing I have learnt is that you should never put limits on what you think God will use you for. So, arriving in Seoul to teach English and Bible, an entire new chapter was about to begin in my life. It was certainly a unique missionary experience. Usually one associates missionary work with poor countries and difficult living conditions. Well not here in Seoul. I had cable TV, a stipend, and all the mod cons of a global city. I guess this was then a harder mission than I thought.

Many of the missionaries in Korea were locals. I found myself co-teaching with Korean missionaries who would help and assist us in the classes and weekend spiritual programmes. One of the teachers was a beautiful girl known as Christine. We taught a class of 7-8-year-olds together. After a few weeks of co-teaching I

asked Christine if she would teach me Korean. I have to admit: I did have ulterior motives behind my sudden interest in learning Korean. I was not a very good student and was soon found out by my teacher. However, my English charm had done just about enough and there began a romance that still to this day is blooming.

In 2004 in a crowded Burger King restaurant, Christine (her real name is Soonim) accepted my proposal for marriage (yes, I really did propose in Burger King, what a romantic I am!) and in August of that year in the middle of the monsoon season Soonim walked down the aisle in a packed church in Seoul to become Soonim Layland.

In 2006, four years after my original commitment to one year of service, I sensed the Lord calling me to pastoral ministry. So after four years of service in Korea I returned to England with a souvenir: the beautiful girl I first met in a classroom in southern Seoul. We both attended Newbold College, and I completed my Master's degree in Theology and began serving as a pastor in the North England Conference. Last year I was called to serve at Newbold as Dean and Chaplain of the very college at which I had studied. God really does have a sense of humour – maybe one day he may ask us to serve in Korea again!



Mental health: well-being tips

Last issue we looked at 'Mental health: the warning signs'. In this issue we highlight some tips to enhance mental well-being and introduce supportive mechanisms for individuals who may be experiencing challenges in this area.

First, a case study:

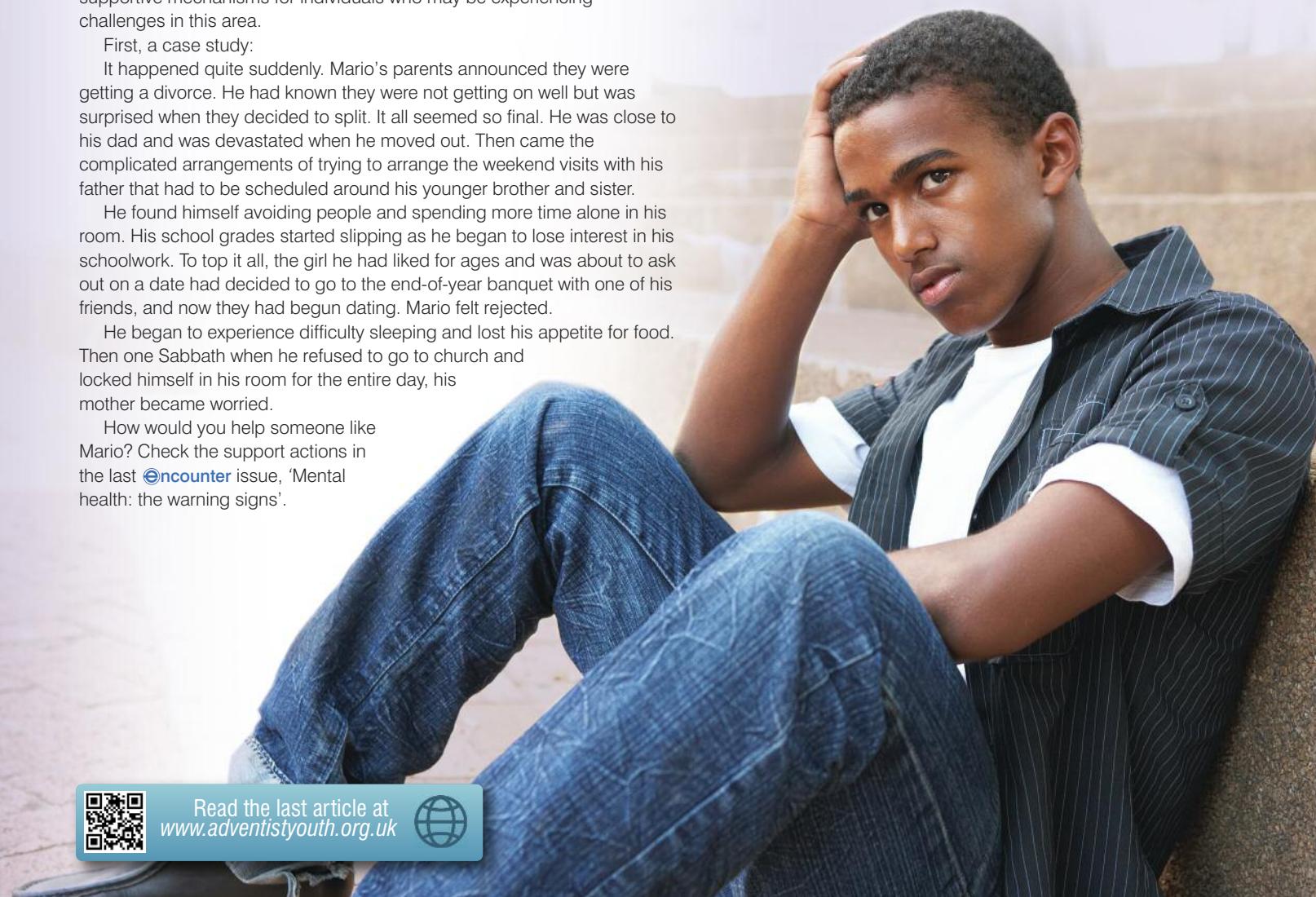
It happened quite suddenly. Mario's parents announced they were getting a divorce. He had known they were not getting on well but was surprised when they decided to split. It all seemed so final. He was close to his dad and was devastated when he moved out. Then came the complicated arrangements of trying to arrange the weekend visits with his father that had to be scheduled around his younger brother and sister.

He found himself avoiding people and spending more time alone in his room. His school grades started slipping as he began to lose interest in his schoolwork. To top it all, the girl he had liked for ages and was about to ask out on a date had decided to go to the end-of-year banquet with one of his friends, and now they had begun dating. Mario felt rejected.

He began to experience difficulty sleeping and lost his appetite for food. Then one Sabbath when he refused to go to church and locked himself in his room for the entire day, his mother became worried.

How would you help someone like Mario? Check the support actions in the last [encounter](#) issue, 'Mental health: the warning signs'.

◦ **Sharon Platt-McDonald**
BUC Director for Health, Disability Awareness and Women's Ministries



Read the last article at
www.adventistyouth.org.uk



Some self-management tips to enhance emotional well-being

Challenge negative thinking. Keep a 'thought diary' to monitor feelings and negative self talk. Practise positive thinking by looking at alternative outcomes to negative situations.

Create 'me time'. Find time to nurture your own needs with activities that enhance your sense of well-being. Enjoy time pampering yourself.

Develop supportive relationships. This increases your level of support and gives you options for sharing when you feel able. Spend time around positive people.

Eat well. Omega-3 has been shown to improve mood. This is found in foods such as walnuts, avocados and salmon. B vitamins, in particular B12, are excellent for maintaining the nervous system. Increasing foods rich in fibre, such as legumes (beans), raw fruits and vegetables and oat bran, has also been shown to be beneficial for boosting mood. These are particularly nourishing to the brain tissue.

Enjoy music. Listening to music that you enjoy has been found to be beneficial. A 2008 Cochrane Review demonstrated that music enhances mood. In particular, for depressed individuals, music therapy was found to boost the emotional level so that depression sufferers appeared to have fewer negative thoughts when listening to their favourite music.

Get daily exposure to sunlight. Sunlight helps improve mood. Daily exposure of 10-15 minutes can be achieved during walking, outdoor exercise, creating a garden 'experience' (water feature, plants, flowers, herbs, vegetables, external play or relaxation area) or socialising outdoors.

Feed your spiritual life. Prayer and meditation (silent reflection) have been shown to provide stress relief and resilience to face difficult life situations. (*ScienceDaily*, 9 March 2010.) Additionally, a study by the Mental Health

Foundation published in 2006 found that religious people – in particular, those who believe in God – are more likely to recover from depression. Regular church attendance was also found to enhance emotional resilience.

Get adequate rest and sleep. Research demonstrates that 8 hours of sleep each night is best for optimal physical and mental health. It helps to rejuvenate physically and recharge the brain. Rest also helps to combat stress.

Identify an 'accountability buddy'. This is someone with whom you have agreed to 'check in' on a regular basis. You may find this helpful as a buffer or additional support for low times. Sometimes this individual can pick up when you are slipping into depression and encourage you to seek help early.

Know when to seek additional help. If you are concerned that you might be becoming depressed then speaking with a health professional or counsellor is important.

Make leisure time a priority. Find healthy activities that you enjoy doing which enable you to relax and lift your mood.

Manage stress effectively. Good stress management builds emotional resilience. This includes managing your time so you don't put yourself under pressure.

Move more. A 2002 study found that exercise, particularly outdoors, invigorates body and mind. The recommended exercise is 30 minutes, six times per week. Building up gradually until you are exercising at 80% of your maximum heart rate is vital. (*jap.physiology.org*)

Practise relaxation techniques. This has been found to promote better physical and mental health. It could be something as simple as deep-breathing exercises.

Take time to appreciate. Nature, a good book, a humorous movie, relaxing music, positive friendships.

NEC youth

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NEC youth

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NEC youth

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For a full listing of youth events around the country please see www.adventistyouth.org.uk

Newbold College Impact Day

More than eighty staff and students participated in Newbold's inaugural Impact Day of service on Friday 8 November.

The day started with Newbold School pupils and parents spending the morning together eating a breakfast of waffles with tea, provided by students and staff from the college.

Later, a team from the college worked on the school property, clearing leaves, twigs and debris from the building gutters, and acorns and leaves from the basketball court. The team also weeded the paths and cleared them of leaves, pruned the shrubs, and removed ivy, vines and rubbish from the area.

On campus, students worked to brighten the campus ahead of the Christmas period, hanging decorations in the hall, cleaning classrooms, and working with the grounds team in Sylvia's Garden to clear leaves and other debris that was blocking the streams.

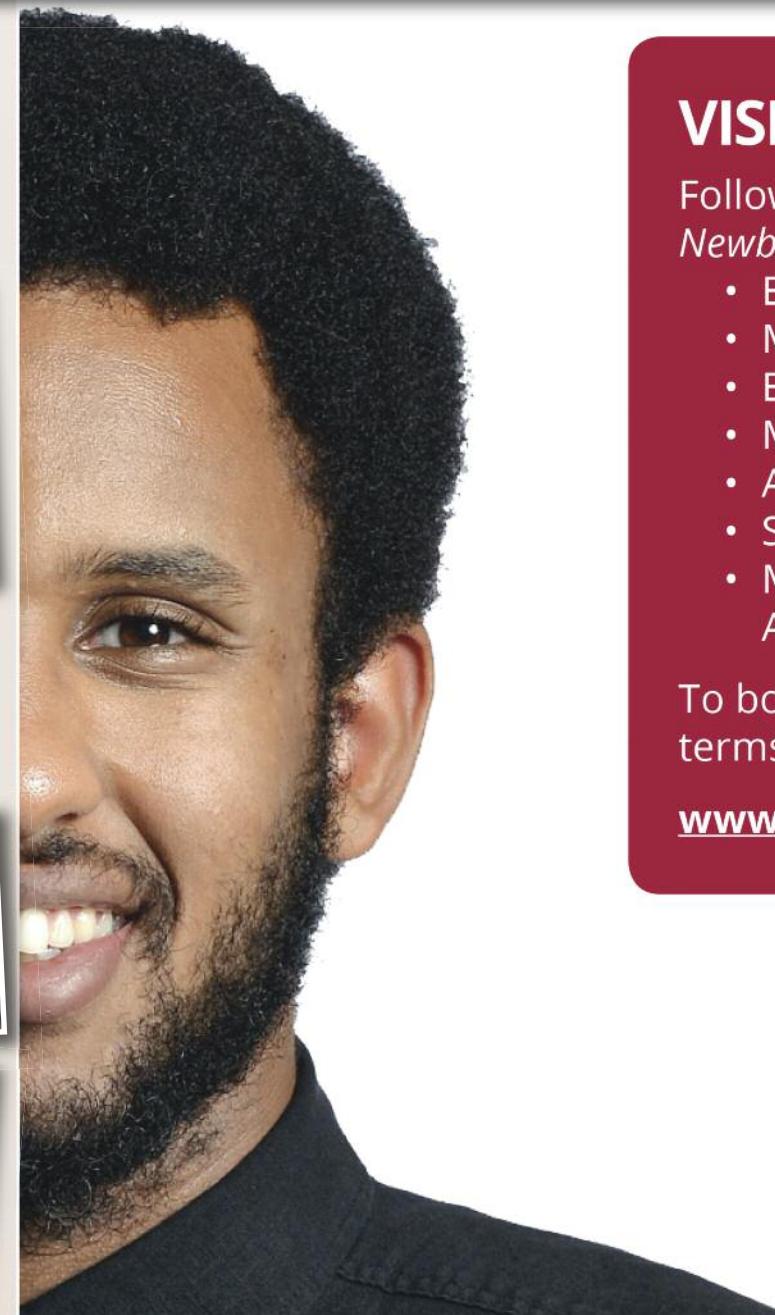
In the community, Newbold's Rubbish Army removed 20 bags of litter from the streets of Binfield, the volunteers at the Bracknell Food Bank warehouse received assistance sorting the influx of donations received ahead of the holiday season, and two local Anglican churches received a facelift with teams from Newbold pulling weeds, trimming bushes and cutting the grass.

Community members were invited on campus for free IT consultations and thirty-five people received a free car wash in the car park, and hot drink in a makeshift cafeteria run by a team of Newbold students. Many visitors also took part in a campus tour while their cars were being washed, with one visitor commenting, 'I have passed by a million times, but I never knew this was here!' At lunchtime the cafeteria served soup and buns for volunteers and visitors.

In the afternoon, teams of staff and students visited elderly couples in the community to spend time with them and to help with housework. A team also visited the local Beech House care facility to sing hymns and spend time with residents, with one resident being moved to tears by the group's visit.

One community visitor commented, 'It was strange that someone would do something good for no reason.' For Newbold staff and students, the reason is clear – Newbold values service. The college's mission is to 'foster a Christ-centred and diverse learning community that prepares students for service in an ever-changing world', and one of the college's four priorities is to 'promote opportunities for service to meet the needs of others'.

While the 2013 Impact Day is one event that marks the beginning of this journey to an increasingly service-oriented culture, it is a journey that promises to be exciting, and a journey that staff and students at Newbold have made clear they are passionate about undertaking.



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Alumnus profile: meet Banwo Idowu



Please tell us a bit about yourself and your time at Stanborough.

My name is Banwo Idowu. I was a student at Stanborough Secondary School from 2004 to 2009. It was a time full of profound moments, deep learning and laughter, a time which I remember very fondly. Stanborough School helped me to form a lot of characteristics that, if correctly developed and utilised, may form a basis upon which one may begin to realise much progress. Since leaving Stanborough School I have completed my A-levels, and I am now thankfully studying law at Southampton University.

Who was your favourite teacher? And your favourite subject/s? Why?

It would be both hard and somewhat unfair for me to choose just one teacher to be my favourite. The three teachers that really pushed me towards personal and academic development, as well as teaching me valuable and unforgettable life lessons, have to be Mrs McKie, Mr Rivers and the late Mr Martin.

Stanborough School organises international trips every year (for example, Hong Kong exchange, USA business trip, France and Spain language trips, India, and so on). How many of these did you participate in? Which one was your favourite? Why?

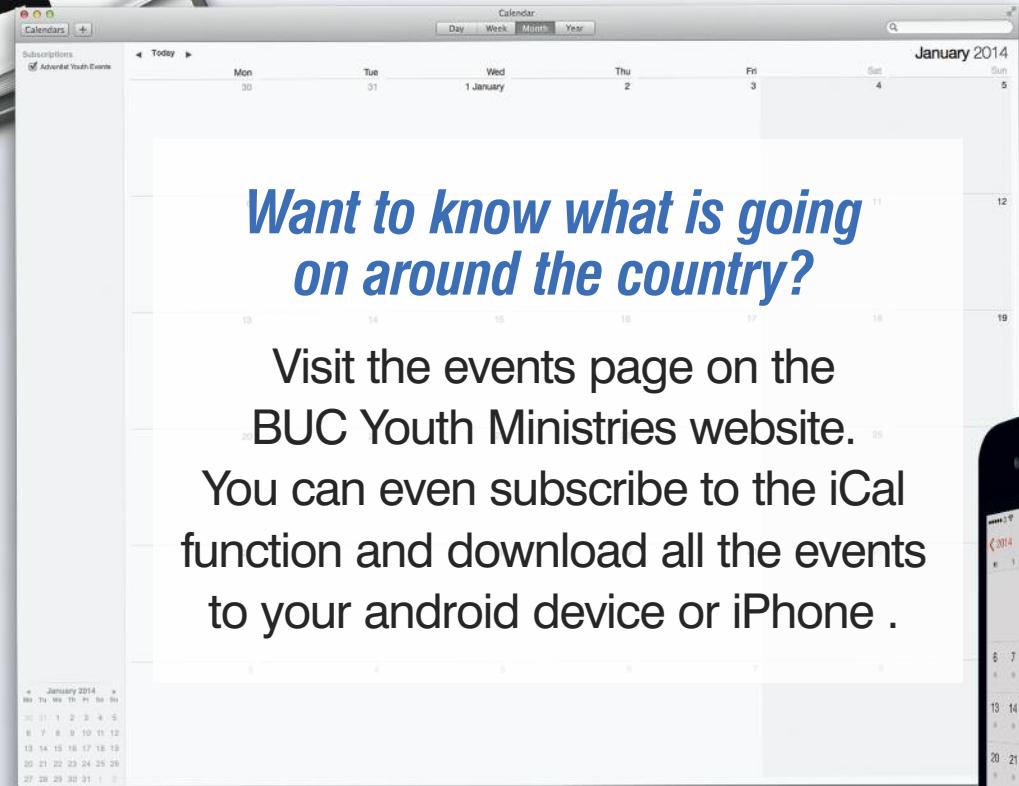
I had the privilege of taking part in the Spain, France and USA trips, all of which taught many lessons. However, my favourite would have to be the USA business trip to New York. I truly felt as if I had an amazing and unforgettable time there with friends, full of laughter and learning.

What was the most valuable lesson that you learnt during your time at Stanborough?

The most valuable lesson I learnt during my time at Stanborough School was that our present actions and decisions dictate many of our future circumstances.

Any final thoughts?

Final thoughts? I would like to say that above all I am grateful to God for the time I had at Stanborough Secondary School, both the highs and the lows, because it has helped me to become the person that I am today. To students currently studying there, I would appeal to them that they really maximise their time there. I urge them to make lasting and meaningful friendships, to disregard any negative things and embrace the positive, to enjoy the family that is Stanborough School, keep smiling and laughing: but most importantly . . . work hard but pray harder.



www.adventistyouth.org.uk



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First come first served

On your marks!

When does a blessing turn into a burden, a gift to a curse, an opportunity to an obligation?

Well, in my experience, it happens slowly, quietly, and surreptitiously. For those of you reading this who have recently been appointed youth leader, assistant leader, or youth team member, you could soon know exactly what I'm talking about.

You've been elected to play an important role in the youth team for 2014, and the new year has started with such positivity and promise. But please, be warned: if you're not careful, it could end in doom and dread, with you simply occupying the role in body, while your mind roams in greener pastures.

Difficult deacons, emphatic elders and persistent politics may await you.

Oh you don't believe me? Call me in three months. If, perchance, these issues are not present in your church, then you may be in more trouble than I thought. The absence of these could signal the presence of another issue . . . APATHY.

Apathetic young people, apathetic old people, apathetic leadership and an apathetic church; people who just can't be bothered.

I speak as someone who's been involved with youth ministry, in one way or another, since I was 17 years old. I have worked with four London Youth Federation presidents, three South England Conference (SEC) Teen directors, too many youth leaders to count, and one very lovely home church.

I am extremely passionate about youth ministry, and it is out of this passion and experience that I embarked on my latest project, *On Your Marks – A Beginner's Guide to Youth Ministry*.

This 'opus magnum' was born out of a genuine, burning desire to help.

After being a youth leader for my local church for two years, I started to think, *Wouldn't it have been great if I had been given a document which could help me fulfil my role better from the moment I accepted the post?* It was then that it came to me: *Why don't I*

o Luke Whyte

write one? Genius!

So, I set about getting it done. As I wrote, read and rewrote, I realised that, hold on, maybe this could help other youth leaders! The rest, as they say, is history.

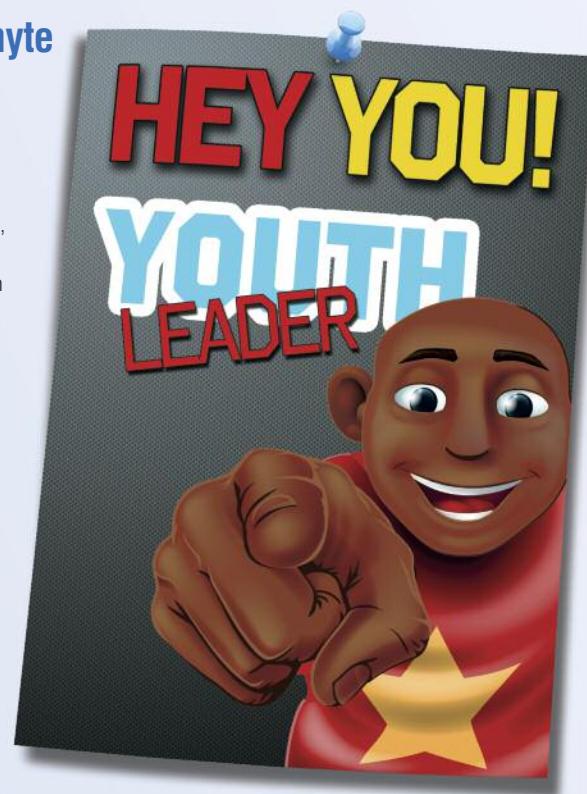
On Your Marks does not cover every issue you will come across in youth ministry: far from it. *On Your Marks* does not guarantee your success: no, that's down to you. *On Your Marks* will not make you run faster or jump higher: no, you need to hit the gym for that!

What it will achieve is the goal of providing you with some advice and tips to help you hit the ground running. It is a practical, how-to guide for youth ministry, a guide that I would have appreciated years ago, when I began in youth ministry.

I am so blessed to be able to give this away free; but, of course, nothing really is free in this world, so I would like to take the time to thank the British Union Conference Youth Ministries Director, Nathan Stickland, and the SEC Teens Director, Dejan Stojkovic, for all their support and commitment to provide each church in the British Isles with a copy of this resource.

On Your Marks – A Beginner's Guide to Youth Ministry.

Don't delay, get yours today! Go to www.lukewhyte.com/onyourmarks to download an electronic copy of *On Your Marks* free of charge, as well as other bonus material. Or email Nathan Stickland: nstickland@adventist.org.uk or Luke Whyte: Luke@Lukewhyte.com



Global Youth Day

On **15 March 2014**, 8 million Adventist youth will be engaged in a day of active service – serving their church and their community.

What could you do to get involved in your local church? Got an idea but no clue how to see it come to fruition? Contact us at the BUC Youth Ministries Department to see if we can help!

Tips for Global Youth Day

Make a list of prospects

You probably know lots of people who would appreciate a nice slice of kindness. Start with your local congregation. Do you know a struggling college student? How about a widow(er) living alone for the first time in 30 years? New mum? Retirees? Sometimes we overlook opportunities in our own backyard, while we are gazing over the fence.

Identify true needs

It doesn't have to be a big hairy need: just a need. Hold the door for the lady with the buggy. Share your umbrella with an elderly person walking to their car. Needs are everywhere. We simply need to keep our eyes and ears open.

Go for meaning over money

Godly works don't have to be a budget buster. Expressions of affection or gratitude can be among the most meaningful and memorable of all Godly acts of kindness. A phone call just to say hi, a friendly wave or a few extra minutes of your undivided attention. These gestures are free, but deeply valuable. In essence, you are giving the gift of YOU.

o GC Youth Ministries



Put together an 'Act of Kindness' toolkit

Just because an act of kindness is random, that doesn't mean it has to be spontaneous. Equip yourself with the tools you need to seize the moment.

Make it a group activity!

There are several great reasons to enlist others. It's a great way to strengthen bonds and make new friends. You can take advantage of each other's skills and abilities. You can hold each other accountable. And finally, it's fun!

Take some cues from the Bible

Just a few of the kind acts seen in the Bible are: making clothes, providing food and drink, carrying a load, hospitality, and words of encouragement. Of course, the most important act is sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Word of God inspires, guides, and admonishes us toward good works.

Adapted from an article written by April Main: <http://churchofchristarticles.com/blog/administrator/tips-on-practicing-not-so-random-acts-of-kindness>

Youth Week of Prayer 15-22 March 2014

This year's theme is: 'The Kingdom of God is Near.' The readings have been compiled by Pastor Japhet De Oliveira; they include authors such as Dilys Brooks, Eddie Hypolite, Tim Gillespie and Kessie Reyne Bennett.

Pastor Gilbert Cangy, World Youth Director, says: Writers will draw from the proclamation and demonstration of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount, Parables and Miracles. The emphasis will be, 'You can enter the eternal kind of life now until time gives way to eternity.' Enter today, be transformed, be an ambassador of reconciliation, seek justice and mercy, and may our communities of faith be windows – previews of the soon coming of the glorious Kingdom of God.

Readings will be available electronically from January – contact your regional youth department/sponsor. Hard-copy readings will be mailed to the churches at the end of February 2014 with the copies of the *Messenger*. Your local youth leader will distribute the copies in time for the Youth Week of Prayer.

Let's begin work now to make this week, including the Global Youth Day, one of spiritual focus, revival and love in action!



School-leaving age?

This conference is for you!

1-2-3:16 will bring together experts from many fields who will help you decide your next career and study move.

Answering questions such as:

How can I get help if things get hard?

Shall I apply for university?
Which one is right for me?

Budgets?
Loans?
Cash flow?

Where does God want me to be?



For more information and to register your interest:
www.adventistyouth.org.uk



7-11 July 2014

