

BUC FAMILY

A Publication of the BUC Family, Children and Possibility Ministries

In this issue:

Room at the Table

Can You "See" What I Feel?

Events & Notices

Safeguarding Our Church Policy Statement

Recommended Reading

Room at the Table: Inclusive Churches for Families Impacted by Disabilities and Special Needs

Pr Les Ackie

In recent years, especially since the explosion of the social justice movement in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, the topic of inclusion has become a hot-button issue in society. The proliferation of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives has become a fiercely contested political football mired in deep ideological differences among legislators, activists, and the public. Yet from a biblical standpoint, inclusion is not an optional extra in the church's mandate to "make disciples of all nations", but sits at the heart of the Great Commission.

In the parable of the Great Banquet, Jesus gave instructions to his servants to "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind." (Luke 14:21). Those often overlooked by society are especially invited into His presence. This reminds us that no one is invisible to God. Jesus

emphasises the importance of having the marginalised "at the table".

Jesus' command had particular significance for those affected by disability in all its forms. Over one billion people worldwide live with some form of disability, and here in the UK, that number exceeds eleven million. Yet despite these remarkable figures, many individuals and families impacted by disability remain on the margins of our church communities. This is not, in most cases, because they do not wish to be present. Research findings from a number of disability organisations indicate that large numbers of families living with disability absent themselves from churches because they are not inclusive spaces that accommodate their needs. Many are discouraged by a combination of physical, social, attitudinal, and organisational barriers.

In the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15), the only way the shepherd could have known that the sheep was lost was by counting them. An inclusive ministry in our churches must begin with a critical question: "Who's missing?" This is not a peripheral concern of the gospel. It is woven into its very fabric. When we know who is missing, we know our mission.

The fulfilment of our mandate is often hindered by our limited perception of disability. According to the World Health Organisation, a disability is any cognitive or physical impairment, activity limitation, and/or participation restriction. Disability is the interaction between an individual's health condition and personal and environmental factors.



So, disability encompasses a wide variety of conditions, some permanent, some temporary, some invisible to the eye. What is considered a disability is often a matter of opinion. Some might consider a condition a disability; others may not. Accessibility advocate Facundo Carandini made the sobering observation that “We are all just temporarily abled”.

Views of disability have shifted over time from the Charity Model, which frames disabled people as objects of pity and dependence, through the Medical Model, which locates disability within the individual as a condition to be fixed, to the Social Model, which understands disability as the result of societal barriers that should be removed to enable inclusion and equality. The social model requires us to develop awareness of our limited appreciation of the needs of people with special needs so that we can be intentional in our efforts to meet those needs. The reality is that when we build our churches and organise our programmes, people with disabilities don’t tend to be at the forefront of our thinking, and as a result, are not taken into account. The result is, as Nancy Eisland said, “For many disabled persons, the church has been a city on a hill, physically inaccessible and socially inhospitable.”

The journey toward fuller inclusion does not require us to solve everything at once. It begins with prayer, asking God to open our eyes to those we have not yet seen, and to give us hearts willing to be changed. It continues with listening: genuinely seeking out the experiences of disabled members and their families, learning what helps, and taking seriously what hinders. It means being honest about the physical accessibility of our buildings, our volunteers’ awareness, and whether our culture can sometimes make people feel more observed than welcomed.

Churches can become more inclusive spaces for people with disabilities by intentionally developing policies that ensure safety and accessibility; involving disabled people in planning to avoid unintentional exclusion; training leaders and teaching sensitively about disability; and using small groups to foster more intimate, supportive, and accessible community engagement.

We can take steady, intentional steps in making our facilities more accessible, creating genuine opportunities for disabled people to participate and to lead, partnering with specialist organisations who can advise and support us, and ensuring that inclusion is not simply the concern of a handful of individuals but something championed at every level of church life.

Accommodations help to make room for people with disabilities. But the ultimate goal is integration into the life of the church. It is said that people will go where they feel welcomed, but they stay where they feel valued. In a similar vein, an anonymous quote says that “Everyone has an invisible sign hanging from their neck saying, ‘Make me feel important.’” Our calling is not simply to open the door, but to build a community where every person, whatever their ability, whatever their need, knows that they belong. This is not a programme or a project. It is a reflection of who we believe God to be, and of who, by his grace, we are becoming together.





Can you “see” what I feel?

Angela Hannant

Every day, part of my morning routine perhaps resembles that of others: I open my eyes, and I give God thanks for a new day. Unlike others however, I don't then jump out of my bed and skip or run to the shower. In fact, I begin by praying for the strength to leave my bed, not necessarily because I'm tired but because every move, every step is made after careful negotiation with my body, my brain and then covered with prayer for the strength to move in spite of the pain I feel!

This may sound rather dramatic; it might even seem overstated. For some it might even appear to be an out and out exaggeration, or even a lie; but for me it's the painful reality of a life lived with chronic pain.

So how did this journey begin? Just over 30 years ago, I was in a life-altering accident, where I was knocked over by a fire engine. Some parts of that day I still remember vividly, especially that I felt a level of pain that I can only imagine as being the stuff of nightmares!

The following weeks and months were filled treatment in and out of the hospital, the rehabilitation unit and finally in the physiotherapy department of a special trauma hospital.

After several months, when my pain did not subside significantly. The doctors were unsure as to whether I could expect to see signs of recovery or if significant health challenges would remain.

Looking back there seemed to be a number of gaps in my understanding of what chronic pain is. I was waiting for the day the pain would be managed or just disappear. I was deflated and saddened when the physiotherapist told me that I was no longer experiencing acute pain, but this was now chronic pain. When I asked for the difference to be explained to me, the information below from the Pain Society was given to me.

"Short-term pain is called Acute Pain. An example is a sprained ankle. Long-term is called Persistent or Chronic Pain. Back trouble or arthritis are examples. Pain that comes and goes is called Recurrent or Intermittent Pain. A tooth ache could be one."

Armed with a new-found knowledge of how pain impacted on me, I felt empowered to share my story. Sadly, this was not welcomed as some people chose to compare levels of pain and decide which one was more deserving of patience, love and sympathy. This practice can be divisive and should be avoided at all costs!

Chronic pain is something that is experienced by approximately one third of the population of citizens in the UK. It can be for a number of reasons. It is debilitating and it is life altering as individuals can experience such intensity of pain that both their mental and physical health suffer.

At times like these, sufferers can find themselves alone, isolated from friends and family, probably unemployed or not occupying the sort of roles that they had once occupied, and often having to explain something that they themselves do not understand.

But there may be others, maybe just a few, who will fully comprehend the reality of chronic pain. You see, unlike a broken limb or a scar, chronic pain is not visible.

Sadly, many of us who have to live with chronic pain will have discovered that there are those who But there may be others, maybe just a few, who will fully comprehend the reality of chronic pain. You see, unlike a broken limb or a scar, chronic pain is not visible. But there may be others, maybe just a few, who will fully comprehend the reality of chronic pain. You see, unlike a broken limb or a scar, chronic pain is not visible. cannot see pain and therefore do not accept that it is real or significant. "Often the cause of pain is obvious, a broken leg, or a bruise. But there are times when the source of pain is unseen, for example a slipped disc. Occasionally it is very difficult to find the exact cause of a person's pain.



Many acute pains are like an alarm telling us something is wrong. Most minor ones are easy to treat; others may be a sign of something more serious. When pain signals are no longer alerting us of danger to the individual, that pain is then considered chronic. At this point, there needs to be a concerted effort to ensure that no feels misunderstood. I remember a disability advisor telling me that my condition was "all in my head." Referring to "Complex Regional Pain Syndrome which I have suffered from following an accident in 2009.

When people are in chronic pain, their mobility may be adversely affected making it difficult or impossible to travel to connect with those who are in their local vicinity or further afield.

We need to look at what steps we can take to be inclusive, non-judgmental, creative and willing to go not just the extra mile, but several miles more!

Here are some suggestions:

- Acknowledge that some members have health challenges that other church members may not be aware of.
- Try to ensure that there is no suggestion that any members are to be blamed for their health issues.
- Churches can adapt to ensure people with chronic pain can still participate:
- Arranging for flexibility in how programmes are listened to or received.
- Offering high-quality streaming for church services
- Invite chronic pain sufferers to share their experience and participate in planning and delivering training for leaders and the church community.
- Establish Chronic Pain Support Groups where people can share their experiences, Educate on Chronic pain and other "Invisible Illnesses"
- Arrange Online or small groups: to connect lonely and isolated individuals with church-run community activities
- Have contingency plans for programme times for those who suffer chronic pain
- Just a reminder - Pain is felt but cannot be seen
- Try not to compare individuals pain experiences
- Finally, The church should learn how to support all members in a manner that demonstrates mutual respect and love for all.



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*Supporting Children
with diverse needs*

A TRAINING WEEKEND FOR ALL CHILDREN'S EDUCATORS IN A CHURCH SETTING



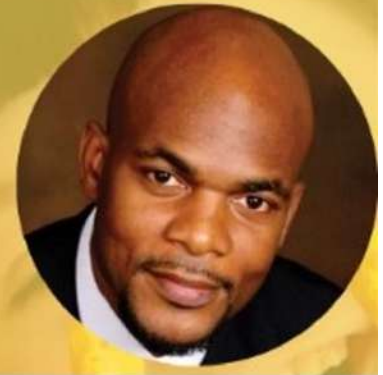
Salisbury Hall, Newbold College of
Higher Education, RG42 4AN



17-19 April 2026



buceducation@adventist.uk



Guest Speaker
Dr. Shaun Brooks
Disability Ministries Director
Georgia Cumberland Conference

Early Bird £75.00 for weekend
incl: meals, resources
**(Does not include
accommodation)**
After 16th March £100 for weekend

Conference Hosts and Speakers



Craige Young
UCY Founder / Dir.



Lorraine McDonald
BUC Education Dir.



Sophia Nicholls
ASNA Founder / CEO



Les Ackie
BUC Possibility Min. Dir.



BUC Children's Ministries Leadership Training

Seminar Dates

Sunday 18 January	Module 1—The Alive in Jesus Curriculum Pt 1
10:00 am – 1:00 pm	Module 2—The Alive in Jesus Curriculum Pt 2
Sunday 22 February	Module 3—Raising A Mission-Driven Generation
10:00 am – 1:00 pm	Module 4—Nurturing Children's Spirituality
Sunday 22 March	Module 5—Story Telling
10:00 am – 1:00 pm	Module 6—Building Resiliency in Children
Sunday 26 April	Module 7—Ministering to Children with Diverse Needs
10:00 am – 1:00 pm	Module 8—Teaching Children About Sex and Sexuality



Meeting ID: 989 618 9409

Passcode: BUCCM



Connecting Lives for Eternal Living





FAMILY CAMPING WEEKEND RELIVING THE BRECON YEARS!

FRIDAY MAY 22ND – MONDAY MAY 26TH 2026

LENCHWOOD CHRISTIAN RETREAT CENTRE,
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Closing date for bookings 17th April

- Camping/caravan pitches available.
- Other accommodation if booked early enough
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- Bonfire night
- Day visits possible
- All visitors must book.
- Beautiful countryside setting
- Cost - Tents £26 per pitch per night; day visitors £5 per person per day

For more information and booking contact Mike on 07925 858297 or email mikejbeamish@outlook.com

Presenter: Pastor Isaac Liburd

YEARS OF NEWBOLD COLLEGE

26th - 28th JUNE 2026

Joint Family and Children's Ministries Weekend

Leeds Central SDA Church

Friday 24th April - Sunday 26th April 2026

District Area 3 Group of Churches Event - 169 Meanwood Road Leeds LS7 1SR

**Building Christ-Centered Families for Today and Tomorrow:
Thriving as a Christian Family in the 21st Century**

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." – Joshua 24:15

Children's Church Programme (ages up 12)

Theme: Friends of Jesus Children's T-shirts £4 (contact local Children's Leader)

Friday Night
24th April

Singles Night
Whole in Christ
Before becoming one
Finding a Purpose in
singleness

Sabbath Morning
25th April

Sabbath School
Growing Strong in Jesus:
Parenting in the 21st Century
Divine Service
Homes Built on the Rock -
Storm-Proof Families in a
Shifting World

**Sabbath
Afternoon**

Baptism
Theme:
"A New Beginning for
the Whole Family"
Commitment to
Christ

Sunday
26th April

Marriage & Couples
Renewal
Theme:
"Love That Lasts:
Covenant, Not
Convenience"
Strengthening
marriages



**Pastor John
Francis**

NEC Family Ministries and
Safeguarding Director



**Sister Delivon
Francis**

Workshop presenter



**Sister Bekezela
BK Peters**

Adventist Community Services &
Children's Ministry Director



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NEC Family Ministries Department
Tel: 0115 960 6312
Email: family@necadventist.org.uk



Marriage & Couples Renewal

Leeds Central SDA Church



Sunday 26th April 2026

District Area 3 Group of Churches Event - 169 Meanwood Road Leeds LS7 1SR

Love That Lasts: Covenant, Not Convenience

You are warmly invited to a special event focused on strengthening marriages in a changing culture-restoring love, deepening commitment, and renewing spiritual unity.

Programme Highlights

- Worship & Reflection
- Short Message: "God's Design for Lasting Love"
- Couples Reflection Activity (Guided Conversation)
- Renewal of Vows Ceremony
- Prayer of Blessing Over Couples

Come and be refreshed,
reconnected and
renewed together.



Scan the QR code
to register



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NEC Family Ministries Department
Tel: 0115 960 6312
Email: family@necadventist.org.uk





EVERY
THURSDAY 8PM GMT

ADVENTIST SINGLES PRAYER MEETING

PRAYER MEETING FOR SINGLE ADVENTISTS
THURSDAYS 8PM UK TIME / 3PM EST
ROOM IS OPEN 24 HRS A DAY TO PRAY
ZOOM ID: 846 3079 9939 PASSCODE: Pray




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Office Number / Appointments
connect@ccscounselling.org.uk
www.ccscounselling.org.uk

**"I am not living,
I am just surviving."
Together we can make
it happen.**

Often, it is not the initial experience that
creates the overwhelming pain,
but the lack of support.

Do not suffer alone
Do not suffer in silence
CCS is here to support you
Together we can win your struggle.



Facing Difficult times or issues, Need to talk?



The first step is the hardest.
Call the NEC Counselling
Service Today!

07539 211 442



Please contact
our co-ordinator
Dee Kyriacou who
will assess your
needs and
assign you to
a counsellor
for support.

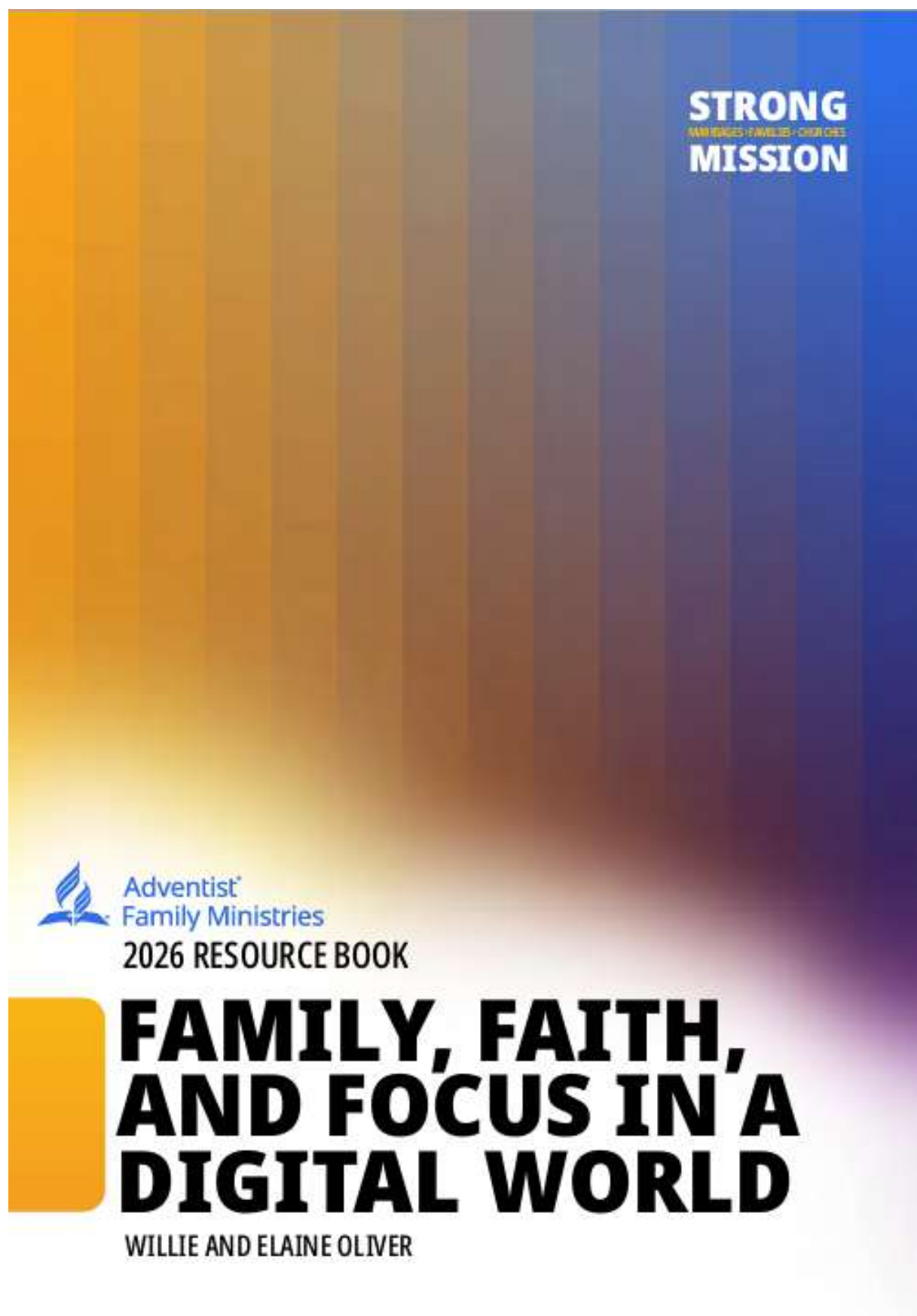


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The Seventh-day Adventist Church values every human being as part of God's creation. We are committed to safeguarding all children and adults at risk who take part in our services and activities.

Safeguarding Policy Statement

The Seventh-day Adventist Church commits to:

- Promote a safe environment for children and adults at risk of harm
- Respond promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation
- Provide compassionate care and support for survivors of abuse
- Ensure that those working with children and adults at risk are trained and supported
- Raise awareness of safeguarding responsibilities throughout all church programming and provisions
- Work collaboratively with safeguarding agencies
- Follow legislation, statutory guidance and recognised best practice in order to protect the vulnerable
- Implement, maintain and regularly review the procedures outlined in our safeguarding policy



Safeguarding is Everybody's Responsibility

[Click here to download safeguarding posters for your local church](#)

Useful Links

[AdventSource](#)

[Adventist Possibility Ministries](#)

[Adventist Single Adult Ministries \(ASAM\)](#)

[Adventist Special Needs Association \(ASNA\)](#)

[BUC Family Ministries](#)

[BUC Safeguarding](#)

[Care for the Family](#)

[GC Children's Ministries](#)

[GC Family Ministries](#)

[In Discipleship](#)

[Prepare Enrich](#)

[TED Children's Ministries](#)

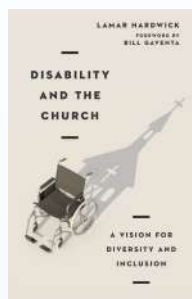
[TED Family Ministries](#)

[TED Possibility Ministries](#)

[Through the Roof \(Disability outreach\)](#)

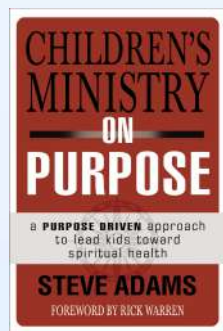
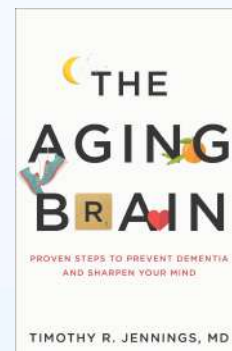
[Women's Aid](#)

Recommended Reading



Lamar Hardwick was thirty-six years old when he found out he was on the autism spectrum. It prompted a difficult re-evaluation of who he was as a person. As a pastor, it started him on a new path of considering the way disabled people are treated in the church. *Disability and the Church* is a practical and theological reconsideration of the church's responsibilities to the disabled community.

Dr Timothy Jennings asserts that while growing older is inevitable, many of the troubles we associate with aging - including dementia, disability, and an increased dependence on others - are not. The choices we make now can help us to maintain our vitality, a sharp mind, and our independence as we age. *The Aging Brain* is an easy-to-use guide to maintaining brain and body health throughout our lives.



In *Children's Ministry on Purpose*, Pr Steve Adams, a twenty-five year veteran of children's ministry in the local church, leads listeners on a journey of discovery. While there is no single key to a successful children's ministry, Pr Adams shows how to develop an intentional ministry process that moves children toward spiritual health while building a healthy ministry environment for those who work with them.

BUC Family, Children, Possibility Ministries & Safeguarding



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