

## **My Journey to the Seventh Day Adventist Church**

**by Andy Gregory**

I was born in May 1970 and raised until the age of 10 in the Welsh town of Pontypool. My mother and father were both secondary school teachers and committed Christians in the Methodist Church where my father was also a lay preacher. I had a brother Richard who was 4 years my senior and we attended Sunday School every week.

I nearly died when I was 3 due to a swelling in my wind pipe caused by an infection. I had to be rushed into hospital for an emergency tracheotomy operation late one night in 1973. Relieved doctors and medics said if I had fallen asleep that night I almost certainly would not have woken up again. 15 years later at my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday party my father made a short speech and said he felt that God had saved me for a reason.

When I was 7 my parents took the family to hear the evangelist Luis Palau at Cardiff Castle. A certain Cliff Richard was also performing. At the end of the evening I heeded Luis Palau's appeal and became a Christian myself.

When I was 8 my father had a calling into the Methodist Ministry and after his 2 years of ministerial training at Trinity College Bristol we moved to Morrison, Swansea for his first placement within a local circuit of churches. My mother became a lay preacher and gave up work in order to assist my father so the family went down to one wage and we had to tighten our belts as a result. We weren't to know it at the time but the years that followed would see the family under constant demonic attack.

During our first year in Swansea, I was in the top year of Ynystawe Primary School and was happy enough other than some settling in problems that often come part and parcel with moving area and school. Unfortunately the same cannot be said of the following year when I made the transition to secondary school. I joined my brother who was now a 5<sup>th</sup> former at Bishop Vaughan Roman Catholic Secondary School (also known locally as BVS – "Bl\*\*dy Violent School"! ). The "rough and tumble" environment at the school was not ideal to say the least and within a few weeks I was being violently sick prior to attending every morning. There were bullies in my class and gang warfare frequently took place on site against a visiting gang from the local Protestant School. There was also a fellow pupil who was becoming interested in the occult and voodoo – he said he wanted to put a voodoo spell on a female teacher who refused to teach him. Her decision to exclude him was because he was giving her pupils nightmares by going into graphic details about the occult films he often watched. The voodoo spell, which involved sticking pins into the head of a doll made to resemble the teacher, was designed to give her a brain haemorrhage and a few weeks later word got around that the teacher was in hospital with that very condition.

If this wasn't bad enough, even worse for me at BVS was the fact that the art teacher who taught my class frequently left us unsupervised for long periods of time. A foul mouthed female pupil, who told me she was Anti-Christ, and who was very big and strong for her age in comparison to her peers decided it would be a good chance to engage in inappropriate sexual language and physical touching with two of the quieter members of the class. Unfortunately I was one of her two victims and perhaps this may have been the crux of my reluctance to attend school and could go some way to explaining why I was so frigid when it came to relationships with the opposite sex later on in my teenage years.

During my time in Swansea, I became very interested in rock and heavy metal music and had begun learning to play the drums and the guitar. Looking back, this had become my own form of escapism where I could shut myself off from the outside world.

At the end of that academic year my father received a phone call asking if he'd be interested in taking up a new position in the beautiful market town of Abergavenny and, given all that had happened, I was not too sorry to say goodbye to Swansea.

I'd like to say that things were much better in Abergavenny but sadly they were equally as challenging. I attended King Henry VIII Comprehensive School where it soon became known that I was a Church Minister's son. Nick-names such as "Jesus" and "Priest" were soon thrown at me but then the thought generated in the minds of my peers that, being a minister's son must also mean I must be gay. A daily barrage of homophobic bullying followed that lasted for months. Eventually my father went to see the Head of Lower School who called the perpetrators into his office for a little chat. The name calling stopped from that day forward but the underlying attitude from certain individuals remained throughout my tenure there and my school work suffered. The worst incident happened during the summer holidays of 1984. I had my first girlfriend that year and had arranged to meet her at the local park in Abergavenny, Bailey Park. When I walked through the park gates that day, a gang of 9 lads (some of which attend King Henry School) recognised me, chased me down and beat me up leaving me bleeding from the nose and mouth. This was a huge dent in my already fragile confidence and I did not venture out of the house for weeks.

Earlier that year (Easter time) I had attended a Christian retreat week at Prestatyn Sands in North Wales with parents and brother. Other than questioning my inability to participate in what appeared very over the top charismatic musical worship sessions, the week passed without any major negative events. Spring Harvest the following year however was a different story. My mother and father were there again and I had my girlfriend Susie and a school friend John with me. Others from my father's main church in Abergavenny had decided to go for the week as well as my brother and his girlfriend. Soon I found myself again in huge youth worship sessions surrounded by hundreds of youngsters dancing and raising their hands in the air (including Susie and John) whilst wondering why I did not feel any urge to do the same. This led to a negative feeling of inadequacy in myself as a Christian.

Worse was to come that week at Spring Harvest. One evening the programme for the youth was a seminar on the dangers of the occult such as playing with Ouija boards etc. At the end of the seminar the main speaker announced that if anyone had been affected by the issues raised, there were stewards waiting at the back of the hall who would be more than happy to talk, listen and minister to them. A short time of musical worship followed as a way to draw proceedings to a close. During this we were suddenly aware of a loud commotion at the back of the venue. I turned around to see a young girl in her late teens being literally thrown around the floor and screaming "Satan!" at the top of her voice. She had demonic possession and the stewards were in the process of casting the demon out of her. It was happening in a manner just as described in the gospels. Most of the young people went out into the dark extremely frightened. Once I had had chance to reflect, it did make me realise that spiritual warfare couldn't be more real and it's happening in the days we live just as it did in the days of our Lord Jesus. However I did mention to my parents that I would not be interested in attending Spring Harvest for a while.

Back in Abergavenny an occult shop opened on the Brecon Road just outside the town. It offered clairvoyant fortune telling, tarot readings and the like. Somehow word got through to the local churches that their plan was to bring down Christianity in Abergavenny by placing demonic

incantations on the children of the ministers that they might create mayhem within the ministerial homes. If true, it certainly worked in our case. It would not be appropriate (particularly to my brother) to document all that took place over the next 2 years or so but suffice it to say, our family was thrown into a state of spiritual turmoil. This unsettled home environment only served to cause my escapism in rock music to deepen and soon I was regularly playing drums or guitar in local rock bands and writing rock songs myself. I had an awareness of certain bands that were considered Satanic and tried to avoid them but little did I know at the time that the Satanic influence in this area was very deeply rooted in ways often not detectable to the untrained eye or ear. Many people I knew developed an interest in Satanism as a result of listening to heavy metal. One friend and band mate, a brash Canadian lad called Scott, loved the band Motley Crue and before long he had an upside down pentagram on the wall of his bedroom and had bought a set of Tarot Cards which he used to predict the futures of his friends, whether they wanted to hear it or not.

I'm going to fast forward to 1994 now. I had married Susie, undertaken a Religious Studies degree at Cardiff University and was moving onto an M.Phil on the Psychology and Theology of Church Music. Susie and I lived in a flat in Abergavenny owned by my parents who were now ministering in Kent. After completing my M.Phil I worked for 3 years as a peripatetic music teacher for a Local Authority funded organisation called Gwent Music Support Service. I enjoyed this but decided the way to progress would be to undertake a Secondary PGCE course. This I undertook in Bristol and my subject was Religious Education as my degree subjects were mainly in this area of academia. Things seemed to be going reasonably well for me overall. I played music in church regularly, I was still playing in rock bands and, at this juncture I was writing and recording songs with my old university friend Gareth who had just come out of the Buddhist tradition that he had belonged to for several years due to an inner dispute with its members.

Before I started my PGCE my parents had re-located to Bradley Stoke, Bristol for another ministerial placement. This was handy as it meant I could stay with them on certain nights during the week as and when needed for my PGCE then head back home to my wife on the weekends. Sadly it was during this academic year (1998-99) that we learnt that both my father and mother had terminal cancer. Spiritually this was very difficult to comprehend as here were two people who had served God all their lives. Hundreds of Christians all over the country were praying for their healing and we never gave up hope that the miracle would come but tragically this was not to be the case. I secured a teaching post at a secondary school in Bristol but within 5 weeks of taking up the position my father died peacefully with myself, my mother and brother at his bedside on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1999. Minutes after his passing, I remember my mother sobbing and saying she would like "Preacher of the Gospel" to be written on his grave stone. Sadly my mother couldn't recover from his loss (I cannot remember seeing her smile, or cry for that matter ever again) and she too fell asleep in Christ on 7<sup>th</sup> December of the same year. My brother and I were devastated and eventually ordered a joint head stone to mark their final resting place in New Inn Cemetery, Pontypool. We decided it should read "Preachers of the Gospel". I couldn't be more proud of my late parents for this fact.

In the wake of this double tragedy I found myself going completely off the rails. My life went on a 7 year downward spiral. Fast forward to March 2006 and I was now living alone in a small rented flat in Kingswood Bristol. Unable to cope with the effects of the grief and despite months of bereavement counselling, I had lost my teaching job during its 3<sup>rd</sup> year, I had lost the job I secured following that, I had lost my marriage and, as a consequence I lost my home and many of my possessions. My Christian faith, whilst not dead, was a very faint flicker of what it might have been had events turned out differently. The lowest point I remember was sitting on my bed with a knife pressed up against my wrist debating whether to end it all. It was this that made me realise I

needed to start re-building my life or it could mean just that. The first positive decision I made was to start attending a church, it was Kingswood Methodist Church, only a stone's throw from my flat. I was also beginning to carve out a new career for myself as a driving instructor. The minister and his wife at the church were very welcoming and took me under their wing by regularly inviting me to Sunday lunch where we had long talks about Christianity and life in general. My friend Gareth came to visit me one weekend and set me up with a profile on the Yahoo Personals. As a result I met my future wife Hannah who was 24 years old at the time and originally from China. Eventually, in 2008 we decided to get married and we bought a house in Keynsham.

Hannah encouraged me to begin using my teaching qualifications again in order to make a more settled income and in January 2009 I secured a job as an Education Worker for an anti-racism organisation in Bristol city centre called SARI. Here it was my job to undertake case work for young victims of racism as well as to go into schools at all age levels in Bristol and the surrounding areas to deliver racial equality sessions such as assemblies, class workshops and staff training. This I took to like a duck to water and it helped me re-gain my confidence in terms of standing up in front of people and in terms of creating interactive age appropriate interventions. After 18 months at SARI I was promoted to Principal Education Worker and I finally began to believe that my life and career was getting firmly back on track and positive developments were about to transpire in my Christian life as well.

There were a number of Christians working in the SARI team and two of them in particular would have a big influence on my recovering spiritual life. The first was a case worker in his 20s who invited me to the church he attended in Brislington. It was a large, well attended evangelical church with a big stage, full rock band, lights and screens either side of the stage. I remember I was "buzzing" with excitement after attending my first service there. There was certainly a spiritual presence about the place. The second was a fellow education worker called Web in his 40s and attended a local Seventh Day Adventist Church. We had long conversations in the car driving to and from schools and I was always very impressed by his Biblical knowledge especially when it came to prophecy and what the Bible tells us will happen in the world during the last days. The theory of evolution had always been a bit of a bug bear for me. Obviously if the Bible is true then on some level or other evolution had to be false but I was not sure where to start in terms of researching this. Web appeared to have much knowledge around so many faith-related topics that one day I asked him straight out, "What do you think about evolution then?"

"It's a load of baloney!" came the more than assured response. At this point my mouth fell so far open a whole swarm of bees could have comfortably flown in without touching the sides!

The following morning at SARI, Web handed me a piece of paper on which he had written "Walter Veith: The Genesis Conflict, [amazingdiscoveries.tv](http://amazingdiscoveries.tv) - Proves evolution is fake!" I decided to check this out when I got home. There were 8 lectures in total by Dr Veith so I used my music recording equipment to make audio recordings of them so that I could listen to them in the car on my way to work. This meant the rock music CDs came out of my car stereo and Walter Veith went in! I listened those 8 CDs over and over until I felt I had a good understanding of the multitude of issues involved in the creation v evolution debate. Dr Veith, a scientist and former evolutionist himself seemed to tear the case for evolution apart with considerable ease.

Following this, I decided to have a listen to some of Dr Veith's other material as he had a 36 part lecture series called "Total Onslaught" and numerous other sermons and messages available to watch and listen to. Over the coming months and years I listened and learned as Dr Veith explained, amongst many other things, how he moved from atheist to creationist and about his own Seventh

Day Adventist beliefs. The Seventh Day Adventist beliefs that he had embraced made more Biblical sense to me than the doctrines I had been taught all my life in other churches. Moreover in some of his lectures ("Hidden Agendas" for example) he explained where Satanic occult signs and symbols originated from and how they are all tied up in various forms of Satanism, occultism, paganism, freemasonry and other illuminati secret organisations. So when I would pick out the CDs from my vast collection at home, I would see these symbols all over the covers and sometimes on the CD labels themselves. Even the so-called Christian hard rockers like Stryper had albums covers riddled with Luciferian symbolism. This led me to the painful realisation that rock music was no longer for me. It was all there, hidden in plain sight and now my eyes had been well and truly opened! A DVD called "The Truth Behind Hip Hop" by Pastor G. Craig Lewis that I borrowed from one of the Principal Caseworkers at SARI helped put the seal on this decision for me too. It was almost certainly no coincidence that, once the rock music was out of my life, many of my bad habits and worldly desires evaporated as well. The old things were passing away as the Bible says they will when you put God at the centre of your life.

By 2014 I was still attending the evangelical church in Brislington and was developing an overwhelming desire to be able to put on talks like those of Walter Veith especially around the subject of creation v evolution and the truth behind the rock music. I would speak to people at the Brislington Church who seemed impressed but permission was never forthcoming from the decision makers at the top – there seemed to be no way in. I constantly prayed that if God saw this as my purpose he would put me in a position to be able to do it in the correct place and correct point in time. Back at the Brislington church I would sit in services with my new-found Biblical knowledge thinking "That's not right!" or "How can they justify that?" and "That's not what the Bible says!" etc Then there would be occasions where people could be touched on the head by the Pastor and would fall over backwards or have body spasms. The one time I went forward to "drink of the cup of the spirit" members were falling down like dominoes as the Pastor's wife made her way down the line of congregants laying hands on them. When she arrived in front of me there came the laying on of hands but I found myself still standing upright feeling no effects of this "spirit" at all. I walked away from church that day feeling inadequate – The Holy Spirit obviously did not want to entice me! I thought.

Events then followed that made me realise that perhaps this was no longer the church for me. The Sunday morning services were moved from 11am to 10am making it more difficult to have a bit of a lie in on a Sunday but still get to church on time. One Sunday I over slept so I decided to go to the evening service instead. When I walked in, I had the shock of my life – 80-100 church members all walking slowly around the auditorium with closed eyes and hands in the air and speaking in tongues. I made my way to an empty seat and opened my Bible – "I'm sure Paul told the Early Church not to do this sort of thing!" I thought as I turned the pages to Paul's letters to the Corinthians. Sure enough Paul tells the Early Church there must be order in worship, no speaking in tongues without an interpreter and even then only 2 or 3 in one occasion and only 1 speaking at a time. I had invited one of the officials from the church who was in charge of prayer and ministry to my house for a chat and suddenly I decided the gift of tongues would be on the agenda. During that evening I expressed my concerns. He assured me that the kind of behaviour that Paul condemns is not what was happening in Brislington and that I should try to participate. He noted that every Christian has the Holy Spirit and therefore has the ability to speak in tongues (or to "pray in the spirit" as they call it) by default.

That evening I decided to give "praying in the spirit" a go. I remember the Pastor saying that we would have the best sleep ever after praying in tongue but that we may have some wacky dreams

too. Undaunted I tried a few words and managed to come out with a sentence or two before happily getting some much needed sleep in readiness for work the next day (by now I had left SARI and was now Equality and Diversity Development Coordinator at City of Bristol College). The next day I was feeling elated – I had spoken in tongues which I thought could only mean one thing - The Holy Spirit had finally accepted me! That night I couldn't wait to give "praying in the spirit" another go. This time it became much more fluent and I found myself speaking in tongues for over an hour before falling asleep. I then had a demonic nightmare: I was at an outdoor Christian rally where the preacher was speaking against materialism especially towards men who make their cars their gods. Sudden the preacher transformed violently into a fierce wolf – all claws and teeth. Everyone started to run but the wolf was too fast for them and was ripping people apart with his powerful jaws - blood and body parts flying everywhere. I was running for my life and woke up in cold sweat. "Something's not right with this!" I thought using all the powers of my intellect!

Despite this experience I decided to give it one more try the following evening. "Any more bad experiences though and I will pack it in!" I thought not wanting to let go of what I thought was a gift from God. This time I had another bad dream – a scarlet woman like a demon of lust was trying to tempt me to cheat on my wife by committing adultery. I woke up again. "How can this possibly be from God?" I thought. I googled "speaking in tongues" – many article and opposing views came up. A female porn star even came up in the list quoted as saying that she speaks in tongues whilst making porn videos – a gift from God? Not likely. Then I thought "I wonder if Dr Veith has done anything on this?" He certainly had in a lecture called "The Charisma of the Spirit" where he explains everything with great wisdom and clarify. It turns out that all this being slain in the spirit and speaking in tongues has all crept into the church from paganism via the Pentecostal and Mormon churches. Dr Veith also looks at every part of the Bible that mentions speaking in tongues and puts it all into the correct context by explaining the background behind who was writing about it and why.

The writing was on the wall for me and the Brislington Church. A light bulb came on in my head with the thought: "If I agree with everything the Seventh Day Adventist Church is saying, why then am I not attending a Seventh Day Adventist Church?!" I googled Seventh Day Adventist Churches in Bristol and saw that there were four in total – North, Central, South and East Bristol. On the spin of a coin I decided to try the North on a Sabbath in April 2015. I walked in and many people shook my hand. "Happy Sabbath!" they would say enthusiastically. No one had ever said that to me before and I liked the positive feeling it gave me. I was asked to introduce myself so I explained briefly what had happened to the 30 or so strong congregation "Amen brother!" said one of the member and shook my hand again! I spoke to the Pastor afterwards and he told me about the other 3 SDA churches in the city and he came to see me at home a couple of times so that I could find out more about the SDA faith. During following weeks I attended the Central Church which I enjoyed before deciding to see what East Church (Lodge Causeway) was like. There, a lovely lady named Angeline spoke to him afterwards during the lunch and asked me if I would wait while she introduced me to someone. I sat there drinking my tea from a polystyrene cup then I looked up and a friendly young, enthusiastic man called Tudor was extending his hand for me to shake. I explain to him how I had come to be at Lodge Causeway SDA Church that day and he said he enjoyed listening to my story and hoped I'd be there again. Within a couple of weeks Hannah and I invited Tudor and his lovely wife Ana around to our house for some tea. We got onto the subject of evolution and I started sharing some of the truths I had learnt from Dr Veith ever since Web had handed me his details on that day in 2009. "Will you speak during our afternoon programme at the church?" asked Ana expectantly. "Are you serious?" I asked in disbelief. "Of course I'm serious - the knowledge you have is amazing!" she replied. I was overjoyed and started beavering away in preparation the first chance I got.

I gave my first talk in July 2015. It was a critical deconstruction of the fossil record in the light of Darwin's gradualist preferences entitled "Bones, Stones and Dinosaur Bones". It was well received and I have had the pleasure of delivering another four sessions since – 2 on other areas of the creation v evolution debate and 2 others on the subject of music entitled "The Shocking Truth About Rock, Pop and Hip Hop" where I exposed the occult agenda being propagated by the rock stars that I once idolised. Two more talks are in the planning stage and praise God, the Pastor has also asked me if I would like to start preaching in the near future. God answers prayers and his timing is perfect! An ongoing, intimate relationship with God which at some points in my life I had all but given up on is now a reality. I have learnt that you don't need bright lights, an enormous stage and lots of glitz and gimmicks in your church to be a true child of the Lord.

And so to my baptism into membership of the SDA Church at Lodge Causeway on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2016. I became convicted that this was the next step in my journey. I wanted to publically acknowledge the change in my life and tell of how God has led me. As well as this, the Lord says in Matthew 10:32 – "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven." Jesus keeps his promises and this scripture confirmed my decision. It may not be easy to join a church that other churches are so cynical about and my sister in law may be acting as if I have joined the Moonies but I believe with all my heart that what the Seventh Day Adventist Church stands for is the truth and if God is for us then who can be against us (Romans 8:31)? Amen.

## **My Journey to the Seventh Day Adventist Church**

**by Andy Gregory (Short version)**

I was born in 1970 the son of a Methodist minister and raised in Wales. I moved over to Bristol in 1999 when I became a teacher. Sadly I lost both parents to cancer at the end of that year and my life went on a huge downward spiral. Fast forward to 2006 and I was now living alone in a small rented flat in Kingswood, Bristol. Unable to cope with the effects of the grief, I had lost my teaching job, I had lost the job I secured following that, I had lost my marriage and, as a consequence, I had lost my home and many of my possessions.

I decided to attend a local Methodist church again and I met my new wife Hannah through an online dating site. She encouraged me to begin using my teaching qualifications again and, in January 2009 I secured a job as an Education Worker for an anti-racism organisation in Bristol city centre called SARI. There were a number of Christians working in the SARI team. One was a fellow education worker called Web who attended a Seventh Day Adventist Church. I was impressed by his wealth of knowledge so one day I asked him, "What do you think about evolution?" The following morning he handed me a piece of paper on which he had written "Dr Walter Veith: The Genesis Conflict, [amazingdiscoveries.tv](http://amazingdiscoveries.tv) - proves evolution is fake!" I immediately decided to check this.

After digesting this, I had a listen to some of Dr Veith's other material. He explained, amongst many other things, the Seventh Day Adventist beliefs that he had embraced. These made more Biblical sense to me than the doctrines I had been taught all my life in other churches and I began to pray that God would lead me to a place where he could use me to serve Him.

Eventually the thought: "If I agree with the SDA teachings, why am I not attending a Seventh Day Adventist Church?" began to enter my mind on a frequent basis. During following weeks I attended the North then the Central Churches in Bristol, which I enjoyed, before deciding to see what Lodge Causeway was like. After attending my first service there, I was introduced to a friendly, young man called Tudor. Within a couple of weeks Hannah and I invited Tudor and his wife Ana around to our house for some tea. We got onto the subject of evolution and I shared the truths I had learnt from Dr Veith. "Will you speak during our afternoon programme at the church?" asked Ana expectantly. "Are you serious?" I asked. "Of course I'm serious - the knowledge you have is amazing!" she replied. I was overjoyed and started beavering away in preparation the first chance I got and God has been using me ever since. God answers prayers and his timing is perfect!

And so to my baptism into membership at Lodge Causeway on 20th August 2016. I wanted to publically acknowledge the changes in my life and tell of how God had led me there. The Lord says in Matthew 10:32 – "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven." Jesus keeps his promises and this scripture confirmed my decision. I believe with all my heart that what the Seventh Day Adventist Church stands for is The Truth and if God is for us then who can be against us (Romans 8:31)? Amen.



