



CLIFF COLLEGE INTERNATIONAL LEARNING CENTRE (CCILC) report on Methodist Church Sierra Leone Training programme Nov 1st – 17th 2009

The visiting training team Rev Ken Todd, Rev Dr. Malcolm and Mrs Janet McCall and Rev David and Mrs Sylvia Griffiths minus Rev Gilbert and Mrs Sylvia Hall travelled from London on Sunday Nov 1st and stayed overnight at Javouhey House on Leicester Peak, Freetown. Gilbert and Sylvia arrived in Freetown on Wednesday 4th. Despite the difficulties experienced whilst in Sierra Leone which largely related to limited transport, funding and unavoidable last minute rearrangements regarding venues, the whole team paid tribute to the leadership of the MCSL for the hospitality provided and the support given. Their personal reports speak also of being encouraged by the faith and commitment of friends old and new who continue to serve the purposes of God in Sierra Leone.



Nov 3rd (Tuesday) Malcolm and Janet McCall travelled to Kenema and the following day on to Kailahun (one of the hardest hit areas in the troubles of the 1990's) reconnecting on the way with many ex-pupils from their teaching days in the Methodist Secondary School, Kailahun. They were thrilled by the testimony of a boy from a Muslim back ground, Stephen Vandi Tarawalli who had joined the school Boys Brigade run by Malcolm so many years ago, but who is now the Principal of the Methodist Secondary School in Kenema, and the Vice-President of MCSL. Malcolm and Janet encouraged the Kailahun Methodists working in church, schools and the community before travelling back to Segbwema to provide similar encouragement in schools and to some



staff at the Nixon Memorial Hospital. On Saturday they led a Lay Training course with about 40 leaders present and Malcolm preached at worship in Segbwema on Sunday 8th before travelling back to Bo on the Monday.

Nov 4th (Wednesday) David and Sylvia Griffiths travelled to Bo. They led a seminar for 15-20 Ministers, Preachers & Teachers on Thursday at St. Augustine's, Bo before travelling the rocky road to Sumbuya on Friday to provide training for 20+ lay leaders (including 5 of the 25 strong Youth Fellowship) there on the Saturday. As with the other 'area training' given by members of the team, the renewal of old relationships and the encouragement (one to one) given to those being met for the first time was found to be as important as the actual training programme. Many groups stressed the urgent need for further training in Church



Leadership, Sunday School resources, and further training for evangelistic outreach. David and Sylvia both took part in the 4 ½ long (the length of the service was not down to him!) Sunday worship service St Augustine's Church, Bo before they met up again with the team on Monday.

Nov 4th (Wednesday) Ken Todd travelled to the diamond mining centre of Koidu. Whilst being involved with the people in Koidu he visited the less-accessible outpost of Kainkoidu to provide encouragement/training at a course on Thursday 5th. Ken preached in the worship service on Sunday before travelling on Monday 9th via junction 51 where he joined the minister travelling from Freetown with the new mission partners (arrived in Freetown Nov 2nd) Rev Peter and Mrs Janice Clark for the journey to Bo.



Nov 6th (Friday) Gilbert and Sylvia Hall travelled to Kenema via Bo with the President of Conference Rt. Rev Francis Nabieu (no other transport available) and arrived 5pm. Arrangements for the Lay Training course in Kenema were not in place but following phone calls and visits

it went ahead on Saturday 7th. Gilbert & Sylvia preached at two acts of worship in Kenema, one at the College Chapel and the other at Sidney Groves Memorial Church. On Monday Nov 9th after visiting two Methodist schools, whilst Sylvia attended the Methodist Pre-School, they travelled with the President to Bo for the Ministerial Retreat. The 'booked' venue for the Ministerial Training Retreat, the Catholic Pastoral Centre in Kenema advised MCSL that they could not host this event which meant that hectic last-minute arrangements had to be made to move to the less-suitable Catholic Pastoral Centre in Bo.

Nov 9th-13th Ministers' Training Retreat in Bo The visiting team came together from their 'area training responsibilities' to meet with the ministers in Bo. More than sixty ministers attended including two or three Anglican ministers and partners in ministry serving in Sierra Leone from Ghana, and the UK. It was recognised that this was the key consultation in the programme and it was intended to provide both training and encouragement for Methodist Ministers as well as reinforcing relationships between the ministers of isolated congregations and Districts of the Conference. The training course went as planned with the usual minor adjustments made in response to the needs of the ministers attending. Lectures on aspects of ministry and mission were interspersed with Bible Study, prayer and seminars related to local concerns. The retreat closed with a lively, but moving service of Holy Communion led by the Conference Secretary (and President Designate), Rev Arnold Temple.



The ministers provided the following evaluation of the programme and suggestions as to what might follow:



- 1. Positives**-Good spiritual food; inspiring impact on us; very encouraging;
Fellowship bonding across the connexion; Prayers excellent-opportunity to pray together
Teaching sessions meaningful; interesting; inspiring; touching and appropriate for the church today
Prayer partners much appreciated; Speakers very friendly and zealous

Valued opportunity to clear misunderstanding and doubts on ministerial appointments (some seen as a sort of punishment!) and other matters in a shared fellowship environment.

Question regarding wives? Wives bitter about the Methodist Church moving their husbands around so frequently. They can't follow without taking children out of school which is very unsettling. This is the cause of rifts between husband and wife and possible break-down of the family. Therefore they want stationing for a longer term.

2. Negatives-Time for discussion too short; Management of the Retreat-information too late; Accommodation not up to standard water a big problem; Food sufficient (c rating)

3. Suggestions for future Training Retreats

- a. Workshops on Accounting; School chaplaincy; Counselling; Appraisal; Circuit Twinning; Ecumenical relationships; Leadership training;
- b. Renewal of ministerial vows.
- c. Visiting team to partner with ministers
- d. Increase the length of the Retreat by one day Monday to Friday
- e. Opportunity for the training of spouses
- f. Friday; Holy Communion service

The team of trainers felt that the 3 full days of the Ministerial Programme was well received by the group as a whole. The visitors and the MCSL Leadership were able to respond to practical and spiritual concerns not only in the open sessions, but in counselling and prayer opportunities that arose throughout the week. We trust and pray that in all that took place participants were, encouraged, re-envisioned, empowered and reminded that unity between all the different tribes, groupings and backgrounds in the Church is essential if the work of the MCSL is to be fruitful for God's Kingdom.



Nov 13th (Friday) The Visiting Team travelled to Freetown in a very old mini bus! On Saturday Gilbert and Sylvia as planned led Western District Lay Training course in Zion Methodist Church whilst other members of the team renewed relationships in Freetown through personal visits.



Nov 15th (Sunday) Ministers of the visiting team were invited to preach at the morning worship in four different circuits. The team plus the Clarks, the President and Secretary of Conference then toured the Skills Centre before enjoying a meal prepared by Lillian Lahai. The group visited the grave of the Rev Michael Tengbe for prayers with his widow Sarah before spending time the widow of the Rev Dr Leslie Shyllon, who had died in hospital on the Saturday evening. The training team returned to the UK overnight on Sunday.

4. Specific Visiting Team Reflections about training/outreach (In no particular order)

Methodist Ministers in Sierra Leone seem generally convinced that unity within the Church and among them is the key issue if the Church is to advance. The visiting International Team would certainly endorse this understanding of the spiritual situation.

Perhaps some thought should also be given to include husbands/wives in future courses/retreats.

The presence of 3 Ghanaian Methodist Ministers was a good encouragement at the Consultation; and the Revd Kwame is already proving a blessing in Segbwema. Next connexional year, there may also be an exchange programme instituted with Methodist Church Nigeria. We believe these are right Kingdom initiatives. But there will need to be a deeper appreciation by everyone that there are large cultural and spiritual differences between Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria. The Methodist Church looks very different in these 3 different nations. Skin colour naturally indicates that there are such differences between Africans and Europeans. But there are also big differences within West Africa, which the Methodist Church will need fully to recognise, and know how to handle, if the greatest benefit is to be gained from this spiritual cross-fertilisation.



The Bo Methodist Youth & Community Resource Centre, uses its well-developed premises to offer IT training, sports activities & HIV/Aids awareness. The paid & voluntary staff use drama, dance, music to take their message to the young people of Bo & surrounding towns & villages, & are currently supported by a Christian Aid worker. The Centre could also offer an ideal base for imaginative evangelistic outreach to the Young People of Bo, & urge that careful & prayerful consideration is given to this.



The training visit overall was considered by visiting team members to have been a most valuable and rewarding experience both for themselves, the ministers and the lay-leaders with whom they were able to meet. Clearly, the devastation caused to the church and the country in the ten years of conflict in the 1990's cannot be dismissed even after a decade of rebuilding and reconciliation.

As Roland Allen ('Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours' & 'The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church') recognised so many years ago we have left behind us overseas a legacy of a paid ministry, an expensive Conference organisation, large institutions, (Hospitals, Schools etc) that can hardly be supported by local funding and limited leadership even in the longer term. It will be many years before the MCSL (like most other churches in Africa and even now in the UK) can move from its western inherited traditions towards a manageable economic structure and streamlined organisation more in keeping with its culture and capabilities. The leaders of the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone, CCILC and the visiting team want to express their thanks to their partners in the UK Methodist Church, World Church Office and members of the Scholarship And Leadership Training (SALT) advisory group whose grant of £10,000 contributed to the success of this training programme in Sierra Leone.

In conclusion, perhaps we should recognise again that any support and encouragement that we can give to the MCSL and other churches overseas through personal sharing, training and funding should not be viewed as charitable but as a responsible continuation of our partnership of the past which has left such a burdensome legacy that they must carry into their future. We continue to welcome further donations from individuals or organisations who wish to support the kind of training work overseas that we are doing through the CCILC. Further information and specific reports are available through:

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