

January 2011

CELEBRATING BRIAN AND COMFORT'S BIG DAY!



December 11th 2010 dawned with brilliant Ghanaian sunshine and a nervous bridegroom preparing for his wedding. Tim Herbert and Dick Whitehouse were there to lend their moral support as they represented our Fellowship churches. No doubt Comfort was equally nervous on the other side of town!

message for the couple. Asbury Dunwell church meets in the HQ building of the Methodist Church in Ghana and several other ministers took part in the service including the regional bishop. When Brian and Comfort exchanged rings and were pronounced man and wife, the church erupted in praise.

Once the register was signed bride and groom danced up the aisle round the outside corridors of the chapel and back in again in a joyful conga, the men waving their white handkerchiefs above their heads in the Ghanaian custom, the woman exuberant in their traditional dress. It was a joyful explosion of African colour and sound.

After the service the crowds spilled out into the grounds of the church while pictures were taken and bride and groom greeted friends, relatives, colleagues and church members.

The reception was held in the garden of a church member who, with her husband, provided the wedding feast as their present to the couple. The church youth band entertained the guests during the reception and after the speeches the couple left for the first stage of their honeymoon. In keeping with Ghanaian custom, Brian and Comfort attended worship in a crowded church the next day before leaving for the rest of their honeymoon on Ghana's beautiful East Coast.

The Asbury Dunwell Church was crowded with over 300 guests and well wishers who came to rejoice with Brian and Comfort on their special day. Sam Adjepong, one of Brian's fellow elders in the church and a long time friend acted as best man and Comfort was given away by her proud father. The Rev Martin Knispel a former German missionary to Ghana and friend of Brian's, conducted the marriage ceremony which included a timely



We wish them well for their future as they serve the Lord together and as we continue to support their individual ministries.

EDITORIAL:



Our focus in this first issue of 2011 is upon mission and, in particular, on Brian and Comfort's wedding in Ghana. I am grateful to the churches for sending me out together with Tim Herbert to represent you all on that very special day. I was actually one of the signatories at the signing of the register so I can testify that the job was well and truly done!

I deliberately went out a week early in order to spend some quality time with Brian as he prepared for the wedding. It is typical of Brian that he was working on University quality control issues until the eve of his wedding. I was able to spend time with the President of Accra Christian University who underlined how vital Brian's role has been in making it one of the foremost institutions preparing candidates for ministry in West Africa.

Brian deserves our full financial and prayer support. Comfort, too, has a ministry running a cooperative producing Fair Trade cosmetics which employs several families. Maybe in a future issue we will be able to highlight her work in more detail.

This underlines the fact that mission also takes place in the market place as well as in church extension and ministerial training.

Brian and Comfort's roles as elder and youth leader in the Asbury Dunwell church in Accra are also a significant part of what the Lord has called them to do. Their

multi-tasking approach to mission should be a challenge to us all. The call to mission embraces local church, working with the poor, involvement in our communities and equipping leaders for the future. All of these are areas in which we as a network of churches should seek to be involved during the coming year. Subsequent issues will focus on some of these issues.

There are three ways we can all be involved in the task of mission:

1. Pray
2. Give
3. Go!

To which we might add, living it out where you are. As the history of the church illustrates, even bed bound invalids can vitally contribute to mission. G. Campbell Morgan attributed much of his preaching power to one such old lady in his congregation!

Springdale College is moving forward in its provision for training workers for the church in the UK as a whole. A full time BTh course, with 37 students currently enrolled has been added to the MA course which has already graduated 60 students through the University of Wales and now has a further 40 enrolled through York St John University.

As a movement we also aim to equip leaders at the local church level and the Multiply! course is currently running in two centres with some 27 in training. Each of these courses focuses extensively on the mission of the Church in the 21st century. If we can help your church with tailor made training, please let us know.

Best wishes

Richard

MESSAGE FROM THE MISSIONS TASK GROUP

The missions task group is delighted with Brian's wedding, and wish him and Comfort every blessing in their marriage. We have walked Brian's journey with him over the years, and worked to support him and develop his support network throughout the Fellowship, and we rejoice with him at this start of this new phase of his life.

We would particularly like to express our gratitude to those who made a special donation to enable us to send Dick Whitehouse and Tim Herbert out to Ghana to represent the Fellowship at the wedding. They were able to spend time with Brian before the wedding and be there to support him and represent all his friends in the UK who weren't able to attend in person. Brian was very appreciative of this.

We would like to ask you all to continue to pray for Brian, as the challenges of a cross-cultural marriage are huge. His financial needs are also significant, as the fall in the value of the pound has affected him badly over the last two years. Please would churches and individuals give prayerful consideration to how they can support Brian in his ministry developing the church in west Africa.

**Gifts for Brian's
Ministry may be
channelled through :**

Tim Herbert

153, Northfield Rd. Kings Norton, Birmingham B30 1EA

Email:

herbsgardens@blueyonder.co.uk

BRIAN AND COMFORT'S WEDDING JOURNEY

In my last Bulletin I told you about Comfort, my fiancé and our plans to marry. Well, these plans have come to fruition and I write to you now as a married man! The last few months have been hectic with preparations and adjustments – and my friends have warned me that there are even more on the way!

In Ghana people often have two weddings – a traditional wedding and a church wedding. The traditional wedding is an affair between the families of the bride and groom in which the groom presents to the family the dowry for his bride. This usually includes gifts of clothing and cash to different members of the family as a 'thank you' for the privilege of marrying a daughter of the family and as evidence that the husband to be is able to provide for his wife. I had to provide a dowry for Comfort – the reverse of the



custom in North America and Western Europe.

We held our traditional wedding on the 27th November and it was a joyful occasion. The ceremony was held at the home of mutual friends with my friends from the Asbury-Dunwell Church acting on my behalf as my family. I had to stay hidden in a room away from the main proceedings until Comfort's family decided that they were satisfied with the dowry I had provided. Fortunately, they agreed and I was invited to join the gathering sitting with my friends facing Comfort and her family – a lot of her family

turned up and a representative of the family asked her if she agreed to marry me. Once she agreed, the presiding minister blessed the dowry and our union. Comfort then joined me and my 'family' and I went down on one knee and placed the engagement ring on her finger. (This was my addition to the ceremony, and the second time I had gone down on one knee!)



For many Ghanaian couples matters would end with this simple ceremony but we felt that it was important to make our promises before God as well as before



friends and family and so we had also arranged a Church wedding.

The days before the wedding were busy with completing work assignments, further preparations and with hosting guests – Dick Whitehouse and Tim Herbert. My German missionary, friend, Martin Knispel also travelled to Ghana to

lead a preaching workshop and to conduct our wedding.

I was a nervous groom but Comfort was a beautiful bride! I am truly blessed by the Lord! Martin led a simple but moving service and following the wedding friends hosted a wonderful reception.

Other friends had provided a gift of a weeks' honeymoon at a coastal resort in the Central Region of Ghana where we had a beautiful time! The Lord is truly blessing us through the friends he has given us!

We are now in the process of beginning our married life together at our home on the GCUC campus. There are more challenges, adventures, and blessings ahead!

Comfort and myself wish to express our sincere thanks to all our friends around the world who made this day possible through their prayers, support and gifts. Pictures of our wedding and a message from us both will be found on my Facebook page.

Please pray for Brian's work of preparing students for ministry in this strategic and influential part of West Africa and for Comfort's Fair Trade work.

MY FRIEND BRIAN JENNINGS

A word from Brian's Best man



I was honoured when Brian asked me to be the best man at his wedding in December.

I got to know Brian many years ago as we both attended the same church. I believe that this was around 1996. I remember that Brian used to cycle many miles to church in his cycling gear and then change into his church clothes when he arrived. From that time I really admired his humility and self-discipline. In those days we would affectionately refer to Brian as "Bicycle Brian"; for he would go everywhere on his bicycle. Much later he graduated to his much loved Suzuki Jeep. To his friends he then became "Suzuki Brian"!

My wife Frances and I started to invite Brian to join us for Sunday lunch (often to enjoy a much missed Sunday roast) and a swim (his other passion) after church. He soon became an adopted member of our family. When we started to host the East Legon Homecare group, Brian was one of our founder members and he has remained committed from the beginning until now. He would and still does travel quite a distance to join us and we are thrilled to now also include Comfort (his newly wedded wife) as part of our group. Brian has been a great asset to the group. Whenever we are unsure of doctrine during our Bible study times, he is able to fill in the gaps in an objective and well balanced manner.

It was because of this gift of objectivity and his knowledge of theology that we nominated Brian to lead the preaching

and teaching department at church (from small beginnings we now have a membership of around 300). We know that we can rely on him to ensure that sound doctrine is preached in the church. One of his great contributions has been to write guidelines for the church to help to enable the gifts of the spirit to be used to build up and encourage, without fear of them being misused.

We often ask Brian to conduct water baptisms on behalf of the church. He is always happy to oblige. One great blessing for those being baptised is that the Lord often speaks a word over their lives through Brian. Time and time again we are told how apt and accurate that word is and this is a great encouragement to all involved.

We are so thrilled that the Lord has now blessed Brian with a helpmate. We know Comfort to be a hard working woman of God and a woman of integrity. We look forward to our continued friendship with both Brian and Comfort as we all seek in our own individual ways to grow the kingdom of God.

Sam and Frances Adjepong

FAMILY FUN AND FELLOWSHIP DAY
30TH APRIL 2011
CENTRAL AVE, WIGSTON

We are planning another Family Fun Day to bring churches together as we share food, have fun and swap stories about what God is doing amongst us. The details have yet to be fully worked out but past events such as this have proved stimulating and have helped us bond as we celebrate our identity in Christ as a network of like minded churches working for the kingdom of God in our neighbourhoods.

If you have any suggestions to contribute to make this a successful and memorable event, please contact the NLT via Christina Workman who can be contacted at her home address:

45 Redstone Close, Church Hill, Redditch, B98 AE.

Tel: 01527-596172

or

E-mail: chris.workman@hotmail.com

MULTIPLY! STUDENTS GRADUATE IN LEEDS



The first group of eight students from Emmanuel Christian Church in Leeds completed the **Multiply! Leadership training Course** on Saturday 22nd January. Springdale College Principal, Martin Robinson, presented the certificates together with National Coordinator Dan Yarnell and course presenter Dick Whitehouse.

Pastor Hirpo Kumbi says, "We are delighted with this course, it is a powerful tool for equipping emerging new leaders. I believe that as our people put into practice what they have learned, our church will move forward in its mission to the city of Leeds and further afield." Hirpo added, "We are planning to run the course again this year and to throw it open to other churches in the city."

Dick says, "It has been a delight to teach such eager students. Our next step is to equip more course trainers and to extend the course materials. Dan and I are currently working on the curriculum for a follow on course tentatively titled 'SALT' which stands for **Strategic Advanced Leadership Training**. So watch this space for details!"

The **Multiply! Course** is currently running with 17 students from an Eritrean congregation in Birmingham and one is due to start later in the year in Greenford, Middlesex with a South American church. We also have inquiries from our own churches in Leicester and Nottingham and from the Continent!. Dan comments, "In order to grow, churches should always train more leaders than they currently need. Failure to prepare leaders in the past has led to stagnation in some congregations."

LIFEBRIDGE YOUTH CHURCH

Ecclesiastes states that, a '*cord of 3 strands cannot be broken*' (4:12). The church plant in West Bridgford has 3 strands which are doors open to us for reaching teens in our community. These strands strengthen our witness to West Bridgford.

Strand 1 – Serve the Community

We run Trentside Youth Club as a service to the community. We work closely with the police, borough council, and other youth workers in West Bridgford. Trentside introduces us to teens from 5 secondary schools. These relationships help us learn about issues facing teens in the community. It also allows us to minister to them through conversation and witness. On average the club hosts 40 teens each week. Besides the open access which the club provides, we also organise occasional events such as ice skating, quasar, water safety, and visits by the fire brigade. Trentside is a credible youth club serving teens in south Nottingham.

We work closely with other youth workers to provide large events for teens. The Hope '08 events we sponsored were so successful that the police came to us in 2010 to request that we sponsor other events. Last September saw 250-300 teens gather in West Bridgford for an open air event. Such events are a statement that someone is there for the teens. They also communicate to the community that work with teens can be positive help to calm fears that many people have about teens.

Through serving the community we have formed vital relationships that will move us forward.

Strand 2 – Share the Story

'**The Point**' is the result of meeting teens in school and the community who have questions about God. Our home is open to teens to ask questions. We have found that food and a relaxed atmosphere are key elements at *The Point*. This Monday night group has grown over the past 12 months from 10-12 teens to 25 teens meeting in our lounge. It has developed from a question & answer event into a 'community'. We are on the verge of movement.

The growth of *The Point* prompted us to run small evangelistic groups. We call the smaller groups *Starting Point*. These small groups allow teens to study the faith in more depth. We ran one 5 week *Starting Point* in 2010 and we have plans for at least 2 more this year. The *Starting Point* challenges teens with the claims of Christ. The *Point* now has a core of teens, some of whom consider it their church, and we are preparing for our first baptisms.

As we share the story of the Gospel others have begun to make it their story.

Strand 3 – Sense His Leading

'*Unchained*' is a teen worship which features a club feel with a live band, drama, short talk, and a café. We have held 3 of these with around 50 teens attending. This worship has encouraged *The Point* to express what they discuss on Monday evenings. It has also opened the door for further cooperation with other youth workers & churches. We sense that *Unchained* will be a regular worshipping community.

We sense God's leading us to establish a youth resource centre. We have made application on a facility. This centre could serve as an after school drop in, office space, counseling service, and a place for the *Point & Starting Point* to expand and grow. The Trentside Youth Club may also relocate to this facility.

We are in partnership talks with a local church. This church shares our vision of reaching the youth of West Bridgford and their leaders have been very encouraging to our work. We are also considering how other Youth Leaders might figure into the establishment of the youth resource in our community.

We envision a time when *Unchained*, the Trentside Youth Club, and *The Point* will serve as an unbreakable cord. These 3 strands are each strong – but together, they are a powerful statement of God's love. It is our prayer that, in following God's leading, we will see teens and their families encouraged and challenged by the story of Jesus.

A WEDDING AND GOD'S MISSION



What does a wedding and God's mission have to do with each other? For Brian and Comfort, seemingly everything! For it has been in the engagement of mission that they have come together and will journey together in their marriage partnership.

What is less clear is what this may mean for us as a church in a rapidly changing post-modern, post-Christian world. It would be tempting to primarily focus our thoughts on the future when the wedding feast will commence, and we as the bride of Christ will be joined to our bridegroom, Jesus. That will be a day of amazing joy and celebration as all of creation will join in to share in this event. People from every nation and ethos will be gathered into the day of celebration and God's purposed future for His people.

However, as good as that will be, there is a present involvement that all of us are taking part in. This is seen firstly in the personal, financial and prayerful support we provide for Brian and other career missionaries. We cannot all be doing his work in Ghana. Most of us will never leave these shores to engage in mission overseas. By supporting Brian, we stretch ourselves and our churches to see the bigger picture, God's desired future, when all nations will join together as his bride. Your faithful and sacrificial support is bringing much needed leadership training to current and future churches, who themselves will continue to work towards God's intended future.

Secondly, this is seen in your own persona and local engagement in mission – from your own witness to neighbours, friends and family, to the churches expressions of its mission in the community: youth groups to OAP clubs or street pastors, to services with those who have various disabilities, cross-cultural expressions of worship to new forms of church. The call of God is for all of us to be a missionary people and a missionary church wherever we may have influence to show God's love, compassion, justice and mercy.

We will always need those who step out in faith and leave the security of home to engage with new cultures and nations, like Brian has done for many years. My sons call him a legend for this commitment. We will also continue to need those who are unable to go but will be supportive in playing their part to enable and encourage Brian and others like him. And as we continue our own personal and church witness to the one who is our Bridegroom and who is preparing us, his bride for the fullness of His Kingdom, then the future looks good. For God's mission will continue until he comes again.

All of us in the Fellowship want to wish Brian and Comfort the greatest joy in their new life and journey together. Let's keep our support flowing so that they can rest in God's provision for the years ahead in continuing this vital ministry.

Dan Yarnell

THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Articles To:

Editor, Fellowship Newsletter
1 Bridge End Ave
Selston
Nott's, NG16 6BE

