

REPORT ON THE THIRD 'RESIDENTIAL' OF THE CLIFF COLLEGE INTERNATIONAL LEARNING CENTRE (CCILC) TRAINING PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA (29th June-19th July 2009)

INTRODUCTION

As usual Rev Dr Malcolm McCall setting out on the 17th June acted as our John the Baptist preparing the way with his wife Janet for the arrival of the larger team of lecturers who travelled to Nigeria on the 29th June. Malcolm's role as a visiting encourager of students in their home locations has expanded as he has become an evangelist at large and advocate/trainer for the pioneering Methodist Training Institute at Zonkwa in the north (separate report available on request).

As regular readers of this ILC programme report will know, the July residentials are for a longer period than those that we have in January. We utilise a larger group of visiting lecturers who are divided into two teams, exchanging venues and students between Sagamu and Umuahia mid-way through the two week residentials. We had the added 'complication' this time of fitting in a 'knighthood' ceremony on the 12th July at the Methodist Cathedral in the capital Abuja (not Lagos!) and a three day 'Episcopal Training Consultation' of which more later.

Patience, flexibility and a sense of humour on the part of everyone involved in the programme continue to be key factors in the success of this programme and our thanks go out to all who have contributed to making this visit one of our most rewarding in so many ways. The new National Coordinator, Very Rev Paul Olukunga and Protocol Officer, Rev Agunbiade Busuyi facilitated our safe arrival by Air France/KLM (the cheapest this time!) and onward air travel to and from the more distant eastern college of Umuahia. Once again our thanks must go to the Head of Methodist Church Nigeria (MCN), His Eminence, Rev Dr Ola Sunday Makinde, ably backed by the Secretary of Conference, Bishop Chibuzo Raphael Opoko and the Rectors (Principals) and staff of the two Colleges for their encouragement and first-class hospitality.

THE JULY 2009 'RESIDENTIALS'



After the usual slow start due to delayed arrivals, payment of fees and return of assignments we had 71 students in residence at Umuahia and 54 students at Sagamu making a total of 125 students in all. As noted previously the 'Chapel/Lecture Hall' accommodation at Umuahia can cope with larger numbers. Now with money raised locally they have begun roofing the large chapel/lecture hall at Sagamu. This will improve the facilities at Sagamu but in the meantime we continue to use an inadequate building with no lights, fans and little ventilation.

The regular 'core' training team (see earlier reports for details) of Rev Richard Jackson, International Coordinator and Mr Keith Phillips, Administrator headed up Team 1 which began in Umuahia and Rev Dr Malcolm & Mrs Janet McCall, led Team 2 at Sagamu:

Team 1

Very Rev Deji Okegbile MA Presbyterian MCN; Cliff PhD Research Student) Lecturer on Fresh Expressions
Rev Dr Stephen Skuce MPhil BD Irish Methodist Minister; Cliff Director of PG Studies & CCILC
Mr Peter Worrell Methodist LP and retired violinist with the Halle Orchestra; Lecturer on Adult Learning

Team 2

Rev Dr Peter Ensor MA Methodist Minister, Director of Undergraduate Studies: Lecturer in New Testament
Rev Usman Habib MA Cliff Postgraduate Research Student; Lecturer on New Generation Churches
Rev Dr Kehinde Olabimtan BTh MTh Baptist Minister of Mission Education

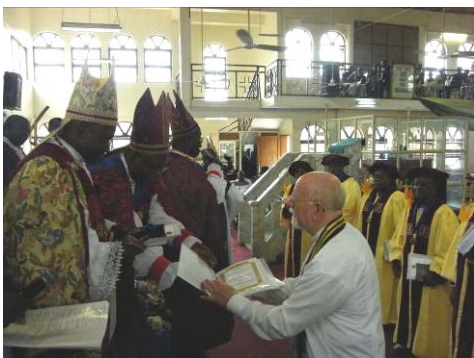
The visiting team were again well-supported by members of the Nigerian staff teams at both Sagamu & Umuahia Methodist Training Institutions, but for the first time we had three Nigerian ministers on the 'visiting' team. To have African Church History scholar Kehinde Olabimtan (now Rev Dr) with us has always been a joy, but to have added two of our Cliff College research students proved to be inspirational. With a renewed emphasis on practical outcomes the Very Rev Deji Okegbile was returning to share with old friends in MCN 'Fresh Expressions' for the Nigerian context and was welcomed by the students; Rev Usman Habib converted from a Muslim background, but now a leading pastor in the 'Church of God Mission' presented the challenge of the New Generation Churches not only through his lectures, but also as the students at Sagamu and Umuahia experienced Sunday worship with hundreds of people at the 'Church of God Mission' churches in Lagos and Umuahia. These experiences of worship outside the Methodist Church (and other traditional denominations) not only contribute to the students' 'Worship Portfolio' but they are proving to be a seed-bed for fresh thinking in repositioning the MCN.

Our only significant problem with the programme this time was that the large consignment of books generously provided through the Langham Partnership and with funding from MMS (Ireland) and Methodist Insurance failed to arrive on the Lagos dock in time for them to be cleared and distributed to our students during the residentials. The documentation has now been completed and the hope is that they will be cleared within the next couple of weeks. Arrangements have been put in place for the books to be distributed through the colleges to the students without further delay once they have been released from the docks. As we noted last time and reiterate now, "Each time we distribute books we realise afresh how valuable a commodity they are to those in ministry who have so little access to the resources that we take for granted. Even where the internet is available in Nigeria there is no guaranteed access without considerable delay and my own experience of time-consuming 'lost connections' remind me of pre-broadband use in the UK."

KNIGHTS IN THE MAKING

We were thrilled during the last few months to learn of the MCN's intention to make posthumously the late Mary Archer Champness a 'Knight of John Wesley' and to honour one of our lecturers the music-maker Peter Worrell (very much alive) as a 'Knight of Charles Wesley'. These honours are given by MCN to lay-people who have made an outstanding contribution to the life of the church.

We learned that the ceremony was to be at Abuja on the 12th July. I had tracked down the Champness family and was able to meet up again with Richard Champness on the Friday before we travelled to Nigeria. Mary Archer Champness, as some of you know, was the first wife of the forefather/founder of Cliff College who died after less than two years of marriage at Abeokuta on 23rd September 1862. We reported on the ceremony that took place at her refurbished grave last July. Amazingly, the Champness family had managed to track down some additional personal information about Mary and even a photograph, which is almost certainly her from a century and a half ago. The family had made up a presentation folder of



this information which I was able to hand over to the Prelate of MCN, His Eminence, Rev Dr Ola Sunday Makinde at the ceremony in Abuja.

The Methodist Cathedral in Abuja was packed with over a thousand people for the service and presentation of these awards along with others. Peter Worrell, Keith Phillips (Photographer!) and I enjoyed, rather than endured a 4 hours plus service of worship, the highlight of which was the decoration of the recipients. I was strangely moved to represent the Champness family in receiving the Mary Archer Champness award of a bible, certificate and medallion, but particularly because

historically it meant so much to the Methodist Church in Nigeria as well as to those of us from the UK who have served as missionaries overseas in much more hospitable times.

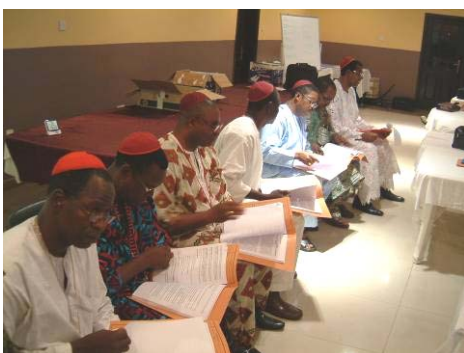
My own mood changed quickly into celebration as Peter Worrell fully robed as a KCW was invited by the Prelate to 'prove' that he was a musician by playing his violin at the lectern before receiving his award. The sound of Peter playing Finlandia to a packed cathedral congregation, most humming the tune along with him, will live long in the memory. As will the upgrade to Club Class for 'Sir' Peter (as he will be addressed in Methodist gatherings in Nigeria) and his lowly entourage on the flight back from Abuja to Lagos!



THE EPISCOPAL TRAINING CONSULTATION (14-16 July inclusive)

Some months ago we were asked to partner MCN in bringing together the whole of the clerical leadership of the MCN with its 9 Archbishops and up to 50 Bishops for a training consultation at which they would learn more about the CCILC and our programme and we would discover how much impact the programme was having through people that had been or were being trained in their dioceses. The logistical arrangements raised problems because we were involved in this programme which took place in Lagos whilst the main course with 125 students in Umuahia and Sagamu was being concluded. Mutually agreed changes to timetabling, travel etc made a positive outcome possible. Few of the bishops took advantage of a dispensation by the Prelate to be absent.

In preparation for this consultation we applied for and received an additional grant of £5,000 through the SALT Advisory Group of the Methodist Church in the UK. This was used to provide key books (some from Langham, still on the docks in Lagos!) and resources which included a book of sample lectures (300 plus pages put together for the occasion) that have been presented by an international group of highly-qualified lecturers in both Sierra Leone (2002-4) and Nigeria (2006-8; 2008-10). This book and the notes were used to ground the whole consultation as Rev Dr Malcolm McCall led devotions related to Spiritual Disciplines, Rev Richard Jackson led challenging sessions with the Bishops on Methodism and Ministry and Making Disciples, whilst Rev Dr Stephen Skuce laid the Biblical and Practical foundations for Encountering Other Religions. As The Prelate presided over our deliberations and the Bishop of Evangelism, Rt. Rev Dr. Sunday N Onuoha guided the Consultation the positive response from the participants means that we are making headway in a shared understanding of mission and ministry. It became clear that the leadership of MCN will continue to give wholehearted support to evangelists, ministers and presbyters who have undertaken the full programme as together they experiment with the kind of changes that the re-positioning of MCN is requiring of them.



Interspersed throughout the Consultation were presentations by the bishops of each of the nine archdioceses that looked at the ways in which their diocese was becoming involved in 'evangelism and church planting'. The large number of presentations and the difficulty that presenters had in highlighting what was significant for mission from each of the reports meant that this was less useful than anticipated. The fact that we now have written reports means that we are in a position to analyse what is being accomplished overall by the MCN and respond accordingly with our ILC programme. The very positive response to the continuing work of the ILC and the 'Episcopal Training Consultation' led the Prelate to encourage us to explore the possibilities of providing a full-blown training programme for the Bishops at Cliff College possibly in October 2010.

CONCLUDING REFLECTION

I must return to thoughts of Mary Archer Champness and in closing share some of the poignant words written by Richard Champness on behalf of the family to the Secretary of Conference, MCN.

I and my Sisters are deeply touched by the great honour that the Conference has bestowed posthumously on our great grandfather's first wife in recognition of her services to the Methodist Church in Nigeria all those many years ago. Like the wives of other Christian Missionaries of her generation Mary was prepared to risk and sacrifice all in the cause of the Gospel. By making this Award, Conference rightly acknowledges Mary's personal sacrifice in obedience to the Lord's call on her life and, in doing so, salutes her publicly as a role model for those Christian women of our own generation who would follow her example. Whilst I greatly value my Christian heritage and ongoing links with Methodism, I cherish even more the personal relationship with Jesus Christ that I am privileged to enjoy together with the wider fellowship of Christian believers through His sacrifice on the Cross.

My thoughts and prayers will be with you all as you meet in the Methodist Cathedral of Unity on Sunday the 12th July 2009 to celebrate the life and work of Mary Champness as the first Wife of my illustrious great grandfather Thomas Champness. It is gratifying to know that his memory is kept alive by those who have reaped the harvest he sowed so tirelessly and effectively both in England and Nigeria three generations ago.

May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show his favour and give you His peace now and always.

Warmest regards



Richard S. Champness



PS ON OTHER PROJECTS

We continue to seek funding and resources for associated projects like college and school libraries as well as funding for the pioneering college of Zonkwa in the north, as part of the CCILC vision to build up local colleges for their developing work. Our experience suggests that if too much unsolicited information is sent out, it is rarely read and digested, but if there is any earlier report further information or documentation and photographs that anyone would like to have, particularly for fund-raising purposes, I shall be pleased to make it available. The new CCILC-DVD mentioned in an earlier report is almost complete. With the addition of January and July 2009 material we hope to be able to release it to our friends and supporters shortly.

Richard Jackson (Rev)

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