



# *The First Twenty Years*

**1985 - 2005**

*This short history was written by Stan Gain as part of the celebrations for the 20th anniversary of Charlton & Blackheath Christian Fellowship, held on Saturday 10th September 2005*

**Charlton & Blackheath  
Christian Fellowship**

## Foreword

Twenty years and still going strong and what tremendous years they have been. Too many faces to include everyone; too many places to feature everywhere; too many happenings etc.

At the end of John's Gospel he wrote: "There are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written"

To record everyone and everything would not take the whole world but a bigger project than this brief history. This history is, therefore, written as a flavour rather than a full historical account.

The time line gives an indication of the approximate period covered on each page. A fuller version is on display with contributions from members of Charlton and Blackheath Christian Fellowship. Everyone who has been a part of us, whether past or present, member or visitor, young or old has played a part in making us who we are today.

This is written that you may celebrate our first twenty years with us.

### **Boys' Brigade and Thursday Fellowship**

It started in August 1982 at a Boys' Brigade camp in East Devon. Several boys had found a new faith in God and had prayed a prayer of commitment to Jesus. It was the start of a move of God that would become a mini-revival that would touch the Charlton and Blackheath area for years to come.

One officer in the company was concerned for the spiritual growth of these new boys and so Mark Veary approached his former music teacher, Mike Leader, a committed Christian to start a Bible study for these boys and for himself. The camp quartermaster, also an officer of the company was touched by the power of the Holy Spirit in this move of God, and so Stan Gain became part of the Bible study that met in Mike's study.

This truly was a move of God. The bible study grew and more boys and soon girls were added to the group and as more and more young people found new faith in God, the Thursday Group evolved squeezing into Ron and Gill Baker's home in Charlton Road.

By the time of the annual camp in 1983 in Seaton, Devon, the Thursday Fellowship, as it came to be known, had grown to about 30 members. Michael Kelsey, the vicar of St John's was the chaplain of the 1983 camp and during that camp there was a sovereign move of God. On the Tuesday evening after lights out, the Holy Spirit moved through the camp. Without human intervention, twelve boys were touched by His grace. By the final evening boys were testifying to others about their conversion experience and encouraging others to receive Jesus. Michael Kelsey said that in his many years in the Lord both in mission and at home this was the closest thing he had seen to revival.

Three further things caused the Thursday Fellowship to continue to grow. The witness of those young people on fire for God praying for their friends and families in this on-going

revival. It was also a time of mission and a large tent mission, headed by Luis Palau on Blackheath and subsequently at Queens Park Rangers football ground in West London saw hundreds of new Christians swept into the Kingdom of God. Dozens of these were referred to St John's Church in Blackheath. At one time the church was holding six 'new Christian' classes at the same time!

In this spirit of mission and revival an additional mission was held at St John's church as a celebration of Michael's ten years as vicar. A team from All Souls, Langham Place led the mission and about twenty five more people were saved. The statistics showed that in this year of mission, 128 new Christians were disciplined by St John's church, many of whom joined the Thursday Fellowship and received solid teaching.

As a result Thursday Fellowship grew further and about seventy young people crammed into the Church Army Faith Sharing Team first floor flat in St John's Park. Sailing holidays, skippered by Ron Baker on the Norfolk Broads became an annual 'spiritual' holiday. Up to six yachts were rented for a great time of fun and fellowship. Paul Oakley, Abigail Pockney and Alan Clapson joined Mike, Mark and Stan in the leadership of the fellowship. In late 1984, the question was asked of the leaders as to whether the fellowship should become a church in itself. The leaders individually and collectively prayed about this and unanimously, and perhaps surprisingly, felt that this was not the direction. More surprisingly, as a result of this time of seeking the Lord, both Paul and Stan felt the Lord saying they were to leave the leadership. Stan had also taken on the captaincy of the Boys' Brigade Company in September 1984.

Stan, Mark, Alan and Abigail were members of St John's church which was full and alive with the new Christian life, while Paul was at South Lee and Mike at Eltham Green Fellowship. St John's struggled with tradition against the new flow of the Holy Spirit and several members were impatient to see the church move faster in the fullness of His Spirit. As a result, Stan and Mark began to make plans to hold meetings at the Boys' Brigade Hall after evening service on a Sunday for those who wanted to experience more of the power of God.

In May 1985, what became a growing frustration with the struggle with tradition ended with several people leaving St John's Church, including Stan and Mark. A simple question by Mark, "Well, are these Sunday evenings going to become a church or not?" brought a quick and firm response from Stan.... "Yes!" Surprised by the speed and clarity of his reply, He quickly concluded that this was the voice of the Holy Spirit.

At the time of leaving St John's Church there had been no intention of leaving to start a new church, but with several people with a real heart for the Charlton and Blackheath area without a church where they could grow spiritually it became a question of keeping up with that leading of the Holy Spirit. With no experience of church leadership, Phil Rogers of South Lee Christian Church was approached and asked if he, with his people, would start a work in Charlton and Blackheath. He replied that he did not have a vision for that area.

### **CBCF is born**

As a result, with fear and trembling on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 1985 at 6-35pm Stan stood up in the Boys' Brigade Hall at a meeting of about 40 people to start the first meeting of the Charlton and Blackheath Christian Fellowship. The preaching was from Acts 2: 42:- *'They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and in prayer.'*

From this, twelve people, former members of St John's Church, Blackheath became the first members of the church; They were Nicola Berry, Alan Clapson , Andy Chumley, Sally Fowler (now Shaw), Stan Gain, John McCavish, Spencer Moseley, Abigail Pockney, Kath Shorten (now Chivers), Mark Veary, David Wilson and Jan Wiszniewski.

Exciting times! Now, having started we went back to South Lee and asked for help. This was graciously given and they gave us Colin and Diane Frith with the intention that as we grew and integrated into what was then the New Frontiers network Colin would become the pastor. Phil Rogers and John Houghton both became actively involved and helped with foundational teaching at our midweek meetings in John McCavish's small flat in Charlton Road. Colin and Stan took responsibility for most of the preaching and Mark led the praise and worship times.

### **In the last days . .**

A new musical emerged in these early days called "In the Last Days". This was a joint production. The lyrics were written by Stan, who produced it, the music by Mark and the script by Jane Loftin who was the director. It was a real test of unity but a triumph as it was performed for three nights in the drama hall of Blackheath Bluecoat School. It had two repeat performances at South Lee Church at the end of the year. Several years later, it was revamped and a much improved production emerged, again in the school drama hall.

### **A vision for Charlton & Blackheath**

For six months the relationship between CBCF and South Lee strengthened. New members were added, including Maurice and Helga Ambler and Andy MacDonald, now a leader in prophetic ministry. It looked as if we would become a part of New Frontiers network until one evening at a meeting with Terry Virgo, who headed New Frontiers, it became clear that this was not to be. He simply asked "If it were thought best for CBCF to be absorbed into South Lee for maybe two years and then re-planted back into Charlton, would New Frontiers have the authority to do so?" It was a fundamental question and it was placed before the whole fellowship. There was total unanimity among the now 26 members. We should not move out of the area. Everyone felt that the vision was for Charlton and Blackheath and not the area in which South Lee was situated.

Now, we were on our own. Our relationship with South Lee was strong, but as we were not to be a New Frontiers church the leadership input from them was withdrawn. The relationship with them continued and we held our first baptismal service there. Six members were baptized on a cold winter's night. Several more baptisms were to follow. On one occasion communications broke down and the water was not ready and poor Daisy Smith was baptized in about eighteen inches of not very warm water.

In September 1986 Mike Leader accepted an invitation to join the Fellowship in an Eldership capacity. This further strengthened the leadership foundations. For personal reasons, Mark left the eldership and Maurice Ambler was welcomed into the eldership alongside Mike and Stan. He brought maturity and experience as well as a deep love for the Word of God. Some of the gaps left by the practical input of Colin, Phil and John were filled by Maurice. Mike had continued to lead the Thursday Group but around this time, with most of the young people either members of CBCF or settled into good churches, it was not long before he decided that it had very successfully achieved its original purpose and it was closed.

## **Evangelism and Mission**

Evangelism and mission were very much at the heart of the fellowship and regular outreaches took place in Charlton Village and on the Cherry Orchard Estate. On one hot July day we were attacked (refreshed!) with a bucket of water as we proclaimed the Good News of Jesus! On two occasions knives were drawn by people opposed to us preaching aloud! It is fitting that in our twentieth anniversary year that work is continuing on the Cherry Orchard Estate. After five years of patiently putting the foundations into place, Linda Gay opened the Sunflowers Pregnancy Crisis Centre on the Estate, one of many outreach and community projects that the church is (and has been) involved in. The Summer of 2005 also saw a week of outreach and social action on the estate, working with Ichthus New Life Fellowship and Blackheath and Charlton Baptist Church..

One feature at these times was “U Wot?” This was a monthly youth event in St John’s church for young people by young people. It drew youngsters and youth groups from churches all over the south east London area and often beyond. It was not only a great encouragement to these youngsters, but many from the fellowship were actively involved in counseling, singing etc. Mark Veary was regularly the worship leader. When it was decided to finish at St John’s it evolved into “Wot Next?” at the Blackheath and Charlton Baptist Church for many years.

## **Charlton House**

CBCF continued to grow and meetings were switched from Sunday evenings at the Boys’ Brigade Hall to Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings at Charlton House. Opportunity for the practice of the gifts of the Spirit was plentiful. It was exciting never to know what would happen as the Holy Spirit moved in power. Words of knowledge, prophecy, tongues and healing were commonplace. We were learning that when the Lord is given freedom anything could happen and often did. No-one was expecting our first experience of deliverance when suddenly one Wednesday evening one of our members was thrown across the room from his chair before being powerfully delivered.

Long before what became known as ‘The Toronto Blessing’ we were experiencing many and varied manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s power. One Sunday, Paul Barnes who played Thomas in the first performances of ‘In the Last Days’ filled with an irrepressible desire to laugh became the key to a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit of a kind that so many marveled at in later years in Toronto. The teachings of John Wimber around ‘power evangelism’ gave us a great introduction to expecting and experiencing signs and wonders in our meetings and outreaches.

Music, praise and worship were a very strong element in these early days. Mark wrote several new songs which were used regularly during the praise and worship. There was great excitement when his first song was published jointly with Paul Oakley and when we heard “You Oh Lord, Rich in Mercy” sung by several thousand tongues at the evening celebrations of ‘The Downs Week’. Another favourite from his pen was “We Declare That Jesus Christ Is Lord!” Jonathan Shorten also wrote several new songs as his musical talent developed.

## **Assembly Rooms**

Some of the new music both home grown and from other sources was very exuberant. “We Declare that Jesus Christ is Lord” was often accompanied by jumping and dancing. Unfortunately, the Jacobean structure of Charlton House was not built for exuberant 20<sup>th</sup> century churches. The effect was that the ceiling below began to bend and the wonderful chandelier rocked quite heavily. It would not quite be true to say that we were thrown out of Charlton House, but by negotiation we transferred to The Assembly Rooms in Charlton Village.

The mission and outreach continued both in Charlton Village and on the Cherry Orchard Estate. We made contact with many people and began to see the power of God on the streets. People were saved and healed and, of course, the members were much encouraged. These days saw the beginning of many ‘characters’ attending the church some of whom became solid members. I am sure that no one who was there at the time will forget Doreen Smith and her dog Sooty. Struggling to overcome alcohol and consequently living a chaotic lifestyle, she became a real challenge and training ground in learning how to serve. She did give her life to Jesus and overcome many of her difficulties before going on to be with the Lord. Not that Sooty was the first dog to come to church. Andy Samuels came with his guide dog, and when Doreen discovered that Andy brought his dog to church insisted that Sooty came too.

It may be that the seeds of the current deaf community were sown into the church at that time, as several made contact with a deaf family from Charlton who received Jesus. One of the family died a few months later and it helped us see the need for continuing outreach and evangelism.

## **Sidmouth Missions**

Having camped with the Boys’ Brigade at Sidmouth in East Devon during the annual International Folk Festival, the potential for holding a mission away from home was followed up. Working with John Chattell, the YMCA and Sidmouth Methodist Church, three missions were held. The most successful was probably the second one when 27 commitments to Jesus were made and as a result introduced us to many more characters. Several found themselves connected to the fellowship.

Two stand out in particular. Alex, a homeless young man from Birmingham was, perhaps naively, invited back to London after the mission. He was to say the least a real character. He eventually stayed with Andy MacDonald and John McCavish and we were able to find this rather work-shy young man work for a year in a job creation scheme at the Boys’ Brigade Hall. Ron Moseling, who ran the scheme, gave us many amusing stories, as Alex was determined to get the sack and Ron was determined not to fire him! He was last seen back in Sidmouth with little change in his life after his stay with us.

A more successful outcome was eventually found in the life of Krissie. She had been introduced to the occult by her own family as a child and struggled to commit her life to Jesus. This started an immense battle for her to break free. She too was invited to London, a move which ultimately saved her life. Her baptism was a pivotal moment in her path to freedom. There were many truly miraculous interventions in her life which eventually led to a powerful deliverance from dark powers. Physical addictions and emotional difficulties still troubled her and with professional help she was eventually helped to overcome these too. She

finally got her life together and went through college, working to support herself. From chaos to freedom - thanks to the love and power of Jesus expressed through the Fellowship.

Sidmouth was a good and challenging training ground and a great opportunity to practice and develop evangelistic skills such as open air preaching, personal evangelism and sketch board. Many were surprised at Paul Key's preaching debut declaring in his typical 'no compromise' way, "If you don't believe in God, you are a fool!"

We were assisted on the second mission by a Youth With A Mission team. In these early days, two young people went on Discipleship Training Courses with YWAM; Teresa Jeffrey (now MacDonald) and Abigail Pockney. Following discipleship training Teresa found herself in Hong Kong and India while Abigail spent her time in Switzerland and France. Linda Gay was later to follow in their footsteps.

The Sidmouth mission followed a one week mission at home based in Charlton House. This focused on the Hornfair Estate and included a cheese and wine evening and 'An evening with Gloria Gaynor' (Yes, that Gloria Gaynor) who 'survived' an evening with CBCF at the Assembly Rooms in Charlton Village. A series of meetings in the dining hall of Charlton Manor School at which Hugh Osgood preached saw the several commit their lives to Jesus. These meetings were held under the banner "Break Free With Jesus" for which another song was written by Mark and Stan.

### **Kenya connection**

At this time, Stan began to travel in a missionary context. Peter Wakeford had twice visited Kenya. He was unable to fulfill his promise to return as he was incapacitated with ME. Stan and Marcus Greenlaw fulfilled that promise on Peter's behalf. Returning with wonderful stories of the power, miracles and salvation that they had seen, a relationship was established with George Opara and The Lord's Ministries in Kenya. Over the next few years many members of the church were to accompany Stan to Africa. In addition to Marcus, Jan Wiszniewski, Carol Morter, Ray Lockwood and Matthew Baker all had opportunity to teach and preach and see the power of God in a cross cultural setting. They witnessed miracles of healing, miracles of nature, responses to the Gospel that had not been seen on such a scale at home. To see God's power healing malaria, typhoid, snake bites, barrenness etc through the hands of these young people was wonderful.

Maybe it was at Lunyu that the seeds were sown that led Matthew into Bible School and to eventually take up the work of pastoring the church. His teaching on Abraham and Isaac was unforgettable. At Nairobi Airport he declared "I have had a wonderful time here, but it has also confirmed to me that my ministry is at home and not abroad." How prophetic this turned out to be.

The relationship with George Opara strengthened and many practical projects were jointly undertaking. Liyavo Bible church was funded and built by the CBCF. In addition, several clinics were built, and about thirty children were sponsored for education. A beautiful vehicle was donated by Marion Davies from Sidmouth to serve as a mobile clinic. A five acre plot was purchased to enable a Bible School to be built and money was raised to build an orphanage for about forty children.

The orphanage was never completed, however, as it eventually became clear that there had been corruption and deceit in the use of the finance. It was a time of heartbreak. Ron Baker accompanied Stan to investigate these problems and to confront George and sadly to discover the truth. Some of the property was returned, but in spite of many attempts, much had to be written off. Later attempts with Slim Thompson from America were made to re-establish The Lord's Ministries on a sound theological foundation, but the work declined, and although still existing has no direct relationship with the church. Thankfully, although the scheme collapsed, most of the sponsored children were able to complete their primary education.

*Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it cannot bear fruit.* From the ashes of the work with the Lord's Ministries, however, Stan was now free to work with many others and has seen work established in many parts of Kenya as well as Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan and Congo. The lessons learned from reconciliation with George Opara helped establish a work of bringing unity to the divided churches of Africa. Through establishing seminars in 'Unity' many areas have been transformed and pastors fellowships established. The evangelistic side of the ministry has seen thousands saved and large numbers healed and set free by the power of Jesus. The Fellowship continues any interest in Kenya and now sponsors four children through the To Kenya with Love Trust.

## **Growth continues**

Although not an ideal meeting place, the church continued to grow during its time at the Assembly Rooms. More people were added, and more interesting characters joined us. Many will remember Humphrey, a brigadier, with a prophetic gift declaring "*Thus says the Lord!*" in such an authoritarian and military way that no-one dared argue. There was a lady who one Sunday declared that "Now I have shown that I can give up smoking for ten days, the Holy Spirit has told me that it is OK for me to start smoking again." We had very open meetings at that time and many people were free to contribute. One Sunday Andrew came forward to share a word with us and promptly produce a copy of The Watchtower Magazine. We never did find out what he wanted to share.

## **St Richard's Hall**

Nicknamed by some 'The Gypsy Church' because we kept changing premises, we were forced to move when the local council decided it was time to renovate the assembly Rooms. Although we did not see eye to eye theologically with St Luke's Church in Charlton - indeed three members of the Thursday Group were ejected from the church for disrupting a service that they saw as non-Biblical - we did continue to relate to them. Following a letter in the local press from the vicar about sharing premises, we were allowed to share St Richard's church with them. Although small this was to be our home for about two years. We were often crammed in to this small church but it enabled us to keep meeting regularly and without a break. Ken and Betty Bickham also became a part of us although Ken, wheelchair bound with MS, was not often able to attend. Doreen Brown, another unique character, also became a very regular member. Unfortunately she died very tragically in a house fire.

## **Mission 89**

Billy Graham held his last mission to London in 1989 and naturally the church was involved. The local meetings were held at Crystal Palace Sports Stadium. We arranged a coach to take people to hear him and on the chosen day there was a rail strike. The coach did not turn up



and only eight people came to hear him. Struggling through traffic in private cars, we arrived just as an offering was being taken up and before Billy Graham was about to speak. We were so far from the platform and faith was not high when the invitation ‘to get up out of your seats’ was given. All eight that we had taken went forward, and two of them, Chris Hadlow and Heather Stewart are still with us.

## **Return to the BB Hall**

We had by this time seen several marriages. Dave and Paulette Schofield were the first. Trevor and Lisa Tinlin, Neil and Gwen Gowers and Andy and Teresa MacDonald also married in these years. Not solely from the fruit of these marriages, but the number of children was beginning to grow and the premises at St Richard’s were no longer big enough to contain us. This took us back to our ‘roots’ at the Boys’ Brigade Hall where we have been ever since. The use of the cottage for crèche and Sunday School work enabled a great increase in our ability to minister to the children. The focus of the meetings began to change and much of the spontaneity was lost as the meetings reflected the need to minister to all ages. Something of the radical edge began to be lost which, thankfully, is being restored in these later days.

Stan continued with his travels and in addition to Africa was visiting Eastern Europe more and more. With frequent visits to the Soviet Union and Romania and to a lesser extent Albania – plus a visit to post war Kurdistan he felt it was time to hand over the pastoral responsibility for the fellowship. With increasing pressure in ministering to the ‘characters’ and increasingly away on missionary trips he handed over to Mike and Maurice, although continuing in the eldership. He had said from the beginning that as an evangelist he would only be able to take the church so far and this was the time to concentrate more on his travels.

## **Changes and Growth - A New Direction**

For a short while, the changes in leadership and the growth in family life caused a change in the character of the church. Change often unsettles people. Several people left the church, including Brian and Viv Mansfield. Brian had served the church as a deacon and teacher for several years and was greatly missed. Roy and Jane Loftin were also missed as Roy had helped in leading the worship.

As always in the life of the church, God was in control. A new influx of people from the Plumstead Christian Fellowship brought new life. Among them were Ron & Kath Gurnett who brought wisdom and experience, and Steve and Julie Gurnett who threw themselves into the life of the fellowship. Julie regularly brings her words and pictures to the meetings and has developed a strong prophetic ministry. Steve, in later years left the Metropolitan Police to become a full time evangelist with Open Air Campaigners and eventually was added to the eldership. Georges Matti also became very influential with his teaching ministry and in particular with his gift of encouragement. In this period of change, Maurice resigned from the eldership and he and his wife Helga were greatly missed when they left the fellowship.

Our links with Greenwich Youth For Christ have always been strong and several of our young people have worked with them, especially on the Ferrier Estate. Several YFC volunteers have found a home in the fellowship while passing their time in Greenwich. Julie works with them in administration.

Following a prophetic word given by Hugh Osgood at a weekend in Ashburnham, the biggest change at this time, however, was the recognition of the gifts that had been placed in Matthew Baker. Having finished his legal studies, he gave up a potential career in the legal profession and went to Spurgeons Bible College. Added to the eldership it has been a joy to see him grow into the pastor and leader he has become today.

During this time of change there was not so much outreach from the church. The missionary work continued but local mission lessened. The church concentrated on teaching and foundations were strengthened with regular teaching from Matthew, Mike, Adam and Georges.

### **C.net link**

Although a relationship with New Frontiers did not happen even though this was at one point considered for a second time, it was decided to build a relationship with what was then called Cornerstone (later to become C.net). This was an association of churches and fellowships under the leadership of Tony Morton in Southampton. This further strengthened the leadership, bringing a measure of accountability and pastoral cover. This also broadened the facilities and resources available to the church and input from Tony, Peter Butt and Peter Stott encouragement and strength to the fellowship. The Fellowship is currently building relationships with several other c.net churches in the London and Surrey areas. Alex Afriyie, who leads the London Network Church in Acton has become a particular friend and encourager.

### **Ashburnham**

Although they had been an intermittent feature in the past, more regular fellowship weekends at Ashburnham Place have become a regular part of the programme. Led by a variety of speakers, these weekends have been precious and significant in the development of CBCF. Throughout the last fifteen years we have particularly benefited from the ministry of Hugh Osgood, not only at several Ashburnham Weekends, but also in many other ways. Hugh is Senior Minister at Cornerstone Christian Centre in Bromley and is also celebrating his 40th anniversary in ministry this year.

### **Prophetic Ministry**

Over the next few years a prophetic edge became a feature of the church. Andy MacDonald and Julie Gurnett were growing in the prophetic ministry and teaching and training in the prophetic is an established part of church life. Two prophetic conferences led by Mark Illes from Southampton have been held and it is believed that the church will play an increasing role in the prophetic in these last days.

### **Alpha**

Coming out of Holy Trinity Church in Brompton Road, Alpha Courses became a major resource for reaching the lost and CBCF held its first Alpha Course at the Boys' Brigade Hall. Regular Alpha Courses have been held since and many have come to a personal relationship with the Lord as a result of these courses.

## **Deaf Ministry**

Thanks to the Gloria Bradford's friendship with her neighbours, contact was made with the deaf community and what became known as a 'Deaf Alpha Course' was run. As a result Jeff and Brigitte McWhinney were added to the church and consequently many from the deaf community have been integrated into the church. Every meeting, including much of the children's' work is now translated into BSL. Hearing members have learned BSL are able to communicate at various levels of fluency. It is a rare meeting when such interpretation is not needed.

Around this time, offices were taken at Blackheath Standard which we have continued to share with Greenwich Youth For Christ.

## **Music and Worship**

Worship and Music continue to play an important part in Fellowship meetings. Richard Pemberton has written numerous memorable songs such as "You are the One and Only God", "Almighty God of wondrous deeds" and "You alone are Worthy", continuing the tradition of "home grown" worship songs. In recent days a worship band has been formed and we are seeing the fruit from the early years as people who have grown up in the Fellowship mature into leadership, like Lucy Waghorn leading worship and Claire Gurnett on the piano.

## **Children and Young People**

During these latter years children's work has become an important part of Fellowship life. We have been blessed by dedicated children's workers led initially by Penny Ashby and more recently by Andy and Teresa MacDonald. For a while there was a Saturday Morning Children's Club running in the BB Hall, led by Adam Bradford. Youth work also developed over several years, led by Ray Lockwood, Dave Barclay and during the last few years by Claire Gurnett, assisted by Tim Troughton and Paul Reeve and a string of GYFC volunteers. Youngsters have enjoyed various labels including "The Youf", "Yobbos" and "Chaos".

## **Now there are Three**

Steve Gurnett joined Matthew and Mike in the eldership in 2002. With Steve now working full time with Open Air Campaigners an increase in evangelism came to the church, especially with a regular outreach in Bexleyheath High Street.

## **Set Free**

A significant event in more recent times was releasing Matthew and Helen for a sabbatical towards the end of 2003. They spent the time in Canada and were not only refreshed and encouraged but came back to us transformed. Matthew returned with a deeper and greater love for Jesus that has become infectious throughout the church. Helen too came back emboldened and has made an increased contribution to the life of the church.

They also brought back with them what has been termed 'listening prayer'. Through this many have been set free from many things and encouraged in their prayer life. A team from

Canada taught and ministered to the church in a conference simply entitled 'Set Free'. The result, together with a recent 'Freedom in Christ' course has been for many a closer and strengthened relationship with their Saviour, Jesus. A new mission statement was adopted at this time: ***Releasing People to be the People God Created them to be.***

Over twenty years many have come and gone. All that have been with us have played a part, some more significantly than others, but all have been a part of shaping us and making us what we are today. There have been many good times and, of course, times of sorrow and tears. Joy and celebration over many who have found new faith in the Lord; sorrow as people have left us for whatever reason; joy and celebration over the weddings and anniversaries and births; sorrow as we have lost our loved ones through death; joy and celebration at our services, baptisms and celebrations...

### **CBCF Today . . . and Tomorrow**

The work goes on. Still many are active in the work of the Kingdom of God. Mention has already been made of Steve with Open Air Campaigners, Julie with Greenwich YFC and Linda with the Sunflowers Pregnancy Crisis Centre. Stan continues with the missionary work in Africa, the Philippines and beyond; Matthew is chaplain to Charlton Athletic Football Club; Jane is a full time chaplain in Belmarsh Prison; Mike is a Borough Dean and involved in Chaplaincy at Blackheath Bluecoat School and ASDA; David Wilson serves us and others with administration; Mervyn hosts the Greenwich Churches website; Jeff, Brigitte and Gloria continue to develop our relationship with the deaf community; Adam is a leader in the Antioch Community in West London; Charlie and Sue continue our links, serving in the Boys' Brigade; many are involved in the Alpha Courses and many more continue to quietly serve God and the community in countless and often unknown ways. We also continue to maintain strong links with St Johns and Blackheath and Charlton Baptist churches and have more recently developed a friendship with churches in the Charlton Churches Group.

Yes, the work goes on and we trust will continue until the return of our Lord and Saviour. Everyone who has been with us over the last years has played a part in helping us to be who we are today. Without them our lives would have been poorer.

As the Apostle Paul wrote, *"Not that we have already attained all of this or have yet been made perfect... but we press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of us."*

Here's to the next twenty years!



**Releasing people**  
***to be the people God created them to be***  
(CBCF Mission Statement)

## **Charlton & Blackheath Christian Fellowship**

meets for worship  
every Sunday at 10.30am  
in the Boys' Brigade Hall Reynolds Place  
Blackheath SE3 8SX

*Childrens' activities and  
British Sign Language Interpretation  
are usually provided*

### **Charlton & Blackheath Christian Fellowship**

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