

A Christian life style for 1975

by Basil Amey

TRADITIONALLY the New Year is a time for rejoicing. There is the possibility of a fresh start, so hopes can be high. There can be a spirit of expectancy.

How is it possible to enter 1975 in this spirit when so many news items are concerned with death, destruction and despair?

The opening paragraph in the November issue of *New Internationalist* reads:

"Forget the forecasts of famine in the future. Famine is here. Hunger is now killing more than 10,000 men, women and children every day, yesterday, today and tomorrow. In the sixty poorest countries on the planet, half the population is down to one meal a day."

If you feel that you have heard all this before and that it is too general to grasp, then a quotation from a letter written by one of our BMS missionaries in Bangladesh makes the position clear.

"The food situation in the country as a whole is really critical. There is a group of Moslem philanthropists who go round the streets of Dacca each morning picking up the bodies of those who have died in the night. Even the cost of cremation or burial is too much for the poorer people. We at Chandraghona, have been having problems with people bringing in patients who are almost dead, having them admitted to hospital and then not turning up again to take the body."

"I suppose they realize that the hospital has to take some sort of action, but we cannot really afford to help paying out money to have graves dug. The money is all needed to help others to have a chance to live."

Such comments are not in any way a criticism of the people or the area concerned. They are a

statement of facts and these facts should make us question our own attitude to those who are placed in situations over which they have no control.

It is not only the present generation that will suffer. Babies who are malnourished can be permanently stunted in body and brain. This condition may, in its turn, affect any children they bear. So the tragedy of malnutrition is passed on to another generation.

As Christians consider these facts they may wish to express their concern for others in the style of life they adopt. A report of a consultation on Development and Salvation suggested: "A Christian life style for today has certain distinctive marks:

- (i) a recognition that our fulfilment cannot be achieved, or properly regarded, as an end in itself.
- (ii) An admission that we are called to a responsible sharing of all we have and are.
- (iii) An insistence that freedom and dignity for others as well as for ourselves become the true motives for our possession, or of our renunciation, of material things.
- (iv) A discipline which prevents us from constantly raising the level of what we demand as necessary for our own fulfilment.
- (v) A simplicity and joy springing from confidence in God's love."

The same report ended with a series of questions among which were the following:

- (i) What part of my income should I regularly give away?
- (ii) Looking at what I earn and what I own, what is essential and what is surplus?
- (iii) How can others benefit from what I have? Do I share enough?
- (iv) What difference does being a Christian make, for me?

It may be that as we enter 1975 we shall discover that our main source of joy is to be found in the giving of our money and our service for the sake of others.

One avenue for such gifts and service is the Baptist Missionary Society and you may wish to write now to:

The General Home Secretary,
B.M.S.
93 Gloucester Place,
London, W1H 4AA.

KINSHASA

Capital of Zaire

Baptists have been active in Kinshasa for many years. The B.M.S. has been privileged to share in this work and rejoices in the growth that has taken place. This month the Missionary Herald invite you to share in this work by reading, which is followed by prayer gifts and service.

The Capital! Buildings and boulevards from the Belgian era joined by architecture of the Second Republic, often decorated with African murals. The African sculptures in the President's Gardens on Mount Ngaliema (formerly Mount Stanley), and the statue of a militant party member of the Popular Revolutionary Movement at Nsele (the Party Conference Centre), indicate the determination of the people to express their freedom to be themselves in all spheres of life.

Growth! Fifteen miles from the city centre, in what appears to be virgin country, new plots of land are already marked out and claimed. New factories point to industrial growth.

People! From all corners of the country. Finding a house or renting a room is a nightmare for the person from the interior who has no immediate family willing to lodge him. This is followed by the problem of finding work, and combating the rising cost of living.

Angolans continue to form a large percentage of the Kinshasa population, and many other nationalities are represented by diplomatic staff or business men and industrial advisers. Noise, rush, bustle, common to any large or capital city; increasingly dense traffic, cultural and sporting events, amusements, temptations, idle hands turning to crime, all these things and more make up the life of the city.

Protestants join the Roman Catholics and Kimbanguists in seeking to show people that there is a God who cares. The British Baptists, the American Baptists, the Salvation Army, Presbyterians and Assemblies of God are among those who work in the city, through the African Churches they helped to form, as well as an indigenous Church, the Community of Light. The Rev. Wantwadi Ndodioko, for several years the General Secretary of the former Baptist

Church of the Lower River, is President of the Synod of Kinshasa, for the Church of Christ in Zaire, and is responsible for coordinating the Protestant work and outreach in the city.

The C.B.F.Z. (*Communauté Baptiste du Fleuve Zaire*)—Baptist Community of the River Zaire), has fourteen churches or parishes, in Kinshasa with a total membership of nearly 15,000. Kinshasa forms one of the four regions comprising our total C.B.F.Z. Community (the others being Lower River, Middle River and Upper River). The superintendent of this Kinshasa Region is the Rev. Koli Mandole Molima who was transferred from Upoto and from his work as General Secretary of the former Baptist Church of the Upper River, to Kinshasa upon the unification of our Baptist work into one Community. The Rev. Koli moved to Kinshasa in February 1973. His task is complicated by regional and tribal suspicion and dissension and perhaps, too, by those hurt because of the change in administrative structure.

The present talks and negotiations on the future of Angola are of direct interest to C.B.F.Z. work in Kinshasa. Out of 14 pastors, 7 are Angolan, 5 are from the Lower River and 2 from the Upper river. A substantial number of church members are also Angolan. The pattern of church and city life will change considerably if and when they return to their own country and perhaps, to some extent, the thoughts of an eventual return have already begun to affect the city churches of the C.B.F.Z.

In this present issue, some aspects of our C.B.F.Z. work in the capital are presented. It is not intended to be a complete and exhaustive picture; rather a glimpse at the response to the challenge to God's people that comes through seeing, "sheep without a shepherd".

The Christian church must help young people to grow



Rev. Kuvitwanga Mvuala talking with the Rev. Mfwilwakanda.
(Photo D. Rumbol)

The Rev. Kuvitwanga Mvuala lives with his wife and children opposite the permanent site for the Kinshasa Trade Fair, and a hundred yards from the great road intersection called the 'Echangeur de Limete'.

He is Christian Education Secretary of the C.B.F.Z. for the region of Kinshasa, and is also teacher and chaplain at the Protestant Secondary School, College Mpeti, Itaga. Lack of private transport and crowded buses, force him to leave home by 6 a.m., and return some twelve hours later, unless, as is often the case, he is called to participate in some other gathering.

The Rev. Kuvitwanga writes:

THE work of God among Zairian youth, and especially young people in the Zairian capital, Kinshasa, is in a period of transformation. This transformation touches every sphere

of life, and young people are called to face three big questions:

1. The political revolution.
2. The social revolution.
3. The implications for religious life.

The city of Kinshasa is never still, and there is plenty to attract young people who form the majority of the population. Kinshasa youth see a world in miniature; a world of adventure. They see different nationalities and want to imitate the latest fashions. They have their favourite stars whether pop-singers or dancers, and are always attracted by new ideas and doctrines.

The political revolution emphasizes authenticity; to be free to be truly Zairian; to be faithful to their own culture. Socially, young people are seeking their place in society and want their voice to be heard. In the religious sphere, young people are seeking and

asking questions. Youth wants to know, to discover, to live, to participate!

Can the young people do these things within the church today? How is the church seeking to help them? For, in truth, the young people are hungry and thirsty for spiritual things.

The personal touch

To seek to capture these young people for Christ, the church has placed chaplains, or pastors, in secondary schools to teach religion and to be available to help pupils and students with any problems they face. It was through this means that Pastor Banda found his vocation. The Rev. Ntemo who is now teaching in Kinshasa, was then at Mbanza Ngungu, and, in addition to his teaching, he always made time to contact the students personally. It was as a result of some of these conversations

that Pastor Bwanda was converted, baptized and later entered the ministry.

If I may give the example of my own work. I teach at the College Mpeti at Itaga in Kinshasa. I have a 24 hour per week programme teaching religion, history, geography and African sociology. But I also make time to get to know the students personally, and I conduct an inquirer's class. In 1972, eighteen students from this class were baptized, and in 1973, there were thirty baptized.

Ready to talk

Another means of seeking young people is by dialogue; always being ready to explain to young people the claim of

Christ and the need of the church. I used to work in the Rev. Wantwadi's office. He talked to me about the future of the church and the need for well trained pastors, and it was as a result of these conversations that I decided to become a pastor.

The church organizes from time to time, special services of thanksgiving. Sometimes it is to give thanks for former servants of the church who have died. As a result of hearing about the life and work of these people whom God has used, some are converted and ask for baptism.

We must also mention Sunday School which meets each week in the parishes before the

morning service. I have sought to help the teachers in the weekly preparation classes. It is difficult for them to get to one central place for an hour on a Friday, so in December 1973, we organized a day course, attended by 150 Kinshasa Sunday School teachers. In July 1974 we held a weekend retreat for the teachers and over ninety attended.

More to do

If the money were available we could realize many other projects such as Summer Schools, exchange visits among young people, scholarships for further study, and also the purchase of a vehicle and the erection of a youth centre in Kinshasa.

* * * * *

New B.M.S. Candidate Secretary appointed



The Rev. Mrs. A. W. (Nancy) Thomas has been appointed B.M.S. Candidate Secretary in succession to Miss F. A. Brook.

Mrs. Thomas began work at the Mission House on 2 January and looks forward to hearing from many who are considering service overseas. She writes of her own links with the B.M.S.

In 1951, my husband and I went out to Congo Belge, now Zaire, as teacher missionaries with the B.M.S. Our sense of calling had been separate, but our work was very much a unity as we taught all sorts and conditions of students at Yakusu, Yalikinga and Yalimba successively.

In 1961, my husband died and was buried at Yalimba. After a short period in England I returned to Yalimba and served as a teacher until 1964.

As Yalimba was no longer open to missionary work as

such, and for a variety of personal reasons it seemed that a change was indicated, God opened the door for me to take ministerial training at the Northern Baptist College, where both staff and students helped me enormously. There followed six and a half years of joyful work as the minister of Trinity Baptist Church, Bacup.

Now it seems that the calling of God is back to the B.M.S. to work as Candidate Secretary and once more I have to say, "He who has led, will lead."

* * * * *

Cover design by Arthur Pallett

Women are prepared to lead

by Mama Pastor
Ditina Diakubama

IN order to encourage and organize women's work, the C.B.F.Z. has created a sub-department of the Christian Education Office, entitled "Woman and Family Department". I have been elected secretary of the sub-department for the region of Kinshasa, and I am responsible for the preparation of the annual programme for all the C.B.F.Z. women's work in the city.

I am also expected to visit each of the fourteen parishes twice a year, if possible, to help the women in the application of this programme. Each parish has its own women's committee. The Land Rover, given by the women of Great Britain makes these visits possible, especially to the parishes away from the surfaced roads, often virtually unreachable except by Land Rover. The fantastic rise in the cost of insurance, and the necessary repairs and maintenance, make the running of the vehicle something of a problem.

Women visit the prison each month with gifts for the



A Communion Service at the Mama Erika Centre, Kinshasa.

(Photo: P. Gilbert)

prisoners, and are also concerned to care for those who are ill or very poor.

The main thrust of the programme conducted at the Women's Centre, *Mama Ekila*, constructed with the help of women in Britain, is in the training of the women's leaders through seminars. Different groups of women come for a day, two days, a week or a fortnight. They might be pastor's wives, lady deacons, teenage girls, or leaders from each parish. We are fortunate in being able to call upon a wide variety of people from the churches in Kinshasa, to help in conducting these seminars. The object always is to help those who participate to return to their parishes to put into practice their new knowledge. This was also the aim of a day seminar for Christian couples

on the meaning of Christian marriage.

The women have taken on themselves the burden of the payment of their regional secretary and the functioning of the regional office.

To enable the women to encourage and inform each other of their activities, there is a monthly regional committee attended by the women's president from each parish and the regional secretary. Both at these meetings and also in the weekly parish meetings, we base everything upon prayer, and we ask for your prayers and help too. Our work needs strengthening and there are many women in Kinshasa who do not know Jesus Christ. Thank you for all that you have done. May God bless us as we go forward in His service.

Lisala— the church that unites many

Born on the 10th June 1939 at Sumpi in the territory of San Salvador in Angola, the Rev. Lopes was called by God to be a pastor during the ministry of the Rev. C. Parsons. The San Salvador Church agreed to send him to the Bible Institute at Kalambata in September 1961. However, in March of that year the struggle for the liberation of Angola broke out and the Rev. Lopes was among the Angolans who fled as refugees to Zaire. He contacted the B.M.S. missionaries in Kinshasa and was sent to the Bible Institute at Kinkonzi. After four years there, he continued his theological studies at Kimpese and then moved with the College to Kinshasa where it became known as E.T.E.K. (Evangelical School of Theology of Kinshasa).

At graduation he was sent to Mbanza-Ngungu (formerly Thysville), where he was teacher of religion and chaplain at the Disengomoko College and also at the state secondary school, for two years. He was ordained on the 6th August 1972 and is now the Pastor responsible for the District of Lisala and in charge of the Parish of Lisala.

The Rev. Lopes writes

Lisala Church is situated where Lisala Avenue and Gambela Avenue meet in KasaVubu Zone in Kinshasa.

The church was founded in 1948 and is one of the largest Protestant parishes in Kinshasa. The members originate from different parts of the country, and thus from different tribes. They are scattered in fifteen different zones (boroughs, districts) of the capital. The membership, composed of young and old, stands at 5,981, but alas, it must be said that many of those who are



Rev. Lopes.

(Photo: D. Rumbol)

baptized fall away. The average monthly attendance at communion is between eight and nine hundred.



The Lisala Sunday School in session (left and below, right).

(Photo: D. Rumbol)

To care for such a membership we have the following committees:

The Deacon's Court, which is responsible for the whole life and direction of the parish. There are 62 deacons who meet at least once a month to discuss church affairs and to be aware of what is happening during the month.

The Pastoral Care Committee helps the pastor in his weekly meeting with people who have any sort of burden and who seek the help and advice of the church. This committee is composed of men and women deacons chosen by the pastor and approved by the church. Especially difficult problems are referred to the deacon's court.

The Fabric Committee has carpenters, masons, electricians, plumbers, painters and an artist as members. It deals, as its name implies, with all the practical maintenance of the parish.

The Death Committee has as its first task to spread the news of the death of one of the church members. Then the committee takes care of all the practical preparations for the interment, and the consolation of the bereaved family. The committee has bought two pressure lamps and other things which they need in their work.

The Women's Committee is responsible for the smooth running of all the women's activities,

and collaborates with the women's regional secretary for Kinshasa.

The Baptismal Committee must be aware of the life and conduct of each candidate for baptism. The members of the committee examine each candidate on his profession and knowledge of the faith. They will distribute the baptismal gowns, and should take a personal interest in the candidates as they enter the family of the church.

The Committee of Organization composed of both men and women is responsible for the organization of all the special services and ceremonies which take place in the parish.

There are also several other committees: drama, music, marriage, finance, men's and women's and mixed choirs and band.

Youth work is led by Mr. Matwasa, a deacon and businessman, who gives all of his free time to this work. He is the first to arrive at the church on Sundays, before 6 a.m., to welcome the children to Sunday School. And he is the last to leave after the day's services, about 6 p.m.

The young people formed a choir in 1969 with the aim of singing during Sunday School, but this choir has greatly developed its activities. Composed of Sunday School teachers, the choir often represents the church at official, religious and cultural ceremonies.

Unfortunately, there are insufficient buildings to cope with the Sunday School programme, and all the classes are held in the open air in the grounds behind the church. The teachers are hoping to obtain musical instruments, such as guitars and tambourines, but their means are limited as they are mostly still at school or college.

There are just two pastors responsible for the leadership and coordination of all this work, Pastor Lukombo and myself. We are always

ready to help pastors from other communities who come to us for advice. We are happy to think that we stand in a line of ministers who not only served faithfully here in this church, but have gone to different parishes or to administrative positions and greater responsibilities.

It is our joy, too, to recall over a dozen men and one woman who heard here God's call to the full time ministry. We continue to pray that God will help us to be faithful to Him as we serve Him in the fellowship of His people.

* * * * *

Laymen have helped the church grow

In a thesis on "Church Growth and the Communication of the Gospel in Kinshasa", Norman Riddle, an American missionary, made the following comments, in 1971, on the C.B.F.Z. parish of LISALA (formerly DENDALE).

"Lisala is the largest congregation in Kinshasa and a model of organization for urban ministries, with the exception of the failure to plant new congregations. (Growth has come to Lisala because it did not plant daughter congregations around it. But the building is not adequate to hold more than one-third of the membership in

any one service). The congregation first met in a disused army hut. In 1955 a large, modern sanctuary was constructed; the architecture adapted to the African setting.

Lisala congregation has been largely BaKongo in composition; there have always been other tribes represented but always in small numbers. However, the Lingala language is now used more than Kikongo in order to reach the non-Kikongo speaking people. One of the factors in the growth of this congregation is the development and involvement of the laity. This has contributed markedly to the congregation's growth in spiritual perspective and maturity of leadership. It has provided continuity of programme and purpose in spite of several pastoral changes."



Masina— the church that is still to grow

Not all of the C.B.F.Z. work in Kinshasa is on the same scale as Lisala. By contrast we can take a look at the Church at Masina.

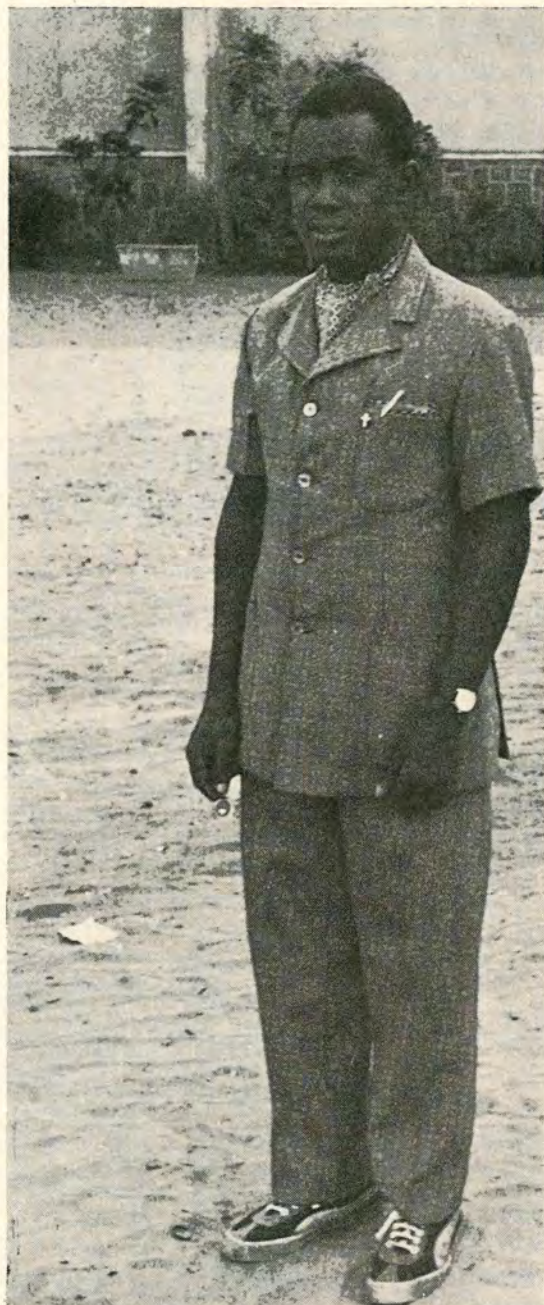
Driving past the 20th May Stadium, where the Foreman-Ali contest took place, you turn off the Lumumba Boulevard at the General Motors Factory. Then along a rough, sandy road into the Zone of Masina. A lot of houses have been demolished and the people moved to a still newer part of the city, to allow for the expansion of the factory, but there are still numerous streets branching off on both sides as you drive along; people everywhere and children playing in the sand; a bar, an open air cinema, a Roman Catholic church, and then the Protestant compound.

The sun reflects off the white sand; a newly constructed block of primary school classrooms stands at one side of the compound, and the nine by six yards church at the other. The church is hoping to build a manse as soon as they can afford it.

Pastor Fernandes writes:

I am your brother in Jesus Christ, **Pastor Eduardo Fernandes Ingles**. I was born on the 15th February 1941 in the small village of Ndulu-Madimba near San Sa'vador in Angola. I am married and have two children. Let me tell you first how the Holy Spirit has worked in my life.

I commenced my pastoral work in September 1970 when I graduated from Bible Institute on Kinkonzi in the Lower River Region in the



Rev. Eduardo Fernandes Ingles.

(Photo: D. Rumbol)

Republic of Zaire. Why did I become a servant of God? It was the work of the Holy Spirit. First, I had a burning desire to stand before

people and tell them about God whom they did not know and had not seen.

Second, when I fled from my own country of Angola, I had seen many preachers killed because the Portuguese saw them reading the Bible; they reasoned that those who were wanting Independence gained their wisdom from God's word. So when I thought about those preachers, I asked myself what I could do to serve God. And how could those preachers be replaced? The answer I received was that I should replace even one of them. I was 18 or 19 years old at the time. I read Jeremiah 1:5, and Joshua 1:7. I couldn't grieve the Holy Spirit, so I said: "Here I am; send me in God's service."

Faith and failures

Well, about the work here at Masina. When I came here in September 1972 there were 102 members. I visited from house to house throughout the whole district and began to see the church grow. By 1973 there were 160 members and by 1974, 200 members.

Our activities among the women are as follows: every Monday: Literacy class; Tuesday: prayer service; Thursday: sewing and housewifery; Friday: the women visit their friends who have just had babies, or those who are

ill, and will often collect water for them from the communal tap. The choir practice is on Saturday. My wife is women's secretary and also leads several of their activities.

The men are responsible for the general smooth running of the church, visiting the sick, leading services. Their prayer service is on Thursday, and on that day they also conduct the catechumen's class. On Saturdays I lead a Bible study group. From time to time we go out to visit those who have fallen away and do not come any more.

Let us not forget the youth work. Every Sunday, over 300 children attend Sunday School which is held before the morning service.

We praise God that some people on their conversion, come and throw their fetishes before us, trusting in them no longer but only in the Lord Jesus. Many are turning away from their sinful lives to trust in Christ. However, it is also true that some people have left our fellowship and returned to their godless ways.

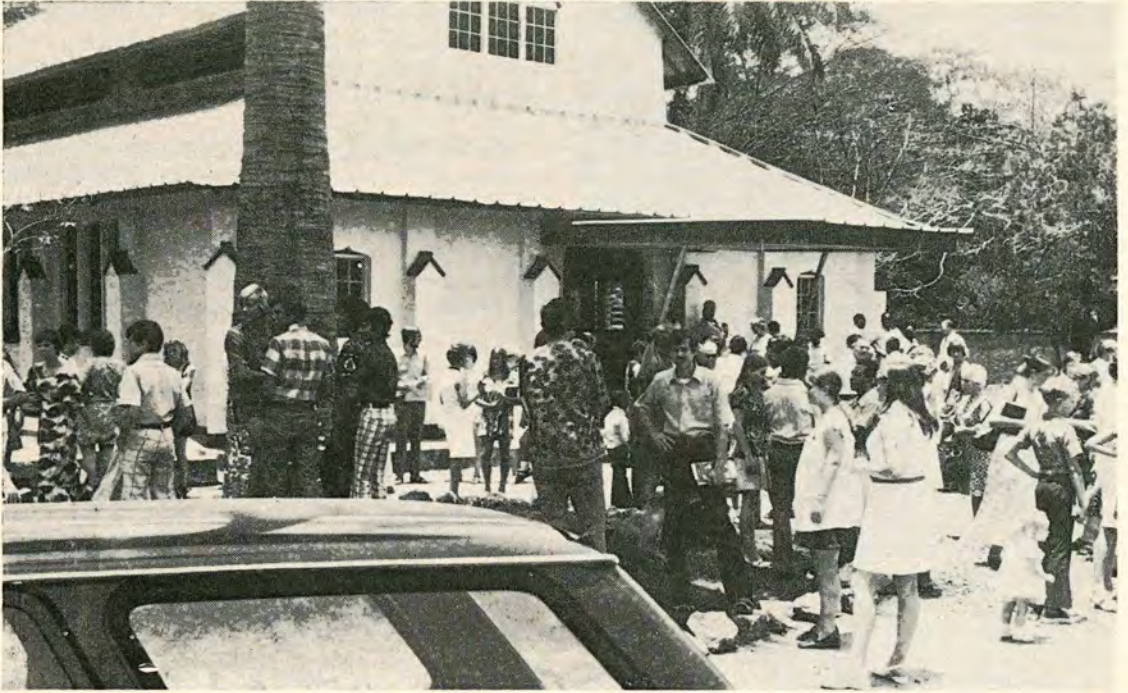
One of the big problems is that the members have not learnt how to give, and we suffer financially.

This is an outline of what the Holy Spirit is doing in the church at Masina. Thank you for your prayers for God's work here.

(Photo: D. Rumbol)



Group at Kinshasa (l. to r.). Rev. S. Koli and wife, Elizabeth Wainwright, Elizabeth Newman, Betty Cooke, Brenda Rumbol, Noreen and Gordon Cato, with children from the Hostel.



English speaking church at Kinshasa.

(Photo: D. Rumbol)

People with a motive strengthen the church

by Bernard McCulloch

I AM almost reluctant to tell you about our church, for two reasons. Many of you reading these words are associated with struggling, small or cramped fellowships, whereas ours is a broad, strong and varied, and I do not wish to glory except in the provision and goodness of our Lord. Also I ask myself what manner of people ought we to be, having seen and experienced so often something of his power.

You see, we are very privileged. Our church is largely made up of people who have come to Zaire with motivation to contribute and help through missions, commerce or government. You do not come to Zaire without a good reason. Although a few may come for holidays these days, most of the English speaking are professionals—teachers, pastors, medicals, missionaries and so on. That is one group. The other is teenage youth. There are many missionaries scattered

throughout Zaire, but only a few English schools, in fact only one American one with a complete secondary education. Therefore, a number of hostels have been set up in Kinshasa for these students, and our church is their spiritual home.

We enjoy our young people very much, and they are making a great contribution to Christian witness in this city. One of the most moving experiences I have had was when nearly a hundred of these young people ministered to us one Sunday recently, through singing and speaking "Come Together". This is a kind of pop music worship service, describing God's plan of salvation from creation to revelation, and calling upon his people to come together, celebrate, and minister to one another in the name of Jesus. They did not simply sing and play with guitars and drums, they showed what The Lord is doing among them through the retreats and Bible studies and projects organized for them by the church.

We have an outreach programme which is equally exciting. One tenth of our income is given away, and this enables us to support a

number of projects. For example we provide salaries for hospital and prison Zairian chaplains. I work at the Mama Yemo hospital which, with nearly two thousand beds provides more than half the medical care for Kinshasa, a city of about two million people.

Many of the expatriate staff are members of our Church and we support our four chaplains in various ways. We also provide a salary for the evangelist at Bolobo Hospital now that it comes under the same presidential medical programme. We make available a credit at a Christian bookshop upon which these men can draw pamphlets and Scriptures.

We contribute to the Evangelization Department, and are wondering how we can do more to integrate our group with the local African churches. Some bridges are being crossed at a bilingual praise meeting, in schools, at hospital and at the University. Americans, Canadians, Africans from English speaking countries and British make up the majority of the congregation, and each group has its special contribution and area of witness in the city.

Our pastor, Rev. Dan Ericson has just left for a one year furlough, but again the abundance; he is replaced by another, Rev. Glen Murray, plus a young evangelist Bob Stromberg who will take over the youth programme. We look forward to more riches. With our pastor's departure we lost our choir leader, his wife, but a new doctor

arrived last month who even has training in music direction so the work goes on. Last year "Elijah" was performed and provided an opportunity to invite a larger circle of friends. We even performed at Kimpese, about 150 miles away.

Our growing point at the moment is about Christian community. During the last few months in Bible studies and through the ministry of a visitor who has experience of these things, we have been feeling more the need to develop as a real community. We feel Christians have been called together to make up The Body, each individual contributing his gifts to the whole, so that the corporate life witnesses, and this is the glory.

We are experimenting in how to work it out. How far can we share our goods and our money? How can we minister to each other more through the gifts the Spirit brings? Can our worship become more an act of the gathered community and less of the few? How can we decentralize more into our homes, and really bear each others responsibilities so that none feels out of it, and none ever burdened?

I have not told you about the organization of our church or its buildings (built in 1916), or the constitution or our problem of identity, but I hope these few pictures of life in the English speaking church inform you, and encourage you, as you make real in your community the truths of the mystery of Christ's Body on earth.

Missionary Record

Arrivals

- 12 October. Mr. and Mrs. P. Riches and family from Yakusu, Zaire.
30 October. Rev. G. R. and Mrs. Lee and family from Kandy, Sri Lanka. Miss M. Smith from Yakusu, Zaire.
5 November. Mrs. K. Emery from Chandraghona, Bangladesh.

Departures

- 14 October. Rev. R. V. and Mrs. Emery and Miss M. Lacey for Chandraghona, Bangladesh.
15 October. Mr. and Mrs. G. I. Pitkethly and Simon for E.P.I., Kimpese, Zaire.
18 October. Rev. D. S. M. and Mrs. Gordon for Fifth Company, Trinidad.
22 October. Mr. and Mrs. D. J. Stockley for Rangunia, Bangladesh.
29 October. Miss R. Murley for Pimu, Zaire.
4 November. Miss J. Westlake for Chandraghona, Bangladesh.

Deaths

- 25 October. In Gorseinon, Wales, Mrs. Blanche Morgan (Member of General Committee).
26 October. At Chandraghona, Bangladesh, Rev. Ralph Vyvyan Emery, M.A., B.D., aged 66 (Bangladesh 1937-50; 1974).

Acknowledgements

The Secretaries acknowledge with grateful thanks the following legacies and gifts sent anonymously or without address.

(1st October, 1974 to 30th October, 1974)

General Work: Anon. £3.00; Anon. (Peggy) £5.00; Anon. £1.00; Anon. (Prove Me) £5.00; Anon. £1.00; Anon. £2.00; Anon. (L.B.A.) £5.00; Anon. (Brian) £4.00; Anon. £100.00; Anon. £0.20; Anon. (A Sympathiser) £5.00; Anon. £1.00; Anon. (Kendal) £20.00.
Medical Work: Anon. £2.50; Anon. (R.H.E.R.) £2.50; Anon. (W.P.C.) £10.50.
Women's Project: Anon. £2.00.
Agricultural Work: Anon. (Grateful Believer) £5.00; Anon. £1.00.
Relief Work: Anon. £1.00; Anon. £5.00; Anon. £1.00; Anon. £5.00; Anon. (E.S.) £5.00; Anon. (Reekie) £10.00; Anon. (R.H.E.R.) £2.50; Anon. £3.00; Anon. £1.00, (I.B.J.) Anon. £50.00 for Calcutta Urban Service.

LEGACIES

	£
Mrs. J. E. Arkinstall	100.00
Mr. H. R. Baldwin	60.27
Miss I. M. Beresford	255.89
Miss K. G. Booth	50.00
Rev. E. Foley	187.44
Miss M. R. Fox	100.00
A. L. Harris	25.00
Mr. T. H. Harris	1,000.00

Nominations

Nominations
for the
Baptist Missionary Society
General Committee
should be received in the
Mission House by
15 January, 1974

Nominations should be sent to:

Rev. A. S. Clement,
B.M.S.,
93 Gloucester Place,
London, W1H 4AA.

The gospel of Christ in a Buddhist world

by Eric Sutton Smith

B.M.S. missionary in China 1939-1951 and in Sri Lanka from 1959.

THERE are at least four races living side by side on the island of Sri Lanka. There are Tamil people who are Hindus, ancient Arab settlers who are Muslims, and the descendants of the Dutch (called Burghers) who are Christians. But the majority of the population are Sinhalese and they are Buddhists.

Most of them are nominal Buddhists to whom their faith does not mean very much. They insist that they really are Buddhists; they "go through the motions" as a matter of course, but it does not affect their daily life and thought very much.

Then there are the devout "seeking" Buddhists for whom the truth in their faith is a very real thing. I call them "seekers", because they have open minds and are always trying to understand more deeply the truth behind their faith. In my own experience it is these devout "seeking" Buddhist friends who are most open to the message of the Gospel.

Our commission from Jesus is to share the good news of His saving work with them. Our zeal to do this is something which they do not always appreciate, for their own faith is also a religion of redemption. They need to be convinced that redemption in Jesus Christ is the true answer to their inner need. Invariably, I have found, the first question they ask is:—If there is a good God why does He allow all this misery and evil?

They do not believe in any god. So you must answer this question as honestly as you can, as a Christian. Remember that to them all suffering is evil. There are a number of answers to this question in the Old Testament. They are all true as far as they go. But the supreme answer is in the New Testament—suffering is not always evil, in fact God Himself has suffered.



Roadside Buddhist shrines are a reminder of the faith of the majority of those who live in Sri Lanka.

(Photo: B. W. Amey)

In my experience this answer always astonishes them. "How can suffering be anything but evil?" they ask. Patiently we have to answer that we all suffer for those whom we love, and surely that is a noble thing. Supremely in the life of Jesus, God suffered for us—to save us. Suffering is hideous and tragic, yes. But it need not be, God has suffered to save us all. The real problem for man is not suffering but sin.

They do not find it easy to understand this. They will reply that they are not sinners. By that they mean that they are not very wicked. Probably not, but in this world good and bad alike are all sinners. It is not easy to make them see that the deadly thing for us is the mind turned away from God. But if they do see it they naturally ask, "If sin is my real problem:— "How can I save myself?"

Our answer is, "You can't save yourself". In the teaching of the Buddha it is possible for man

to save himself by a long personal discipline to rid himself of desire. Desire is the cause of all suffering and of all evil to them. As long as you remain a person you will always desire things and add to the world's suffering.

If you could rid yourself of desire you would cease to be a person and become part of The Truth. This is a state which they call Nirvanah. If you attain it, you cease to exist, only The Truth remains. And when will that be? For most of them never.

This path of discipline is too hard for them in one lifetime. They will be reborn into this world, again and again, as other persons. Each time their attempt at self discipline may fail, and they will never attain Nirvanah. But whether they do or not, their only hope is to try and save themselves.

We often say to them, "We do not bring you a new religion, you already have a good religion, you do not need another one. What we do bring you is a Living Saviour. You cannot save yourself from the deadly power that sin has over you. But Jesus Christ died to cleanse your guilty conscience, if you will let Him do so. And He now lives to help you. Salvation is not a "do-it-yourself" process. You must work out your own salvation, that is true, but He is also at work within you to help you each time you are forgiven". It is a joy to see the relief come on their faces when they realize this. You begin to see that it is not your own persuasion that is making this change in them but the joyful power of God's good news.

Death?

But since rebirth into this world is rooted in their minds, they naturally ask us:—What will happen to me when I die? They believe that when they die they cease to exist. Later they may be reborn into this world, but it will be as someone else with a completely new personality. They will never know what they were in their previous life. So when your father dies, you are saying "good-bye" to the man you loved. You will never meet him again. Their funerals are tragic affairs.

How different is the Christian funeral where we sing, and speak of the "sure and certain hope of the resurrection to everlasting life". We have

to tell them that in Jesus Christ there is no rebirth back into this world. Nor do you cease to exist and become "merged into the Truth". Instead you are "with the Lord", as a living person. And He will present you faultless before the presence of God's glory with exceeding joy. You need never say good-bye to any whom you love who are in Jesus Christ. They remain the people you knew and loved, but free from sin and "complete in Christ".

This warm personal aspect of Christ's Gospel makes an appeal to them in contrast to the seemingly cold impersonal picture of the hereafter in their faith. A few well chosen words of the Gospel message at a Christian graveside never fails to move Buddhist mourners who are present.

Joy!

Christians with their everlasting hope sing hymns at the graveside despite their deep sense of loss. Buddhist friends are always puzzled by this and often ask:—What have you got to sing about?

Our answer is "Everything. We have everything to sing about". People of other faiths chant, but Christians sing whenever they worship. There is a great difference between the two. Christian praise always has that deep note of joy; solemn joy at a funeral of course, but joy nonetheless.

Christ died for our sin, He now lives to help us, and neither life nor death can separate us from our living Saviour and his love. That is why we sing. Our Buddhist friends are struck by this. Whatever tragedy comes to us we have this capacity to rejoice. It is a joy which the world cannot give—and the world cannot take away.

In presenting this good news to them you need to be very patient. They are loth to move-on from the faith that belongs to their race. On the other hand the joy and the life which they see in a born-again Christian is something they wistfully long for. On the day of their baptism it is a joy to see them enter this new life in Christ.

You are trying to present life in Christ to the people of Britain. Please pray for us who are trying to present life in Christ to a Buddhist world.

COMMUNION SERVICE

INDIVIDUAL COMMUNION
CUP TRAYS & ACCESSORIES

Please write for illustrated list and literature

A. EDWARD JONES LTD.

CHURCH SILVERSMITHS

&

CRAFTSMEN IN METAL

(Incorporating Townshends Ltd.)

The originators of the individual Communion Cup
in Great Britain

Dept. M.H. St. Dunstan Works

Pemberton Street, Warstone Lane

Birmingham B18 6NY

Established 1902

Telephone 021-236 3762

DON'T FORGET 'JERUSALEM'!

Fred's in Barnsley. David's in Guildford.

Sheila's in Canterbury. Lois is in London.

They're all missionaries. *In 'Jerusalem'*

Mission matters at home and abroad.

See what God is doing in your own country

... through the

BAPTIST TIMES

Only 6p

Every Thursday

Get your newsagent to deliver it

For BOOKS

On Baptist history and principles

Denominational booklets

Dedication and baptismal cards

Church membership certificates

Write for full list to:

BAPTIST PUBLICATIONS

4 Southampton Row,

London, WC1B 4AB

The content of this magazine is © BMS World Mission.

This magazine is digitised by the John Smyth Library of the International Baptist Theological Study Centre Amsterdam (IBTS Centre). BMS World Mission has authorised IBTS Centre to make this file available in open access for research purposes.

Unauthorised reproduction is not allowed. Permission to publish (parts of) the content of this magazine elsewhere must be obtained in written from:

BMS World Mission
PO Box 49, 129 Broadway
Didcot, Oxfordshire
United Kingdom
OX11 8XA

01235 517700

info@bmsworldmission.org