

SHARING THE VISION

OF CHILD EVANGELISM FELLOWSHIP OF BRITAIN

2020 SUMMER

Opportunities in Challenging Times

You don't need reminding we're living in challenging times. The economy is in free-fall, the national debt is skyrocketing, unemployment is soaring. People are anxious about the future, their jobs, their income, and their health and that of their loved ones. At times like this we wish we could find some safe haven until the crisis is over. Christians also experience fear and anxiety. A favourite text for sermons recently is Psalm 46 which reassures us that even through terrifying circumstances we can be certain of God's sovereignty and his unflinching care for his people.

Romans 8:28 reminds us that God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love him and who are called according to his purpose. The 'all things' is all inclusive, without exception, good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant, evil and beneficial. The bible portrays God as someone who especially delights in bringing good out of evil. He turns deserts into pools of water, barren heights into lush meadows, waste places into the garden of the Lord. To his grieving people he gives 'beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness' (Isa. 61:3). Therefore we can certainly expect that the

Lord has good plans for us even during this global crisis.

It certainly seemed to everyone that Paul's missionary career was over. Locked up in a dark prison in Rome surrounded by armed guards, no longer able to preach the Gospel in new places. But, not a bit of it. He wrote to his friends in Philippi, 'I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much

more bold to speak the word without fear' (Phil. 1:12-14). Instead of going to the lost, they were coming to him. His guards were changed several times a day and many were converted to Christ. They were from Caesar's Praetorian guard and they then shared the Gospel with Caesar's family and servants. Later Paul says, 'All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household' (Phil. 4:22).

We don't have to look far for Gospel opportunities today. Children are getting bored, missing friends and school, desperate for something to occupy their time. Many are asking questions and looking to Christians for answers. Churches who live stream their services have many more watching than would normally attend a worship service. Children are more open to the Gospel now than for a long time. But how do we reach them? We have examples of folks using social media and the internet in innovative ways. What about a lockdown bible club or an online bible quiz? Some are writing letters to children they're no longer able to meet.

What if we can't see any opportunities? We can always pray. Remember when Hagar was desperate? She couldn't bear to watch her darling son die of thirst in the blazing desert heat. Then the Lord heard Ishmael's cries and opened Hagar's eyes to see a spring of water! (Gen. 21:17-19). Remember Elisha's servant who thought he was staring annihilation in the face as the Syrian army surrounded them? Then Elisha prayed and the Lord opened the young man's eyes to see the vastly superior forces of God protecting them. So too, may the Lord open our eyes to see wonderful opportunities he's provided at this time for us to reach children with the good news of Jesus Christ.

STUART OWEN



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CHILD EVANGELISM FELLOWSHIP OF BRITAIN

A MISSION WITH GOD'S VISION FOR CHILDREN

www.cefbritain.org

Memories of Christine

■ I first met Christine in 1971 (Nearly 50 years ago!) when, as a family, we moved to Chingford and started attending the same church as her – South Chingford Congregational church.

Over the next few years, I had some involvement with the work of CEF – helping with a local Good News Club and also with 5-Day Clubs in my summer holidays from university. I remember going for a week's training to Redcliffe Missionary College and particularly enjoying the sessions led by Christine on sharing the gospel and how to lead a club. She was a very inspiring teacher.

Christine was very kind to us as a young people's group at the church. We often went to her house after playing tennis – once after she had just celebrated her 50th birthday!

On Easter Sunday there was always a sunrise service in Epping Forest and after it we all went round to Christine's for breakfast of hot cross buns and other delights! She was very hospitable to the youngsters in the church.

I remember on one occasion we were at a loss to know what to do one evening (it may have been a Bank Holiday Monday). Christine suggested a dinner party at her house! So, we all went home and dressed in our best and returned to her house where she served us a lovely dinner!

I kept in touch with her over the years, mainly through my parents and their ongoing involvement with the work of CEF.



More recently, I used to visit her at home twice a year – once after Christmas and once during Wimbledon fortnight. On the latter occasion, we would eat strawberries and cream as we watched the tennis together. She was always very good company.

Christine was always keen to hear family news and each of our meetings ended with us 'doing a Woodbridge' as she called it. She fondly remembered that my dad, whenever he and my mum had visitors, would always 'have a word of prayer' before the visitors left. She too had this practice and described it as 'doing a Woodbridge' – something which touched my heart.

It was very hard to see her slow physical deterioration in the past few years but her faith and love for the Lord remained strong as did her desire to see her family and neighbours come to know the Lord. On the occasion of her 90th birthday, I think she had several celebrations. I went to one which was a really lovely time. Some of Christine's family were there and she took the opportunity to give a 'speech' in which she shared her testimony and spoke of the Lord's grace and goodness to her over the years.

The last 2 occasions I saw her were when she was in hospital and then in the nursing home. When I heard that the Lord had taken her home to heaven, I felt sad for those of us who loved her and enjoyed spending time with her and will miss seeing her, but joyful for her as she entered the presence of the Lord she had loved and served for many years.

CARYS WOODBRIDGE,
Deaconess East London Baptist Tabernacle

■ I first met Christine in 1971 when I worked with her as a summer missionary for 6 weeks during a vacation from Bible College. A year later I joined her as a trainee. We lived and worked together for the next 12 months and then I worked with her for a further 6 months before moving to Tyneside to start a new work.

My memories of Christine are mostly of laughter. She had a wonderful sense of humour. She was an amazing teacher and a very hard worker with a deep love for the Lord. She had a great relationship with both prayer partners good news club teachers and children and was much loved by all. We will miss her.

RENA CLARKE,
Former CEF Missionary in Tyneside

■ My first memory of Christine Chester goes way back to my Bible College days in 1964. The students, including myself were gathered together in the main hall to be introduced to a full-time missionary called Christine Chester. This lady helped to form the ministry and work of Child Evangelism Fellowship in London.

As a young Christian at that time I had never heard of CEF. Christine gave a very challenging message about her ministry, and I remember her asking the students to pray, and consider giving some of their time during the summer, to reaching children with the gospel. I responded to Christine's plea to serve God in London.



Before the outreach commenced, Christine gave the volunteers one week of training in her kitchen at home! For me this was essential as I had very little experience in children's ministry. I remember sitting in my little bedroom at 14 Victoria Road, Chingford, making memory verses, cutting out flannelgraph and printing out songs, all in preparation for our ministry with the boys and girls. We all had a firm grounding which came from Christine's many years of experience working in London. I have wonderful special memories of Bible readings and prayer times in Christine's lounge, before venturing out to start the day with the children. Her vision was also to see more full-time missionaries reaching out to the children who had no hope, and were without God in that vast city of London.

Christine had a great passion and burden to see children turning to the Lord Jesus and accepting him as their personal saviour. I believe God used Christine to direct my life towards a ministry with CEF. She encouraged me to attend the very first three-month missionary training course in September 1973 at Kilchzimmer, Switzerland.

Christine's influence and commitment really had a tremendous impact on my life. She was instrumental in giving me a good solid foundation for my future service for the Lord. Looking back, God blessed me and directed me through her ministry and witness - I think her reward will be great in heaven.

MARGARET HINDMARCH,
Former CEF Missionary in Argentina

Christine Chester

■ We praise the Lord for Christine's example in her love for the Lord and her commitment to taking the Gospel to children. She was a great intercessor for the work, even after her retirement.

Our family benefitted from Christine's hospitality on our journeys back to N.Ireland for deputation. We remember toasting crumpets over an open fire in her living room. Her home in Chingford was a "haven" for many.

I taught with Christine at the first Summer Ministries Training Course of CEF Britain in July 1974 at Redcliffe College in West London. Her teaching gift, as well as her personal relationships with the students, made her an ideal leader for the course and the 5-Day Clubs which they taught.

During our regular "Bible School tour" of Britain, we used Christine's home as a base for the London area. What a blessing to have Christine praying for each of the schools visited!

Our son, Paul, needed somewhere to live while he was studying Apologetics at Oak Hill. Christine was willing to have him stay in her home. Paul told us: "I have wonderful memories of our fun times, prayer times and sharing together. She loved her garden and often talked about the perfect Gardener, our Heavenly Father, who cares even for the sparrows. I remember her singing How firm a foundation on her "second birthday" (new birth).

Christine was a faithful servant of the Lord. Now He has called her to higher service: "His servants shall serve Him" (Rev. 22:3). May the Lord enable others to pick up the torch and take the Gospel to boys and girls in Britain, as she did!

ROY AND RUTH HARRISON

Former CEF Regional
Directors for Europe



■ I was one of Christine's earlier Trainees, though I'd met her briefly in my last year in Bible College when once a week she taught Child Evangelism classes. It was actually February 1967, I became her Trainee, after arriving back after Children's Ministries Institute in America, to do my Internship year with Christine. After a short period living with her in Victoria Road learning how to organise and run a CEF office and ministry, I moved to live with former Bible College friends in Islington to help develop the North London end of Christine's patch.

The highlights then, were the prayer and planning meetings we had each Monday morning alternating between our two locations. These, together with her attention to detailed planning and prayer for each activity, no matter whether a Good News Club, Teacher Training Class, Local Committee Mtg. or visit to a Church, supporter or Prayer Group were a fantastic foundation. I left early 1968, to complete final training in my Church before leaving in July, to serve in CEF Hong Kong. It was then I learned another side to Christine as a dear fun-loving friend and prayer partner.

This, through holidays, Children's Missionary Discoverer's or Camp when on furlough. One such holiday, by car through her Malvern Hills, another, with two other CEFer's, on a Canal boat! Best, was the month she spent with me in Hong Kong in 1975 when I'd just passed my driving license and been given a very old Ford Cortina GT! It was then, Christine said, her hair turned white! I count Christine as being not only my mentor, dear friend and fellow worker but an inspiration and challenge to live for God, like her, with an open heart, hand and home, sharing Him to all.

JOAN STAPLETON.

Retired CEF Missionary in Hong
Kong and Pacific region



Ruth and three of our children with Christine

■ As a family, we remember Christine for her love and knowledge of London, her gardening, baking, hospitality and tennis. Our, now adult children still remember the warmth of her welcomes, and the unique character of her house and intriguing memorabilia there.

As a colleague, I remember her organisational skills, generosity and attention to detail. She was energetic and worked very hard as a missionary, but was careful to take time out to rest and insist trainees did the same. The teacher training aspect of CEF was something she valued and worked toward. She was careful to maintain contact with and pray on for former colleagues.

One of my memories of coming to NE London was her strong emphasis on a good foundation of prayer for the Lord's work among the boys and girls. Looking back I see now more and more how crucial is this for a work to last.

Our family remain so thankful for all her prayers for us over the many years.

BERYL OWEN

trained and worked with Christine in London

Unprecedented Times!

How many times in the past months have you read or heard the word *unprecedented*?

"These are *unprecedented* times we're living in."

"We've taken *unprecedented* measures to stop the spread of this virus."

"Businesses are facing *unprecedented* economic challenges in the wake of lockdown."

Yet in the midst of the unprecedented challenges, the ministry of Child Evangelism Fellowship in many countries across Europe and around the world has seen unprecedented blessing from the Lord, as online ministry has reached into the homes of children in a way it never has before.

The ministry of CEF Ireland is one of the many that have adapted and changed to meet the needs of children, families, and churches in our current climate and culture. Just as lockdown was beginning, CEF workers across Ireland were preparing for Easter party clubs—one-off meetings to share the true meaning of Easter with boys and girls. Once lockdown was put in place, a quick pivot was made to create one large, online Easter party club. With this change, the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection was proclaimed in over 2,000 homes across Ireland and beyond!

<https://athome.cefireland.com/> was another ministry CEF Ireland began in an effort to provide valuable resources to children, families, and churches as they adjusted to life entirely at home. Over 40 resources were compiled on this one site that was visited over 22,000 times. One child communicated with CEF Ireland that he came to faith through these online resources, but the Lord is surely

using <https://athome.cefireland.com/> to plant the seeds of the Gospel in many children's lives.

As this article is being written, CEF workers across Ireland are preparing for around 25 online camps, each using a combination of YouTube videos, Zoom meetings, and downloadable activities to reach children with the Good News of Jesus.

Another ministry that has grown during the lockdown is the ministry of CEF Greece. Though disappointed with the cancellation of many weekly clubs, an all-day children's conference, and their Teaching Children Effectively Level 1 course, Magda and Stefanos, the National Directors of CEF Greece, knew that ministry had to continue. For years, they had used puppet skits to introduce lessons and teach various truths to children during face-to-face clubs. They had always wanted to record these puppet skits, but didn't have time with such a busy ministry schedule. The lockdown provided a perfect opportunity to create these recorded skits; they would record, edit, and upload three or four every week!

Magda and Stefanos recorded more than puppet skits; they started recording Bible lessons and missionary stories, uploading them all to their CEF Greece website for children and families to access. God blessed their efforts, each video reaching into the homes of 300-400 children.

Beyond recording and uploading

videos, Magda, Stefanos, and their team began live meetings with children via Zoom. Each Sunday at noon, they would put on an online Sunday school, where children across Greece and all the way to Cyprus were able to hear the Gospel! The online Sunday school led to an online 2-hour Children's Conference, which led to an online Holiday Bible Club, themed "Around the World in 5 Days." From the safety of their own homes, children were able to "fly" around the world with "CEF Airlines," learning memory verses, hearing Bible lessons, and meeting Greek missionaries living abroad. Even children in Gypsy camps with no access to internet were able to join the virtual Holiday Bible Club, with CEF workers travelling to them and setting up a computer with internet access. An orphanage with around 70 children tuned in each day for the HBC as well—children who may not have been able to attend a traditional Holiday Bible Club.

Though many churches are closed and in-person meetings are cancelled, God's Word is still spreading to children across Europe and around the world. Please pray for God's continued blessing with these online clubs and children's events. May we see an unprecedented work of the Lord in these *unprecedented* days!

LYDIA HARDESTY



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"Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

Matt. 18 v 14

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