

“Revolution” sponsored bike ride – so what?

So here I am, back safe and sound! After 13 days cycling around the country; after over 60 hours actually on a bicycle saddle; after some 702 miles covered on a combination of all sorts of roads, forest tracks and canal towpaths; after some 35,000 feet climbed (yes, that is higher than Everest!); after passing through all types of weather, from cold and wet through snow to hot and sunny; the Church Mission Society’s “Revolution” cycle tour rolled into the King’s Centre in Oxford on Saturday 22 May for an incredibly moving welcome and a huge service of “Celebration” to mark the amalgamation of SAMS and CMS into the new CMS. After the balloons, after the dancing,



after the uplifting worship singing by over 500 people, after the fantastic preaching by Archbishop John Sentamu and after some emotional prayers by church leaders from all over the world, after all that effort, so what?

Well, it is true that the team have all realised some personal goals. I never believed I could cycle so far and actually enjoy it! I never believed I could climb Snake Pass in the Pennines near Manchester and even engage in a little tussle for getting to the top first (a bit macho that – sorry about the video on the blog!). I have proved the doctors absolutely right that cycling is good exercise for a damaged knee. In the process my back is much stronger too, no pain or spasms, praise God. Certainly, I am much fitter than before, perhaps even fitter than I ever was, even when running marathons. Thanks to all of you who have supported me in this, especially by praying.

Much more, though, as a team, we have raised awareness of CMS and of mission both here in the UK and abroad as we visited 13 different churches around the country. We were a core group of seven, but we were accompanied by others on some legs of our journey, including at least two bishops and a bear! Between us, we have raised thousands of pounds for CMS’ work; personally I have raised more than £1500 before Gift Aid. People’s generosity has been amazing: thank you all so much.



But think on this too! A bunch of seven disparate strangers who would probably never have chosen each other as companions has come together as a group, no, as a team, as a community even. They have shared, worked, sweated, laughed and prayed together to achieve what might not have been possible alone. In that, there is an allegory for the coming together of SAMS and CMS as God puts together to achieve what man might not have.....? The new CMS has been launched and blessed, a force for God for good in all parts of our planet. Thank you Lord.

What were the high points and the low points? Well believe me or not, arriving back in Bucks was probably the low point; not because it was almost over. No, here we really do seem to have the worst roads in the country, and the worst drivers too! Not even in two days in London were we hooted, abused and nearly mown down by speeding vans! Do some of us in this county need to re-examine our stress-filled lives a little?

The high points? There are too many to mention, but they must be about people really. Wherever we went, we met Christians who were exceptionally generous in welcoming, feeding, housing and washing for complete strangers. By such hospitality and generosity we were truly blessed. Then again, it was great to meet friends and family, some unexpected, in some of the church services each evening.



We heard of amazing witness abroad, not only in Africa and in Asia, but in Latin America too. But the most amazing thing about the tour has been hearing what God is doing in communities through churches here in the UK. In the depressed area of Hull, we heard how alcoholics and drug addicts are finding friends and a loving community at a local church. (One such person is now on the church PCC and taking part on a school twinning programme in Sierra Leone as I write. He cycled with us on day one too!) In York we heard about a "hut" which has been filled with Wiis and PlayStations so that local teenagers have a safe place to hang out in. In Manchester, we heard about run-down streets rediscovering their sense of pride and community through street parties, hanging baskets and a mission partner sent from Kibera slum in Nairobi! In Sheffield, a charity shop is being used as a blessing to the local community, not only recycling clothes and furniture but giving an opportunity

to “chat the gospel”. In Birmingham, we saw how ethnic Sikh Christians were reaching out and providing care and help to the Muslim community. In well-heeled Winchester, we heard how a team returned from a short-term mission to children in Africa, flushed with the success of what had been achieved in the lives of 2,000 children, only to be challenged by a retired mission partner, “Now touch the lives of 2,000 children in Winchester!” That church now has a superb children’s and youth work team which takes assemblies once a month into 18 schools in the city. In Guildford, we saw the church opening its doors to the homeless and deprived..... Just some examples of what churches are getting up to. Doomsayers and statistics may tell you the church is dying. On the evidence of two weeks there is plenty of life in it yet!

Thank you all so much for your love and support for this venture. Thank you so much for your sponsorship. I have been really blessed by the support I have received and I am truly grateful. Thank you, all you very special people.

(If you want to enjoy our blog, visit <http://mission.typepad.com/day50cycletour/> while it is still there!)

