

THE HARLESDEN CIRCUIT



TWO ADVENTURES

Kofi Baah is an Accountant from the Central Region of Ghana. In this story he describes vividly the move to a new country, a new church culture, and the challenges he faced.

At last, I had my visa to come to the UK to pursue a professional career. At the same time it was fascinating to come close to the place where the Boys Brigade started. I had grown up in a little town in Ghana and at my local church had, become a member of the Boys Brigade from the age of 6, rising through the ranks to Officer 1.

As the years went by I established a Boys Brigade company at another location. When the time came for me to leave my little hometown and travel to the UK, I was thrilled, filled with awe. I told members that I would link them with the UK Brigade and my ambition was to engage with and learn from the UK Brigade. I had dreams of playing the drums and marching along the streets of London as part of a church parade!

In my first year in London I tried to contact officers by attending various church services looking for Boys Brigade, but it was not the same. What I had learnt, believed and upheld in my child hood about Boys Brigade was completely different to what I experienced here in London. What a disappointment, I thought to myself. Why is it that we do not have Brigades as well as youth organizations in our churches? Surely this is an indication of a decline of church life.

Despite my disappointment, I told myself that “I can do something”. I can use the talent obtained through early years in Sunday School, Bible Class, Boys Brigade, to train other children.

Now as a Sunday school teacher at the Harlesden Methodist Church, I am enjoying the time I spend with young people. My hope is that some day sometime, somewhere, some how, some way, through my teachings the little ones I lead will become the next generation to form and lead a Boys Brigade club at our church.

QUESTIONS:

- Kofi’s hopes were disappointed. What other sorts of hopes and experiences do people bring to our churches? How can church members of longer standing help and support them? How would you explain the decline of church life?
- What hopes and dreams have you had for the church? How many of them have been disappointed? How have you coped?
- What can we learn from Kofi’s response about handling such disappointments? What other responses are you aware of that have resulted from such disappointments? What can we in our churches do practically to help people come to terms with the shock of the differences?

The second story is told by 13 years old Jamilla Joseph about a thrilling but equally daunting, very personal challenge.

'One of the best experiences I have had as a young person in my church life at Harlesden Methodist was when I went to a Sunday school trip to Wales.

The reason why I have chosen to tell this story is because it reflects on how I have shown courage and how I have been able to put trust in God when faced with a big challenge.

I had not been away from home for quite a long time but I knew going on this trip would bring forth some challenges although I did not know what they were going to be. In the first week one of my task included Bunji Jumping and rock climbing. I had always been afraid of heights but the day had come for me to face my fears. I knew that some how I would conquer my fear. I trusted God and had faith in him and knew I could overcome this fear if I tried. So when the time came for me to jump. I jumped. As I did I felt a calming feeling come over me and I was no longer afraid. I also felt this when rock climbing. As I reached to top of the rock I felt overwhelmed with a feeling of joy and happiness. This has helped me to put God first in all I do. Including the good times and the most challenging'

QUESTIONS:

One of the marvelous things about Jamilla's story is her open honesty about her feelings. As we get older we get used to hiding these feelings, not always for good reasons. Perhaps her example can help us value our achievements a bit more and enjoy them more as well!

- Are there times that you are comfortable to talk about when you had to face your fears? What were they? How did you cope?
- What times of achievements that you are comfortable to talk gave you the sort of feeling of happiness that Jamilla describes? How important have they been in building up your faith?
- What might we learn from this story, and Kofi's above, about our work with children and young people?

Bible Study: Kofi chose as the passage **Proverbs 30:7 – 8**. The two verses make a very practical prayer for life, as the passage continues into verse 9 we get an understanding of the reasons behind the prayer.

QUESTIONS:

- How would you summarise the attitudes or actions that this prayer asks to be delivered from? In your experience how much damage can such behaviour do to human life...and in what ways?
- How far would you be happy to make the prayer your own? Are there things you would like to add to it? Or to take away?
- What does verse 9 suggest has led people to neglect their faith? What other reasons in your experience might people turn from the Lord or 'profane the name of my God'?
- ... and thinking of Jamilla, does her story bring any particular Bible passage to mind?