**AN ACCOUNT OF THE TWO RIVERS MISSION – 3rd to 18th May 2014**

**A Biblical approach**

The superb expositions of the Fifth ‘Gospel’ – the prophecy of Isaiah by John Hibberd – sets the scene for this much prayed for mission. The reading is Isaiah 35 and at the conclusion of it John asks ***Can a desert burst suddenly into bloom?*** and he replies, “Yes it can. Thirty years ago, I went camel trekking in the Thar desert in India (as you would if you were him!), hoping to see its barren beauty. But it had rained for the first time in five years in the preceding week, and there were therefore so many areas of unbelievable greenery”.

“This passage is not limited to the physical world; it can be read at many levels, including the new life that God can bring to a barren soul…” And this is how I have read it, John, for The Two Rivers Mission– the Colne and the Stour.

**Mission Centres, Churches and Teams**

Along both rivers there were sixteen mission centres, embracing forty-six churches, which were served by 155 team members, some of whom served for both weeks. These are typical remarks made about the team members by the churches. “Loving, friendly, well led…We had a great week with the TFM team…the TFM team were a great joy and only too keen to serve, and very grateful for everything we did”. I might add that although they were mainly old boys and girls, there were a few youngsters among them! Thank you and well done to you all.

**The door-to-door work and the responses**

As you know, door-to-door work with the Personal Beliefs Survey is the bread and butter work for the teams. Although I do not have the figures in from all the churches, here are some sample. “Over 100 houses were visited on the estate and, as a result, 430 people turned up at our Fun Day in perfect weather!”. “151 completed the surveys in our village, and of these six individuals were led to pray, five of them for the first time”. “Nearly 900 homes were knocked on, a good number of follow-ups were requested, and ten people became Christians from door-to-door”. As we know, most church members are reticent about doing this at first but once they get involved with us they discover the joy and the fruit.

**Some of the Highlights**

*Along the Stour*

It was excellent to share the leadership of the mission with John, with him taking responsibility for the Stour. I gather that in Sudbury he accepted the role of “Grill the Vicar” in a pub populated by avowed atheists. They continued grilling him until past closing time, and concluded that they must do this again – as long as a “grilling” substitute can be found! Roger was able to join John for the last four days of the mission, and they worked him hard: five events in and around Hadleigh beginning with “What do you think over a drink?” for men only at The George Pub. The responses amounted to 25. He then moved onto the Manningtree area for a Hog Roast, not to be grilled, but to preach! - again 25 responses, and for all this we give thanks and praise to our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Along the Colne*

To be in partnership, again, with Dan for the mission along the Colne was an enormous joy. We had started out together in 1895 – sorry, 1985! – and here we were again for the finale 29 years later. The highlights for Dan were his Nights, or Mornings, or Afternoons of Colour – six, his Healing Services - four, and his United Services –three. At all these events people responded to the beautiful Gospel of our Lord Jesus in their droves, coming to be saved and healed. As always, I continued to love to see this happening. Then my personal preaching highlights were Hot Potatoes – full houses of 50 people wherever they were held in *The Bull* at Halstead, *Ye Olde Swan* at Brightlingsea, and in the appropriately named *Slug and Lettuce* – as a side salad! - in Colchester. We were also thrilled to include a “Grill a Bishop” event in the Bull at Halstead, with Bishop Stephen Cottrell holding the floor for a full hour and concluding by presenting a Gospel invitation.

**Follow-up**

This is always the crunch – do all the respondents get followed-up? Again, as with the door-to-door statistics, I have not yet heard back from all the churches, so I can only give you samples. Puzzling Questions, Christianity Explored, The Journey, Start and Alpha are discipleship courses to which people are being invited. Along the Stour something like 75 people have been invited to one of these, and along the Colne something like 125 – three of whom are young fellas who are going to be baptised. But on the day of revelation, there will undoubtedly be many, many more to God’s glory.

**Conclusion**

As I mentioned at the start, this has been a much prayed for mission. It has been prayer walked, prayer cycled and prayer driven, emanating from Rosie Watkins who established Alive@Five in the Upper Colne. They saw themselves as a Praising Choir in front of the Army singing, *“Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures for ever”*, in accordance with 2 Chronicles 20v21. This has happened, and I therefore believe, along with John, that where there has been spiritual barreness there is renewal, and where there has been dryness there is unbelievable greenery.

Peter Adams (Evangelist Emeritus) 11th June 2014