

ENGLAND

REVERSE MISSIONARY HELPS UK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES IN EVANGELISM

In the early 1800s, Robert Moffat, the pioneer UK missionary to Africa, was converted as a young man through the witness of a small congregation in the hamlet of High Legh, in the Cheshire countryside. At that time he was working on the High Legh estates as a gardener. In 1815, he read a poster advertising a missionary meeting, and this led to a burning desire to take the Gospel to people who had never heard. This was his missionary call. He left High Legh and became a pioneer Congregational missionary for the London Missionary Society in southern Africa. David Livingstone later became his son-in-law.

In 1851, the High Legh congregation later affiliated with a small denomination called the Independent Methodists. These are best described as 'Congregational Methodists' and the country chapel maintained its Christian witness in the middle of the Cheshire countryside until its closure in 1996. It was then converted into the Northwood Christian Centre for camps and conferences.

Exactly 200 years after Robert Moffat's missionary call, the former chapel-cum-camping-centre, at High Legh, welcomed a 'reverse missionary' - an African young lady who came as the evangelist to share the Gospel at a camp for young teenagers from the West Yorkshire town of Morley (a former northern textile town).

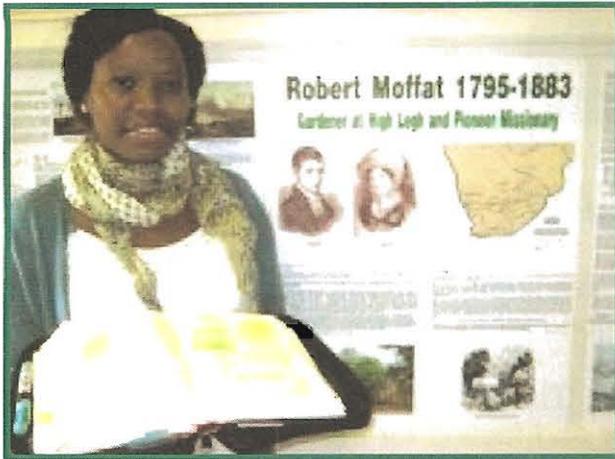
Claudine Uwizeye originates from Rwanda. She is a member of Cannon Park Congregational Church, Middlesbrough, and recently began work as an evangelist with Child Evangelism Fellowship of Great Britain. She is working alongside several EFCC churches in the UK, including Cannon Park, Whitby and Bulkington, where she is assisting with children's meetings, holiday Bible clubs and camps. She was invited by youth workers from Morley Community Church (EFCC) to be the guest speaker in the summer and share the Gospel with 17 young people they had recruited to participate in the camp.

This annual camping experience at the Northwood Centre for Morley youngsters has run continuously since 1999. They pitched their tents for a whole week in early August and took part in an action-packed program that included water sports, games, swimming and quizzes. There was a night-walk, a trip to a Theme Park, a visit to a "Maize Maze" plus hiking and other activities. Over the years, they have brought approximately 300 youngsters to these evangelistic camps at the Northwood Centre. All of the youngsters live within one mile of the church in Morley.

Claudine led sessions each evening during which she explained the Gospel in an engaging way to the young people, 94% of whom had no church affiliation at all. Each morning, there were short and simple Bible studies in groups and after supper each evening, a team member gave a testimony. Camp co-ordinator, Andy Dalton, said it was significant that 200 years since Robert Moffat had left High Legh to evangelise pagan Africans, an African had come to evangelise the pagan British. "The story has gone full circle. Is it not amazing to see the results of missionary endeavours two centuries ago? Robert Moffat and his fellow missionaries opened up Africa for the Gospel and today we see the results of their labours, with millions of Christians and churches. It has been very moving to see this young African evangelist engaging effectively with these children and young people from the UK, many of whom had never understood the Gospel message before."

Claudine lives in Middlesbrough and conducts children's missions, holiday Bible clubs and church based children's meetings throughout northern and central England with Congregational churches and other denominations; she also provides teacher training for churches working with children.

Article and photographs kindly submitted by Andy Dalton, Camp Co-ordinator



Claudine Uwizeye with Bible in front of the Robert Moffat wall chart at the Northwood Centre.



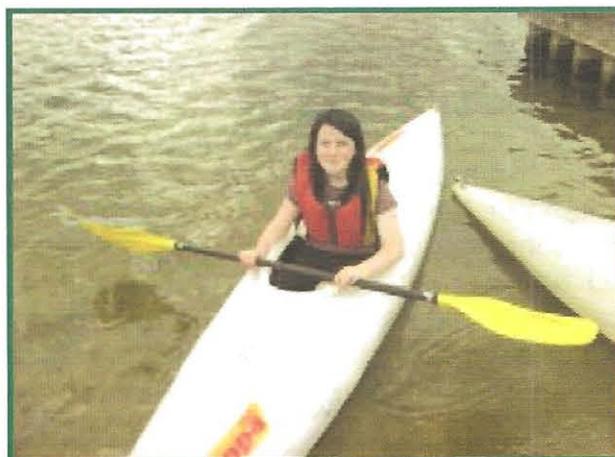
Campers with Councillor Elliott in the Morley Town Hall Council Chambers where she gave the children a civic send-off on behalf of the Morley Town Council.



Campers on a day trip photographed on the beach at Rhyl, North Wales.



Busy on the beach at Rhyl.



Enjoying kayaking.



Enjoying a paddle in the sea.