

Newsletter

Girls' Brigade International

No. 33, October 2009

Hello Everyone,

I find it incredible that we are moving towards the end of 2009. Has it been a good year for you or have you like many been overwhelmed by some of this year's events? In many ways it is difficult not to be affected by all that is going on around us and particularly during difficult periods of our lives we feel the need of encouragement.

Encouragement is "oxygen to our soul" and most of us would agree that we would not be where we are today had it not been for Christian friends, family and Brigade family who were faithful in the "ministry of encouragement". As we look forward to ICGB 2010 let's take on board the words of Paul to the Thessalonians "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Ann

ICGB 2010

ICGB 2010 is being held in Eastern Malaysia in the city of **Kuching, Sarawak**.

Dates: 24-31 July 2010.

Cost per ICGB Representative: SGD 1300

Cost per Touring Party Member: SGB 1700

(SGD = Singapore Dollars)

If you have not already registered then please make contact with GB Malaysia.

Outstanding balances must be paid by 31 January 2010

www.gbmalaysia.org

ICGB blog: <http://icgb2010.blogspot.com/>

From our International President

Dear friends,

Never allow the magnitude of a task to intimidate you; instead let the greatness of God fill and empower you for executing His command, to accomplish the impossible and the unimaginable. The more I have pondered over it, the more I have come to the conclusion that God chooses to employ and involve ordinary not-so-capable humans in the affairs of His business - building His Kingdom. Our God enjoys seeing timid novices turned into confident experts; ordinary people who are willing to learn from Him and get great things achieved in His name. There are many examples of men and women in the bible who, empowered by God, were able to do many great things. God's desire is that we trust Him in all that we do.

Many times, we look at our inability and inadequacies when it comes to a job, a position or even a duty. But I want to encourage you not to look at the bigness of the task, but rather at the **BIGNESS** of our God! When God calls you to do something, He will empower you and give you the grace that is needed for the task ahead. Learn from the example, of Moses, David, Deborah, Mary the mother of Jesus, Saul - renamed Paul, and many others! Ordinary people, but trusting God and doing extraordinary things!

Sometimes it is difficult to tap into the greatness of God, simply because we are humans. We need to tap into each other's gifts and talents in order to experience the greatness of God. In my view one of the advantages of belonging to an international movement like GB is that you have a diversity of gifts and talents at your disposal and we all can benefit from that. That is why it is

important for us to stay connected to each other. Communication is an important part in this connection. All Fellowships need to keep the communication lines open and alive, so that the spirit of encouragement can continue to flow. This way we can draw and give encouragement to one another. No Brigader or Fellowship should feel left out.

Therefore, may I encourage you, through this newsletter to get out your computers, pens, pencils and send in your news! Remember, God wants to use ordinary people to do extraordinary things!

Blessings for you and yours as you Seek, Serve and Follow Christ.

Ruth M Chikasa

TRIBUTE TO MRS. MARJORIE BECKLES

**Chairman, Cayman Girls' Brigade Council
Captain, Bodden Town Girls' Brigade
Company**

(Oct. 9, 1950 - Jun. 18, 2009)

As we pause to remember and give thanks to our Girls' Brigade Chairman and friend, Mrs. Marjorie Patrecia Beckles a multitude of wonderful memories flood our minds and hearts. To our Girls' Brigade family, 'Marjie' as she was affectionately called was not only Chairman of our Girls' Brigade, but also Captain for the Bodden Town Brigade, an Officer, Advisor, Educator, Colleague and Friend.

Mrs. Beckles lived by the Girls' Brigade principles of acknowledging Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, living according to his standards, teaching the Christian attitude of life and promoting a just society where all people are equally valued. The Girls' Brigade motto to "Seek, Serve and Follow Christ" was also her personal motto and this was reflected in her actions and deeds.

Girls' Brigade was a part of Mrs. Beckles life from childhood. She was an active member of

the Girls' Guildry, under the leadership of the late Miss Pearl Carter. As a young adult she became an Officer and later the Captain of the Bodden Town Girls' Brigade. Her strength of leadership and caring personality resulted in Mrs. Beckles being selected as Chairman of the Girls' Brigade Council, a position which she held until her death.

Mrs. Beckles touched many lives because of her generosity, warmth and caring personality. She cared passionately for all persons she came into contact with and she extended this into all facets of Girls' Brigade. She only needed to know that someone was in need and she would move all obstacles to assist the individual. She seemed to always have a solution to the problems people faced. It was perhaps her genuine compassion for others which she displayed throughout her life that endeared her to so many people.

It seemed as if Mrs. Beckles knew everyone and this was not only across this island but internationally as well. It was a pleasure to travel with Mrs. Beckles to a Girls' Brigade International Conference and find so many people that knew and loved her. She did not only know them by name but knew about their family and their companies. She was not shy about introducing herself and anyone else who was with her during the breaks at the Conference.

Mrs. Beckles would always spare a moment to thank you for whatever you had done, whether it was small or big. She was such a humble person. She always seemed to find the time and have the energy to successfully balance her work, family, church and Girls' Brigade. Throughout her life she portrayed Rudyard Kipling's poem entitled "If" and it is most fitting that we dedicate two stanzas from this poem in tribute to our Girls' Brigade Chairman - Mrs. Marjorie Beckles.

IF

*"If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt
you
But make allowance for their doubting too,
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,*

*Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
 And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:
 If you can talk with crowds and keep your
 virtue,
 Or walk with kings-nor lose the common touch,
 If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
 If all mankind counts with you, but none too
 much,
 If you can fill the unforgiving minute
 With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
 Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
 And-which is more-you'll be a Man, my son!"*

Mrs. Beckles was a dynamic woman. We will never forget her and her passing has brought a tremendous void to our Girls' Brigade family. May her soul rest in peace.

News from GB USA

Boston was the venue for the Caribbean & Americas Regional Camp which was held in July. The camp was attended by seven countries and by 76 campers and 12 off-site participants. Their theme was "Arise, Shine, Break Shackles – Transform Lives".

Jocelyn James
 GB USA

St Kitts Girls' Brigade

Independence Awards: On 16 September 2009, National Heroes Day, twenty one young people were recognised for their outstanding contributions to national development. Ms Delyth Christmas of St Kitts Girls' Brigade was among that number.

"Delyth is a hard working young woman; she is a Lieutenant/Captain of the 2nd St Kitts Girls' Brigade attached to the Wesley Methodist Church and a member of the Zion Moravian Youth Fellowship. A teacher by profession, Ms Christmas is passionate about assisting young people in achieving positive goals; she wishes to encourage them to 'Dare to be different and speak positive things'". Ms Christmas received the Independence Award in the area of Community Involvement and Services.

Petra Nero
 St Kitts

SUMMER ADVENTURES

Kosova trip changes lives

More than 28 volunteers jetted off to Kosova this summer as part of the GB Europe Summer Mission – FIZZ – where they worked at the Smile Centre in Gjakovë and met members of the newly set up GB Kosova. **Stacey Cripps**, Captain of 5th Bradford, shares her experiences.

Earlier this year, GB received the news that our international sisterhood had spread to the Balkans with a new company opening in Kosova. Through the charity Smile International, members of GB had the opportunity to visit Kosova and work there for periods of one or two weeks as part of a FIZZ team.

Teams started going out there at the beginning of July and I was part of the eighth and final team that went out this summer.

At five past midnight on Monday 24 August, standing outside Wakefield bus station, I wasn't sure what to expect when I arrived in Kosova. I wasn't even 100% sure what I'd be doing when I got there, other than helping at kids clubs, which we'd been briefed about, but I was packed and raring to go. I met up with my team – Claire, Katherine and Jolene all from Northern Ireland - at Gatwick airport and we excitedly boarded the plane for our adventure.

When we arrived we were met by Diana and Mike Seeney, our team leaders, and filled in about what missionary work we'd be doing there. First we were taken to the Smile International Centre where we'd be staying, so we could meet centre managers Angela and Paul Maxfield and settle in. We were based in a town called Gjakovë, which is approximately two hours from the capital Pristina.

It was very hot in Kosova, regularly in the 30s and 40s and we only had rain on our first evening and final full day - a big change from being at home!

Our team's missionary work consisted of helping to run the kids clubs in the nearby villages of Rugovë, Brekoç and Krusha Mardha. It was so much fun - we played games, sang songs, told Bible stories and did craft work based on the stories.

We also spent time visiting some of the families and widows from the war (10,000 Kosovans were killed in the conflict in 1999 and over 1,900 bodies are still unaccounted for). We were also invited to one of their churches, Eternity Church, to worship with them and spend time with their youth group who came from another nearby village.

Language was a barrier, they speak a version of Albanian, but we had two brilliant translators who

worked with us for the whole week and there were also children and young people who spoke some English. I even picked up some simple Albanian!

The Girls' Brigade company met on Wednesday evening (the same as my company) so we led some activities there. It was so nice to see the girls so excited and wearing uniforms like we have at home. You'd be forgiven for thinking that we were at home if it wasn't for the language. It was fantastic to see what the previous teams had done with the girls and to listen to them talking about GB.

Our team was also given the opportunity to 'sell' GB to some girls from another village. They'd already been approached about it but were unsure so it was arranged for us to meet them and give them a 'younger' perspective. The meeting was positive, the girls seemed quite interested, but we're not sure whether it was successful due to the challenges faced in their Catholic village. Whether this proves to be fruitful or not, we've spread the message of GB a bit further, which can only be positive.

It wasn't all work though - we visited the war graves in Gjakovë where a mother told us more about the atrocities and the situation now; we had an afternoon at a river (where seven of the youth group chose to be baptised) and a day at the waterfalls in Mirusha with the youth group, which was cold but fun for swimming.

We also visited the Serbian Monastery in Dechani where the monks still need to be under armed guard. There is still a military presence in Kosova, as they are afraid that if it is removed Serbia may attack again, but it is completely safe. It is a beautiful country and, apart from the graveyards and the military, there is little visual evidence of the atrocities that happened 10 years ago.

It is only when you talk to people that you realise the extent of the suffering. The trip was so humbling and made us all realise how much we have and take for granted. It also brought to our eyes how much still needs to be done for the people there.

Smile International offers many opportunities to help and in my GB company we're already planning on using some of these, starting with Christmas shoeboxes for children in less fortunate countries.

Going to Kosova was a fantastic experience and I made some lifelong friends. I know this will be the same for the previous teams and I assume that, like me, their lives have been changed forever. I know that some have even applied to do a gap year there soon. Next year I hope to go back for longer to continue helping, spreading God's word and promoting GB even further.

Faleminderit (thank you in Albanian) Di, Mike, Angela and Paul for making our stay so welcome - and thank you GB for making it all possible.

Claire and Katherine Rush from GB Northern Ireland share their story of Kosova

"When we left Gatwick airport on Monday 24 August, we had no idea what to expect when we arrived in Kosova. The four of us were the last group of girls of the summer to participate in the GB Europe Fizz Team programme. We left with the anticipation to serve God through helping others, but we did not expect how much Kosova would help each of us!

Our base for the week was the lovely, newly built Smile Centre. The UK based charity, Smile International, works in many countries such as Sri Lanka and Uganda, but was founded in 1999 due to the war in Kosova. During the Kosova conflict, over 10,000 men were killed, leaving many widows and fatherless children. Approximately 2,000 men are still missing and every day mothers and wives of missing men visit the municipality office in Gjakovë to ask if there is any news of their loved ones. They have done this for the past nine years. Smile financially and emotionally supports these families, as well as stepping out to show them the love of God despite their Muslim culture. The Smile centre sits high in a hill above Gjakovë, so we couldn't help but draw reference to Matt 5:14.

Throughout the week we participated in five different Children's clubs, plus one Girls' Brigade meeting. As our theme was animals we were able to tell the children the stories of the Lost Sheep and of Daniel in the Lion's Den (with the help of our translators). Twice we visited the village of Rugovë and led a bible club in the local church. Here the children were extremely well behaved, and loved to sing and dance for God. Their favourite song was "Our God is a Great Big God", and they even taught us a new chorus called "Jesus' love is bubbling over". The church in Rugovë consisted of a small room, with very stiff carpet which was sore to kneel on. The children were well used to sitting on the floor to do all their colouring in.

On Wednesday night we were privileged to attend the Girls' Brigade meeting in Eternity Church Gjakovë. Here many of the girls wear the GB polo shirt with the emblem. They were very excited to welcome us into their company and once again loved to sing "Our God is a Great Big God". Throughout the summer the girls have been learning about the miracles of Jesus, and we were blessed to see how they could recall each of them in detail.

Throughout our time in Kosova we had the privilege of carrying out four different house visits

to various widows. Going into many of the homes was extremely heart breaking as on the wall there would be pictures of all the husbands, fathers and sons who had been taken and killed during the war. All of the widows were very welcoming and on all occasions we were offered biscuits, cake, and delicious home grown juicy plums. One of the widows that we visited was called Susannah and she lived in one of the Roma Camps, right beside the town rubbish dump. The house only consisted of one small room, where Susannah and her three teenagers slept. However it is here where we were blessed to see that each member of the family had a bible which was frequently read, and their hearts desire was to worship God.

One of the main reasons why we knew God had called our team to Kosova this particular week was to meet a group of young women from a neighbouring Catholic village. Smile had instigated this meeting as they wanted us to share our experiences about GB in the hope that the girls would then start a company in their village. However that night God gave us the opportunity to share our testimonies and as a result the girls asked some very important questions about their own faith. Please pray for this group of girls that they experience the reality of God in their own lives.

A highlight of our week was being able to join together with the young people of Eternity Church for Bible study, praise and fellowship. The church had approximately 20 young people, all of who were ablaze with God's Glory. Many of the teenagers come from Muslim families, and in some cases have to smuggle bibles into their own homes. However they are such a light to their country, they wear their faith on their T-Shirts and WWJD bracelets and are a real witness for God. Please pray that they continue to stand strong and are blessed.

Words cannot describe our time in Kosova. We thank you all so much for your prayers and support. God's spirit is rapidly moving across the land. God has taught us so much from our short time there, and we cannot wait to return there. Thank you (faleminderit) from Kosova.

Claire and Katherine Rush
GB Northern Ireland

News from GB Ireland

At their AGM on 5 September 2009 GB Ireland appointed Mrs Margery McElhinney as their new President and Mrs Joan Darling retired from that position.

Margery has written a letter introducing herself to our International family:

Dear All,

As the newly elected President of The Girls' Brigade Ireland I would firstly like to say how privileged and proud I am to hold this position and pray that as I take over the 'reins' from Mrs. Joan Darling I will live up to the very high standard which she set as indeed did Mrs. Barbara Carson before her.

As you know, my name is Margery McElhinney and I was born in Dublin in July 1948 (I will let you all do the maths!!) and have gone through the ranks of the 5th Company – Clontarf Presbyterian, since my Mother enrolled me at the age of four, firstly as a Candidate (Explorer), then Junior, Senior, Brigadier, Associate, Lieutenant and then Captain for the past 21 years until my retirement from the Company at our Annual Display in April this year. I also had the wonderful honour of having been Captain during the 5th Company's Centenary Celebrations in 2008. I am married to Harry, for nearly 40 years, and have two 'adult' children, Graham and Karen.

To me The Girls' Brigade is a way of life and one which I love very much and as I go forward as President of The Girls' Brigade Ireland I ask that you remember me in your prayers so that I can indeed strive to 'Seek, Serve and Follow Christ' always.

Margery

(I'm sure that you would wish to join with me in extending our congratulations to Margery on her recent appointment and to wish her God's richest blessing in the months and years ahead)

News from the Pacific Fellowship

Pacific tsunami and earthquakes:

Thank you for the prayers and messages of support from our International family of GB as Samoa, American Samoa and Tonga work at getting some normality back into their lives after the tragedy of recent weeks.

There is still no official information from American Samoa where there are Girls' Brigade Companies.

Information received from Tonga from a GB contact has responded that "*one of the northern island's Niua Toputapu got hit badly and so far there were 6 deaths reported, 3 missing and 4 severely injured as 2 villages*

got hit by 3 tidal waves, damaging offices, accommodation etc.

Ha'apai was also affected, through sea water level rise, flooding the offices and accommodations in low lying areas but no major damaging of building etc according to news from my relatives there."

As far as we are aware, there were no GB casualties.

There was also an earthquake centred just off Vanuatu, but GB Vanuatu has informed me that the earthquake was not felt in Port Villa which is the Capital of Vanuatu, but was felt on the island of Santo. There are GB companies there but apparently no damage was done.

Please continue to pray for these countries.

Australia National Conference:

I was delighted to be invited to join Australia for their National Conference in Canberra from the 3-8 October. It was a very busy six days and I am pleased to be able to advise that Coral Anderson was re-elected as National Commissioner for a further three year term, and Helen Webb has been elected as her Deputy.

Elizabeth Harding was bestowed the honour of Life Membership in recognition of the service she gave over many years, and also the time she served as Deputy National Commissioner then National Commissioner of GB Australia.

A highlight of the week was attending Government House for the presentation of Queen's Awards. After a tour of Government House gardens, four young ladies from Canberra were presented with their badges and certificates by the Governor General, then afternoon tea was served – a very pleasant afternoon.

As with all Conferences there were business sessions, devotional times and times for fellowship with one another. One thing I would like to comment on is that I was most impressed with the number of younger leaders who were involved throughout the week. We had a young leader and her dad leading worship, others sharing their testimony, others were part of the organising team from Canberra, and other young leaders ran the activities for the "mystery night". It is really great to see these younger leaders being given the opportunity to use their skills and talents and I commend GB Australia for doing this. These leaders are the future of Girls' Brigade no matter which country we are in.

A special presentation was made on the last day to Renelle Neale, the National Administrator for GB Australia as Renelle is retiring in January 2010. Renelle has been in this position for 15 years and I know her knowledge and expertise will be missed when she finishes. I would like to take the opportunity to wish Renelle all the best for her

retirement, she is not giving up GB though as she will still be running her company.

Jennifer Box
IVP Pacific Fellowship

Girls' Brigade Zimbabwe Newsletter September 2009

Greetings in the Name Of Jesus!

It is and has been an exciting time for us here in Zimbabwe. After attending the conference in Port Elizabeth (P.E.), South Africa, we came back home filled with fresh new ideas and concepts to pass on to our girls. Thank you to everyone in P.E. South Africa who warmly welcomed us and made our stay pleasurable. We were also able to meet and make lots of new friends. We were also fortunate to enjoy and be blessed by the City Fathers of P.E. who hosted a party for all of us who attended the conference.

After coming back home to Zimbabwe we invited Lt. Kalolo from Zambia to train 19 Officers including myself. It was a truly enlightening experience! We were also honoured to have the International Vice President and All Africa President, Mrs Pasellah P. Penny attend this training with us. We were all enriched by this training camp. Allow me to remind you of the old saying "learning never stops"; this was definitely a learning experience. This training camp was held from 13-16 August 2009.

Our Girls' Brigade in Zimbabwe is growing at an alarming rate considering the harsh economic climate we have had to endure. The young girls and women of Zimbabwe show that they are indeed ready to revive the Girls' Brigade in Zimbabwe.

On 12 September 2009 we were privileged to hold a Thanksgiving service and Parade right here in the Sunshine City, Harare. At the

service, we paid homage and honour to Mrs. Pasellah P. Penny, on her being elected International Vice President and All Africa President. It was a great occasion as we were able to hold our service at the prestigious Town House, residence to the Honourable Mayoress of Harare.

350 Brigaders, Officers, Chaplains, parents and supporters came to witness this wonderful occasion. We started with our parade followed by our service. As the Girls' Brigade paraded through the City Centre, they were escorted by The Zimbabwe Republic Police as they proudly sang "Seek, serve and follow Christ". The melodic harmony resonated through the City of Harare. The Brigaders made us proud as they displayed their marching and singing skills. After the parade the girls were inspected and then set off to commence the Thanksgiving Service held in style in the Town House Hall.

Our National Chaplin, Reverend Cleopas Chipato, from the Arcadia Baptist Church, opened in prayer. The programme was filled with thanksgiving and praise for our very own International Vice and All Africa President, Mrs. Pasellah P. Penny. The occasion was graced by our counsellor Mrs. Ruth Kavunika who also accepted to be an Honorary member of the Girls' Brigade. Before the service, I politely asked if she would like to become an Honorary member of the Girls' Brigade of Zimbabwe and she *...drum roll please...Accepted! Ya Hoo!* She was then inducted into The Girls' Brigade of Zimbabwe by our National Chaplin, Reverend Cleopas Chipato. This induction was greeted by the ululating of all in attendance at our service. Thus, I am proud to announce, we now have both the Honourable Mayoress, Mrs. Masunda as our Honorary President and our Councillor, Mrs Ruth Kavunika as an Honorary member. It was, I have to repeat, a truly joyous occasion!!

The girls put on a splendid show singing and acting. Mrs. Pasellah P. Penny was inducted and blessed by Major Anam, from the Salvation Army Church. The mountainous occasion was witnessed by family, friends, and other Chaplains from different sections. The message at the service was delivered by the anointed Bishop Desmond Laurence, from Christ Like Ministries. The focus of the message was "Arise, shine, break shackles and transform lives". Indeed this is what we are striving for through the Girls' Brigade of Zimbabwe. We then had a lavish luncheon humbly hosted by Mrs. Pasellah Penny. This day, Saturday 12 September 2009, is one that will be remembered as truly unforgettable. The presence of the Lord was truly felt.

As I close, on this note, I, as President of the Girls' Brigade of Zimbabwe, encourage you all to "Arise! Shine! Break Shackles! and Transform Lives!". With God's grace we shall continue to minister and worship Jesus Christ our Saviour and also to continue to teach the girls and young ladies to Seek, Serve and Follow Christ. Until I write again....be blessed!

Mrs. B. Laurence
National President
Girls' Brigade Zimbabwe