

**Report of the Edinburgh 2010 – Witnessing to Christ Today
Closing Celebration Held on Sunday 6 June 2010
to Churches Together North Thames**

By

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The Edinburgh 2010 – Centenary of the 1910 World Missionary Conference had attracted Christians from many parts of the world. Mainstream churches, ecumenical bodies and other denominational congregations were represented. The Assembly Hall of the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh was packed, and it was good that I had a ticket.

The service started at 3pm with gospel songs from Scotland Africa Mass Choir of Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries, which is a member of the International Ministerial Council of Great Britain. The songs swept delegates to their feet singing along from an overhead screen.

The event was the grand finale of workshops and seminars held in Edinburgh since 2nd June. Delegates were told that 100 years ago in 1910, in the same assembly hall in Edinburgh, many Christian folks gathered to tell their stories of their experiences in Christ and to pray together. From that gathering a vision of a united church was formed in the hearts of the delegates.

One would wonder what they would say today about the church in 2010! Is there visible unity in Christian witness? How does the church stand in the face of violence and injustice in the 21st century? How is the gospel shared today in our society against the background of secularism and political correctness?

It was expected that these questions would be answered to enable delegates to go with a renewed vision. In the quest to discover the vision, delegates were led to pray, sing and share their stories again this time with a new audience. There were songs from Asia (The Rice of Life –rice instead of bread is the staple food of Asians), France with English version (Je louerai L’Eternel -Praise I will praise You), Americas Nicaragua (Sent by the Lord), New Zealand (Touch the earth lightly), and South Africa (We walk his way). Everyone participated in these songs and by now a sense of new vision was forming in the minds of delegates. It was like a huge mass choir rehearsing for a big event with great expectation.

But what have we learned about mission, church vision and unity since 1910? For this we had Rev Dr Ken Ross of the Netherlorn churches in Argyle, to quiz Professor Brian Stanley, director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World. Professor Stanley talked about advances in technology

which help to get the gospel and church vision to many people at a click of the mouse. Migration has brought its changes with Africans, Asians now resident in Scotland. It was interesting to hear from Bishop Devamari of Dornakai, the diocese of which 1910 Asian delegate V S Azariah ultimately became the first bishop. He is a living witness of the vision of the church that started in 1910 in Edinburgh.

Delegates had 2 minutes to discuss with a neighbour about their responses to what they had heard and sung, how the church should be witnessing today and what resources and insights they could use to witness. This time the Assembly Hall buzzed with voices as delegates talked to each other. I was talking with a complete stranger from Buckina faso, who is studying women participation in the church, in Oxford.

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Dr John Sentamu, Arch Bishop of York gave an inspiring sermon from Ezekiel 37: 1 – 14. The question was “Will the dry bones live?” His answer was “Yes, with the help of the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit would transform a us into a superman with spiritual abilities to witness and bring results that God wants. He ended his sermon with an optimistic note – “see you in 100 years time.”

The event came to a close at 17:30pm and delegates had to return to their stations knowing that the next gathering will be in 3010, but this time as in 1910 we will not be there.