



Pastor's Page

"God on Holiday"

For me as a schoolboy it would have been the equivalent of winning the National lottery! (Which really would have been a miracle as there wasn't a national lottery in those days!!) I refer to the announcement last week that 'some pupils might not be able to go back to school in September because of the Swine flu 'pandemic'. Well viral infections apart, what a joyous announcement for any who like me prefer 'playing out' to attending school (I haven't been for years!)

I now know that school is a good thing (take note younger readers!) but holidays are good too and the 6 week summer break was always the highlight of my year as I spent most of it by the sea. My preferred activities were; romping down sand dunes, exploring rugged headlands, driving small dinghies, playing beach football and sampling synchronised swimming! However I found that many of the activities that my friends and I participated in revolved around the CSSM programme. CSSM stands for **C**hildren's **S**pecial **S**ervice **M**ission and not (as many of the young hopeful Christian team members used to think) **C**ome **S**ingle **S**oon **M**arried! Though I objected occasionally to going to some of the activities (felt a bit like school again!) this ministry and the people involved in it had a major influence on my life and my Christian faith. And this great work of Summer beach missions plus the Scripture Union organisation all took off in Llandudno, North Wales!

Those who went on the church trip a few weeks ago will know that Llandudno is a classic Victorian seaside resort resplendent in suburban glory. There's a promenade, pier, beach huts, regattas, cable cars boats trips, ice-creams, tramlines fish shops, puppet shows, donkey rides and candyfloss. (I tried them all!) And it was here that Children's Beach Missions were born. In August 1868 Josiah Spiers was on holiday there and as he walked along the beach he watched children playing in the sand making a 'garden' of pebbles and seaweed. It occurred to him that instead of making a garden the children could be making a text of scripture with their pebbles. He hurried off to buy a ball of string and some pegs and ran back to the beach. "Who'll help me write a text?" he called to the nearest group. A crowd of children soon gathered around him for the activity which he followed up by telling bible stories. For the rest of the week Spiers kept his daily rendezvous with the children, which culminated on the Sunday with a special service attended by nearly 400 people. And this spontaneous event led to the pioneering work of the CSSM which Spiers and Thomas Bishop build up over the next 40 years. The work continues to this day.

For me one of the great things that God did through the ministry of CSSM was to cause me to associate the Gospel with great times. Summer holidays (as I've said) were the best times for me and I remember well "talks" on the top of spectacular mountains surrounded by friends, testimonies at Tide Fights in the afternoon sun, songs about Jesus at beach barbecues and challenging sermons at Family beach services. Now whilst the gospel message isn't about happy memories surely the One who came to give us life in all its fullness expects us to enjoy life in all its fullness? So perhaps 'happy holidays' and 'Gospel truth' is a Godly combination.

26th July 2009