

## Notes on the life of Revd Mark Northcott b.1936

I was born in October 1936, 'The year of the three kings' in Croydon, then in Surrey near London. This was just before the destruction by fire of Crystal Palace nearby, but I was too young to be implicated.

I have vivid memories of the blitz in 1940 when I was evacuated to Leicester to my mother's family where I was given a hero's welcome, as I was again in 1944 'Doodle Bug Time'. Primary school education was disrupted right through the war with days off and frequent trips to the air raid shelters. However, I had wonderful protective parents and retain many happy memories. Ironically, the only hymn I can remember from primary school was 'Rejoice the Lord is King' which introduced me to Paul's letters and Handel. However, in those days I felt religion was just for women and girls. These were exciting days and I well remember gathering round the radio (I have always preferred radio to TV) and hearing the news and the progress of the war, not to mention Churchill's stirring speeches which I still like to listen to on CD.

Shortly after the end of the war in 1946 I was taken to Brighton Pier to see an exhibition showing the enormity of the Nazis' slaughter and abuse of the Jews at the emancipation by the British of the concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen. This had a profound effect on me and I marvelled that this ancient people had been preserved for so long – the people, already ancient, into which Jesus was born as a Jew. Could there be a purpose in all of this and the establishment of a Jewish state in what was Palestine in 1948 seemed so natural?

1948 brought me to secondary school, Whitgift middle school with good emphasis on religion including daily services, rugby, cricket and high academic achievement. However, I still made no firm commitment to a living faith in Jesus Christ until a friend from school invited me to attend a Christian camp for boys at Penmaenmair (*pronounced: Pen Mine Mowr*) in North Wales. At about this time I was reading the New Testament more and came across the words of Jesus, "Every idle word that man shall utter he shall give account on the Day of Judgement" (Matt 12:36). I realised this warning from Jesus had a great deal to say – not just to politicians, but to everyone, including me, and there was no way I could give any sort of account on Judgement Day. Then I heard a powerful sermon on the text "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin" (1John 1:7) which was very close in the Bible to the texts we had heard every day at school. But I still didn't make the personal connection until the North Wales camps when I heard some robust preaching from real men who became my heroes – rugby players and medical students among them, and it was at this time that I accepted Christ's invitation to ask him into my heart and became a thorough-going Christian – a decision I have never regretted, although at times I have let him down.

After school I felt a call to help others in the medical field and became a lab technician and joined the RAMC for 2 years of very beneficial National Service which I believe made more of a man of me. However, I realised that my real interest was not in the blood and guts of people but in the unique personalities of folk and their need for a fully rounded life with Christ at the centre, and responded again to some more powerful sermons about the needs of the ministry to which I readily responded and became an Ordinand – or budding Church of England clergyman which was later confirmed by a successful time in both the lab in Singapore and Malaya and also a multi-racial Sunday School.

Upon discharge from the army I spent 3 years in the city of London as a clerk in financial institutions which I enjoyed very much. Then I felt it right to apply, in April 1961, to become a trainee clergyman. To my amazement things happened very quickly indeed and I was not only accepted for training but was found a place at Clifton Theological College, Bristol for three years of theological training which I found very beneficial. All fees were paid for by the local authority, which was amazing! I was ordained and married in 1964 and began a varied ministry which took over most of my life.

My wife, Shirley, came from a Jewish background and I was delighted when early in my ministry in Walthamstow, East London, a young man called Bernard became a Messianic believer and joined the church. After a productive ministry in East London, and already the father of Joy and Rebekah, we moved to quite a different sphere as I became curate at Idle, Bradford, Yorkshire and here we saw a completely different part of Britain before moving to a CMJ (Church's Ministry among the Jews) property in North Manchester where we not only lived among the Jews and learned so much about the ancient faith, but had the opportunity of travelling all over the north of England to churches, schools and meetings. It was a wonderful and fulfilling ministry to be engaged in for over 9 years. We established links with lots of Messianic believers.