

# 1973 – 1998



Cliff Walk Church

## This account was written to mark the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

In 1973 Canning Town Evangelical Church published a leaflet which summarised the history of the church over the previous 100 years. By 1973 most of the church members did not live in the Canning Town area but were spread out from Plaistow and East Ham into the Essex suburbs. During the late seventies a number of members retired from work and left the church as they moved much further away. At this point the congregation dropped to perhaps its lowest level. The church particularly lacked two things: young married couples and young children whose parents came regularly to the church. Those remaining continued to witness in the neighbourhood through delivering the Challenge newspaper and running very popular children's and teenagers' activities.

As we now look back on the past 25 years, we have so much to thank God for.

### **Some of the key events and highlights have been:**

**1975/6** - It had been foreseen when the new building was erected in 1958/9 that extra space would be needed when the youth hall - a separate building called Tyrell Hall in Star Lane opposite the end of Ordnance Road - was demolished by the Council. With the redevelopment of Star Lane planned for the late 70s, work commenced on the extension to the Cliff Walk site in 1975 and was finished the following year.

**1980** - Steve Chalke, now of GMTV fame, came to church and ate a daffodil at the beginning of an evening service.

**1983** - The churches in Newham worked together in running a 2 week mission with a group called "Saltmine" and this climaxed in Luis Palau the Argentinean evangelist conducting a week of meetings in a large tent in Balaam Street Park. Many people committed their lives to Christ during this time and we had the privilege of following up a number of these. At about this time young people's leaders got together and formed Newham Youth for Christ which for the next 7 years was to be the focus of many exciting youth activities.

**1986** - For 3 weeks in the summer, 60 young people from around the country came to Newham under the control of Youth for Christ. 20 of them operated from our church and ran holiday clubs, evening youth concerts at Eastlea School and did open air evangelism in Rathbone market. Hundreds of people were challenged about the Christian faith. When the members met that autumn we agreed that God wanted us to change our services and for the focus of church life to be on all ages and being God's family in the neighbourhood. With not too many ideas and limited skills and resources, we began our new morning services. Within a year the congregation had nearly doubled and we began to expect God to be at work as new people to come in.

**1989** - In the summer, Billy Graham came to West Ham United football ground for a series of meetings and church members served in the choir and in many other ways as well as taking friends and relatives to the meetings.

**1992/3** - At the end of the year we advertised for a Pastor. This was the first time the church had looked for a paid leader to come from outside the congregation. It was with great joy that we welcomed Carl and Viv Palmer to the church in the autumn of 1993. In December we held a great big party to say thank you to Bert and Gladys Matthews for all their work in the church as Bert retired from being Leading Minister for 23 years.

**Since 1993**, under Carl's leadership we have continued to change as we seek to worship God and witness to the community around.

**1994** - The Council finally closed off Star Lane as a through road and renamed the part outside the front of the building "Cliff Walk". We had been known locally for many years as Star Lane Church so we introduced the logo above as part of our plan to be known as Cliff Walk Church.

**1995** - The church members agreed a vision statement setting out the strengths, weaknesses and aims of the church. Church life is reviewed each year in the light of this document and new priorities established.

**1997** - Vera Bond and Gladys Matthews retired from children's work after over 110 years service between them.

**As we look back** on the occasion of our 125th anniversary, we thank God for: those with whom we have shared the news of God's love for them;

- the way the congregation has become multi-racial, including with people coming from countries in which we have in the past prayed for missionaries;
- many great holidays together as families and with young people;
- our links with other Christians in Newham through outreach campaigns, Youth for Christ, Newham Bible Training Centre and Newham Christian Fellowships;
- the holiday clubs and trips we have run for children and teenagers;
- annual retreats for members and friends to the countryside where we enjoyed the hospitality of other churches and spent time having fellowship and fun together;
- the commitment to regular prayer that has been the reason for the church's growth;
- the financial resources to do what we have considered God's purposes.

### **The future**

As a church, we have proved that God is faithful. The people of Canning Town need to hear and see the Good News of Jesus as much as ever. The area needs to experience the light and peace of God's kingdom. The challenge now for us church members is to love and serve our Lord with all of our lives, as others have done before us.

*"A family filled with joy" - our theme for 1998*