

May 2016

It is ten years this month since I left Christians in Sport, not really knowing what the future held. The first ten years of Verité Sport have been amazing. We are excited about the places God has used us. We are grateful to all those who have helped to make it happen.

As writing seemed an important aspect of my work, which could continue, Verité Sport was formed with the support of Chris Powell of Verité CM, with whom I had worked on a number of booklets for major sports events.

The three main emphases in the work throughout the 10 years have been:

- Helping sports ministry develop internationally;
- Writing and producing resources;
- Supporting professionals.

Here are some of the highlights of the past 10 years:

- In 2006 I did not know one elite (track and field) athlete; now I am in touch with more than 60;
- A Bible Study group has been established at Diamond League events, with over 50 different athletes attending;
- Church for team GB at athletics team events which run over a Sunday has become a normal part of the programme;
- In 2006 we had no knowledge disability sport. Since then we have been to a number of events particularly in athletics and goalball and are passionate about the need for the Christian sports ministry to engage with disability sport.
- Each week since 2006 a weekly devotional email (a thought from the Bible applied to sport) has gone out. It is currently received by 1026 people in English and 235 in French. During Olympics and World Athletics Championships a daily email is sent to help athletes in the event. One athlete replied: "The daily messages were great as well. A perfect little shot of Jesus at just the right time!"
- Verité Sport has supported projects in: Argentina, Congo, Pakistan, Romania, Thailand, Togo and Ukraine
- I serve as secretary of the Major Sports Events Chaplaincy Committee, selecting and recommending chaplains to the organizing committees of major sports events.
- During the 2012 Olympics I served as Olympic Attaché for Togo. In addition to serving Togo I was able to pray with 20 different athletes – some of them several times. To pray with someone on the day of the most important competition was an immense privilege.
- Verité Sport provided laptop computers to seven sports ministry leaders in 6 countries in French speaking Africa;
- An Easter Sunday tweet an Easter message was re-tweeted by ten athletes with large followings. By the end of the day the Easter message had gone to 46,562 people!
- I was invited to an international seminar at the Vatican: "Coaches: Educating people", one of only four delegates who were not Catholics.
- I was co-chair of the More than Gold Resources group. Over the past 10 years, I wrote Christian booklets which were distributed at World Cups, Summer and Winter Olympics, Paralympics, PanAm Games, Cricket World Cup, European Football Championships and Commonwealth Games.
- Verité Sport has been able to distribute new football and athletics kit (donated by the Football Association and British Athletics) to countries where it can be used. Over

200 large boxes of kit have gone to about 20 different countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and South America.

- Verité Sport has supplied more than 100 pairs of football boots, and 100 footballs plus match shirts, shorts and training kit to Les Amis du Monde in Togo.
- Over the past 2-3 years Stuart has been working more closely than ever with Christians in Sport, including attending CIS professional sport team meetings.
- I have written about sport and Christianity in a variety of places from chapters in academic books and articles in academic journals, an article in the Dictionary of European Baptist life, a series of articles in The Times online and Lausanne Global Analysis to regular contributions to Sorted men's magazine, articles in Bible Society and Scripture Union publications, for Inspire, Liberti and Rejoice a German Seventh Day Adventist Magazine, Irish Baptist, Evangelical Movement of Wales magazine, Engage (BMS World Mission) and sporty Bible reading notes for Bible Reading Fellowship's *New Daylight*.
- Random fact: 2006-2016 Stuart has visited different 37 countries.

A story

In 2012 in Ukraine I had an amazing experience. While taking part in a TV programme, I met Alina, a professional futsal player. (Futsal is indoor football, hardly known in UK but sufficiently developed in parts of Europe that there are professional leagues – even for women). I asked Alina if I could do an interview with her, which happened a few days later.

Before the interview started Alina told me she had something to say to me – speaking through a translator. “When you asked for the interview I did not know who you were. Afterwards I realized that you had written the book which totally changed my attitude to sport. I was struggling to reconcile playing professional sport with my Christian faith and was thinking seriously about stopping playing. Then someone gave me *Born to play*. Now I know God wants me to play futsal and to use my gifts for him. I now see playing futsal as worship of God. Being famous in futsal means that people ask me questions and I am able to tell them the secret of my life – God. After the Bible, *Born to play* is the most important book I have read”.