

# THE VOICE

magazine of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion

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## Rosedale's Farewell to Bethany

by Lynn Sobczak

**Sunday 15 June was the very fond farewell service to the much loved Pastor of Rosedale Community Church, Cheshunt, Rev Bethany Burrage.** It was a day of mixed emotions: sadness to say goodbye to Bethany and her daughter Hannah, who will be moving with her, and at the same time, a celebration of all that she has achieved during her time at Rosedale. She has been a member for nearly 17 years and following ordination, she was appointed as the Minister nearly seven years ago.

Bethany established and led the Sunday School and youth work for 10 years; ran holiday Bible Clubs enjoyed by many local children; took the youth on camps and joined in all sorts of activities, including water fights! Bethany established

the Warm Welcome nearly three years ago where members of the community enjoy friendship, activities and lunch



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COUNTESS OF  
HUNTINGDON'S CONNEXION

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# Rosedale's Farewell to Bethany

*...continued from front cover*

The numbers have gone from strength to strength and it has been described as a lifesaver by several people. She has run groups and courses, and spoken in local schools and at clubs for older people, as well as inspiring the church. She started a Walk for Wellbeing, which has been a huge benefit to the congregation and the community, and a Parent & Toddlers group which has been hugely popular. And all who attended will never forget last Christmas Day when Bethany and her daughters hosted Christmas dinner and an afternoon of entertainment at the church.

A number of people spoke in praise of Bethany's ministry and involvement in the community, mentioning the parts played by her four lovely daughters.

Our president, ex-president and two trustees of The Connexion expressed their thanks and good wishes, as well as various members of the congregation. The president changed hats as it were and also spoke as the UK Head of the Sierra Leone Mission, praising Bethany's involvement, which has included two ministry trips to Sierra Leone, and greetings and thanks were received and read out from

Magnus: the Bishop of Sierra Leone. Janet had travelled from Cornwall to be with us; Joe & Elizabeth from the Isle of Sheppey. Councillor Mark Mills Bishop spoke on behalf of Broxbourne Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council, praising Bethany's tireless work for the community and the very real differences she has made. Councillor Paul Seeby was also in attendance. All this was to a back drop of pictures taken over the years.

Bethany has led from the front, encouraging others to try new things and develop their gifts. She has supported both members of the church and people in the community with no connection to the church and has gone the extra mile on very many occasions.

At the conclusion of the service, Bethany passed on a literal baton (very appropriate for a runner: Bethany established Park Run in the area) to the new Pastor, Alex, who will be in post from September.

The service was followed by a delicious buffet and an opportunity to take the microphone to give thanks and express good wishes to Bethany and her daughters. We are losing someone very dear to us but wish her well as she returns to her roots and takes up the post of Pastor of West Auckland Vineyard Church in County Durham.

# A VISIT TO PAKISTAN



*By Simon Allaby*

In March this year, I returned from my 7th visit to Pakistan. As always it was a very busy programme with many opportunities to preach and teach, including pastor's seminars, youth Bible studies, a nurses' conference, men's fellowship meeting and outreach to villages and brick kiln factories. I thought it might be most helpful to use this photo to give a glimpse into the lives of many living in Pakistan today and the difference Christians can make by showing the love and compassion of Jesus.

In the background you can see smoke rising from the chimney above the kiln where the bricks are being fired. There are thousands of such factories and in this part of Pakistan some two million people live and work in them. Families are caught up in bonded slavery with generation after generation trying to gain their freedom by making bricks to repay debts, mostly without success. A family of four have to make 1,000 bricks a day for which they will be paid £3. Living conditions are basic with no schools, shops or healthcare and inadequate diet. But there is hope for some.

In the foreground are two groups of children. The children on the right are able to attend a school which has been set up by the church and which has been permitted by the brick kiln owner (sometimes they refuse permission). As well as schooling they are given a decent meal including an egg, bread, fruit and milk. They might easily have been children from a school in England. But there is only enough funding to pay for half the children. So the children on the left of the picture do not attend school and do not get the meal. The contrast could not be more striking as they looked tired and depressed. My friend who runs the school longs for the day when the school can be expanded to include all the children.

While education provides the best route out of the brick kilns for the next generation, a fortunate few gain their freedom by having their debt paid. My last preaching engagement was at a church in the Butter Colony just outside Lahore. The colony is made up of families who have been redeemed. Why the Butter Colony? In the process of making butter a residue is left

behind called lasi. So those who have been redeemed are called the butter, while those still left in brick kiln slavery are known as the lasi.

Thank God that in Jesus we have a Saviour who has paid all our debts so that we can all live in the 'Butter Colony'. Thank God too that with the wealth he has blessed us with we can improve the lives of others by sharing both our material and spiritual riches.

I hope to return in 2026.

# Dangers Faced By Magnus Working With Street Children in SL

Magnus continues to carry out his work in trying to help the large numbers of street children in Sierra Leone, visiting them regularly with food, drinks and medical items. Sometimes, however, this valuable missionary work comes with personal risk.

In April Magnus reported a particularly challenging night on the streets. Just after midnight he reached a place called Corner Kick in the 'five five' area in Waterloo, which during the day houses a small market, where women sell food and cooking ingredients. It is an area which is often populated by homeless and young girls.

Magnus said, 'Initially, I met about seven of the girls, one of whom already knew me, and began speaking to them about Jesus. All were Muslims, so they



asked a lot of questions about Jesus, telling me they were fasting during Ramadam. After responding to their request for a prayer, I shared a bag of bread, sardines and juice with them. I had enough with me to feed 20, and I don't know how this information was spread so quickly, but I was suddenly overcrowded with over 20 new boys, including a few drug addicts who were more senior. One of them forcefully snatched the bag from me, including my phone, taking out items for himself and giving the rest to some of the other boys. There was only one female present, who was a little older, and thankfully, my phone was eventually returned to me. It was a very intimidating experience. On this occasion I wasn't hurt, but it serves as a warning and I left the scene feeling very afraid and shaken. I thank you for your prayers of protection over me in these situations.'

Magnus has advised us that working with these children and youths has increasingly become more dangerous as many are desperate for food.

In addition, there has been a massive rise in drug taking among the children over the past couple of

years - particularly using the drug Kush, which is so addictive, users can become hooked after a single hit, trapping them in a cycle of self-destruction.

During one of her visits to the streets with Magnus, Janet O'Shea, Chair of Sierra Leone Mission (SLM), also witnessed this: 'I have had the privilege of joining Magnus several times to minister to the children and provide them with food and drink. I have seen first-hand how the children are often so hungry they can become very boisterous. Tragically, because these children can see no future for themselves, they are devoid of hope.'

Janet adds, 'We praise and thank God for giving Magnus the vision for Bethesda Orphanage, a sanctuary for street children, which has enabled him to rescue many helpless boys and girls and provide a safe and loving environment, where they can thrive.

'We also offer thanks for the generosity of people who continue to support this amazing outreach. When God guides, God provides'

# London To Brighton Bike Race - calling at Turners Hill Free Church

*By Peter James (Turners Hill Free Church)*

The London to Brighton bike ride is an annual charity cycling event in the UK, covering approximately 54 miles (about 87 km) from Clapham Common in London to Brighton seafront. It's organised by charities such as the British Heart Foundation and Alzheimer's

Research UK, among many others, raising funds through participants' sponsorship. It is a non-competitive, charity-focused London-to-seaside bike ride that brings together thousands of cyclists for a good cause each summer.



Here at Turners Hill Free Church, we enjoy being located directly on the road that cyclists take. Each year, we become an 'unofficial stop' where cyclists can come and take a break. The church car park is transformed into an outdoor café. We provide cakes, sweets, treats (which are baked mainly by our congregation), teas, coffees and much-needed water. The whole church gets involved, from serving the cyclists to chatting with them and learning their stories. The Church children stand and cheer with banners, handing out water to the cyclists as they come up the steep hill. This year will also included a prayer board for any prayer requests, which was very

popular and started some good conversations as well as live singing of worship songs as cyclists rest.

The church has been doing this for many years. Many of the cyclists

who enter each year will often stop specifically to visit, say hello, and enjoy some refreshments, thanking us for our generosity. It has been a great blessing for us as a church in our outreach.





**How can we be a family today?**

Registration forms:  
**[cofhconnexion.org.uk](http://cofhconnexion.org.uk)**  
book your place by 30th September

Worship, fellowship,  
Trustees' & SLM AGMs,  
inspiring speakers from  
around the Connexion,  
news from the churches  
and family barn dance



**Oct 27th-29th 2025**  
**High Leigh Conference Centre**  
**Hoddesdon, Herts. EN11 8SG**



It's that time of year again! We are all looking forward to the annual **Connexion Conference**, which will run for three days from Monday 27th to Wednesday 29th October 2025, at **High Leigh Conference Centre** in Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire.

The Conference is a hugely popular event, which offers a perfect opportunity to bring our communities together to catch up and enjoy spending time with each other in lovely surroundings. There will be three days of prayer, worship, learning, discussion, inspiration, fun and friendship! As always the Conference is open to all ages, with everyone catered for in a varied programme of activities and entertainment.

Arrangements also remain flexible to suit individual preferences. Visitors can attend for the full three days, or come for the dates of choice - either just for the day or to stay overnight.

The theme this year is **Dwelling in Unity**, which will feature one talk per day to explore relevant aspects, by inspiring speakers from The Connexion.

## Keynote Speakers

Monday 27th, **Peter James**: Made One Through Christ

Tuesday 28th, **TBC**: Made One Through The Bible

Wednesday 29th, **Simon Allaby**: Made One Through The Spirit

As well as learning, worship and fellowship, the three-day event will include Trustee and Sierra Leone Mission (SLM) AGMs, news from Connexion churches in the UK and a family barn dance. Plus, of course, plenty of free time to catch up with a cup of coffee!

## How to book

Visit The Connexion website to download the Conference Booking Form, and please make your bookings as early as possible, and no later than 30 September.

Also check out the programme on the website, which provides details of the planned activities over the three days.

***<https://www.cofhconnexion.org.uk/what-s-new/13-conferences/651-book-now-conference-2025>***

We look forward to seeing you there!



We support the work of Countess of Huntingdon Connexion churches in Sierra Leone through contributing to ministers' wages, providing funding for ministerial training, and building and maintaining churches. We also support the care and education of children through the Bethesda Orphanage and The Connexion's schools, helping with teachers' salaries and teacher training. When necessary, we help to restore homes damaged during unrest, and can assist in times of emergency or urgent need.

### **Making a Donation**

If you would like to make a donation, to help SLM's work in

Sierra Leone, just click on the Donations button, located at the top of each website page. Please also state if you would like your donation to go towards a particular project.

You can also donate by bank transfer to

Barclays Bank  
Sort code: **20-16-08**, Account number: **30799076**, Account name: **Sierra Leone Mission**

(NB We are very grateful to receive anonymous donations, but when making a bank transfer donation, the donor's name is needed for auditing purposes. Please be assured this information will remain private.)

# CHILDREN'S RETREAT 2025 MAKOILONGA

In 2024, part of the Cheshunt Foundation Grant was used to fund a very successful Children's Retreat, held in Rotifunk, Southern Sierra Leone, for 148 children.

Unfortunately, this year the grant didn't stretch far enough to cover the costs, and disappointment was on the horizon for the children.

However, by God's Grace and intervention a generous donation was received specifically for this event and the Children's Retreat 2025 was reinstated!

A team in Sierra Leone prepared and organised for the weekend and, for once, Magnus was able to take a back seat! It was also very exciting to learn that 'Big Mohammed' from Bethesda was attending to lead one of the sessions.

At the weekend, 20–22 June, children from many of our Connexion Churches arrived at Makoilonga, full of excitement and anticipation for what promised to be

a great time ahead. The team initially made preparations for 100 children, and were astounded when 216 children attended!

Magnus commented, after he visited the location on Saturday, 'I am very much encouraged by the children, especially when they had a Bible quiz. The Connexion has a great future here.'

Magnus also took boxes of clothes from last year's shipment of donations from the UK - and the delight on the children's faces said it all!

We give thanks for the wonderful donation, which made it possible to hold this event again in 2025, and Janet O'Shea, Chair of Sierra Leone Mission (SLM), asks that we join together in prayer for the children, asking that they will stay close to the Lord as they are nurtured by our Connexion family in Sierra Leone.

We also pray for another successful Children's Retreat in 2026!



# EXPLORING FAITH TOGETHER IN OUR CHURCHES

## The Chapel, Mortimer West End

has been running a 12 week series studying Women of the Bible.



Some of the characters featured are familiar, such as Martha and Mary, or Esther, whereas others, Euodia and Syntyche for example, may not be as well known. Some may not even have been named. But each has their story to tell.

Each week, regular Chapel and guest speakers have been examining this collection of biblical women to reveal hidden wisdom and encouragement from these often inspiring and enigmatic figures. Meanwhile...

## Wormley Free Church

Over the past three months, Wormley Free Church has been running the Alpha Course, welcoming up to 15 guests each

week. The sessions combined warm fellowship with delicious meals prepared by members of the congregation, followed by engaging video presentations and lively, thought-provoking discussions.

The course provided a safe and open space for people to ask questions, explore the Christian faith, and share perspectives with one another. Many spoke of how much they enjoyed not only the teaching but also the sense of community that grew around the shared table.



Building on the enthusiasm and friendships formed during Alpha, the church has now invited the group, along with one or two new faces, to take part in an eight-week study of Mark's Gospel. This next step offers a chance to look more closely at the life and ministry of Jesus, continuing the journey of discovery together.

# SUSSEX CONNEXION

As a Connexion church family, apart from the annual Conference, there are not many opportunities when individuals can meet together, and the Trustees are often thinking about ways in which this can be encouraged.

A few years ago the Ministers in Sussex decided to meet up for lunch every couple of months to get to know one another better and to spend time sharing and praying for each other. The Cluster now includes Simon Allaby at Bolney Village Chapel, Peter James at Turners Hill Free Church, Peter Earle at Shoreham Free Church, David Batchelor at South Street Eastbourne, Martin Brown and Dave Sweetman at Hailsham Gospel Mission, 'CK' at Ote Hall Chapel and Gordon Hamilton.

On Friday 9 May five of the members were able to have a quiet day at Penhurst Retreat Centre, which is set in the beautiful East Sussex countryside. The group met at 10am and spent some time in worship and prayer before giving 'CK' some time to introduce himself and speak about how he and his wife seem to have been called to Ote Hall Chapel. (More about this story will follow at a later date.)

After lunch there was time to go for

a walk, sit in the sunshine or get creative in the art room, before sharing and praying together again and then leaving at 4pm.

It was a wonderful day and we are thankful to the Cheshunt Fund for covering the cost. It is definitely something to be repeated in the future and maybe next time extending the visit to 24 hours.

The Connexion Trustees are hoping to facilitate similar clusters in other parts of the country where geography allows (and on Zoom where it doesn't!)



*The six Sussex Churches represented: Shoreham Free Church, Hailsham Gospel Mission, Turners Hill Free Church, Ote Hall Chapel Wivelsfield, Bolney Village Chapel and South Street, Eastbourne.*

# THE VOICE

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COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON'S CONNEXION  
(UK AND SIERRA LEONE)



THE SIERRA LEONE MISSION

THE  
CONNEXION