

## Trip report from Sierra Leone 21<sup>st</sup> May – 4<sup>th</sup> June

### The other Bolney Church!

Not long after I arrived in Bolney in December 2010 I learned that a new church had been built in Sierra Leone with money that had been raised during the rebuilding of BVC in 2004. I was unable to attend the opening of this church in 2011 but it became a dream of mine to one day visit to the 'other' Bolney Church and meet its pastor.



So here I am at last with Pastor Christopher Dove at his church in Bureh Town. Christopher travels some distance to be at the church at weekends and while there is a small manse next door it has no electricity (none in the village), no water and no furniture. Since I returned, we have been able to buy him a bed!



### Bethesda Children's Home



Opened in 2013 Bethesda provides a home for children who were previously either living on the streets or with parents either unable or unwilling to care for them. It was built with two guest rooms and became our home during our stay. It was such a joy to spend time with a remarkable group of young people and inspiring each evening as they took turns to lead a time of Bible study and prayer.



Over our second weekend seven former Bethesda children, who are now all at university, came back and we all went for a wonderful trip to the beach – a rare treat for them all!



## Connexion Schools

23 Connexion schools provide education for 5,000 children. The challenges are enormous with teachers often poorly qualified and paid, buildings in disrepair and a general shortage of teaching aids. But there are also many signs of hope.

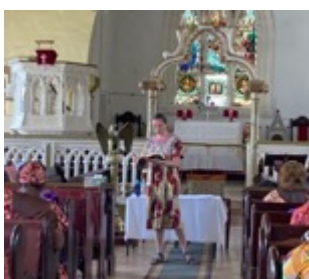
Janet spent 6 days teaching Class 1 and introducing new teaching methods. 19 children on the first day quickly grew to 56! (Still a relatively small class). After school each day we decorated the walls with colourful teaching aids.

(Below) Janet also spent a morning with headteachers inspiring and challenging them to be the best that they could be.



(r) They loved playing the games at the end of the morning and were very competitive!

## Conferences on Leadership and Mission and Evangelism



While Janet was busy in school Bethany and I had the privilege of teaching a one-day conference on Leadership with 50-60 leaders and a 3-day conference on Mission and Evangelism with over 90 attending each day. For the former Bethany taught on 'leading from A to B' and the character of a godly leader and I

taught a session on 'finishing well'. For the latter Bethany taught on discipleship and how to be with Jesus and become like him, while I taught on how God's Kingdom grows, explored 'how good is the good news?', and unpacked the Great Commission. We hope and pray that those who came were inspired and encouraged in the work God has called them to do. Most are poor and with the inflation rate in Sierra Leone having tripled this year it is harder and harder to make ends meet.



(r) Daniel Koroma (the Connexion agent in SL) leading worship

## Health Centre



With limited options for healthcare, the Connexion Health Centre provides a much-needed service to the local community. A new maternity wing is under construction, but completion has been delayed due to the trebling this year of the cost of building materials.

It was also of great benefit to us when Bethany contracted malaria!



A ward with Community Health Officer and Bishop Magnus



The current maternity unit



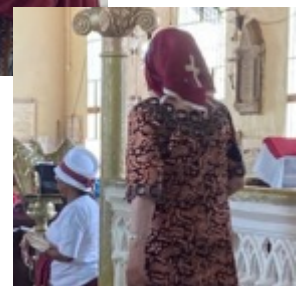
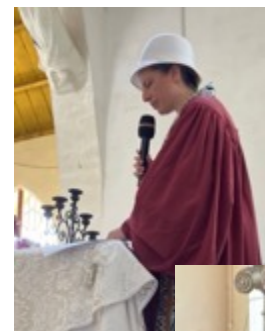
The laboratory



The new maternity unit awaiting completion

## A glorious service!

On our last Sunday we were privileged to share in a wonderful service at St Mark's Cathedral. Reminiscent of Sister Act the service began with a robed choir processing in slowly and singing All Things Bright and Beautiful before later exploding into joyful African worship as the congregation danced their way to the front to make their offering. I almost got vertigo in the pulpit (!) and somehow juggled a microphone and my Bible in the face of a fan which was trying to blow everything away! Women are required to cover their heads for Communion, so Bethany got to wear a very nice hat and Janet a head covering handed out by one of the vergers. All in all, an unforgettable experience.



**And finally...**

There simply isn't space to record everything we did and all we saw, so here are a few final snapshots:

We ate a lot of fish – some of them quite grumpy!



(r) Beating cassava leaves with Moses the student BVC sponsors



Helping lay the foundations for a new livestock farm

(r) More alien than human this is actually me!



(l) No such thing as maternity leave in SL so little one comes to school with his mum



Who doesn't appreciate the gift of a live chicken!



How many can you fit into a 12-seater Minibus? In Sierra Leone 25



Team Sierra Leone 2024