

# The Voice

Autumn 2021 No.422



THE  
CONNEXION

The Sierra Leone Mission

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## **WELCOME From The Editor**

HELLO everyone, and welcome to the Autumn edition of the Voice magazine! My legs have finally fully recovered from those fifty miles, and you need only ask my mother to know how much I complained on some of those hills (not at all, right Mum?).

But more on that later! We have a brilliant kick off with our Bible study, before moving on to hearing from what the youth of the Connexion have been up to this summer. Youth conference will be going ahead along-side the main conference, and bookings are open and can be found on the website. We also have updates from Bethesda and an article on how Covid has impacted Sierra Leone as a country.

The word from the Trustees outlines each of their roles in the Connexion, followed by the musings of our President Ken Stone from this summer. Our history article gives a special and detailed recounting of the origins of Sheppey Evangelical Church; the request for the histories of each Connexion church is still open and I would love to gather more!

We have also said a sorrowful farewell to our friend and brother Ken Stone who, after many years of service to God and the Connexion, went to be with the Lord in early June.

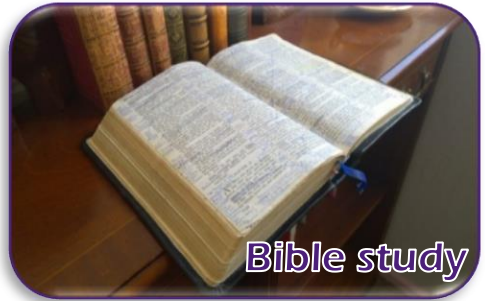
Finally, any articles or photos of news from around The Connexion are greatly welcomed and appreciated to be included in the magazine. The deadline for our next addition is 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2021. Just email me at: [estherkerengreen@gmail.com](mailto:estherkerengreen@gmail.com).



# Bible study: Autumn's Great Joy

By David Batchelor

In my quiet times recently, I've been reading the beginning of Luke's gospel. We normally read these passages at Christmas, but I think they're really worth meditating on when the Christmas trappings are not around. Woven into Luke's narrative of Christ's incarnation are a number of personal testimonies, rejoicing in this "Good News of great joy" (2:10). They are a delight, and I'd like to take you through some of them.



1. John the Baptist and Elizabeth (1:39-45). This is so wonderful—and unexpected. What we have here is the first human recognition of Son of God incarnate (just a few days after the Holy Spirit has incarnated Him in Mary's virgin womb). The elderly Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, lifts up her voice in joy at the privilege of being visited by the mother bearing "my Lord" (1:43). But Elizabeth is not (quite) the first to recognize the presence of Christ incarnate. The first person to do so is the unborn baby John, filled with the Holy Spirit, who leaps for joy in Elizabeth's womb (1:41, 44).

Ever seen cattle leaping for joy when released into the fields after being cooped up all winter? (Web-search it—it's worth seeing.) Malachi 4:2



prophesies that the redeemed will do exactly this on the great and awesome Day of the Lord (when Christ comes to judge). How fitting, then, that at Christ's incarnation, the first human recognition of Him was a leap for joy! But how surprising that it was an *unborn baby* that first

perceived Him and did this! An unborn baby leads earth's worship at the coming of Christ in flesh.

## 2. Mary (1:46-55).

Immediately following on from what's just been described, Mary herself responds with her famous 'Magnificat'. As I read this again recently, I was



particularly struck by the overflowing heart must have been behind her opening words in 1:46-47: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour". How Mary's heart must have soared for joy by the Holy Spirit, to have spoken those words. As she goes on to say (in 1:48), she was indeed blessed to have been given the honour of bearing the Son of God in her virgin womb (1:30-35), but what she so wants to *magnify* and *glory in* is not herself, but "God my Saviour" (1:47). Do you know what it is to have a heart ravished with God, for having saved you through Christ?

3. Zechariah (1:67-79). I love the end of Zechariah's prophecy (verses 78-79) —I hope it never grows dull to me. This seems to me to be Luke's equivalent of John 3:16. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Zechariah speaks of "the tender mercy of our God, whereby the Sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death". To anyone who has been awakened to their sinfulness before God, and, with a deep sense of their shame and guilt, has prayed like the tax collector in 18:13 ("God, be merciful to be a sinner") and been born again in Christ, these closing words of Zechariah's prophecy are like water to the thirsty. Jesus Christ is the Sunrise sent to us from on high by the tender mercy of our God. Drink Him in deeply, slowly, prayerfully and thankfully from Zechariah's words here.

4. The Shepherds (2:8-20). The shepherds certainly had a fright initially at the angel's appearance (2:9); but how their hearts were filled with joy at the angel's message of a Saviour born for them and for all the people of God (2:10-11). See how they later glorified and praised God (2:20), not just for

what they had seen (the Baby Himself) but primarily for what they had *heard*—i.e. that this Baby is the Messiah, the Lord Himself, come to save us. That message in 2:11 was absolutely key for the shepherds: it's what they subsequently made



known widely, to the amazement of everyone who heard (2:17-18). The shepherds may not have been great with words (we have no poetic words recorded that they said, unlike for Mary, Zechariah and Simeon), but they just overflowed with this Good News that the angel had told them (in 2:11).

There are others, similarly overjoyed at the arrival of the Messiah—Simeon (2:25-35), and Anna (2:36-38). You might like to read them too. The Lord Jesus really is “Good News of great joy” for all who repent and believe in Him (5:32; 15:10; 24:47).

## Youth Camp after Lockdown

By Hannah Green

Due to lockdown, we have not been able to do as much with our church youth group as we would usually have done before. As summer arrived, here at Rosedale we were really missing our youth camp and meeting up with friends we have made in years past. This is why it was so exciting to be able to attend an event called



CampFire – a youth camp along with three other church youth groups. In previous years, we have been to a similar event called Intents, though it was

on a much larger scale. This summer, we enjoyed fewer numbers, but an equal amount of fun!

Our group consisted of five of us: me (Hannah), Danai, Michael, William, and Jesiah, along with our youth leaders and pastor, Becky and Bethany. The camping ground was a large, muddy farm in Norwich with plenty of fields and space for all of the activities they had planned, including a water fight, manhunt, and some heated card games. Being an overnight camp, you always had to stay on your guard turning corners in the dark because screaming too loud disturbed the neighbours, horses, hens....

As a youth group, we particularly enjoyed the worship in the barn every day, as well as getting to be around other Christians our age, which isn't something we have the opportunity to do of in school. One of my personal favourite activities was singing around the evening campfire with our youth leader, Becky, and with the new friends we were able to make and keep in touch with afterwards. Whether or not we were in tune as we sang can be put up for debate later – if we are able to return for a spectacular time next year.

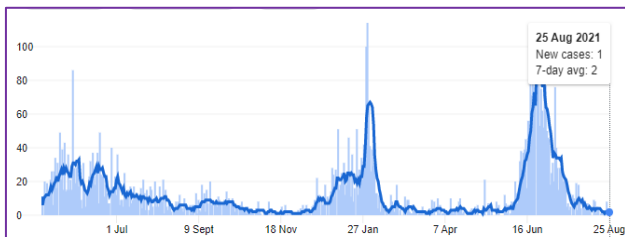
Overall, being surrounded by other Christians after a long lockdown of cancelled activities was amazing, as well as listening to the intriguing discussions about God and prayer throughout difficult times. We can't wait to go again and for youth group to kick back in with the end of the pandemic!

## Covid-19 Sierra Leone Update

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> August

Confirmed cases: 6,358

Deaths: 121



# The Impact of Covid in Sierra Leone

By Magnus Bendu

It is sometimes said that when the West sneezes, Africa catches the cold. This is even truer that when the UK sneezes, Sierra Leone catches the cold. There are many reasons for this assumption. Sierra Leone is heavily dependent on the West and the UK in particular for donations and projects that drive the economy and, in some cases, outreach and infrastructural activities of the Church. The country also benefits a lot from remittances and support sent by Sierra Leoneans living and working in the West and abroad generally. Once anything strikes the benefactors, the beneficiaries suffer significantly.

When Covid started in Wuhan, China in November/December 2019, very few people in Sierra Leone knew what was happening in the world. We started developing interest when the virus attacked Italy. Once it reached the United Kingdom, we fastened our seat belts, knowing fully well that Sierra Leone is a



potential destination either of the virus or its repercussion. Not too long later, at the end of April, the virus arrived in Sierra Leone. At that time, the country was already in panic because it took our memories back to the deadly haemorrhagic fever disease – Ebola, which ravaged the nation in 2014. With news about how the virus was terrifying and taking lives in Italy, Spain and the UK, we concluded that our hope was only in God’s hands. We are fully aware of how weak our medical system is.

However, added to God’s mercy, we had some other God-given advantages that we didn’t countenance and that is the hot burning sun. There was also the advantage of the Ebola Response apparatus which had not been completely dismantled. The panic lasted only for three months in the first

wave and went almost without notice in the second wave. The third wave which threatened with the Delta variant of the virus is almost under control. Not many people have died in all three waves and a very insignificant number was reported infected as well. As at the time of writing, only 6332 out of a population of seven million have been reported infected and 121 reported dead as a result of the virus. Our efforts in tackling the virus were praised by the international community, but I don't know if we should be totally proud of such compliments.

Even though the strategies of hand washing, sanitizing, social distancing, and facial masking prevention methods are being implemented to some extent, I don't believe that is the reason why we haven't faced the intense wrath of the virus because a huge majority of the people consistently



flout prevention rules which are directly opposed our very communal way of life. It may not be a scientific fact but I think the main reason why we have been spared from the intensity of the pandemic in terms of deaths and infection rate is that, the virus' spread and survival rate is drastically impeded by the heat of the sun. Whatever may have helped us, we must be very grateful to God, even as we share the burden of the seriously affected countries in terms of death toll and infection rate.

The low infection and death rate from the virus does not in any way suggest a low impact of the consequences of the virus in Sierra Leone. There has been tremendous social and economic impact in all spheres – the government, Schools, Churches and families. Prices of basic commodities have hiked exponentially as most of what we consume is imported (a shameful reality though). Movements and normal activities in the country are restricted for most of the time including congregational worship which has the capacity to provide a lot of psychological therapy besides the potential for divine intervention. All of these are enough to wreck an already pathologically weak economy such as ours.

Many are against the restrictions either because they do not believe in the existence of the virus or their political orientations forces them to deliberately oppose anything done by the government in power. But there is also a positive side to it all. Petty traders, who would spend over twelve hours out of their homes daily, now spend some time with their families which seem good for children. Those who never had time to pray together did. But life became harder and harder as most people depend on hand-to-mouth for their survival. Subsistence agriculture also improved a little as menial jobs in urban centres dwindled, causing some inhabitants to recede to their villages to farm, which attracts no restrictions. This too is difficult as they need imported rice to eat as food to keep them working.

Yet because many of us were born in these poverty infested circumstances, mainly as a result of human failure, there seems to be a lot of resilience among the people. Amidst the suffering many are happy to praise their maker while they have breath. With the extremely poor health system and very low income per capita, a full fledged attack by Covid would have just buried this poor nation alive. But God always finds a way of giving strength to the weak. Maybe one of biggest prayer points against a Covid-controlled world for us here is that it has the potential to reinforce a 'poverty mentality' which can keep people less motivated to work hard and thus walk their way out of extreme economic poverty as nothing seems to be certain except God.



This is where the Church comes in to let the world know that Jesus lives. And because He lives so we can face tomorrow without fear. Jesus is the one who holds our future. He will live forever. Covid will not live forever. Covid will soon disappear. As the scripture says: "Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut your doors behind you.

Hide yourselves a little while until the wrath has passed" (Isaiah 26:20). "For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning (Ps. 30:5).

**The 17<sup>th</sup> annual  
S.L.M.  
Charity Golf Day  
24<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

**9.30am Bacon sandwich and coffee/tea**

**18 hole Stableford (10am 1<sup>st</sup> Tee)**

**Plus meal afterwards + prizes £40**

**Horne Park Golf Club**

**Croydon Barn Lane,**

**Surrey, RH9 8JP**



**Speak to Gordon Hamilton if interested**

**07551199897**

**Or email [gordon@hamiltonshouse.co.uk](mailto:gordon@hamiltonshouse.co.uk)**

***Due to the covid19 coronavirus, the food options may change, therefore  
so will the overall cost.***

# 50 Miles of the Pennine Way

By Esther Green

We did it! My mum and I started our hike on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> of July and walked for 16 miles, starting out at Hawes and ending at Tan Hill the location of the highest pub in England. I had been prewarned that this would be the hardest day of the three, and looking back it definitely was! The weather was beautiful and sunny – windy up on the dales – then poured with rain about three hundred meters to the end. However, the views from each dale we climbed were spectacular, always showing rolling hills and countryside far off into the distance.



Everyone we passed was incredibly friendly and we often ended up stopping and exchanging our walking aspirations for the day. After the initial “These hills are much harder than the ones we have down south!” it was wonderful to speak to so many other hikers. What was slightly annoying was when we were behind a group for a long while, then saw that we were catching them up - only to then find that they had already reached the top and turned around to come back down!

The second day we were joined by my sister Becky and walked from Bowes to



Low Force waterfall. This was a much flatter and easier day, which was perfect for our aching feet from the day before. It started with a bit of light drizzle, but soon cleared up for a lovely day. And we

were able to have a lovely cup of hot chocolate on our way through Middleton-in-Teesdale.

For the third and final day, it was back to just me and mum, and it rained the entire time! This time we started in Cumbria and walked 'home' to Teesdale, beginning with a ridiculously steep climb straight up into the clouds.



As always, this was just as I like to start my hikes – out of breath and wishing I had a pair of wings to carry me to the top, but these were the best views so far. Leaving out from Dufton and making our way back to Low Force, we hiked over a point known as High Cup Nick. A beautiful scar forming a valley looking down into the town. The views would have been clearer if it weren't for the clouds (but I have no intention of making that climb again just to see them in the sun, I'm sure you understand).

All reminiscence of the hills aside, it was a beautiful three days of hiking for a great cause! The total amount of money we've raised so far is £632 and there's still the opportunity to get in there if you haven't been able to donate yet. All the money we raise will go towards the Sierra Leone Mission: everything you hear about the missions work overseas and from Bishop Magnus is helped by the money you have given, and we are so grateful.

A big thank you to everyone who has donated to this fundraiser. Not to mention a thank you to my Granma who drove us to our start and finish points every day, often coming over tiny and terrifying roads. We love you Granma.

Donations to the Sierra Leone Mission won't end after this! Check out the last page to see how you can keep giving and supporting our work, or head over to the Connexion where you only have to press a button.

# Youth Conference 2021

**Along-side the Main Conference, we will also be starting our Youth Conference!**

**The speaker is arranged, so come along and join us all for some worship, games and fun!**



**Ages 13-18yrs**

**Book via the main booking form.**



## **Obituary: Ken Stone**

**On the 5<sup>th</sup> of June we learned that our dear friend and brother Ken Stone had 'gone home to Jesus'.**



**Ken had given the Connexion a lifetime of service, attending a number of our churches, including Westcott, Basingstoke and, for many years, Hailsham. In this time, he also guided us as the Chair of Trustees and Sierra Leone Mission. His first wife, Prudence, was the daughter of Quinton De'Ath, a Trustee and Connexional pastor, and in more recent years he worshipped and led the work at Hailsham with Christine.**

# Update on Bethesda

By Janet O'Shea

Outside of the walls of Bethesda, change has been happening; the two narrow lane roads have been transformed into a busy four lane toll road.

Unfortunately, this has brought problems to Bethesda that were not initially foreseen, but have

shown themselves as a certain season begins. The road has been built higher than the building itself, meaning that during rainy season the torrential rain has drained off the road into the grounds. This has resulted in deep water surrounding Bethesda and Magnus having to dig 'soakaways' to absorb the excess water.



In Sierra Leone, just before the heavy rain, there is a rush of wind. On one particular day in June the children went off to school as they would any other day. However, to let in some cool air, the boys had opened all of their windows and not shut them before they left. The strength of the wind smashed the windows causing yet more repair work for Magnus. Like all properties there is always maintenance to keep the building in order, and although we often advertise the new building projects going on, Bethesda is not exempt from the occasional upkeep.



However, the positives totally outweigh the negatives! The children have excelled once again at school. Six of them have passed their exams to progress to senior school and two have reached the end of their school life. The others are moving up into their next classes. Great credit must be given not only to the children for their

hard work but to Sallay and latterly to James, who help with homework and ensure they understand their work fully. Their dedication to the education of the children at Bethesda has been outstanding.

Mariatu and Abdul will take their final exams at the end of August. Good grades will confirm places for them at university to study medicine and law. This is such a thrill as these young people had nothing when Magnus found them and gave them a home. 'Thank you, God for the opportunities You have created for the children at Bethesda.'

In October we will introduce an exciting initiative making it possible to 'adopt' one of the children and become more involved in their individual, everyday lives. Communication could be a challenge, but every day there are more advances in technology and we are determined to make it work and provide this amazing opportunity. More information will be available and delivered at conference.

Bethesda continues to be a wonderful Christian home for children whose young lives have been severely damaged. It is an exciting work to be part of and we can ALL be involved. Please pray for these children and that God would raise them up to be Godly men and women living for Him in Sierra Leone.



## **Book Now!**

**Book your place at this Year's conference by filling in the Conference Booking Form on the website or at this address:**

**<https://www.cofhconnexion.org.uk/images/Connexion-conference-booking-form-Oct-2021.pdf>**



**We will be meeting at High Leigh Conference Centre on the 25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> of October.**

**We will be delighted to gather together as a Connexion family after so long.**



# It's Good To Talk

By Ben Quant

Bob Hoskins and BT may have hijacked the phrase a few years back to encourage us to buy into their services, but nevertheless, the catchphrase is still true - it is good to talk! The last 18 months have been a challenging time, a cause for sorrow and of stress, but they've also been a time to reflect, re-evaluate and learn. Amongst it all, many of us have been reminded just how crucial and central relationships are.



This should come as no surprise, after all, relationship lies at the heart of our faith, at the heart of God even. God is the community of Father, Son and Spirit, a relationship of mutual service, will and love. This overflows beyond the Trinity to the Church and the world that God made and loves. Perhaps we've also been reminded this year that the Church is not the building, or even our services, but the people, the family of God, living out their faith together in their local communities and across the globe. For this I am grateful, otherwise we would have ceased to exist when lockdown bit, closing our premises and preventing our physical gatherings.

My father was one of eleven children - his mother was an only child and we often joke that she over-compensated! Most of the children married and had children of their own, and now that generation is having or have had children too. The result is that I have no idea who many of my relatives are, there are just too many of them. As The Connexion, we're accustomed to the idea that we're a small movement of small churches, it's hard to explain who we are without mentioning this even if we aspire to grow. Our size, however, can be an advantage when we think of relationships. Being a small family means that

it is easy to get to know people, especially when they're friendly as our family tends to be. You can see this at Conference, which always primarily feels like a family reunion rather than a conference or business meeting.



This family feel is challenged by our geographical spread. From Middleton (Manchester) to St Ives (Cornwall), our congregations are far apart, meaning that we don't see each other all that much. This has been a barrier to our unity; how can we be one when we're too far apart to meet or work together regularly?

This is another area where lockdown has broadened our horizons. The rise of video conferencing through the likes of Zoom, have opened our eyes to a world of possibilities. We may not have been able to meet physically, but we've had ministers' meetings, church leaders' meetings, quiz nights, joint services, virtual choirs and streamed events. Technology has allowed us to keep in touch, deepen and create relationships. This is certainly something I'd like to try and develop more going forward. It turns out that there are ways in which we can meet, pray, share, debate, encourage and have fun together, even when we're in different counties. We've even run Alpha online with one guest attending from his houseboat; we've never quite known where he'll dial in from each week!

Of course, this doesn't replace the value of physically seeing each other and talking with each other. Conference will no doubt remain the main opportunity for us to do this, a valuable chance to worship, eat, celebrate and pray together and help discern what God is saying to us. We've not managed a full Conference since 2019, but October's is not far away now at all. Have you booked in yet? Hopefully there will still be time when you're reading this - head over to the website to download a booking form and find out more: [www.cofhconnexion.org.uk](http://www.cofhconnexion.org.uk).

Is this enough? I still think there must be more that we can do together. Could your church meet with other Connexional churches for social events? For

prayer meetings or occasional joint service? Could you exchange preachers or prayer letters? Have an online Zoom chat mid-service? Let's get creative and try to dream up new ways of expressing our relationship through the Spirit!

The Connexional Trustees are of course another form of link between the churches and the wider Connexion. We are keen to hear what is going on in the churches, do be proactive in telling us! Maybe write it up so we can post it on the website too - are you reading it, or pointing others to it? Perhaps you could include headlines and links in your newsletters or email circulars? We are reviewing our list of contact trustees so that every church has a named trustee they are linked to, we'll have the new list in place for Conference.

At Wormley we've been reflecting on the fruits of the Spirit over the Summer. This has highlighted to me that they are there to help us grow strong relationships - they are meaningless in isolation. They recognise that we aren't perfect and that sometimes we do things that damage relationships; isn't this what sin is, behaviour that damages our relationships with God, each other, and the world that he has made for

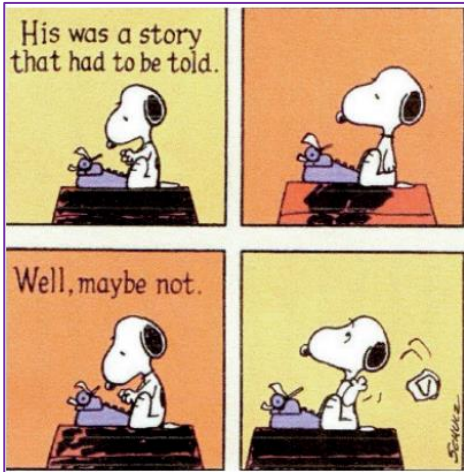


us? One of the roles of the Trustees is to help when our relationships go wrong; we can come alongside the church if its members find themselves in disagreement on a matter, or if there are concerns about the church leadership. Thankfully this doesn't happen often, but if you do have concerns and need to talk to someone, we are ready to listen and help find a way towards a restored relationship and a better way forward.

It's good to talk! As a family, let's get creative and make the most of the opportunities we have to encourage and support each other, praying for and with one another, bearing with each other when things go awry. In doing so, we'll be reflecting and pointing towards the Trinity; Father, Son and Spirit; what better aspiration is there than that!

# Presidential Musings

By Ken Hart



Thanks to Charles Schulz, the cartoonist, for this one, and to Clive Dale who passed it on to me.

It set me thinking that we may all identify with Snoopy. We're so used to books, films and programmes about famous and heroic people that we tend to dismiss our lives as ordinary and forgettable.

Alan Burgess, the author, was introduced to a woman who had been a

missionary in China before the Communist take-over. She felt she had led an unspectacular life, but let slip that she had once led over 100 children across the mountains to safety from the Revolutionary Army. This was Gladys Aylward, a remarkable little woman who got on with whatever God put in her path to do. The film "Inn of the Sixth Happiness" was far from a true picture of her life. Her life needed no embellishment or tweaking - she's known to God for ever.

As a believer in the Lord Jesus, so are you. So am I. What does it really matter if the world has never heard of us? We're assured that a place with Christ is reserved for us [John 14: 2-3] and our names are recorded in heaven [Heb. 12: 23]. We really don't need more commendation than that. If we ever have our ten minutes in the spotlight, let's pray that it's the Lord who will get the glory.

Snoopy's reaction also set me thinking about the past seventeen months and our churches. It's good to hear about churches embracing new technology to spread the gospel. It's good to hear about people following on-line services and showing interest in our message. I hope, as I'm sure you do, that it's a lasting response.

As far as the Chapel is concerned, there are only a couple of us who could have gone down the Zoom or You Tube path. So, we've taken the "old fashioned" answer of producing a weekly leaflet with a worship guide, and preaching slot. We added a Quiz Sheet of varying difficulty, and it seems to have been helpful. I've visited on Saturdays with the leaflets, to share news. It was interesting to hold conversations with villagers from opposite sides of the road.

Well, nothing spectacular in that. I agree. There must be countless churches with similar stories. Remembering Gladys Aylward, whether small or large, tech savvy or not, did we all get on faithfully doing whatever the Lord put in our path to do? If so, He remembers it still - every online presentation, every leaflet, every phone call, every conversation. Our part, of course, is to keep going.

The question at the beginning of lock-down was: "What does the Lord want us to learn during this time?" The question now is "What have we learned?" It may not be the same for each fellowship [though there may be some common lessons]; the real test is to keep on keeping on.

May our Lord bless you all, and make the work you do for Him fruitful and lasting. I pray it won't be too long before we see each other face to face. Talking of which, I had a number of bookings as President which had to be cancelled in the past year. If any of you would like to set these up again, please get in touch. If you intended to contact me, but were prevented, I'll be glad to hear from you.



# A History of Sheppey Church

By Brenda Riddle

Do you ever wonder who built your Church and what prompted them, and why choose the site that it stands on? For some of us it's an easy question to answer. We were there at its inception.

A little over 35 years ago God brought together a group of people living on the Isle of Sheppey and

that's when our wonderful story began. George and Ann Wiggins had advertised in the local Post Office and the FIEC Christian magazine, inviting 'like-minded people' to meet them on a Saturday afternoon in September 1985, to see if we'd be interested in joining them in a time of prayer and to discuss what they felt about Christianity.

There were approximately 16 of us comprising mostly of small families. We didn't know each other. Some weren't Christians. Some had been wondering in the wilderness between Churches for a while but the factor we had in common was that of a sense of restlessness or dissatisfaction. For all of us, our Church experiences had been disappointing or upsetting. We weren't sure where this was taking us but as a result of that first meeting, we decided to meet again two weeks later at the Wiggin's home for informal worship.

Led by George we kept meeting like this for a couple of months and a few more people joined us. We soon came to the conclusion that we needed more space. So, we rented Leysdown's tired village hall which was set among seaside holiday camps; an array of fish-n-chip shops, cafes and arcades. The numbers continued to grow and God was weaving together a very interesting Church of people.



Before long we decided that the village hall was not big enough. During the summer months we took the children across the road and used the bus shelter for lessons. It wasn't very satisfactory and passing holiday makers created a lot of distractions. The pub kindly offered us their barroom but that didn't work either. What would we do in the winter we wondered? We needed a separate room for Sunday School.

We moved to a large workmen's porter-cabin in a field, sited there as a temporary community hall for a recently built housing estate. The Children poured out of the estate and very quickly we had 40 children and several teenagers attending Sunday School.

An unexpected dimension to our congregation were the prison inmates on work release who were painting the cabin at the same time as we met for Church. We were warned not to speak with them but when the guards disappeared to the pub, they'd stop their work and listen to our services. Pretty soon they were making prayer requests and we saw God answer some of them too. We held our first Carol/Nativity presentation that Christmas and the turn-out was phenomenal. We got permission for the inmates to attend and they in turn invited their families. As a thank you they made us a Cross and a little offering box made out of matchsticks. Needless to say, the offering box quickly 'vanished' but we still have the matchstick Cross on the wall.



January 1986 was the year that most of the country remembers being hit by severe blizzards. For us, it was an exciting diversion. Everyone pitched in to help the elderly. Farmers distributed bread and potatoes. There were no roads visible, therefore no traffic! Instead, a magnificent

array of snowmen peppered the landscape.

Yet again we needed to improve our Church accommodation. We were spending too much valuable time creating a worshipful atmosphere each Sunday, and the rent had doubled! Ann Wiggins recalled working as an office

junior for Gilbert Kirby, who was now chairman of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. So, she wrote to him asking for help for our fledgling Church. In response 3 trustees visited us and, to cut a long story short, they told us to find a property and they would buy it. The God-incidence of this was that the Connexion had recently sold 2 properties and the money wasn't ring-fenced. We'd already spotted 2 units in a little shopping parade.

There was a tremendous amount of work needed to transform this building into a place of worship for our Lord. It would take many chapters to detail the work we did; the practical gifts and meals delivered by those who cooked better than they laid bricks and the outrageous bargains we sourced to create what we have today. Every detail, from the ceiling to the floor were blessing from God. However, the biggest blessing was the connection we made with our community; the love for one another that grew out of working for the Lord and the hilarious laughter as we laboured in the nights. There are so many things that have happened over the years since then but what is recorded here is now only remembered by a few - but still too precious to be forgotten.

Pastors have come and moved on. Peter and Joe were home grown from within the congregation, but the man with the vision was George Wiggins. A modest man, much loved by those who remember him, now resting in the arms of Christ. We look forward to meeting him one day and remembering all the adventures we shared.

One of the overriding factors in the development of Sheppey Church was that each time we moved or changed our practices, was born out a sense of dissatisfaction (*a bur under our saddles*). The lesson we've learned is that although God is unchanging, His intentions are to change and refine us into His image.

## How to give to the Sierra Leone Mission

You can give by Bank Transfer to:

Barclays

Sort code: 20-16-08

Account number: 30799076

Account name: Sierra Leone Mission

Or, perhaps you would prefer to send a cheque to:

Janet Foord, 2 Cheyne Close, Church Milton  
Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 2SQ

Every pound given, goes to support our brothers and sisters in Sierra Leone.

*Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

2 Corinthians 9:7



## **The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion**

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## **The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion**

### **Sierra Leone**

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