

# The Voice

Summer 2020 No.418



Magnus delivering shoe-bags to children at Fabaina

THE  
CONNEXION

The Sierra Leone Mission

# Contents

Word From The Editor.....	3
Bible Study: Cosmic Choices.....	4
Jesus' Ministry of Health.....	6
Health Centre For Children.....	9
Could You Be A Trustee?.....	11
Covid-19 Sierra Leone Update.....	14
Mission During Lockdown: Shopping.....	15
An Unexpected Summer.....	17
Wordsearch.....	20
S.L.M Golf Day.....	21
Bumper Shoe Bag Bonanza For 2021.....	22
S.L.M History.....	23
Presidential Musings .....	24
How to Give to The S.L.M.....	27



## **WELCOME From The Editor**

HELLO EVERYONE and welcome to the Summer 2020 edition of the voice magazine. We are greatly indebted to Gordon Hamilton for so skilfully producing the Spring 2020 edition of the Voice. Gordon and Sarah Waters will both be a hard act to follow. However, I am delighted to have been given this opportunity to be the editor. As a member of the Connexion for the past 10 years and having visited Sierra Leone in 2018, I have a great love for the congregations in both countries.

As Covid-19 restrictions begin to ease, it has been interesting to find out what is new and exciting in the UK and Sierra Leone Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. There is a surplus of interesting and enjoyable news, despite churches being unable to meet, including this edition's uplifting Bible study provided by Dave Sweetman, followed by a message from the trustees, updates on the new Health Centre in Sierra Leone, and some missional news from a couple of our churches during lockdown.

Don't miss our new series running alongside the Sierra Leone History videos, available on our YouTube channel, detailing the history and early years of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion in Sierra Leone, and how two Connexions, 5000 miles apart, came together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

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> November 2020. Just email [estherkerengreen@gmail.com](mailto:estherkerengreen@gmail.com).



# Bible study: Cosmic Choices

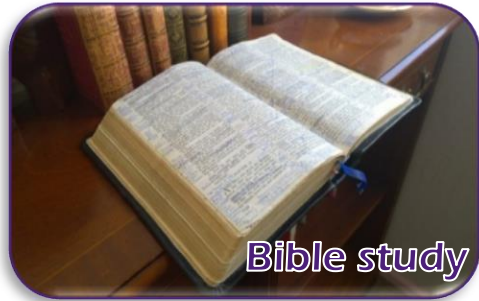
A study of Psalms 1 and 2 (Reading from the NIV)

By Dave Sweetman

God's purposes for all creation is on his King who is to rule overall. The Psalter comes back to these themes again and again.

## Who is the man?

But back to Psalm 1v1. "Blessed is the man". In scripture, the word "man" can be taken to include both men and women so please assume that is the sense in which I use the term in this study. That being said, who is the man or woman being referred to, the man who is blessed?



Is it you? This Psalm makes a clear distinction between those who are righteous and those who are wicked. How would you describe yourself?

Do you worry about whether you are good enough for the blessing that the Psalm talks about and whether you are good enough for heaven? Take heart. Being righteous is not the same as being perfect. Elsewhere in Scripture, we learn that no-one is perfect. In fact, if you turn to Jeremiah 17v9 you will read: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure". So, no-one is naturally righteous if left to their own devices. However, the righteousness being talked about is the righteousness that comes from living by faith in God's ability to forgive our hearts. It is described in Romans 3v21 as follows: "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe." So, you are the one who is blessed if you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, who took your sins upon himself at the cross. And, when

we know the grace of the Lord Jesus towards us, it turns our hearts towards him, so that indeed we do delight in all we see of Jesus in Scripture and over time, we slowly become the man described in Psalm 1.

Supremely, however, the man who is blessed is Jesus Christ. He is the one who fulfils this Psalm. He always delighted to do his Father's will and we are blessed because we belong to him and are amongst the assembly of the righteous described in verse 5

### **Who is the King?**

Now to Psalm 2. The Psalmist is really perplexed about why people rebel against God. What possible reason can there be? Take a little time to think about why people in your family or amongst your friends do not follow Jesus.

Psalm 2v3 puts a finger on the reason. Freedom! Freedom from any moral obligation to serve God. Freedom to do just what we want!

Verses 4-6 describe what the Lord has to say. Do you think his laugh would make you smile or cringe? God laughs, scoffs, rebukes in anger and finally terrifies them in his wrath. That is a side to God that we and others we know never want to meet. The judgement of God is real and no-doubt he uses a pandemic like Corona virus to graciously warn us all about it. This Psalm 2 makes clear that the COSMIC CHOICE facing the world is about God's Kingship.

In verses 7-9, God's anointed King speaks. In the early days when King David was first writing his psalms, no doubt many Israelites assumed King David was the king referred to in Psalm 2. But later Psalms will trace how King David failed, as did Solomon and all the subsequent kings in the line of David. If you look closely at Psalm 2, you may see how the Lord and his anointed King seem to merge together to be almost inseparable. For example, the words in verses 11 and 12, "serving the

Lord with fear” and “kissing the Son lest he be angry”, picture the Lord and his anointed King acting in unison. This is no ordinary King!

Look at Revelations 2v27, 12v5 and 19v15 to see examples of how the Scriptures apply this Psalm to Jesus. Acts 13v33 also quotes this Psalm and makes it clear that the “today” of Psalm 2v7 is the day of Resurrection which proved Jesus’ victory over sin and death. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, is indeed God’s King who one day will rule the nations.

Have you “taken refuge in him” by putting your faith in him? Do you honour King Jesus with reverence and love?

*If you would like to follow up with any thoughts or questions on this study, feel free to email Dave at [dpsweetman@btinternet.com](mailto:dpsweetman@btinternet.com).*

## **Jesus’ Ministry of Health: A Motivation to Building a Clinic in Sierra Leone**

**By Magnus Bendu**

In Luke 4:17, we read that Jesus turned the scroll to the prophecy that was written about Him, and read from Isaiah 61:1, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised”.

This passage sounds like the manifesto or the mandate of Jesus’ ministry on earth. Three goals are clearly presented there: the goal of Preaching, the goal of Healing and the goal of Deliverance. My understanding of this passage informs me that every other endeavour in life falls under one of these three goals (the PHD goals). Whether it is about being a

Pastor, a Medical Doctor or a Nurse, a Lawyer, a Teacher, a Civil Society Activist, a Politician, a Diplomat, an Economist, an Engineer, a Trader, a Musician, a Farmer, a Fisherman, etc., all can find their specific objectives linked to one of these goals.

Therefore, I believe that when Jesus opened the scroll and read this scripture, He was setting out the scope and pointing to the foundation from where all ministry engagements should stem. In His ministry on earth, we see that Jesus served with all the three ministry goals in mind (Cf. Mtt. 4:23-24). However, His healing ministry; apparently because of the need, became probably the most popular. He healed people with all kinds of sicknesses and diseases (Luke 4:40). He felt sorry for them and showed passion to heal them (Mark 1:41: Mtt. 14:14).

The Connexion in Sierra Leone has been doing its bit of service in all three ministry goals referenced above and have since 1792 and, with the help of the UK Connexion, established concrete and sustainable steps to serve humbly; especially in the goals of preaching and deliverance. We have Churches to preach the good news and schools where knowledge is transmitted to set people free, bring enlightenment and deliverance from ignorance (Cf. John 8:32). Our only concrete step in the ministry healing, even though Churches and schools also provide healing, is Bethesda. At Bethesda, homeless children are accommodated, rehabilitated, and reunified. Bethesda is in fact far more linked to the ministry of deliverance than that of healing, although preaching happens there too.



Well, as a matter of fact, all three ministry goals as set out here are in essence very much intertwined to a point that it is difficult to do one

without the other. Therefore, as a Connexion, we thought that having a clinic will tremendously complement the work that we do. I must also mention here that we have not been dormant in the healing ministry in any way. With the support of the Sierra Leone Mission and the Friends of Sierra Leone both in the U.K, medical bills of many have been paid over the years. What the clinic will add to this is easy access to identify those who need help and a sustainable means of continuing to help as well as minister to the sick. This follows the trajectory of Jesus - He taught or preached, then He healed and delivered (cf.4:23-24).

The healing ministry in Sierra Leone is a huge need. This is an even greater need for children whose health care facilities in Sierra Leone is one of the poorest in the world. For many years now, we have always been among the worst countries in terms of maternal, infant and child mortality rates. Beyond the statistics, I see this practically every now and then. Many children die of illnesses and diseases that could have been prevented with access to health care facilities. In the location where the new clinic is being built for instance, there is no specialized clinic or hospital for children in over 50 miles radius with very bad roads to add to the problem. The only hospital focused on children which is 28 miles away serves the entire city of Freetown and its environs, which means those from the rural areas will sometimes return with their children dead without going beyond the queue.

The new clinic, which has been named the *Ralph O'Shea Memorial Children's Clinic* will initially focus on providing primary health care for children and also treat other patients generally. The structural part of the building is at a very advanced stage, thanks to the SLM for supporting the initiative; and to the late Mr. Morgan Pearce of the UK who mainly funded over 95% of the work done so far and yet preferred to be anonymous until his departure to be with the Lord on the day we started roofing. His legacy in Sierra Leone will never die. Thanks to all those who have also supported the work in so many ways. We still have



a long way though to go. As Paul puts it in Philippians 4:19, “He will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory”. And clearly, God does this through His people. As Covid 19 has badly exposed our health system in Sierra Leone, making it worse for children in particular, I am looking forward to completing this work and get the clinic up and running by January 2021. You may be one of those the Lord has chosen to make this happen. You are welcome. God bless you.



## Health Centre for Children

By Janet O'Shea

**Aruna Sesay** loved to play football in his home village Fabaina; there was little else to occupy him and he enjoyed being active with his friends. All of that changed when he fell and broke his leg in two places. His mum didn't have the money to transport him to Freetown and she certainly didn't have the money to pay for his treatment so **Aruna** had to suffer. Fortunately, we visited Fabaina and were able to give his mum the funds to seek medical help; otherwise he would have been crippled for the rest of his life.

We met a young dad with two of his little girls. He had just buried his wife. She had fallen ill; possibly in the early stages of a third pregnancy. The journey to Freetown was long and difficult and she died on the way.

At Brama school we found three children with malaria, all needing medication but unable to access any because they had no money. Again, we were able to help. At Bethesda **Fatmata** became feverish and lethargic, she needed medical advice, so Magnus drove her to Waterloo to find a chemist.

Recently **Adama** from Bethesda suffered from a series of fits. There was no immediate support for her so 4 days later Magnus drove her to Freetown which took about one and a half hours.

**All of these scenarios could be multiplied time and time again.**

Magnus has shared his vision to establish a health centre for children, he stresses that this would not be dependent on the S.L.M. but would fund itself. The centre would focus on pregnant mothers and children but would also have a leading role in health education in the local villages.

By God's grace the money for the purchase of the land was donated and then £30,000 from our brother Morgan built the structure and the roof. An additional donation has bought the windows. The wonderful bonus is that the land is opposite Bethesda. To complete the interior of the building and include electricity and plumbing we are praying that God will stir the hearts of His people. To be realistic we would need £39,000 more.



We have started a bid with the Department for International Development for equipment and the development of health services for the Children's Health Centre. If we are successful, the money would be available in the New Year.

## Wouldn't it be wonderful to complete the building by Christmas?

See the last page for information on how to give to the Sierra Leone Mission.

## Could you be a trustee?

By David Lockett, Chair of Trustees

The Connexion needs new trustees, so would you like to grab a coffee, or your favourite beverage, take a seat, make yourself comfortable, and ask yourself, "Could I be a trustee?"

Straight away several additional questions pop up. What is a trustee? Who are they? What do they do? You may even be asking, what is The Connexion? I will give my answers to these but, first, why did I become a trustee?

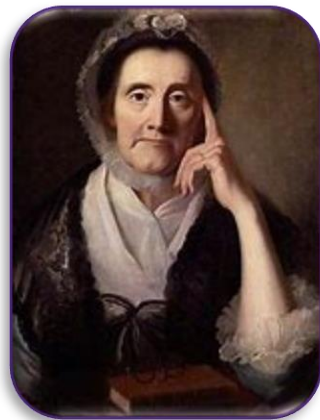
It was about 13 years ago that I was asked if I would consider joining the trustees. At that time, I knew all the then current trustees, and several past ones, and considered them to be men and women of stature,

significant personalities in The Connexion, and so my first thought was. "my goodness, I can't be like them." I think I said something like this to Noel Vallely, who had made the proposal to me. He said that every one of those serving and past trustees had felt just the same when first approached.



So, I thought about it for some time. I'd already come to realise that The Connexion was quite special, unique even. A small group of churches spread around the UK as far afield as West Cornwall, Manchester, Gloucestershire, and Kent, each with its own distinctive situation, personality, and ways of 'being church'. Yet, bound together, not only by their love of Jesus and desire to follow Him, but also by an extraordinary history.

Established in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century by a woman who became a legend in her lifetime, who applied all the resources at her disposal to build churches and train preachers to further the gospel of her beloved Jesus Christ; earning the admiration of people from every stratum of society, from slaves to royalty and at the same time a thorn in the side of the establishment. Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, was an extraordinary woman with the courage and strength to break the rules of an intensely patriarchal society. She was a friend and confidante of John Wesley, Charles Wesley and George Whitfield, celebrated giants of the Methodist Revival, with comparable achievements, but, perhaps because of her sex, for a long time overlooked by many biographers and historians.



A spectacular history, but that's not why I agreed to be a trustee. What really attracts me to The Connexion has more to do with relationships. One might expect friendships to develop between colleagues from different churches but, in The Connexion, we find deep lifelong relationships between entire families, which sometimes span generations; astonishing when you realise they may live hundreds of miles apart and only meet once or twice a year. From the first time I attended a Connexion Annual Conference, I felt accepted as part of this family, and it is this sense of genuine friendship which helped me feel comfortable with the idea of becoming a trustee.

As a trustee I attend four formal trustee meetings a year, usually in London, but sometimes at our churches. The agenda for discussion and making decisions is extensive but our focus in recent years has moved to growth as we try and answer the question: “How can we help our congregations and ministers to become ever more effective at sharing Jesus in their neighbourhoods?” Of course, our resources are limited. On paper, the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion has assets valued at over £5 million, but it is run entirely by volunteers on an annual budget of less than £50,000. So, the role of the Trustees is essentially to work out how best to apply those assets and income so that our churches thrive.

Between formal meetings, the trustees’ conversations continue by email, phone, and short internet meetings. We are governed by the *Scheme*, which is a legal document that defines the Connexion as a charity and contains the rules and restrictions under which we must operate. Legally, the trustees are guardians of the charity’s assets, much in the same way as directors are responsible for company assets. The number of trustees is limited to 9 of whom 2 may be ministers of our churches when appointed. Due to recent retirements there are currently only 5 of us, so we are now looking to recruit up to 4 new trustees.

Trustees need to be in regular attendance at a Connexion church when they are appointed but, apart from that, there are no qualifications required other than a love of Jesus Christ and willingness to follow Him. (Like ministers, our trustees are expected to accept the Connexion’s Articles of Faith.) The amount of work that you can take on as a trustee will depend on your own circumstances; we are all volunteers, some with full-time jobs.

If you have read this far maybe you are interested. If you would like to find out more about being a trustee please contact me ([david@cofhconnexion.org.uk](mailto:david@cofhconnexion.org.uk)), or another trustee and we will be delighted to give more detail about our activities. Alternatively, you

may prefer to speak with your minister/church leader who could pass on your details to us if appropriate.

Thank you for reading this far. Now, drink up that coffee before it goes cold!

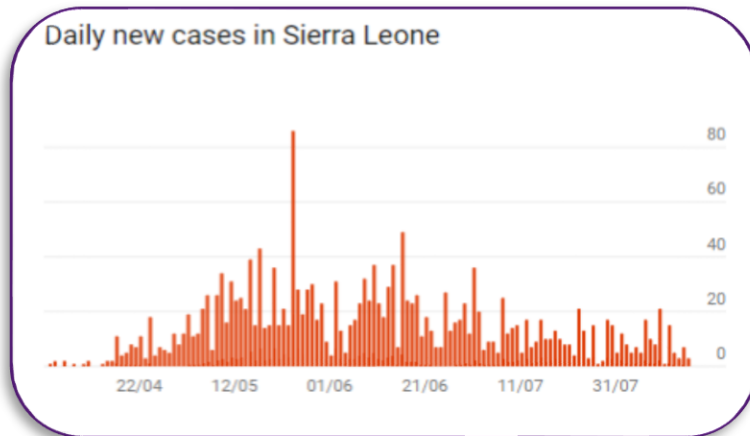
## Covid-19 Sierra Leone Update

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> August

Confirmed cases: 1,959

Deaths: 69

Recovered:1,529



# Mission during lockdown: Shopping

By Bethany Green, Rosedale Community Church

Like most churches we had all sorts of outreach plans for Spring 2020. Our Easter Workshop, St George's Day Fayre, and a street party for VE Day. Until that day in March when everything changed. The

announcement of a 'lockdown' on March 15<sup>th</sup> left the whole country reeling and wondering what life and church was going to look like over the next few months. As a community church dedicated to well-being of our neighbourhood, what could we do to serve and continue the mission of God?



Like so many, we realised that those living alone, elderly, or with health problems were going to be hardest hit. Jesus command to "Love you neighbour as yourself" Matthew 22:39 took on a sharper focus. As believers we have a hope that those who do not know Christ do not have, but as Jesus so vividly displayed and the New Testament teaches, our message of hope needs to have legs. Paul's words to the Thessalonians linking the big three Christian virtues of love, faith and hope to good deeds confirmed what our instincts were telling us. Paul encourages them saying, "We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 1:3

By Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March we had 'Help' fliers printed and began distributing them around the Rosedale estate, offering assistance with shopping, picking up medication and a telephone befriending service. It

was a crazy few weeks as we quickly put basic procedures in place. The Borough Council and County Council took several weeks to organise and implement their shielding response and so I found myself working in partnership with Sir Charles Walker, our local MP, who was working all hours to help fulfil the need for food boxes and deliveries.

Do you remember those early weeks when the supermarket shelves were empty, and limits were imposed on how many bottles of milk one could buy? Fortunately, a member of our congregation works at Tesco and she spoke to the manager and assured him that I was legitimately buying for multiple households. I did discover that



my limit was five shopping lists at a time... more than that and my brain ceased up. Everything took an exceptionally long time; the queues, the slow meander around the one-way system without getting too close to the person ahead... I never realised how long it could take some people to pick the perfect pack of salmon fillets... and then the 'distanced' checkouts. How could it take so many hours to just to do food shopping!

And yet, there was also a very real beauty about helping folk. I remember as a teenager watching Mother Teresa on TV and wondering how she could spend all day, every day ministering to the poor? Her love and patience to repeat the same action over and over again with a never-ending stream of needy people, amazed me. That is why she was referred to as saint and I am not! And yet, in a very limited way over the past four months, I have been privileged to 'help' and have been so blessed. As I turned up at the front door, I saw the relief and hope a bag of shopping could bring. The moments that we chatted, the smiles we exchanged, listening to their stories, perhaps offering to pray for them; I



discovered that truly it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35)!

No, I didn't lead anyone to Christ on the doorstep, but I have built friendships. Friendships with folk I wouldn't have otherwise met. Friendships that give the opportunity to invite them to join us in a community celebration when we are once again able to meet. Friendships that I hope have communicated something of the love of Jesus.

## **An Unexpected Summer - What I Did In Lockdown**

**By Ben Quant, Wormley Free Church**

At the time of writing it's mid-August, and the heatwave has just been exchanged for downpours of rain. Soon the summer holidays will be over and children will return to school. My recollection of those now distant days of going back was the joy of meeting friends again and the inevitable annual assignment, 'What I did on my Holidays'. Of course, this year's cohort will have a very different essay to write. As an act of nostalgia, here's my submission 'What we did on our Holidays in our Lockdown'. As for many, the start was a surreal interruption, which we all thought would be a brief one, perhaps just three weeks. We fully expected that by Easter all would be as usual: the usual celebrations we look forward to and the usual joy of catching up with folk at Conference. Of course, nothing turned out to be normal this time around.

Was it consumer desire for new gadgets or Spirit led impulse, I don't know, but just before lockdown officially came, I ordered a new webcam. Whatever the cause, I'm glad I did. It has seen much use over the following months!



It quickly became clear that we were in this for the long haul, and like so many we were scrambling to work out how to respond and keep the church together, worshipping, and even making the most of the 'new normal' to offer hope and good news to those around us. The regular congregation were divided amongst the leadership, with each leader making sure that they kept in contact with their 'pastoral group', especially those without internet capabilities. Alongside this, we set to working out how to worship together when apart. How could we do services online? How could we replicate our normal services? What would be better done differently to take advantage of this very different medium? And how could we ensure that there was a sense of interaction and engagement when staring at a screen rather than sharing the same physical space?

We soon found a rhythm with pre-recorded services which the congregation were invited to contribute to through silly and sensible means, followed by a Zoom gathering, a virtual cuppa & chat. We found that this approach and period lent itself to tackling topical themes, and explored issues such as protest as Christians, #BlackLivesMatter, care for the environment and how and why to engage with the news, as well as reflecting on what it meant to be in lockdown as Christians. In fact, the medium really lent itself to this, perfectly suited not just talks but also interviews, video clips, vox pops and so on. I'd love to take this further going forward and explore how the online world could be used as a forum to explore these issues in the wider community. I have to say I have enjoyed the creativity of trying out new things, and loved the way

online services could be engaged with not just by our regulars but also old members who had moved elsewhere, friends, family and strangers. When we do return to meeting together in the same place, I shall miss this, and we'll be looking to continue some of what we've been doing online alongside 'regular' services. One thing we quickly discovered is that these services and gatherings are legitimate acts of worship; God was with us.

This gathering of dispersed friends quickly made us look further afield and ask why we had never used video conferencing to meet with friends from the Connexion outside Conference. Like many, we've had fun with quiz nights online. Thinking it was worth a try, we gradually opened these up to others in the Connexion and it was wonderful to be joined by folks from Middleton, St. Ives, Goring, and Rosedale, as well as friends and family from around the country. Over lockdown I've also been involved in Trustee and SLM meetings online, Elders meetings with other churches, ministers meetings, Conference planning meetings and have shared worship with other congregations from around the country. One of the challenges with being 'The Connexion' is the distance between our churches. I wonder now if that is really the challenge we thought it was in the past. Perhaps lockdown has revealed possible ways of eliminating the gap.

Like many we also moved other regular activities online such as prayer meetings and Bible studies. We've found that these also became accessible to more. Some no doubt joined in because in isolation they had nothing else to do, but for others the simple saving of time traveling made these activities more viable. We also found ourselves wondering how we could engage with our local community in this period, and have been running an Alpha course online too. Although small in number it has worked remarkably well, the virtual world providing space for those attending that maybe the physical world doesn't. It is an area I'd like to experiment with more going forward ...although I miss the meals! The food bank has also continued, becoming a more crucial part of our

mission, enabling us to practically help those struggling in this time as well as opening up conversations about life and faith. I suspect this work is not going to go away for some time yet.

It hasn't been all creativity and fun, a number of our congregation have been affected by Covid-19, either through contracting it, having friends or family who have, or through being key-workers or forced to shield. We have missed each other, prayed for each other, made mistakes and have longed to meet. It has been hard, but God has been with us. We've learnt much through these strange days, and discovered, I believe, that God and church can be bigger than we thought before.

## Wordsearch

E	W	L	C	M	E	Z	B	H	C	M	R	G	Z	O	O	M	P	G	L
X	E	B	S	A	V	E	R	T	N	E	C	H	T	L	A	E	H	U	P
M	N	S	D	A	C	O	N	T	A	I	N	E	R	S	U	F	Z	G	A
R	O	J	G	J	P	Q	W	A	D	S	A	L	H	T	L	H	A	K	E
W	E	N	Y	H	T	R	U	S	T	E	E	O	E	H	O	A	M	S	V
R	L	F	U	R	S	A	G	E	L	V	P	H	J	U	C	V	Z	A	A
P	A	H	R	R	N	A	K	Y	Q	P	U	D	F	N	K	S	V	B	W
F	R	S	K	T	B	H	O	P	I	A	T	Y	L	D	D	H	J	C	T
J	R	R	N	E	Y	T	O	N	F	N	X	T	V	E	O	T	D	T	A
E	E	D	O	X	R	Q	G	J	U	O	D	K	G	R	W	R	R	N	E
H	I	H	L	I	U	K	E	W	N	R	W	J	X	F	N	J	P	U	H
Q	S	K	P	S	A	L	M	S	G	O	Z	T	I	N	R	B	L	W	K
S	Z	B	O	L	H	T	Y	V	H	C	O	N	N	E	X	I	O	N	F

CONNEXION

SHOPPING

PSALMS

CONTAINERS

SIERRA LEONE

HEATWAVE

CORONA

THUNDER

LOCKDOWN

HEALTH CENTRE

TRUSTEE

SHOEBAGS

ZOOM

**The 16<sup>th</sup> annual  
S.L.M.**

**Charity Golf Day  
25<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

*(It is hoped we will be able to provide)*

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

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

**2 Course meal £45**

**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.*

# 'A bumper shoe bag bonanza for 2021'

Most of the children in Sierra Leone might celebrate Christmas by having chicken to eat or visiting the local 'park' to play football against other villages, they might even go to the beach. One thing that they can be confident of is that receiving a present is definitely remote.



Try to imagine the excitement that receiving a shoe bag brings; made with love and full of new and precious gifts and luxuries. There are so many children, that often one bag might go to a family rather than an individual. So, what can we do?

Tell others about our children in Sierra Leone. Ask them to get involved  
Share with other churches: there is now a competition between two Baptist churches in Cornwall as to which one donates the most!

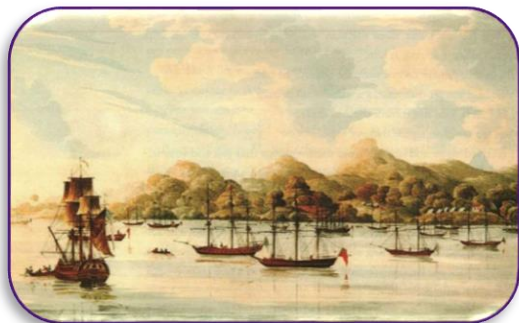
Ask the local school to take on a project. The W.I. loves a challenge! Tell your friends on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. Involve the local library.

People love to see results from their efforts, so we have photographs! Most of us are in small churches so let's reach out from inside our four walls and include our neighbours. It's a great way to get the gospel out, something so easy, but that makes a world of difference to that child on Christmas day.

This year's bags are almost ready to go, so let's all make it a  
**'Bumper Shoe Bag Bonanza for 2021.'**

# Sierra Leone Mission History: How it Began

During the American War of Independence, many slaves fought on the side of the British, and as a reward were granted their freedom. They were at first deported to Nova Scotia, an eastern province of Canada. For 8 years they stayed here and were visited by ministers who had received their training at the Countesses collage in Trevecca, thus establishing Christianity among the people. As a part of their ministry, John Marrant, the first black man to be ordained as a Countess of Huntingdon's minister, travelled to Nova Scotia to minister there.



However, due to the cold weather and less than welcoming locals they appealed to the British to be granted a new land and in March 1792 they arrived in western Africa, Sierra Leone. Of the 2000 people who travelled to Sierra Leone, approximately 1000(1,131) were member of the Connexional

Church. This was the beginning of the work and witness the Connexion in Sierra Leone.

Led by 3 native ministers the Connexion in Sierra Leone built churches and a school in Freetown and were soon busy evangelising the

neighbourhood. Meanwhile, the churches of the Connexion in England had no knowledge of this church in Sierra Leone until 1825 when news finally reached England that it existed.

To find the first episode on the Sierra Leone History check out our new YouTube account *Sierra Leone Mission*, and stay tuned for our next episode: *The Early Years*.

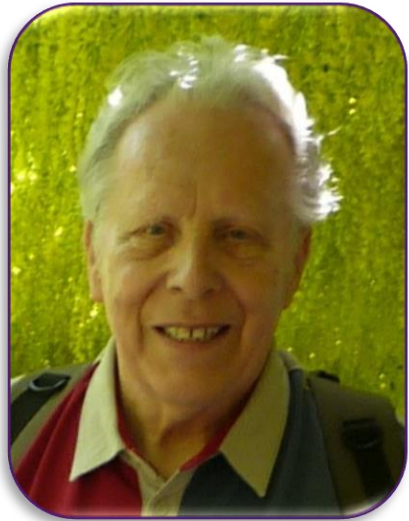
## Presidential Musings at Five Months Plus

By Ken Hart

Greetings to all of you. It's good to have another edition of "Voice" and to welcome our new editor to her responsibilities. The Lord bless you, Esther, and help you in your creative role, and in keeping us in line!

When I was asked to write for this issue, you can imagine what followed. My mind went blank. After all, the last time I wrote, I was able to talk about how the chapel at Cradley was coping with lock-down, and what had happened in my first presidential year up to March 20<sup>th</sup>. But now?

It's a principle of creative writing that, if you have nothing to say, then you insert a sheet of paper in the typewriter [remember those?], or open your favourite writing program, and type something, anything, however





banal, just to move “the little grey cells” into action. So I did that; and what popped up? The text you’ve read so far.

And are the grey cells activated? I think so.

You’ll all have your tales to tell of the past five months, and they may well be a collection of positive experiences, new routines which swiftly became standard routines, frustrations etc. I hope that you’ve not had negative or sad things to live through, but if you have, then I truly hope and pray that you discovered the nearness and reality of God’s love and peace in those situations. And I know that some may have profound stories to tell out of those events, but for many it will have been a daily proving of the faithfulness of our Lord, even when you couldn’t see clearly beyond the present moment.

For Marion and I, it’s been a matter of keeping people connected without Zoom and similar aids. We’ve just issued our 22<sup>nd</sup> “Keeping in Contact” leaflet. I distributed them on Saturday mornings and talk face to face [social distance, of course] with everybody. We thank the Lord that the leaflet has been on time every week, and that He has kept us from descending into a mere routine with the content. Our members keep in touch by phone, and continue to wrestle with the weekly quiz / puzzle sheet. I’m amazed at their stamina. We are planning to have an open-air get together in one of two gardens when it looks as if we will neither be baked or drenched!

On a personal level, we’ve experienced the same “family deprivation” as so many people. It was five months before we could see our elder daughter, who was in strict isolation, and has only just returned to work on limited hours. Our elder son had to suspend his self-employed business till July, and our younger son is still in isolation in Suffolk. We were so grateful that our other daughter and her husband, who live in Worcester, were able to help with our shopping while our local supermarket laboured to organize its online shopping site. They’ve visited us regularly, We meet in our front garden, with most of the garden

between us! The phone has been a great help for keeping in touch with our friends across the country – and I'm sure that has been true for you. We've been able to finish some home projects which have been on the back burner for far too long, and our garden and mini back allotment are in order at last.

So, you can see, that our lives have been like most. The one thing that still exercises our minds and our prayers is – what next? Am I tired of the safeguards, the changing restrictions, the uncertainties, the thoughtless liberties? Yes, at times I am, and I find I'm not alone; but that doesn't mean I can be careless and rush out into the big wide world as if the past five months were just a bad dream. The one thing that we here are still asking and discovering is, what does the Lord want us to be as a church when things are more stable? I wonder what answers you are picking up.

Notice, I didn't say "return to normal". I find we're not sure that that door is open to us, any more than things returned to the old ways after the so-called "Spanish flu" or the Second World War. What we are clear about is that the Lord will lead us into His future for us. Perhaps some things will go. Perhaps we shall rediscover something about being the people of Christ, and serving Him, that we have forgotten or neglected. Perhaps there are new things [not new bandwagons] ahead. The important thing is that we are not going into an uncertain future. We are simply going into a tomorrow we haven't encountered yet. I'll leave you with a story.

There was a sailing ship in the old days which encountered a fierce storm in mid-ocean. The passengers were understandably worried – frightened actually. The captain's young son disappeared up on the deck, and came back smiling. "It's all right," he said. "My father's at the wheel. The ship's in his control." Every blessing in Christ.

## 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



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