

# THE VOICE

Magazine of The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion

No. 439

Q1 2026

## WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS



**BRIAN BALDWIN**

1932-2026



**PASTOR KEN HART**

1938-2026

In this issue we give thanks for the lives and faithful service of Pastor Ken Hart and Dr. Brian Baldwin. Ken served as Pastor of Cradley Church and later as President of the Connexion, while Brian was a devoted member of Mortimer West End Chapel, a former Chair of Trustees, and also served as President and General Secretary. Both men gave themselves wholeheartedly to the Lord and His Church, and their wisdom, humility, and steadfast faith will be deeply missed.

Tributes to Ken, by Gordon Hamilton, and to Brian, by Brenda Baldwin, appear on pages 3 and 4 respectively.



**COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON'S  
CONNEXION**

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**Magnus Bendu**

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<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Tribute to Ken Hart	3
Tribute to Brian Baldwin	4
Staying Connected in a Dispersed Connexion	6
Care And Commitment Award	7
Sierra Leone Mission	8
SLM Golf Day	10
New School at Foo Foo Water	11
Brama Nursery Saved	12
Growing Clusters	14
A Season of Welcome at the Chapel	16
Thanks Be To God!	18
Developing a Vision for the Future of the SLM	19
A Future Rewritten: Abdul's Journey	20
About the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion	22
List of Past and Current Trustees	26
Map of the UK Connexion	28

# PASTOR KEN HART

1938-2026

A tribute by Gordon Hamilton



Pastor Ken Hart, 87, went to be with his Lord and Saviour on 1 March this year. A faithful servant of Christ, Ken devoted his life to preaching the gospel, shepherding God's people, and encouraging all who knew him.

After retiring from Baptist ministry in Essex, Ken and Marion moved to Malvern, where they soon felt the Lord's call to Cradley Church. Ken went on to serve there as Pastor for 17 years, giving wise leadership, steady pastoral care, and a warm, gracious presence that blessed the fellowship deeply.

Ken also served the wider Connexion as President for two years, faithfully guiding and supporting fellow ministers before handing over to Janet O'Shea. His humility, kindness, and steadfast faith left a lasting impression on many.

Many will especially remember Ken's interviews as President at the annual Conference. Seated on the stage, with warmth and gentle humour, he drew out news from churches across the Connexion, encouraging ministers and members alike to share what God was doing in their communities. With thoughtful questions and an attentive spirit, he made space for every contribution, so that even the smallest fellowship felt seen, heard, and valued.

We thank God for Ken's long and fruitful ministry, and for the love and devotion he showed to Marion and his family throughout his life.

Ken had been in poor health for several months. Please pray for Marion and the family at this sad and tender time.

Ken's memorial service was held at on 18th March at Malvern Evangelical Church following a funeral at The Vale Crematorium.

# BRIAN BALDWIN

1932-2026

A tribute by Brenda Baldwin



Many people will remember Brian as he became part of the Connexion as far back as the 1960s and which actively continued until 2008. Even then he attended conference until these last few years.

Brian was born in Yorkshire, went to school in Manchester, then University in Liverpool and London (studying biochemistry), and after a brief spell of National service in Germany, worked throughout his career as a Research Scientist in plant protection in Bracknell, Berkshire. He met his first wife, Marjorie, in Liverpool before moving to Wargrave. Two children followed, Alison and David. The family became involved in the Countess of Huntington Chapel in the village, and all attended the annual conference. Brian and Marjorie were house parents to the young people, getting to know Graham and Lynn Squibs, Margaret Staplehurst and others at that time. They have some good stories to tell!

In 1968 Brian was invited to become a Trustee, and subsequently served the Connexion as Chairman, President and General Secretary. He always spoke fondly of his other Trustees with whom he worked for many years, Gilbert Kirby, Roger Davies, Douglas Staplehurst, Norman Lloyd, Bernard Mayo and Ken Stone.

Brian loved the Connexion and its people. Perhaps his legacy is that he tried to guide it as Chairman through a time of change. He valued the history of the Connexion, its firm roots in the faith of the Countess and the evangelical revival but wished to see it adapt to the new challenges of the twenty first century. He remembered Gilbert Kirby's remark at the rededication service at Mortimer West End Chapel, "Hats off to the past, coats on for the future". That meant revising the Scheme to include Believers Baptism, being open to more modern worship, and generally being less stuffy! An incident I remember from conference (2000 I think) is

when Brian and I did a skit on the balcony scene in Romeo and Juliet. Brian went down on one knee and completely hammed it up. Somebody commented, "I never seen a Trustee do that sort of thing".

A deep sadness for Brian was when Marjorie died in 1990. Sometime later Brian met Brenda on the restoration project at Mortimer West End. Brian was on the team as Trustee, Brenda as a member from Goring, which initiated the project. Both were very slow on the uptake but eventually decided the other was a good thing and married in 1995.

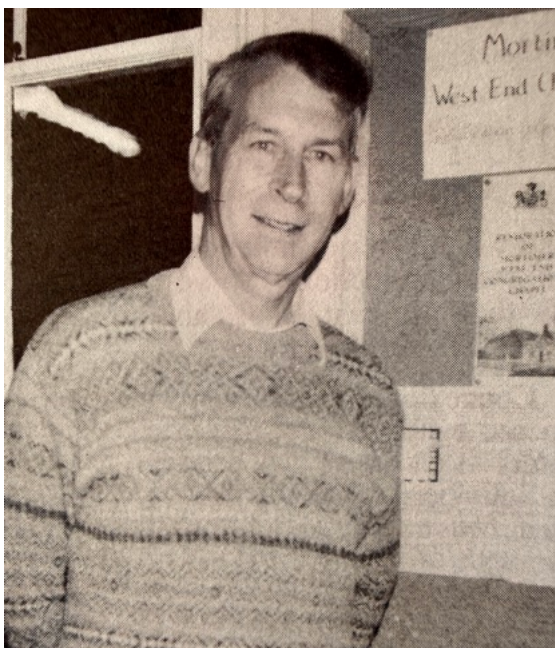
Brian was blessed with a long life (93 years), two very happy marriages, two wonderful children, seven grandchildren and, so far, four great-grandchildren. But Brian's life throughout was centred on Christ, to whom he would give all the glory. And is now with the Saviour whom he loved and served.

*Brenda Baldwin*

*This picture of Brian, which appeared in **The Voice** in the Autumn of 1992, was taken around the time of the restoration project at Mortimer West End.*

*In his personal profile, which he wrote for the magazine, Brian expressed his love and concern for the church and its people:*

*"...through my early experience in mixing with Christians from all sorts of denominational backgrounds I am convinced that the Lord is more concerned about our love for Him and our fellow Christians, whatever the tradition." (Editor)*



# A STAYING CONNECTED IN A DISPERSED CONNEXION

One of the distinctive features of our Connexion is also one of its greatest challenges: we are spread across a wide geographical area. (Take a look at the map on the back page to see which churches are your nearest neighbours.) Unlike more locally concentrated groups of churches, we do not naturally cross paths in everyday life. It can sometimes feel as though we are serving at a distance from one another, and that makes it harder to experience the shared identity and mutual support that lie at the heart of being a Connexion, rather than simply a collection of independent churches.

And yet—this is not the whole story.

Connection has never depended solely on proximity. What binds us together runs far deeper than geography. We are united by shared convictions, a common calling, and a heartfelt desire to see the gospel at work in our communities. These are strong bonds—strong enough to stretch across distance—but they are not self-sustaining. Like all good things, they need to be nurtured.

When we invest in them, something remarkable happens: distance becomes less significant, and fellowship becomes more real.

In recent years, we have seen encouraging steps in this direction. One particularly significant development has been the introduction of a Connexion-wide prayer meeting, held on MS Teams every two months. Facilitated and led by Sat Deodhar, minister at The Countess Church, Ely, these gatherings are a powerful reminder that we are not alone. As we come together to share, to listen, and above all to pray, we experience afresh the unity we have in Christ and the shared mission we are part of.

Alongside this, the quieter, everyday expressions of connection continue to matter deeply—praying for one another, sharing news and encouragement, visiting when we can. These small acts carry great weight. They remind us that we belong to one another.

Staying connected is not just about keeping in touch; it is about standing together. As we continue to invest in these relationships—intentionally, prayerfully, and generously—we strengthen not only our fellowship, but our shared witness. And in doing so, we move forward together with renewed confidence, hope, and purpose.

# CARE AND COMMITMENT AWARD

Congratulations to Jennifer Dobson and Edith Rowe, members of Wormley Free Church, who have received this year's Care and Commitment Award from Churches Together in Hoddesdon, Broxbourne and Wormley. This joint award was in recognition of Jennifer's and Edith's dedication in serving others.



*"Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ,  
if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit,  
if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by  
being like-minded,  
having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.  
Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.  
Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,  
not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the  
others.  
In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as  
Christ Jesus." [Phi;ippians 2:1-5]*

Ben Quant, Minister and Connexion Trustee, said: 'For many years Jennifer and Edith have been at the heart of our outreach. In particular they have helped run our Toddler Group and Drop-In, not just working hard but doing so with ongoing attentiveness and concern towards others. Between them they also play a key role in our prayer life, are involved in the World Day of Prayer and help run our Conversation Cafe. We're delighted that their efforts were recognised in this way and are inspired by them!'

# SIERRA LEONE MISSION

The Connexion's involvement with Sierra Leone can seem like an accidental chapter in our history. It's a quite astonishing story of two separate church movements, that owe their origins to the dedication of the Countess of Huntingdon.

For four decades the two Connexions were barely aware of each other. Then, long before any of us were born, believers from the two communities met, and chose to bind their futures together; the Connexion in the UK chose to partner with its sister Connexion in Sierra Leone. That choice created not a project but a relationship.

I've been studying the Connexion magazines, from the last 120 years. They show that, from the beginning, the Mission to Sierra Leone was spoken of as

*our work*

*our people*

*our shared labour in Christ*

The churches in Britain and Sierra Leone grew up conscious of one another, praying for one another, giving for one another, and learning to recognise that the Gospel had made them one household. It is a unique relationship in church life so enduring, so personal, and so deeply mutual. It's not simply history; it's true fellowship.

What keeps the Connexion involved is recognition that we are bound together because God has bound us together. When missionaries endured sickness, when congregations rebuilt after loss, when chapels, schools, dispensaries, an orphanage, and a health centre were raised with so few resources, the language used was of God's provision for our shared witness.

The churches in Sierra Leone are our partners in this common witness. Their endurance has often inspired and strengthened the faith of the UK churches. Their courage has rebuked our discouragement. Their joy in worship has reminded us why the Connexion exists at all. We remain involved because in their life we see the work of God that joined us together, and *The Voice* never tires of celebrating them.

The Sierra Leone Connexion proclaims Christ steadily in difficult conditions. It educates children where education would otherwise be a distant dream. It rescues children the world has abandoned. It heals bodies to reach hearts. It builds churches not only of brick but of human fellowship, reconciling disputes, guiding communities, and giving visible form to Christian hope. Above all, it shows

that our faith can take root in soil very different from our own and bear fruit. The work in Sierra Leone proves that the Gospel does not belong to one nation; it belongs to Christ.

The historical accounts also speak honestly about struggle. The mission has always lived close to its limits. Funds are scarce, workers are few, illness and even war interrupts plans, and progress is slower than we would wish. The burden placed on a handful of faithful workers is often heavy. We don't try to hide these weaknesses, instead we offer them to God in prayer. Past pages of *The Voice* present struggle as part of their authenticity, they never pretend that the mission is easy.

And perhaps that's the deepest reason the Connexion remains bound to Sierra Leone. This relationship has taught us, year after year, that the Church lives by grace rather than by strength. Our shared history is a testimony to providence: two communities, on separate continents, carried forward by the same faithfulness of God. For it to cease would silence a living witness to what the Connexion has always believed, that relationship matters more than size, that mission matters more than comfort, and that the Gospel entrusted to us is meant to be shared, even when the cost is real.



The Sierra Leone Mission is central to our story, not an optional appendix. It is one of the places where the Connexion has most clearly learned what it means to follow Christ together.



**"not a project  
but a  
relationship"**

# SLM GOLF DAY 2025

*This article by Gordon Hamilton should have appeared in our last issue, but was inadvertently left out when it went to print.*

Friday 26<sup>th</sup> September saw the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual S.L.M. Golf day, held this year at Horne Park Golf Club. The weather was dry, overcast and virtually windless, ideal, conditions for golf. Thirty one men played, and for the first time over the 21 matches, someone got a hole in one.

James Josling who plays off a 36 handicap got a hole in one on the 6<sup>th</sup> hole.

Needless to say a huge cheer went up and many congratulations to James. It was his first ever hole in one as well.

The over all winner with a staggering 46 points was Tim Cornish playing off a handicap of 32, saying he had never shot 90 before, so a worthy winner. John Commins playing off 28 came second with 45 points. The biggest winner was the S.L.M. with **£570 raised**.

Thank you to all involved. Tim Cornish left below, John Commins right below



# NEW SCHOOL AT FOO FOO WATER

Over the past couple of years, the SLM has been increasingly aware of the desperate condition of the school buildings at Foo Foo Water (also known as Hailsham). What should have been a safe place of learning had become fragile and unstable, with classrooms deteriorating to the point where serious concerns were raised about their structural safety.

We had been advised that the primary school was perilously close to collapse. Walls were weakening, the roof was failing, and each passing rainy season heightened fears for the wellbeing of the children and teachers who gathered there daily. The situation weighed heavily on the hearts of the SLM committee, who were deeply troubled by the thought of young pupils trying to concentrate on their lessons in a building that was no longer secure.

Yet even in these worrying circumstances, the determination of the staff and the eagerness of the children to learn remained undiminished. Education continues to be a lifeline in communities such as Foo Foo Water, a gateway to opportunity, stability and hope for the future. The urgency of the need could not be ignored.

We are therefore delighted to share that in February, by the grace of God and through the faithful generosity of supporters, funds were released to begin the construction of a brand-new school building. This is not simply a repair job, but a fresh start, a safe, strong and purposeful environment where children can learn without fear.

*Artists impression of the new school (with creative spelling)*



The new building will be named Huntingdon Primary School, Foo Foo Water, marking a new chapter for the community. What once felt like an impending crisis has become a testimony of provision and hope. Where there was danger, there will now be security. Where there was uncertainty, there will be opportunity.

We look forward with great anticipation to seeing the walls rise and to the day when children walk into their new classrooms, confident, protected and ready to learn.

# BRAMA NURSERY SAVED!

The primary school in Brama village, Sierra Leone — situated just beside Bethesda Orphanage — is flourishing. What began as a modest provision for local children has grown rapidly, with increasing numbers arriving each term, eager to learn and full of hope for the future.

But growth brings challenge. With every classroom filled to capacity, space became critically scarce. For a time, the nursery children gathered in the village church, their young voices bringing life to its walls during the week. Then came an unexpected blow: a Government directive prohibiting designated buildings from being used for alternative purposes. Overnight, the school faced the very real prospect of turning away its youngest pupils.



**"...under the new government rules, where would the nursery children go?"**

At the same time, there were signs of encouragement. Brama School was blessed by a generous donation of classroom furniture from Bolney School in the UK, shipped to Sierra Leone in December 2025.

Yet the central question remained: where would the nursery children go?

The situation felt urgent and overwhelming. Without a solution, the youngest and most vulnerable would lose their place. So the community

did what it has always done in times of need — they prayed.

And God answered.

In His gracious providence, a generous donor stepped forward with the full funding required to build a new nursery block. What followed felt nothing short of remarkable. Work began almost immediately. Walls rose swiftly. Foundations were laid. In what seemed record time, the doors opened and the children walked into their very own purpose-built nursery classroom — safe, bright, and ready for learning.

What had been a moment of uncertainty became a testimony of provision. A powerful reminder that when God moves, He moves decisively — and often far more swiftly than we dare to hope.

*What a joy it was to receive photographs showing the desks and chairs carefully arranged in place — and even more heartening to see the classroom walls looking just as bright and well-kept as when SLM members painted them back in 2019. A visible reminder that seeds sown years ago continue to bear fruit.*



## YOU CAN DONATE TO THE SLM STRAIGHT FROM YOUR BANK

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.

Donating by Bank Transfer: **Barclays Bank**

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

# GROWING CLUSTERS

One of the challenges we have always faced as a Connexion is our geographical dispersal; how can we truly be a family of churches when our churches are so dispersed? Over the last couple of years we've been thinking about how we can overcome that and develop deeper links across the Connexion, and hopefully through that develop not just better friendships but also support and encourage each other's mission. We're beginning to think that part of the answer lies in our historical roots.

During the evangelical revival out of which the Connexion and other related church groups arose, including the Methodists, part of the challenge of the time was to support, teach and disciple new Christians, when the church was growing quicker than new evangelical ministers could be trained and sent out. The Countess responded through founding her Bible college in Trevecca in order to increase the number of evangelical ministers. Her students were sent throughout the land during their training to preach in the surrounding churches and areas. This continued when the college moved to Cheshunt (hence the planting of churches in Wormley, Cheshunt and other areas local to the college). John Wesley applied similar ideas on a more local level, assigning ministers and preachers to work around a circuit of churches. Not only would the churches 'share' leaders, but also had the potential to build active relationships and work together in other ways too.

**"...circuits or clusters could be used to network groups of our churches..."**

Today we don't face the challenge of the Connexion growing quicker than the supply of ministers and preachers, but we believe this model of circuits or clusters could be used to network groups of our churches to encourage them to relate to and support each other. Modern technology, as we learnt during lockdown, is a great facilitator of this, allowing us to expand such groups beyond simply the few churches that are near enough to each other to meet up physically through video calling. To start with, we're encouraging regional groups of ministers to meet together to pray with each other, share news and ideas, and to support each other, and maybe, from time to time, have an away day together. This is currently happening amongst the churches in the South such as Bolney, Hailsham and

Shoreham, and amongst our Northern/Eastern churches, Middleton, Ely, Rosedale, Wormley and Sheppey.

Our hope is that this can gradually develop beyond this to developing links between the congregations (for example, recently I was invited to preach at Ely, and Sat from Ely reciprocated here at Wormley soon after). Perhaps in time, as a result of the developing friendships this might lead to into churches committing to pray for each other, churches coming together for joint services and events, and congregations seeking to support each other's outreach.

As Trustees, we recognise that for this to work, it needs to do so organically, but we're keen to support it as and how we can (including Cheshunt Foundation funding if the activity fits the requirements).



*Congregations at Ely (left) and Wormley greet each other by video, one of the many ways our churches can participate together despite the distances between them.*

# A SEASON OF WELCOME AT THE CHAPEL

Over the past year, The Chapel, **Mortimer West End** has stepped boldly into a season of fresh energy and outward focus, launching a range of exciting new initiatives designed to open doors, build friendships, and warmly welcome people into its growing church family.

The year began with a vibrant **New Attendee Barbecue** in February, a relaxed, laughter-filled gathering where newcomers could connect naturally with members of the fellowship. It was the perfect setting for conversations to spark and friendships to begin.

Later that month, the momentum continued with the launch of a four-week **'Merge Course'**, held after Sunday morning services. Created by the Elders with great care and vision, the course provides far more than information, it creates genuine connection. New visitors have the opportunity to meet church members and the leadership team in a meaningful way, discover the story behind The Chapel, and explore its vision and mission for the future.

But the welcome doesn't stop there.

In December, **Chapel calendars** were distributed throughout the community, keeping The Chapel visible and inviting all year round. Special



Welcome Services, followed by shared lunches, have offered further opportunities for people to feel known and included. Meanwhile, a diverse range of events and workshops, from cooking and baking to financial wisdom, healthy living, and creative arts, have drawn neighbours together through shared interests and God-given talents.



What's been the result? Growing connections. Deepening relationships. And an increasing number of newcomers discovering a place where they truly belong.

Through creativity, hospitality, and a heart to serve the wider community, The Chapel has seen its church family flourish, not just in numbers, but in warmth, vibrancy, and shared purpose.

This spirit of warm invitation and intentional community-building is not unique to The Chapel, Mortimer West End. It reflects the heart of Connexion Congregations more widely, churches committed to generous hospitality, meaningful relationships, and active engagement with their local communities. Across the Connexion, congregations share this same desire: to open their doors, share the gift of God's love, and ensure that all who enter find both a welcome and a place to belong.



# THANKS BE TO GOD!



*Magnus with some of the children at Kono nursery*

**Following our appeal** for donations to help purchase a new car for Magnus, we are thrilled to share some truly wonderful news: **£14,625 has been raised!** Our prayers have been answered beyond anything we dared hope for. As Ephesians 3:20 reminds us, God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.

Magnus' old car had reached the end of the road. With a failing engine, it was no longer reliable for the vital work of transporting goods bound for Sierra Leone's churches, schools, and communities. Determined to keep going, Magnus was often forced to

borrow vehicles just to ensure the UK container could be loaded and sent on its way.

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of so many supporters, that struggle is now coming to an end. This remarkable gift will make it possible to purchase a reliable new vehicle, freeing Magnus to continue his work with renewed confidence and momentum.

To everyone who gave, prayed, and encouraged: thank you. Your kindness will travel far beyond our shores and bless countless lives. We're very much hoping Magnus will send us a photo of the new car when he collects it — a visible sign of God's provision and your generosity in action.

# DEVELOPING A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE SLM

In February, a dedicated team of SLM committee members gathered in Devon for a two-day vision-building retreat, setting aside time to reflect, pray, and think carefully about the road ahead. The key question guiding their discussions was how best to secure the future effectiveness of the mission in the context of an increasingly complex and changing financial and legal environment. While recognising that many of these external factors are beyond our direct control, the group approached this challenge with a shared sense of responsibility and hope, rooted in a commitment to steward the mission faithfully for the years to come.

Throughout the retreat, there was a strong emphasis on discerning priorities rather than rushing to fixed solutions. Time was given not only to structured conversations but also to listening, to one another, to the experiences of churches and workers across the Connexion, and to the experience of our partners in SL. This created space for honest reflection about both opportunities and pressures, and for recognising the need to remain adaptable without losing sight of core convictions.



The time together served as a clear expression of the Connexion's continued commitment to our partners in the SL Connexion. While specific pathways are still being explored, there is a strong and united intention to support, sustain, and strengthen the work entrusted to us. Further conversations and developments will follow in due course, but this gathering has helped to lay a thoughtful and hopeful foundation for what comes next

# A FUTURE RE-WRITTEN: ABDUL'S JOURNEY

In February, Abdul will graduate from university with a degree in Mass Communication, a remarkable milestone in a journey that began in the most unlikely of circumstances.

During a recent two-month internship in Bo, Abdul gained invaluable, hands-on experience in news editing and presenting, camera operation, investigative journalism and script writing. He has also worked with the television station *Classic Media*, further sharpening his skills and building confidence in a highly competitive field. He is not only qualified... he is



prepared.

But Abdul's story is about far more than academic success.

As a young boy, he was rescued from the streets of Freetown by Magnus and cared for at Bethesda Orphanage. There, he found safety, stability, and something he had never truly known before: opportunity.

From the beginning, Abdul distinguished himself. He worked diligently, achieved strong grades, and earned the respect of staff and students alike, eventually being appointed Head Boy. His university education was made possible through the faithful generosity of Sierra Leone Mission

(SLM) supporters, whose donations covered his tuition fees and opened the door to a future that once seemed unimaginable.

Now Abdul stands at the threshold of that future.

He has a clear vision: to establish his own media business, using his training, experience and unwavering work ethic to tell stories, inform communities and create opportunity, not only for himself, but for others.

To turn that vision into reality, he needs practical tools. SLM is therefore making an appeal on Abdul's behalf for the essential equipment required to launch his venture:

**Camera, Tripod, Lavalier microphones, Mafi (audio recorder), Studio lights, WiFi access, Drone, Computer**

These are more than items on a list. They are the building blocks of independence, sustainability and long-term impact.

If you are able to provide any of this equipment, or make a financial contribution toward its purchase, you will be investing in a young man whose life has already been transformed, and who is determined to use his second chance to make a difference.

To support Abdul, please follow the guidelines on page 11 or contact Janet O'Shea, Chair of SLM.

Together, we can help ensure that this next chapter is not only hopeful, but successful.

## ***DID YOU KNOW?***

**The Connexion has published a magazine for more than 200 years.**

**It's previous titles were:**

The Evangelical Register

The Monthly Record

The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion Circular

The Countess of Huntingdon's New Magazine

The Harbinger

The Free Church of England Magazine

The Magazine of the Free Church of England

The Missionary Quarterly

The Sierra Leone Quarterly

The Voice

# ABOUT THE COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON'S CONNEXION

*"I give and devise all my Freehold, Copyhold and Leasehold houses... and also the Chapels there... unto the said Thomas Haweis and Janetta Payne his wife, the said Lady Anne Agnes Erskine, and John Lloyd..."*

With these solemn words in her will, Selena Hastings set in place the future of the work to which she had given her life. When she died on 17 June 1791, she left a fellowship of chapels bound together by a shared commitment to the gospel, known as the **Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion**.

For many readers today, the Connexion is simply the spiritual home in which they worship. Yet its origins lie in the remarkable calling of a woman who longed, above all, to see Christ exalted.

## A Heart Awakened by Grace

Born in 1707 into an aristocratic family, Selina Shirley married the Earl of Huntingdon and moved in the highest circles of society. Yet privilege did not shield her from sorrow. Family tensions marked her childhood, and as an adult she endured repeated bereavements, including the deaths of five of her seven children.

In the midst of illness and grief, she encountered the message of the new evangelical preaching of the eighteenth century: that salvation is by grace alone, through faith in Christ alone. This truth took hold of her heart. Like many believers, however, her assurance was not always steady. Her letters reveal deep introspection and spiritual struggle. She knew what it was to cling to Christ in weakness.

**"She knew what it was to cling to Christ in weakness."**

Rather than withdrawing into private devotion, she offered her life, influence and resources to the Lord's service. She appointed the popular evangelist George Whitefield as one of her chaplains, and opened her homes for gospel preaching. Through her support, many heard the good news who might never otherwise have entered a parish church. Her relationship with John Wesley was more complicated. Though united in love for Christ, they differed on theological details, which reminds us that even devoted Christians can disagree earnestly while seeking to

*This, the most famous portrait of the Countess of Huntingdon, hangs in The National Gallery. The simplicity of dress subtly signals that her identity was not anchored in fashion or display, but in faith. The bible in front of her is not merely decorative. In eighteenth-century portraiture, the prominently placed Bible signified seriousness about faith and submission to God's Word. Above all, note her direct gaze which conveys resolve and seriousness. She is not portrayed as timid or ornamental, but purposeful. For a woman in the eighteenth century, an age when public religious leadership was overwhelmingly male, her visual confidence is striking*



**"...even devoted Christians can disagree earnestly while seeking to honour the same Lord."**

honour the same Lord.

## **A Vision for Gospel Ministry**

Lady Huntingdon was convinced that faithful preaching required faithful training. In 1768 she established a college at Trevecca in Wales to prepare evangelical ministers. Ahead of its time, the college provided a place where Scripture was honoured and the new birth proclaimed.

She also oversaw a growing network of chapels. Contrary to popular assumption, these were not gatherings of the wealthy. People from all walks of life worshipped together, drawn by the clear proclamation of Christ crucified.

Yet her life was not without shadow. Through her involvement with the Bethesda Orphan House in Georgia, she became connected with the ownership of enslaved people, an aspect of her legacy that grieves us

today. It is a sobering reminder that sincere faith does not automatically free believers from the blind spots of their age. We remember her with gratitude, but also with humility.

## From Revival to Connexion

For many years Lady Huntingdon sought to remain within the Church of England while supporting evangelical preaching. Legal challenges in the 1780s, however, made this increasingly difficult. Reluctantly, she accepted that the chapels associated with her work must stand as a distinct body. Thus the Connexion formally emerged.

In her final years she considered how the work might continue after her death. Her will entrusted the chapels and properties to four trusted associates, carefully naming also those who were not to preach in them. The document reveals both her determination to guard the gospel she loved and the personal tensions she had experienced.

After her death, the Connexion gradually moved from being guided by her personal oversight to being governed by trustees. A legal “Foundation Deed” in 1807 brought the various properties under a single structure. Its purpose was expressed simply: the “propagation of the gospel.” Over time, structures changed and chapels opened and closed, but that calling remained.

## A Living Legacy

At her death there were around sixty-four chapels in the Connexion. The number has fluctuated across the centuries, yet the work has never been measured by buildings alone. The true legacy of Lady Huntingdon is the continued proclamation of Christ and Him crucified.

She was not a perfect woman. She could be strong-willed and insensitive. She knew conflict as well as affection. But she believed that her title and wealth were trusts from God, to be laid at His feet. In an age when women held no formal church office, she exercised remarkable spiritual leadership through prayer, patronage and perseverance.

For us today, her story invites reflection. What has the Lord placed in our hands? Influence, resources, time, gifts; all are given that Christ might be made known. The Connexion exists not because of legal deeds or historic buildings, but because generations have continued to cherish the gospel she sought to defend.

**"...sincere faith does not automatically free believers from the blind spots of their age."**

**"The Connexion's purpose was expressed simply: the 'propagation of the gospel.'"**

As we look back with thanksgiving, we do so not to magnify a noblewoman, but to praise a faithful Saviour. The same grace that sustained her through sorrow and controversy sustains us still. And the same commission, to proclaim the good news, remains our joy and our calling.



*Three of the earliest chapels in the Connexion, established during the Countess's lifetime at Ote Hall, Goring and Ely*

## CONNEXION GOVERNANCE FROM 1791 to 2026

At various times in the past, the Connexion's Annual Reports included a list of all who have served as trustees since the death of the Countess in 1791. Thomas Haweis, his wife Jennett (or Jenetta), Lady Anne Erskine, and John Lloyd were the Connexion's first executive team. Those who died were succeeded by new devisees until a **Foundation Trust** was created in 1807 to secure the governance of the Connexion for the next 90 years. In the mid 1890s the trustees sought to expand the trusteeship, give ministers a more prominent voice, and hand more authority to the Annual Conference. This resulted in our current governing **Scheme** which came into effect in 1899. The next page contains an updated all-time list of trustees.

- Devisees named in Lady Huntingdon's will and their successors
- Trustees appointed under the 1807 Deed of Trust
- Trustees appointed under the 1899 Scheme

PAST AND CURRENT  
TRUSTEES OF THE  
COUNTESS OF  
HUNTINGDON'S  
CONNEXION 1791 TO 2026

Devises	Appointed
1 Rev. Thomas Haweis	1790
2 Mrs. Jennett Payne Haweis	1790
3 Lady Anne Agnes Erskine	1790
4 John Lloyd	1790
5 Rev. John Ford	1792
6 John Groves	1792
7 Robert Butcher	1793
8 James Oldham Oldham	1793

Trustees	Appointed
1 Rev. Thomas Haweis	1807
2 Robert Butcher	1807
3 James Oldham Oldham	1807
4 William Langston	1807
5 James Arundell	1809
6 Rev. John Finley	1820
7 Henry Fitzherbert Stroud	1820
8 Joseph Trueman	1823
9 John Dean Paul	1850
10 Rev. James Sherman	1857
11 Benjamin Cooke	1857
12 James Haycroft	1857
13 Rev. Henry Allon	1864
14 William H. Michael	1871
15 William Revell Spicer	1871
16 Frederick W. Wilcocks	1871
17 Samuel Smith	1883
18 William List	1885
19 R. A. McLean	1888
20 Rev. J. B. Higgs	1892
21 William Hilton	1893
22 Henry Buckland	1899
23 Edwin H. Hobday	1899
24 William Nethercoat	1899
25 Rev. W. H. C. Palmer	1899
26 Henry W. Randall	1899
27 George W. Willis	1899
28 C. Armstrong Dash	1902
29 Thomas D. Smith	1903
30 William Spence	1905
31 E. Dolby Shelton	1905
32 Charles Bartter	1907
33 Rev. J. Westbury Jones	1910
34 Rev. Robert Nott	1919
35 John D. Tibbitts	1919
36 Henry Thomas Griffiths	1922
37 Henry Jones Bridgwater	1923
38 John Wheeler	1923
39 Albert Dennis	1929
40 Bertie Touch	1929
41 Hedley M. Lamerton	1929

	Appointed
42 Rev. Edwin Tully	1930
43 John William Gammans	1930
44 Rev. A. W. Sansom	1937
45 Charles J. Jeffreys	1937
46 Albert E. Mason	1937
47 Clissold G. Larkinson	1937
48 Herbert William Lawrence Keeping	1941
49 Sidney Marven	1941
50 Rev. George Henry Crisp	1942
51 Edwin Alec Blaxill	1944
52 Arthur Harrison	1947
53 Frederick Tench	1947
54 Rev. Levi Criddle	1955
55 Quinton De'Ath	1955
56 Kenneth Bernard Stone	1965
57 Ralph Edward John Uren	1965
58 Rev. Gilbert Walter Kirby	1968
59 Brian C. Baldwin	1968
60 Mrs. Marjorie Crossley	1970
61 Douglas Staplehurst	1970
62 Rev. Roger Davies	1972
63 Frank R. Reeves	1983
64 Rev. Norman Lloyd	1991
65 Bernard Mayo	1991
66 Rev. Matthew Squire	1998
67 Mrs. Jackie Lake	2000
68 Rev. Gordon Lowman	2001
69 Clive Morgan Dale	2002
70 J. P. Noel Valley	2002
71 Andrew Bennet	2004
72 <b>Graham Austin Squibbs</b>	2007
73 David Peter Sweetman	2008
74 <b>David John Stanley Lockett</b>	2008
75 Glynn Phillips	2009
76 <b>Rev. Benjamin D. Quant</b>	2011
77 <b>Rev. Simon Allaby</b>	2014
78 Rev. Bethany Burrage	2017
79 Robert John Shottliff	2017
80 <b>Mrs. Elizabeth Gregory</b>	2023
81 <b>Stephen Houghton</b>	2025



*The Countess nominated Rev. Thomas Haweis (left) as a devisee of her Connexion after her death, but leading a movement that had seceded (split from the Church) would have compromised his position as an Anglican priest. In practice the Connexion was run by another woman, Lady Anne Agnes Erskine until she died in 1804.*

## **THE VOICE**

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COUNTY OF HUNTINGDON'S  
CONNEXION



THE SIERRA LEONE MISSION

**CHURCHES OF THE COUNTIES OF HUNTINGDON'S CONNEXION**

- 1 Bells Yew Green Chapel
- 2 Bolney Village Chapel
- 3 Coptthorne Chapel
- 4 Cradley Chapel
- 5 South Street Free Church, Eastbourne
- 6 Ebley Chapel
- 7 The Countess Free Church, Ely
- 8 Broad Oak Chapel
- 9 Goring Free Church
- 10 Hailsham Gospel Mission
- 11 St. Stephen's Church, Middleton
- 12 Mortimer West End Chapel
- 13 Ore Hall, Wivelsfield
- 14 Resedale Community Church
- 15 Sheppey Evangelical Church
- 16 Shoreham Free Church
- 17 Slough Community Church
- 18 Zion Community Church, St Ives
- 19 Turners Hill Free Church
- 20 Woodmancote Church
- 21 Wormley Free Church

