

THE VOICE



READ WITHIN ABOUT
CHRISTMAS AT ROSEDALE

SPRING 2025 NO. 436

THE
CONNEXION

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WELCOME FROM THE EDITOR



Hello everyone and welcome to the Spring 2025 edition of *The Voice* magazine. Just when I think the sun is here to stay, it disappears again and grey clouds resume. But soon Spring will have sprung, Easter is on its way, and a whole host of new beginnings will arrive. So, amidst frantically writing my dissertation I bring to you all the news that the Connexion has to offer for the beginning of 2025.

We're starting strong with a bit of a testimony from me about what to do when you're cornered in the kitchen with a Big Question – laughing is not an answer! Then on to catching up on Christmas events at Broad Oak Chapel and Rosedale Community Church, as well as an update from the lovely little Matthew Mouse – not so little anymore! David from the SLM committee will also be running us through how your generous donations are allocated and spent. Don't miss the final article in Paul's wonderful series on How to be a Strong Christian, this time focusing on the work of the Holy Spirit; I wish to say a big 'thank you' to Paul for his consistent and thoughtful articles. And, finally, I want to extend heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has provided articles for *The Voice* over the course of my editorship. Thank you for giving your voice to our Voice.

This is not the end! If you or your Church have any articles, news, photos or bible studies you want share, send them over to Christine at the website (christine@cofhconnexion.org.uk) to continue having your voice heard. Check out the *What's New* tab every Wednesday to keep up to date with your Connexion family.

BIBLE STUDY:

Acts 17

By Esther Burrage



The Bible passage that's been floating around my head lately is Acts 17 v 19-34: ***Then they took him [Paul] to a meeting of the Aeropagu, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas). (NIV 19-21)***

Paul is visiting Athens to share the message of the gospel with those who know nothing about Jesus or the God known by the Jews. His words are met with curiosity and Paul is suddenly presented with the dilemma of needing to introduce his listeners, who have no background knowledge, to the powerful message that they can know the Almighty. He does this by utilising a nearby altar dedicated to an 'unknown' god and creatively articulating that this god is actually the One God (v23). Hearing him, the philosophers find this interesting and want to know more. Paul shares with them the good news and although it doesn't win them all, they express interest in hearing him speak further. It's an exciting first step when you tell someone about Jesus and they want to know more, but even more exciting when you're faced with a barrier of understanding and you are able to break through it.

I'm sure many of you who have been Christians for a while, or even just a short time, have been asked questions about your faith by people who don't realise that not every Christian knows all the answers, especially not to the 'Big Questions' like: If God is good why do we suffer?

I was in the kitchen doing the washing up one night when my flatmate came in and, before I even had a chance to turn my headphones off and say hello, he asked me, "If you got a bad grade or failed a Uni assignment, would you blame God?"

My first instinct was to laugh. To me, it was funny. The idea of failing something and wanting to *blame* God for it, was silly - blame doesn't even come into my thoughts. But then I realised that from my flatmate's perspective – someone with very little knowledge about God and the Church and without the same Christian upbringing as myself – it's not silly. In his world, something going wrong required blame, or at least a reason for being let down if you really tried hard. I realised that in that moment, my flatmate was like those Athenians that Paul spoke to. He was interested in what I would have to say, but it was then up to me to find the right language to express my answer in a way that didn't just rely on faith that I take for granted. I'm sure that, as a law student, my flatmate has a far greater vocabulary than me in many other areas, but in this case, I had to do what Paul did in Acts 17. Elaborate on the space already labelled as the 'unknown'. If it's God's responsibility to make sure you get a good grade, how do you know if you've taken the opportunities that he's given you to do better? And, most importantly, if you want to blame him when you fail, are you praising him when you succeed as well?

Sometimes it takes a little creativity to reach people who have a heart for learning the gospel but don't always know where to find the means. That creativity can be found in all sorts of places – a sports game with children and youth who only understand anything if it's put in football terms; in a magazine with articles to appeal to everyone, or even over a gradually cooling washing-up basin in the kitchen.

The Fruits of a Christmas Tree

By June Collins, Broad Oak Chapel

Once again, the parish church in nearby Sturry hosted a 4-day Christmas Tree festival in early December, inviting local shops, businesses, schools, clubs etc. to make/display a tree, decorated to highlight a theme that was special to them.

With that in mind, we decided to promote the Love, Peace and Joy that can be found in Broad Oak Chapel, not just at Christmas but every day of the year.



The words in the photo above are displayed in the chapel and on the outside notice-board as a welcoming greeting to everyone.

May the Love, Peace and Joy of the Lord be your strength, as it is ours at Broad Oak Chapel.

Where Does the Money Go?

By David Price,
SLM Treasurer

You may be aware that SLM supporters are very generous when a particular need is raised, for which the Committee are very grateful! For instance, the recent appeal for funds to renovate the children's shower and toilet block at Bethesda was very quickly oversubscribed. But the need for "general fund" finance is a larger and ongoing burden that can sometimes get overlooked – hence this article.

By way of background, grants are sent out every month by the Sierra Leone Mission (SLM) in the UK to the Connexion in Sierra Leone to help with:

- The costs of pay and training for teachers, as well as helping with building and maintaining Connexion schools.
- The costs of pay and training for Connexion ministers, and building and maintaining Connexion churches.
- The costs of running Bethesda, the Connexion orphanage.
- The costs of university education for children from the orphanage.
- The costs of caretakers, local agents, radio station work etc
- As funds permit, larger periodic grants for building works at churches and schools.
- And last but by no means least ... the annual cost of sending the shipping container to Sierra Leone, which in 2024 cost £10,300.
- All this means we need income of about £72,000 p.a. (£6,00 per month) for grants towards current annual costs (quite apart from building work), which can only go up – Sierra Leone being particularly vulnerable to price increases.

But there is always more that could be done if more funds became available! For instance :

Teachers & Schools

- There are about 100 teachers across 20 Connexion primary schools receiving support. We would love to be able to pay them more – indeed it would be great to be able to support more teachers.
- And, of course, there is always a need for more schools – and more teachers – and more classrooms and better facilities in existing schools ... (and urgent repairs for collapsing buildings, termite infestations, etc!)

Ministers & Chapels

- There are about 50 ministers across about 30 Connexion churches.
- Very few of the congregations are able to contribute to ministers' salaries, let alone any building work that may be necessary on the chapels.

Health Centre

- Because of the daily running costs involved, the Health Centre has no generator, so it relies on solar panels.
- There is a great need for a scanner (for organs and abdominal diagnosis) but that would need more power than solar panels can provide ...
- The maternity building is not yet in use because there is a need for a functioning water system, electricity and additional furniture.

- The combined potential impact of the Health Centre and the maternity building for the community is huge; but the lack of funding for big items is a real problem.

Bethesda Orphanage

- For most things, everyone at Bethesda relies on electricity provided by solar panels. However, as emergency backup for when solar power fails, there is a generator to power a pump that sends water from the well to the water tower. Running costs are however expensive.
- Following a recent appeal, the Connexion were recently able to finance the refurbishment of the children's shower and toilet block.
- There are no showers, however, so the children still have "buckets over the head", because that would need another generator and another pump.
- It would be lovely to provide shower facilities that we take for granted!

If you would like to know more, or if you would like to send a donation, or get involved with the work of SLM as a supporter or local coordinator, or if you would be interested in joining the management committee, please contact Janet O'Shea (SLM Chair) at kimatalex@yahoo.co.uk or David Price (SLM Treasurer) at dp23@live.co.uk

NOTICE

We love receiving your donations and are so grateful for every penny given to the SLM. In order for us to keep a proper record of everything you give, please make sure to send a message or email to Janet Foord with your name and where you would like your donation to go. This is very important information that will help us send your money to where it needs to go and know who to thank for it!

Update from Matthew Mouse

By Cindy Dicks

My, my what a busy little mouse Matthew has been since the last time he wrote to *The Voice* magazine.

Last year his Easter story called *The Empty Tomb* finally became a real book as it made its way to the printing house. Quite a few of the books were bought and he is happy to say that the children loved hearing about the real story of Easter, told from Mary's perspective. They also enjoyed all the brightly coloured illustrations.

He has also been really busy writing the full story of Jesus. In a collection of 14 short stories, he tells how he follows the life of Jesus, right from meeting Mary on a dusty road to visit her cousin Elizabeth, up to what feels much like the first Easter celebration, with Lazarus, Martha and Mary as they invite him for a meal and chat about all the things that remind them of their dear friend Jesus. These stories will soon be published into a fun interactive book with lots of puzzles and crafts to enjoy.

But the most exciting time of the year for Matthew just has to be Christmas. This is when he gets to share his favourite story with girls and boys all over the world. In 2023, he wrote a little Christmas story called *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*, the real story. In rhyme, he tells all about the real story of Christmas and what a special gift God sent us. These little books were made into both full-colour illustrated books and colouring books, with a link to a little video, where you can watch and listen to the story while you read. Over 500 books were received by children in the UK and South Africa. Wow, Matthew had not expected





this. This year, 200 of the same little books were sent to Sierra Leone as Christmas gifts. But the fun didn't stop there for Matthew. In Lubbersthorp, there was a Christians Together event at Christmas, where his story was read out to over 40 children, and books were given to them so that they could read it again

and again. But there was more fun to come. Matthew just loves a good Christmas party and was excited to have his Christmas story read to his little friends at Little Lubbers for their Christmas event.

I do think that Matthew has been really busy over the last year, but he has whispered in my ear and told me that he isn't going to be taking a break just yet. He has big plans for 2025, and one of those is to have his Christmas book sent to print again, he hopes to have his life of Jesus story all sent to the printer before the end of the year.

I really hope that he makes it and that both his Christmas story and Easter story reach children far and wide, and Matthew hopes so too.



Until we next hear from Matthew Mouse, with more exciting news, he would like to wish you all a very blessed 2025.

A Tudor Christmas at Rosedale

By Bethany Burrage



As the bell rang out the town crier was heard, “Oh Yay! Oh Yay! The Twelve Days of Christmas have begun. Come ye and worship our Lord and Saviour. God bless the King!”

And so begun our wonderful Tudor themed Christmas Carol Service.

As a congregation who seeks to be a Christ-Centred Community, we love the opportunity to provide events that welcome in our family, friends and neighbours. We have several community groups that meet through the week and our constant prayer is that we will have the

opportunity for those meaningful conversations, or to pray with folk and share with them the love of Jesus. Christmas is a wonderful opportunity to invite them to worship with us and many will attend who do not come at other times of the year.

This past Christmas was to be my last one at Rosedale and the leadership team happily gave me permission to pull out all the stops. Hannah and I had long dreamt of celebrating a Tudor Christmas. As amateur historians who are slowly creeping into the world of re-enactment, we imagined what it would look like to introduce our very multi-cultural congregation and neighbours to ‘the dole’, wassail, real Tudor minced pies, the Lord of Misrule, and the symbolism of the holly tree. And so we begun preparing.

We sewed our own costumes. We asked our extremely talented Iryna to decorate the hall with holly and ivy. We made a large lamb minced pie, borrowed a bell to ring people into church, and decided Percy Pigs would do as a replacement for the boar's head. We learnt tricks and how to mould marchpane (marzipan).

But our main focus was to ensure the message of Christ being the light in a world of darkness was clearly presented. The setting was the kitchens of Hampton Court Palace in the year 1538. That was when King Henry VIII decreed that all church pulpits should have a copy of the Bible in the English language so that people could understand what they were hearing for the first time, instead of Latin which had been the language of the church for almost 1000 years. Utilising the skills of our own Latin scholar (Esther) we developed the theme of the Word of God (Jesus) being revealed to us through the Word of Scripture. We brought it up to date by showing a clip of the work of Wycliffe Bible Translators and how their ministry of translating the scriptures into local languages around the world is making such an impact in the Kingdom of God.

It really was a wonderful morning of celebration. We had visitors from every one of our community groups plus many friends and neighbours so the hall was packed. There was so much joy and engagement with members of the congregation taking part in the readings and games. As the 12 days of Christmas unravelled our theme of Jesus being the light of the world was revealed. And we raised £190 for Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Hannah, Esther and I, were in our element. We had so much fun acting our parts and leading the carols with great gusto. We are so grateful that we were able to share the gospel with so many not-yet-believers and hear the conversations taking place over fruit punch and mince pies (Tudor and modern). It will be an unforgettable last Christmas at Rosedale.

Selina and Us: By Ben Quant

The Countess' Legacy

An abridged version of Ben Quant's talk at Conference 24, which can be watched in full here: <http://youtu.be/U0Q-IZBaQHI&t=6s>

What comes to your mind when I say Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon? A stern face from an unflattering portrait? A dry church history lesson? An historical figure who frankly has nothing to do with us now? But should we see the Countess as an embarrassing older relative to hide away from visitors? No! I believe we struggle with our sense of identity as a Connexion because we've lost sight of our roots, the Countess, and consequently our place in God's people today. It's time we took her out, dusted her down and took a fresh look at her and her legacy.



Portrait by John Russell, reproduced with the permission of the Trustees of the Cheshunt Foundation, Westminster College,

Selina was born in 1707, as Lady Selina Shirley, to Washington Shirley (the 2nd Earl of Ferrers) and Mary Levinge. The Shirleys were a distinguished family who could trace their lineage back to Edward the Confessor, whose death sparked off the events of 1066. In 1728 she married Theophilus Hastings, the 9th Earl of Huntingdon. He was equally well connected; a year earlier he'd carried the Sword of State at George II's coronation. They would often be found at court mingling with the likes of composer George Frideric Handel and writer Alexander Pope. For a while they owned an estate in Enfield Chase, North London. This was eventually sold. To be

near their boys' Westminster school they rented 11 Downing Street - yes, the traditional address of the Chancellor of the Exchequer! Remember how God placed Esther in the heart of the Persian court in just the right place and time so that she could play a key part in saving her people? Mordecai said, '...and who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?' (Esther 4:14). I believe God placed Selina in the heart of these connections for the sake of our nation.

But good connections don't protect you from suffering and Selina knew great personal tragedy. Her father died shortly after her first child was born. They had seven children: Francis (1st), became a tear-away and didn't share her faith; George (2nd) and Ferdinando (4th), died from smallpox within eight months of each other; Elizabeth (3rd), was the only one to out-live her; Selina (5th), died in infancy; Selina (6th), died at 26; and Henry (7th), died at 18. Theophilus died three years later from a stroke. Not surprisingly, Selina suffered from poor physical and mental health.

The Countess always showed compassion towards others. In 1730 she became one of 21 'ladies of quality & distinction' who signed Thomas Coram's petition calling for the foundation of the Foundling Hospital in London. In 1737, she also led a group of titled ladies excluded from attending a debate on Spain, in breaking into the House of Commons gallery and shouting until the House rose. Despite such philanthropic efforts, she felt empty, a melancholy compounded by personal suffering, but things were to change in 1739.

In 1739, Selina's sister-in-law, Lady Margaret Hastings, came to faith under the preaching of the methodist, Benjamin Ingham. Selina saw that Margaret had discovered a peace and joy she lacked, and through her testimony came to Christ herself. A.C.H. Seymour wrote, 'Now the day began to dawn – Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, arose, and burst in meridian splendour on her benighted soul. The scales fell from her eyes, and opened a passage for the light of life that sprang in, and death and darkness fled before it...'

Selina devoted herself to confessing her new-found faith and encouraging those who preached this 'gospel of grace', developing a network of relationships with significant voices in the fledgling revival, including John & Charles Wesley, Philip Dodderidge, Howell Harris, Isaac Watts, Benjamin Ingham and the great preacher of her day, George Whitefield. She invited her peers to come and listen to these methodist preachers, and wonderfully, they did. A.N. New wrote: 'The good effected by the efforts of Lady Huntingdon was very great and, through her persuasions, members of the aristocracy were brought within sound of the preaching of the gospel. She embraced every opportunity of speaking on religious subjects to her friends in her mansions; and her manners were so polished, her talents so conspicuous, that her society was much sought after, notwithstanding her religion. Her drawing rooms in Town were crowded with doctors, poets, philosophers, statesmen, lords and ladies, where the great truths

of religion were discussed and her Ladyship not infrequently astonished those present by the clearness and force of her views of truth.'

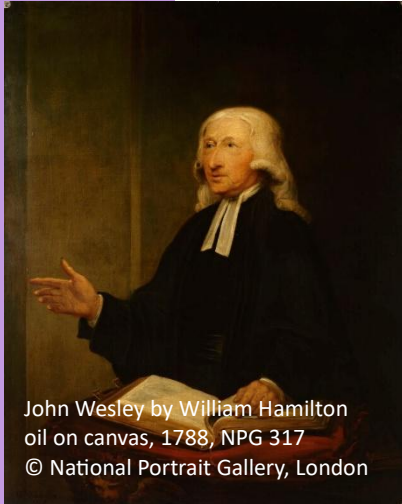
This movement, however, was resisted within the church. How could Selina promote the development, ordination and placement of ministers who preached the Gospel of grace when this was the case? As a noble, she was allowed to erect chapels on her property for private use, and to appoint two chaplains, and so she appointed George Whitefield as her chaplain and took to inviting him, or others of her contacts, to preach as she travelled around the country, buying or renting property as required, on which she erected chapels for those who were converted (e.g. Brighton and Bath). She also opened a training college in 1768, in Trevecca, Wales, to support them. Tradition has it that the hymn, 'Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah' was first translated into English for its opening. She poured much time, emotion and money into the college and her students were sent all over the country, preaching wherever there was a need.

(Image behind: Westminster College, Cambridge)

Her network of chapels rapidly grew to include places such as Brecon, Devizes, Dover, Hull, Gravesend, locations in Lincolnshire, Worcester, and the former Westminster Chapel in London. Eventually the college moved to Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, with students continuing to take the Gospel out to the surrounding area. You can trace the church in Wormley to that time. This missionary legacy ripples on; you can see this in our church plants in Rosedale (Cheshunt) and High Barnes (Ely) and our welcome of others into the Connexion, such as Hailsham, Sheppey and Slough. The college moved again, becoming Cheshunt College, Cambridge, before amalgamating with Westminster College. The proceeds became the Cheshunt Foundation, which continues to fund theological training today, a significant part of Selina's legacy and a distinctive of the Connexion.

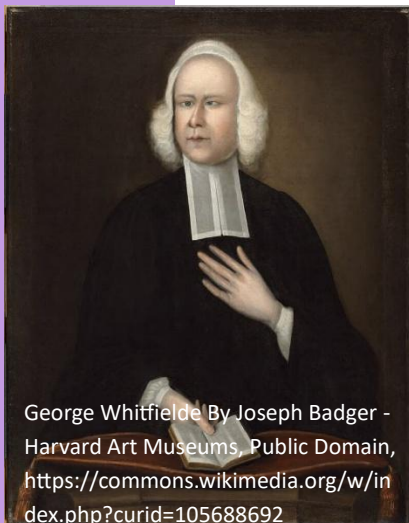
The Countess' evangelistic endeavours arose from her compassion. Gilbert Kirby wrote, 'One would not wish to give the impression that the Countess [...] confined her attention to those of her own station in life. It has been said that, "while her drawing rooms were fitted with brilliant assemblies, her kitchen was crowded with the poor, to whom she dispensed her charities for the relief of their wants, and directed them to Jesus Christ as the only remedy for their guilt".' We continue to hold together evangelism and social action, e.g. Goring's toddler group, Rosedale's over 50's club, Ely's Rich Tea Community for those with learning difficulties, Wormley's Conversation Cafe for those who speak English as a second language, and Shoreham's foodbank.

There was an urgency to Selina's activity. She wrote, 'I dread slack hands in the vineyard, we must all up and be doing.' Even in her dying days, she strove to keep going, even initiating new activity. She always



had an eye out for new opportunities such as the working class entertainment venue, the Pantheon, Clarksenwell, London. Its clientele included 'small tradesmen, apprentices, dressmakers, servant-girls, and disreputable women'. Selina always thought the building would make a fine chapel. When this closed, it was converted to an independent church, Spa Fields Chapel, with a congregation of 3,000, run by two ordained Anglican clergymen (against the law for CE priests). The local parish priest protested and the chapel was closed. Selina intervened, building a small passage from the

chapel to a small house nearby, to make it her private chapel and allow it to continue. The priest protested again; how could this be seen as a private chapel when so many were in attendance! With regret, Selina registered it as a dissenting chapel in 1782.



The Countess had never wanted to leave the Church of England, but this judgement meant she had little choice but either to stop planting new churches or to secede. Sadly, she withdrew her churches and in 1783 the Connexion came into being. Although this brought sorrow and kick back, this came with advantages; no longer was she restricted to building private chapels on her own land and could ordain Connexion ministers within the Connexion. A rapid expansion followed.

Despite Selina's best efforts, the unity between the Wesleys and Whitefield broke in 1770.

Whitefield died in the same year, meaning that Selina lost the support of Whitefield, the Wesleys, and one of her key advisors and Trevecca's

principal, John Fletcher, in quick succession. How this impacted the Evangelical Revival we don't know, but it's certainly a 'what if...' moment.

Aware of the need to plan for the future of the Connexion, in 1790, the Countess produced her 'Plan of Association for Uniting and Perpetuating the Connexion'. 64 churches are named. It made provision for: geographic districts (like Methodism's church circuits), settling disputes, the appointment of ministers, and the stipulation that each person give not less than 1d a week. Sadly, this Plan was blocked; I suspect it would have given us a clearer identity and structure had it been put in place. She died on 17th June 1791, her will naming four people as responsible for the Connexion's assets, paving the way for today's 'Scheme'.

Hebrews 13:7-8 says, '7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.' Reflecting on Selina's life, I believe she left us a legacy of:

- **Seeking more** - striving to always be better for God
- **Grace** - a theology and practice of grace that welcomes all
- **Mission** - sharing God's love through evangelism & social action
- **Striving for unity** - allowing diversity within evangelical theology and practice
- **Activism** - making the most of the time, resources and contacts God has given us
- **Assets** - the buildings and funds of the Connexion and Cheshunt Foundation

It is no exaggeration to say without her, the church and even our country would be very different; I suspect the only reason she has been forgotten is that she was a woman in a man's world. We should be proud of her, not embarrassed, seek to imitate her as she imitated her Lord, and embrace and apply her legacy as 'her children' today.

(Image on right: Published by Carington Bowles, after John Russell, mezzotint, published 10 June 1773, NPG D16850 © National Portrait Gallery, London)



How to be a Strong Christian Part 5

By Paul Woodbridge

In this 5-part series thinking about how we can be strong Christians, we've looked at how many promises in Scripture help us to see that God holds us fast and can be trusted to fulfil promises like John 10:27-29, that no one and nothing can take true believers out of the Father's hand.

Last time, we considered the finished work of Jesus, what he has done for us through his death on the cross -our sin was put on him and reconciled us to God. See especially Rom.8:32-34.



In this final piece, we will look at the **CONTINUING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**.

Eph.1:13-14 speaks of believers marked with a SEAL, a mark of God's ownership, showing that we belong to him. And the Spirit is a *deposit, a down-payment*, who guarantees our inheritance. The Message puts it like this:

'It's in Christ that you, once you heard the truth and believed it (this Message of your salvation), found yourselves home free—signed, sealed, and delivered by the Holy Spirit. This signet from God is the first instalment on what's coming, a reminder that we'll get everything God has planned for us.'

God has given us a great inheritance and made us his heirs - and to prove it, to show it's secure, he gives us the first down-payment, the pledge, the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts - just as we might put a down-payment, a deposit, to

secure a holiday. And the deposit is itself a guarantee that the full amount will be paid – Eph.1:14.

It's interesting that the modern Greek word for 'down-payment', 'deposit' is **engagement ring** - an anticipation of good things to come.

Another important aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit may be seen in Rom.8:15-16 – *'¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba Father."¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.'*

God has adopted us – and that's something that can never be revoked or reversed. There was once a little boy who'd been adopted who was being teased about it in the playground, and he said, 'But I'm special; your mum and dad had to have you, they had no choice. But I was chosen'.

A question that perhaps arises from v.16 is, HOW does the Spirit witness with our spirits that we are God's

children? Well, it seems to me that this is something subjective, even emotional. God, if you like, giving us an overwhelming, personal impression of his love for us – not merely for the world, but for **ME**.

Perhaps when we least expect it, God suddenly makes his love known to us deep within our spirits, a special assurance of his love. Perhaps he may do it even when we feel somewhat indifferent or negative to God – he suddenly speaks to us and assures us again of his love and fatherhood. The initiative lies with God in this – some call it 'a special season of blessing'. We should be open to it as we seek God. A joy unspeakable, inexpressible and glorious (1 Peter 1:9). It may happen when we're singing, or listening to a sermon, or alone with God in prayer or studying the Scriptures.

Picture a father walking with his son along the road, hand in hand. Suddenly, the father squeezes his child's hand, or picks them up and cuddles them. Imagine the effect on the child! Now the child's hand is always in the father's hand – it

never leaves it. But sometimes the father wants to remind the child of his love and of the fact that he's secure. There's no change of status – he's no more his father's son after his dad has squeezed his hand or given him a cuddle than before. But he feels a special joy and assurance when the father suddenly cuddles him!

We're always secure in God's hands, but it's as if sometimes he gives our hand a special squeeze or gives us a cuddle, as if to say, 'You're mine, my son, my daughter, I love YOU'. There's no change in the relationship when God does this, it's just a mark of God's goodness and kindness to us. Pray for this to happen to you, for the Holy Spirit to touch your emotions!

So, in conclusion, these, then are our 3 Guarantors of salvation, the grounds of our assurance – the promises of God, the finished work of Xt and the ongoing work of the HS. God wants us to be sure of our salvation, assured that we are members of his family for eternity, that we might be strong in living and witnessing for him.

We can sum all this up in **Eph.1:4,7 and 13** - The Father chose us, the Son shed his precious blood for us, and the Holy Spirit sealed us. Hallelujah!

'My name from the palms of Your hands Eternity will not erase; Impressed on God's heart it remains In marks of indelible grace. Yes, I, to the end will endure As sure as the Spirit is given. More happy but not more secure, the glorified spirits in heaven.' Augustus Toplady, 'A debtor to mercy alone'.



A Word from the President

By Janet O'Shea

Recently we have been reading through Philippians as part of a *Discipleship Explored* course here at Zion Community Church, St. Ives. What a wonderful book and full of encouragement! Many times, Paul, the author, emphasises the unique and incredible position we hold as Christians. These are just a few of the gems that he writes:



- We are partners in spreading the Good News. (1v5)
- God has begun a good work within us and will continue His work until it is finally finished. (1v6)
- We share with Paul the special favour of God. (1v7)
- Righteous character is produced in our lives by Jesus Christ. (1v11)
- We have been given the privilege of trusting in Christ. (1v29)
- God is at work in us, giving us the desire and the power to do what pleases Him. (2v13)
- We rely on what God has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort. (3v3)
- His peace will guard our hearts and minds as we live in Christ Jesus. (4v7)

When we meditate on these amazing truths it unfolds the realisation that the Almighty, Omnipotent, All Knowing, Powerful Creator of the world loves us, died for us and lives in us. Mind blowing!

Paul encourages us to '*press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed us.*' (3v12) We have so much to be thankful for, so in closing I would echo Paul's words. '*Always be full of the Lord. I say it again... REJOICE!*' (4v4)

HOW TO GIVE TO THE SLM

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

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, Mulberry House, 20 Kingsborough Drive, Eastchurch, Kent, ME12 4DN.

When you donate, please ensure you state your name and clearly label which area of SLM outreach you wish for your donation to go towards. To do this you can email Janet Foord at norman.foord@yahoo.co.uk.

You can find out more about where your donations go by going to WHAT'S NEW at the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion website.



THE COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON'S CONNEXION UK AND SIERRA LEONE

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