

The Voice

Winter 2020 No.419

A new roof being installed at Jerusalem Avenue



THE
CONNEXION

The Sierra Leone Mission

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WELCOME From The Editor

HELLO everyone, and welcome to the Winter edition of the Voice magazine. I don't know about you, but it's beginning to feel a lot like Christmas, and there is lots of news to share as you sit by the fire with your feet up, drinking hot chocolate.

Beginning with a Bible study that's sure to make you laugh, followed by updates on Jerusalem Avenue, mission opportunities during Covid and lockdown, and many more extremely interesting reports from all around the Connexion. You will not miss any winter news!

We also have the next instalment of the SLM History: The Early Years, and don't forget to check out our new Sierra Leone Mission YouTube account where you can find our history series, plus loads more interesting videos. In addition, if you would like to give to the Sierra Leone Mission and help us support our friends in the Connexion overseas, just go to the last page, where you will find all the information you will need to easily donate.

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 15th of February 2021. Just email me at: estherkerengreen@gmail.com.



Bible study: Who Were the Magi?

By Joe Gregory

Matthew 2:1,2

'After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.'



Recently, I saw something that suggested that if the wise men had been women, things would have been different and better.

Firstly, if the Wise Men had been women, they would not have arrived many months after Jesus' birth because they would have stopped to ask for directions. And if the Wise Men had been women, they would have been there to organize things so Jesus wouldn't have had to be born in a barn. And finally, had the Wise Men been women, they would have brought much more practical gifts including a casserole so the family would have something to eat.

What do we really know about the Wise Men? Not much when you look in the Bible. Where did they come from? "The east" you say. But where in the east? How far east? Leysdown? Norfolk? Russia? We know they came from the east and they came from a long way away, but we don't really know where they came from.

How many of them were there and what kind of men were they? Again, we don't know. In the second century, a church leader named Tertullian suggested that these men were kings because the Old Testament had

predicted that kings would come to worship him. He also concluded that there were three kings based on the number of gifts mentioned, gold, frankincense and myrrh. And the manufacturers of nativity scenes caught on, and so in every nativity scene you see three kings or wise men. But the Bible doesn't tell us who they were or how many of them came.



Going back to the passage in Matthew - In the sixth century, someone decided that their names were Melchior, Balthazar and Gaspar. And so operas and carols and stories have been written using these names for them. But no one really knows what their names were.

We don't even really know for sure that they were wise. In the original manuscripts they are called the "magi" from an ancient Iranian word "*magoi*," which was used to describe people who acted in very strange ways, were interested in astrology, spells and incantation and dressed in a very bizarre manner.

The Latin word is "magi," from which we get words like "magician."

So, we don't know who they were, where they came from or even how many of them there were. Why not? Why doesn't Matthew tell us any of this information?

Well I would suggest that all of this detail is left out of the picture in order that the full emphasis may be placed on the one thing that is central to this story, namely their statement, "we have come to worship." That's the main point of this particular story as Matthew tells it to us. "We have come to worship." And as we look at what Matthew tells us about these men, although they may have been strange people who dressed weirdly, they really were wise men.

So, we have at least three kings who have come to worship the One king, born in terrible conditions as a helpless baby. It's incredible that Jesus, creator of the Universe, left Heaven for the stable.

Jesus, the ultimate somebody was born and gave his life as a nobody, so that everybody could be somebody in the kingdom of God.

Jesus said the kingdom is at hand, and when we put others above ourselves, bringing comfort and support and love to those who need it, we are expanding His kingdom even now, all these centuries later.

So when you look at the Magi worshipping the baby in your stable scene just remember this: Jesus, the ultimate somebody was born and gave his life as a nobody, so that everybody could be somebody in the kingdom of God.

And the challenge for us today is whether we will be wise men and women. Wise men and women still seek Him. Wise men and women still serve Him, and wise men and women still worship Him.

Obituaries

John Elphick who had been looking after Ote Hall Chapel, Wivelsfield for many years went to be with the Lord on the 8th November, aged 80. John had been in hospital for several months and had caught Covid-19. We thank God for all he did in keeping the chapel afloat through a very difficult period, and pray for his wife Jill, children and grandchildren.



We have also said goodbye to Paul Bangura, a Muslim convert who became a Christian, Gibril Deen, and Pastor Samuel Bennett who passed away on the 1st November. We thank God for their lives and pray for their families in their grief.

Remembering Sylvanus

On the 31st of August Sylvanus Alaba Nicol went to be with the Lord. Sylvanus was our former agent in Sierra Leone, and had been the pastor of Christ Church, Hastings until his retirement 6 years ago.

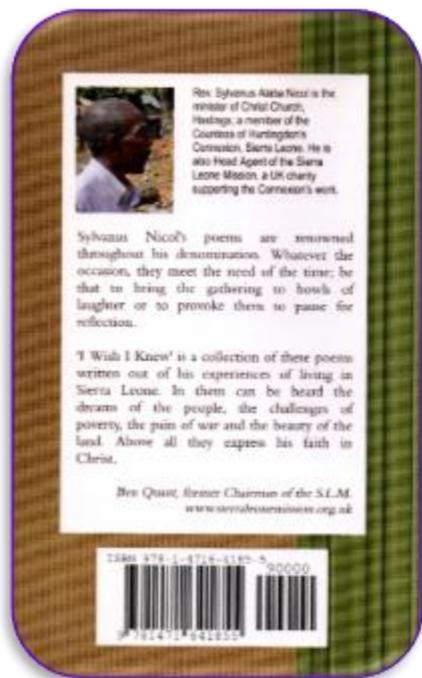
He had taken over from Rev Reuben Dove who 8 years ago, and handed over to our present agent, Rev Daniel Koroma.

In 2012 we produced a book of Sylvanus' poems. The first one in the book is;



'I wish I knew'

I wish I knew what makes men so
The steam that moves their being,
But one thing I think is greed.
Greed for pence and greed for pounds
Greed for any and every dusty brown,
The mirage that drives men mad.
O how they toil and sweat and fret
To grab, to hold, to horde,
And store for a morrow
Not their own.



Rev QUAY, former Chairman of the S.L.M.
www.sierraleonemission.org.uk



Goodbye from Joanna and Keith Waters

As I write this we are preparing to move to Carshalton as Keith begins his new role at Pastor at West Street Evangelical Church (FIEC).

Our time at the Connexion has been a happy one. We worshipped at Countess Church in Ely where Gordon Lowman was Pastor. He encouraged Keith in his ministry, and he became a deacon, then Elder and it was Gordon's encouragement that led to Keith applying to study theology through Midlands Bible College (online).

It was during this time that we first went to Conference, for the SLM day; something we heard about through our then house group leaders, Brian and Ann Mitchell.

Over many years we continued to attend, and both Sarah and Grace attended Youth Conference and became leaders themselves. We had the privilege of leading the Children's work at Conference and being involved in Youth Conference too, as well as planning and organizing for several Conferences.

Joanna served as Secretary on the SLM committee helped greatly by Dorothy Benton and Margaret Staplehurst, especially enjoying the travelling time; a great opportunity to learn lots more about SL.

We have been leading New Connexions, a church plant from Countess Ely for 12 years and what a challenge and joy this has been to be part of such a loving family of believers through the ups and downs of life in 21st Century Ely.

Please pray for the family who we leave behind as they seek a new Pastor, and for us as we move to a new area to do God's will there.

And if you are ever near Carshalton, please do come and see us at West Street.

Knitting Project for St. Ives

Zion Community Church St. Ives is in a unique position; on a summer day thousands of people pass by, as it is situated on the main shopping street. 2020 has been no different, even with the pandemic, to this day St. Ives is packed with tourists.

Selling chairs and tents from the festivals on the forecourt of the church for the past five years has covered the cost of the Bethesda children's education, uniforms, and stationery. This year, with no festivals, buckets and spades donated by Tesco became the substitute, alongside hand knitted children's jumpers and cardigans and crocheted baby blankets and throws. Bed socks also became a big hit!

But we have a problem...we don't have enough items to meet the demand.

With long evenings now upon us, I was wondering whether there might be a few knitters among you looking for a new project, and would be willing to produce an item or two for us to sell? Just send them down to St. Ives with a suggested price tag, all of the money would be donated to the Sierra Leone Mission.

On another note, last night another store donated hundreds of inflatable items not sold during the summer months, they were going to be dumped! So, if you fancy a mermaid swimming ring or a beach ball...or two, just let me know! My empty conservatory is once again full. The store still has nine more pallets to dispose of...not all inflatables; my problem is how to say no!



Embracing Scattered Church

By Karl Relton, Countess Free Church

The year 2020 has brought unexpected changes to us all. Churches found their normal lines of ministry seemingly evaporate overnight, causing many questions to be raised. Yet for the Countess Free Church in Ely, although the sudden onset of the restrictions hit us hard just like everyone else, it has also re-enforced something that we have been talking about for years. It has had the effect of precipitating changes that in many ways we have been gearing towards for some time.



Our Baptist ecclesiology already informed us that 'the local church' is the people covenanted together, and not the building (nor even 'the people gathered', I might add). So, the transition to networks of phoning each other, online groups and online (Zoom) whole church gatherings were mere implementation details for us, rather than anything gnawing at our sense of identity.

The next thing for us to realise was that while the restrictions of course meant that central building-based ministries ceased, that certainly did not mean that our witness and mission as a church was halted. The Spirit is capable of witnessing through individuals in diverse ways through us in our scattered locations! In Ely we are trying to embrace that mindset – and are reminding ourselves that whenever an individual member or family witnesses, that *automatically* means the local church is active!

For example a tiny group of just 3 families had a format pre-lockdown that was accessible to enquiring friends: involving a short video, a very simple

way of opening up a Bible passage, and an easy way for people to start praying for one another. This moved online, and we continued to invite people we knew were searching – with the relationship strong enough that some did indeed connect. In July we were able to move that to the park (keeping distance between families), and now the weather has turned we have moved into the church hall where we can continue to be spaced out, and continue to strategically invite others – albeit one family at a time.

Another example is a young mum on a cul de sac with other young families. In lockdown they initiated a children's zoom originally to just share and chat, but the church member felt called to offer something more. After



prayer and careful consultation some of the children gathered in her garden for a short hands-on Bible story, triggering some deeper conversations with a couple of the parents.

A different church member started a new book club online, with a mix of other church members and a friend or two – praying and waiting for the themes from the shared book reading to spill over to spiritual questions.

At Countess Free Church in Ely we are calling these *micro-initiatives*. They are small, but they can be done even in the midst of restrictions. For some friends or contacts, they may well be *more accessible* routes towards faith discovery than coming to a central big gathering in a church building ever was. Although diverse and not following any set programme, they are still initiatives of the church: we call it *the scattered church* in action!



The Repairs at Jerusalem Avenue

By Daniel Bockril Koroma

The Huntingdon Primary School at Jerusalem Avenue, Goderich, now Reuben Dove Memorial School was founded on 5th. September 1999 and the Church was founded a year earlier.

The school and the church were meeting in three private homes, one being that of the current Head Teacher. The family of the current Head Teacher, Mrs. Isha Unisa, donated to the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion a piece of land for the Construction of the school and Church.



SLM supported the construction of the school and made provision for the church to be at the top and the school at the bottom. The school moved from the private home to the newly built school, hence the provision made for the church to be at the top was not achieved and the Church started meeting in one of the classrooms.

For over ten years, the school had faced serious challenges; one major challenge was the leakage in all the classrooms which caused cracks to appear on the walls.

The school was approved in 2019 by the Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Basic and Senior School Education, therefore, qualified Teachers are paid by the Government who also provide grants for the pupils. Officials of the Ministry of Education visited the school early this year and threatened to close the school if it is not roofed and the condition of the building improved upon to allow for a conducive learning atmosphere.

Before the commencement of the 2020/2021 Academic Year, the SLM gave support once again, this time for the roofing. The school (which houses a

Primary school), Church and a Secondary school which started few years ago, can now boast of a building that is improved, efficient and attractive. The roofing and the painting done on the building have given the school a new phase lift.

Because of the roof, lots of children had left the school due to the building being referred to as a 'death trap'. However, a good number of those who had left have returned, and new admissions have been made.



There is now a sign of relief. The school's entire management structure expresses sincere thanks to SLM and promises to take good care of the building.

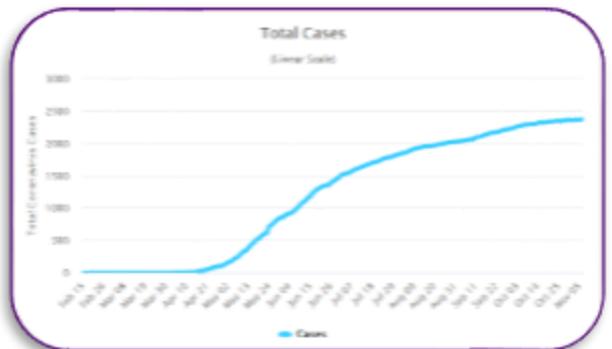
Covid-19 Sierra Leone Update

Date: 23th November

Confirmed cases: 2,406

Deaths: 74

Recovered: 1,828



Golf Day Report

By Gordon Hamilton

Friday 25th September saw the 16th annual S./L.M. Golf Day, this year held at Horne Park Golf Club, and although the weather was not as warm as it had been for the previous few months, the rain stayed away and everyone had a great game of golf.

It is always good when we get a new name on the winners board, and this year Wayne Brooks came in with a creditable 38 points (see photo of Wayne with organiser Gordon Hamilton), second place on count back was Mark Cullimore and in third place was last year's winner, Marcus Phillips, both Mark and Marcus had 36 points. The biggest winner, as usual, was the S.L.M. gaining £602 (approx. Le7,224,000 in profit).

Thank you to all who supported the event.



Abdul and Mariatu: Moving On

By Esther Green

Abdul and Mariatu are the two oldest children at Bethesda. At a very young age they were rescued off the streets of Freetown by Magnus and brought to live at Bethesda orphanage. He gave them a home, new brothers and sisters, and ensured that they had a good education and studied hard. Now their time at Bethesda is coming to an end and they are moving on to further education - something they could never have dreamed of doing living on the streets.

When Bethany, Janet and I visited Bethesda in 2018 we asked the children what their career aspirations were and got many answers like: Pastor, Doctor, Lawyer, Nurse, and Prime Minister. It is incredibly encouraging to see that Abdul and Mariatu have not taken their eyes off their goals since and are still working towards them. Abdul has just been appointed 'Head Boy' and Mariatu as 'Student Chaplain'! These are two incredibly bright and hardworking teens who are asking for your generosity to help them achieve their dreams and serve their community and beyond.

Next year they will be taking their final exams and dependant on their results, will be eligible to go to University, Abdul hopes to study law and Mariatu hopes to study medicine. With the creation of the new health centre wouldn't it be amazing if Mariatu could work there one day? Abdul's course would be four years long, costing 7,000,000 leones per year (£542), and Mariatu's would be seven years long, costing 8,000,000 leones per year (£620). The SLM has supported them through their childhood, but now the committee is asking: is there more that we can give to help them meet the financial requirements and achieve their dreams?

On the last page is information on how to give to the Sierra Leone Mission, simply say what you would like it to go towards...and change lives.



A Word From the Trustees: Staying Connexed!

by Bethany Green

When I was a child, my dad decided it would be fun to teach us ciphers and codes. So we learnt some basic substitution codes where A=M, or ^ = T. We also learnt to speak in Pig-Latin. I got quite fluent in the code language, and my Dad and I could have a conversation together that would leave the others in the room totally baffled.

Whilst 2020 hasn't quite deteriorated to the state where codes and ciphers are required to communicate, we have all had to learn a new language. 'Lockdown', 'Social distancing', 'Furlough', 'Unprecedented' and 'Zoom' are words that have entered common usage this year. My current favourite term is "Coronacoaster" describing the emotional ups and downs of living through this year.



Language and other ways of communicating is, of course, essential for us to live and function together, and in this year of being unable to gather freely, we have had to adapt. For the Connexion as a whole one of our big challenges came regarding the Conference. Clause 20 of the scheme says, "The Trustees shall in the year 1899 and in every subsequent year call to their assistance a Conference of all the Ministers in actual service at the chapels mentioned in Clause 3 and two delegates who shall be laymen or Ministers who are not pastors from each congregation worshipping in any such chapel..." But a physical, gathering together conference wasn't possible this year as the whole nation shut down for three months.

However, we were able to hold a Zoom meeting on 17th October to cover all the essential business. Thank you to all those attended. It was lovely to

see so many friendly faces on screen and wave 'hellos' to each other as we sang, talked, voted and prayed together.

Individual congregations have been very creative at how they provide spiritual encouragement for their members this year and it has been such a joy and a blessing to hear the wonderful way folk have supported each other. Some churches have provided a YouTube message whilst others share a paper devotional. Some churches were able to open up quite quickly after the first lockdown and begin to gather in person, others have instigated phone-call ministry. Another first this year has been the Connexion wide series of online services during the November lockdown. Thank you to everyone who has contributed from so many different congregations for the blessing of us all. We are so grateful to all those who joined in and brought the word and worship of God into our own living rooms.



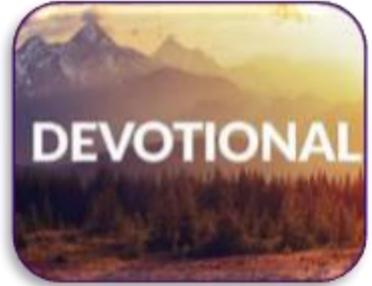
What will 2021 bring? I don't think any of us would like to offer a prediction! But our prayer is that we will be able to meet at our Conference once again. At present we have provisionally booked High Leigh Conference Centre for 6th-8th April with John McGinley as our speaker. I hope to see you there and be able to talk face-to-face... or in Pig-Latin if you prefer...

For more info on Conference 2021 and other important connexion news and updates go to the Connexion website

A Reflection on Psalm 121

By Magnus Bendu

Psalm 121 is a prayer and a song of deliverance. The author, David, was probably under attack by various enemies when this song was written. In our day, these enemies could be equated to stubborn sicknesses, terminal diseases that threaten our lives, corona virus, cancer, poverty, hate, envy, witchcraft manipulations, demonic possession, etc. For the Psalmist as for us, there is an assurance of hope and protection in the God that we serve. That is why the Psalmist declares that he will lift up his eyes unto the hills to see his help coming.



Why did David use hills to assure himself of hope in the Lord? 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills...' Hills denote **SOLIDITY** and **STABILITY**. Our God is a solid ground to build our hope on and a stable source of help. In the New Testament the Bible reiterates that we must fix our eyes on Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2). In God, no matter what, we are sure of a present help in times of trouble (Psalm 46:1).

David also goes ahead to say: '...from whence cometh my help. 'This is a recognition that God is his **SUPPLIER and SUFFICIENCY**. In Philippians 4:19, Paul says our God is able to provide all our needs... And in 2 Corinthians 12:9, we are admonished that His grace is sufficient for us. These are great promises that we must believe in. God will take care of our problems if we are willing to put our trust in Him. We have to trust in the God from whom our help has been coming from. He who made heavens and earth and all there is. He is the God who created us and knows us by name.

The remaining verses of Psalm 121 depict the **SAFETY and SECURITY** we have under God's protection. 'He will not suffer (allow) thy foot to be moved... The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night.' Under the shadow of the almighty, we are safe when we face challenges and difficulties

that we see (by day); and we are protected from spiritual and human manipulations that are planned against us (by night).

With all of these blessings, the only condition is that we must DWELL in the secret place of the Lord (i.e., prayer) in order to abide under the shadow of the almighty Jehovah (Ps. 91:1), day by day and night by night.

Interview: Peter Earle

The new Minister of Shoreham

How did you first get to know Jesus and become a Christian?

I am Welsh born, raised in Norfolk, to a Christian family. I became a Christian at a youth weekend at the age of 13. At the age of 17 God called me to ministry in a very clear and decisive manner. I did all I could to run away, but He had other plans for me!! My Father was an accountant who became a pastor when he was 50, and he was the greatest example of how to be a father and a pastor. I believe there is a shortage of pastors today. We have lots of people who want to preach, or lead, but not many pastor/shepherds who will go looking for the sheep who has wandered off, or the sheep that is hurting etc. My dad taught me how to love people, and care for them. It is even more important today than ever. As families are being destroyed, and people are alone and hurting, we need Pastors who will love and restore them to Jesus.



Have you always lived in England?

I have lived in Switzerland for three years and am a fluent French speaker (I have even done preaching in French and simultaneous translations).

How did you get to know the Connexion?

I spent three years at the Elim Pentecostal church Bible College, and have spent 25 years in the Elim ministry, mainly at the church in Preston Park in Brighton. During this period, we saw growth which meant we had to move building twice and saw many healings and miracles. Not least in my own family where my son was healed after an accident left him permanently disabled and in a wheelchair. (One day at a meeting God told him to pick up his chair and walk out, so he did, even though doctors had said he would never walk again). My two daughters were both told by Doctors they would not survive, yet God healed them totally.

After my time in ministry, I burned out and due to various circumstances stood down from ministry. For a few years I hid at the back of the Connexions church in Bolney, where Simon Allaby and the church family gently gave me space to heal, whilst loving and encouraging me. Eventually I got more involved in the activities of the church, leading to Simon asking me to go preach at Shoreham. As soon as I walked into that building, I knew there was a special sense of God's presence there, and I knew God had pushed or led me to where I needed to be.



What made you choose the Connexion?

The reason I went to Bolney was because I was looking for a church that was doing a service on Good Friday, and it was one of the few that did. I believe that this is the most important and symbolic days in our calendar, and I wish more churches had services on that day!!

What is your favourite bible story and why?

My Favourite passage is the book of Amos. It has so much similarity to our situation today and says so much to the church if we get into it.

Who do you aspire to be like?

I do not aspire to be like someone, I would love to have the bible knowledge of the late David Pawson, would love to be as funny as Pastor

Geoff Lucas, have the real anointing of the Holy Spirit as Pastor Denis Philips. In reality I am always learning that God loves me as I am, and I aspire to be the best Me I can be for Him. He made me to be Peter, so that is my aspiration!

What is the best advice you have been given?

The best advice I was given was by a wise man who said that the stupid question is the one you don't ask.... and God loves it when we ask. If something does not go as we plan, do we ask God why? Perhaps if we asked more, we would understand more!!

What is the most influential sermon you have heard/given?

The most influential sermon was about our relationship with Jesus. He says that he and the Father are one and if you love God, you will love Jesus. If you love Jesus, you will keep His commandments. He then says He will give a new commandment. That if we love Him, we will love each other! Then comes the crunch, that if we love each other the world will see Jesus because of our love. What a challenge to us in church. Do we love each other enough that people outside the church see that Love and decide they want to know Jesus because of what they see? What a challenge!!

How have you found lockdown?

Lockdown has been hard as a pastor, since we cannot see and minister to our people, we cannot visit or spend time and the virtual meetings do not allow us to see and read each other. On Zoom we can say we are fine, when we are not, but face to face is different.

If you could go back in time and meet someone, who would it be?

In the past I would have loved to meet Smith Wigglesworth. A man full of the Holy Spirit and real relationship with God. I would have loved for Him to lay hands on me and impart what he had from God...wow.



Sierra Leone Mission History: The Early Years

On the 7th April 1824, a letter was sent out from the Connexion in Sierra Leone to the connexion in England asking for worshipping material that they had lost during the first difficult decades of establishing churches in the new colony. The letter was signed by Minister John Ellis, one of the first to have been converted after moving to Sierra Leone in 1800, and their acting Chief Minister.

However, after the letter no more was heard from Sierra Leone until the first visit was made in 1839, when two Sierra Leonians, James Gallon and John Sykes, visited London and gave accounts of the work of the connexion in their home communities. Their visit was initially quite a



surprise, but they were warmly welcomed, and £12 was collected to provide them with the materials they needed to worship.

In 1839 John Ellis died and was succeeded by Anthony Elliott. The Sierra Leone Connexion now numbered 879. The next shipment of gifts was sent out to Sierra Leone in 1845, and the year after a grant of £10 was sent for more hymn books as the Connexion began to grow.



How to give to the Sierra Leone Mission

You can give by Bank Transfer to:

Barclays

Sort code: 20-16-08

Account number: 30799076

Account name: Sierra Leone Mission

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

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

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

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

2 Corinthians 9:7



The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion

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