

PARISH PARTNERSHIP

Wivelsfield's link with St Matthew's Aberdeen, Sierra Leone **BETTER TOGETHER**

NEWSLETTER 65

JANUARY 2021

WISHING YOU A HAPPY (AND HOPEFULLY BETTER) NEW YEAR

BI-CENTENARY

You may remember from our two previous newsletters that 2020 was the bi-centenary of the founding of St. Matthew's church and we were able to show you a picture of the special service that they held on September 21st, which is St. Matthew's Day.

On the last Sunday of 2020 (December 27th) they followed this up with celebrations in and around the church. They had plans for a number of activities which, because of Covid, they are postponing until later this year.

We've attached some pictures, one of which shows two items which they have produced as souvenirs of the centenary.

The bottle opener has a resonance. We originally chose St. Matthew's as our link parish because they co-operated with the local mosque in raising money to provide the scholarships which we now support.

When we made our initial visit to Sierra Leone we were told that the scholarship scheme arose from the custom of enjoying a bottle of beer after Sunday services and at other times! Their philosophy was that if they could afford to spend money on the occasional alcoholic drink then they could afford to donate to a good cause. The aim was, every time a beer was consumed, to donate a sum equivalent to the cost of that beer. The scheme grew from there.

Hence, producing a bottle opener as a souvenir seems very apposite.

Those of you who have been with us since the inception of our link will remember that we suggested people might like to donate the cost of a packet of biscuits every time they bought one. There was always the option to choose something other than biscuits and we know some stuck with the alcohol option!





The principle, however, remained true to the thinking of the people of Sierra Leone which was that if one could afford to spend money on something which was not absolutely necessary (naughty but nice, perhaps) then maybe there was a moral obligation to donate to a cause that benefitted people less fortunate.

Over the years the people of Wivelsfield have responded magnificently to this whilst mostly remaining sober!

CHRISTMAS PARCELS

For a number of years Jane Hill has been sending items to Sierra Leone. Jane is the mother of Charlotte (Charley) who has visited St. Matthew's on our behalf on more than one occasion. Charley also has a number of contacts in Sierra Leone which are independent of our link and she has raised a lot of money in a variety of imaginative ways including sleeping rough in London for a night.

This year we have undertaken to contribute to the not inconsiderable cost of sending three parcels, a task not made any easier by virtue of the extra paper work required – which has nothing to do with Brexit!

One parcel went to St. Matthew's and contained Christmas bags for 15 families. Contents included soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, sweets, a small teddy, pencils, pencil sharpeners, tea and coffee. Also enclosed were Nativity booklets, children's shoes and first aid items including PPE.

The picture shows Rev. Georgiana Scott with the parcel.

The other two parcels went to Martha who is friend of Charlotte and who has links with "Happy Kids and Adolescent Charity". Contents were similar but also included some football kit that had been donated to us a good while back.

Jane has plans to send another parcel this year to Vicky Luke – and that leads us seamlessly into our next item.



VICKY LUKE.

We've mentioned Vicky a number of times before. She provided accommodation for us on a number of visits to Aberdeen. She is a maternity nurse and we have kept in touch with her throughout as well as helping her with medical supplies

We were delighted when we heard that she was to be married to Patrick in her own church in Freetown in mid-December. We wish her all happiness and attach photographic evidence!



SHOLARSHIPS.

Because of Covid and various other issues money for the children we support in secondary education has not yet been sent. The matter is about to be resolved and we will give details in a subsequent newsletter.

Suffice it to say that, over the years, we have seen a number of children successfully through their secondary education and, in some cases, beyond.

The Sierra Leone government provides free primary education but does not have the resources to go beyond that. This inevitably leads to a lot of wasted human potential. What our link has done is, in some ways, a drop in the ocean but we have enhanced the lives of some children who would not otherwise have had the opportunities that are now ahead of them.

Thank you for your part in this.

KEEPING IN TOUCH.

As always, if you have any questions or observations please do not hesitate to contact me on 01444 471336 or by email at pssjwelch@gmail.com

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2/1/21