

PARISH PARTNERSHIP

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

NEWSLETTER 66

FEBRUARY 2021

SCHOLARSHIPS

We can now report that we have been able to send funds to support the 11 children for whom we cover the costs of their secondary education. The total bill came to 35,400,000 Leones which amounts to £2,809.52. You might like to calculate the exchange rate!

As always in the past we added £100 to go into St. Matthew's "Poor Fund". Previously we have sent this in time for Christmas but, this time around, it can be used to get 2021 off to a better start.

We hope that at a future date we will be able to get some photos of our children but the situation has been difficult. Schools were closed for a time and Covid restrictions have not helped although, so far, Sierra Leone does not seem to have been quite as severely affected as some other parts of the world.

It appears that the Sierra Leone government may try to give to secondary education the sort of support it gives to primary education which is totally free of charge. It was an election promise so time will tell!

LAPTOP

Last October we told you about Duke (his name, not his status!) Wilson. Who is an active member of St. Matthew's and leader of their youth section. He is following an Accountancy course and needed a laptop.

Fortunately one of our team, Fenella Holmes, had one which she was able to "wipe" and send out to Aberdeen. She recently received the following whatsapp from Duke:

"I have received the laptop today. Thank you very much I really appreciate it, as for me the laptop is very new – it seems like it's from the shop. My friends say that the laptop is very nice, everyone says that I am going to enjoy it. I really appreciate it".

SHIDA PRE-SCHOOL

We first visited Aberdeen in February 2009 and spent 10 days meeting people and getting to know the community. One of the links we made was with Shida Pre-School. At that time it was little more than a shed at the side of the bungalow in which lived its founder.

On subsequent visits we took out simple items such as pens, pencils and paper. During the Ebola epidemic we were able to contribute to the wages of the small number of

teachers so that their jobs were secure and the school was able to get back on its feet once the epidemic was over.

In more recent years, and for a variety of reasons, the link became more tenuous, one of the reasons being the death of the lady running the school. However, we are delighted that Palmsy George, the grandson of the original proprietor, has now taken it over and has put it on a very firm basis with a Board of Governors and a Parent Teacher Association.

The school currently has 64 paying pupils plus 3 who are supported free of charge because their parents cannot afford the fees.

There are plans for improvement, the main one being the conversion of the original shed into a two storey building. They are also replacing old wooden furniture with something more modern and comfortable. They would also like to acquire some outdoor toys.

We are currently exploring ways in which we might be able to help them with their plans and will keep you in touch with any developments.



The rather cramped interior of Shida taken in 2010.



Shida today showing the building work on the second storey. Work has been slowed by Covid and the very high inflation rate in Sierra Leone which has increased costs.