



October 2021

Dear Friends,

New Wheels for Sister Amala

You may recall from our previous newsletter that the new school vehicle had been ordered and was due to arrive in Freetown at the end of July. Despite our optimism there were a number of unexplained delays but we are delighted to tell you that Sister Amala collected the vehicle for Freetown at the end of September and it has now arrived safely at the school. You can see from the photos that Sister Amala is definitely in the driving seat!



Once again many thanks to all of you were able to make this possible including our partner in this enterprise, MIVA, an Austrian NGO. We have Joe Manning, the Honorary Consul to Sierra Leone in Ireland, to thank for helping us make this link.

Future Fundraising

Hopefully you will have received our recent mailing about the decision by Virgin Money Giving to cease to provide this fundraising platform to all charities from the end of November. Rest assured that any donations made up to that date will be forwarded to our bank account and all Gift Aid will be collected on our behalf and forwarded to us. We have now moved to a fundraising platform which can be used immediately.

It is Just Giving and you can access it at:

<http://www.justgiving.com/friendsofstjosephsmakeni>

We are really hoping that those of you who previously set up a monthly donation will transfer it to this new platform as the children of St Joseph's depend on you. We realise what an inconvenience this is in busy lives and we are so sorry that Virgin Money Giving has made this decision.

The Sun Shines on St Joseph's School!

After the school has struggled with power blackouts for some time, the EKI Foundation, the Spanish organisation (www.fundacioneki.org) which provides solar power installations to schools and hospitals in developing countries, has now made a full assessment of the needs of the school. Again it is thanks to Joe Manning for moving this on and he is hoping that he will soon receive confirmation that EKI will provide a full solar panel system with servicing.

The search for an administrator has just become more positive

An application was made to Misean Cara in Ireland (www.miseancara.ie) to fund and recruit an administrator for two years to work alongside Sister Amala and to give her the support she desperately needs. Confirmation has now been received that the funding has been agreed and Viatores Christi, another Irish NGO (www.vcvolunteers.ie) will now be responsible for advertising and recruiting Sister Amala's assistant. If any of you are interested or know someone who may be interested in applying for this role please apply directly to Viatores Christi.

Memories of visits to Sierra Leone and St Joseph's School.

We recently asked you for your memories of past visits to the school. Here are some of the responses we received:

Paschal Kearney Cssp



"I myself, lived in Sierra Leone (1971- 92). During that time, I was well acquainted with the Cluny Sisters, their work and mission, and among whom was Sr. Mary Sweeney. I also know her family in Ireland, very well

In 2007 I returned to Sierra Leone. I invited a Dr. Jane Anderson to accompany me. Dr. Anderson is a social anthropologist. Her month long stay, resulted in a book (Romarang), the proceeds of which went to Sr. Mary and her projects".



Margaret Headen

In November 2009 a group of UK Immigration Judges visited Sierra Leone and in the course of that trip were taken to St Joseph's School. On the journey from Makeni I was sitting in the front of the minibus when I felt something pecking at my ankles and discovered a live but trussed chicken under my seat. It had been given to our guide by the village chief. I believe it was destined to be Christmas dinner!

Chris Buckwell

My memory is of the very first visit we made in November 2009. The amazing dancing and the speech by the Head Girl brought tears to our eyes. What has happened since, so much due to the work of the founders of the charity, with their supporters, has been truly inspirational.

Delia Kay

In 2009 when we were working at The University of Makeni we bumped into Sister Mary. She introduced herself as the Headteacher of St Joseph's School for the Hearing Impaired and invited us to visit the school. The following afternoon she showed us around the school telling us the history, the problems encountered and the successes achieved over the years. We were very interested and very impressed. Then Sister asked if I would do some training for her staff, because she knew I had been a Headteacher. I carefully explained that I had no experience in schools for deaf pupils, but I was happy to observe her teachers for a few days to see if there was an area that could be improved.

I had a fascinating few days watching the sign language and the relationships between the teachers and pupils. There were a few difficult pupils who showed some stubbornly bad behaviour. This sort of behaviour was very familiar to me and so I decided this was an area I could help with.

I ran a training session on Positive Discipline as opposed to negative or punitive discipline. As a result the school introduced 'Golden Time'. This was an hour on Friday afternoon, when, if the pupils had worked hard and behaved, they could join in games organised by the teacher e.g. rounders, netball, football and any other games the teacher could invent! Any child who had not worked hard and behaved had to sit in a classroom and read or do some maths. Within a few weeks the behaviour of those few pupils had changed! They wanted to have fun too! When I visited the school in 2012 I was really pleased to find that 'golden time' was well established and the teachers understood the value of positive discipline.

All Change within the Friends of St Joseph's School!

A message from the editor (Linda Freestone) "I was on a visit to Sierra Leone in November 2009 (see the memories of Margaret Headen and Chris Buckwell above) and as a result of Sister Mary's vision for the future of the hearing impaired students, the Friends of St Joseph's was created. It was registered with the Charity Commission in the UK in 2011 and since that time I have been a trustee and the chair. The time has now come for me to hand over to a younger and more energetic team! At our recent AGM I am pleased to say that Kate and Stephen Dixon were elected as joint chair. They have both worked in Sierra Leone (and in fact they met there whilst Kate was working at the school

and Stephen was visiting!) There will be a transition period and you will still see my name pop up in various guises. I am still looking after our emails, editing and publishing the newsletters and liaising with Sister Amala and Joe Manning. Even once the transition is fully completed I will remain a committed supporter of the school”.

And now a message from the new team. Stephen Dixon says “Kate was working at St Joseph’s when we met, and I was working all over Sierra Leone. We both saw a lot of the country when we lived there and have been back visiting ever since, even taking friends to show them how amazing the school is. It is of national importance in Sierra Leone and we look forward to supporting the school in our role as trustees and joint chair. We have been working with the Friends of St Joseph’s School since 2014 and are excited about sharing the Pilot’s seat!”



And finally we have news that Sister Mary Sweeney, the person who began this inspirational school so many years ago has settled well in her new home in Dublin.

Amazing Donors

If you have been inspired by the work of Sister Mary, Sister Amala and all the staff at the school who work tirelessly to give the hearing impaired students a better future, please consider making a donation, however small, by following this link:

<http://www.justgiving.com/friendsofstjosephsmakeni>

Thank you so much to all of you who contribute to this amazing school. You are making a huge difference.

We rely totally on our supporters who subscribe to this newsletter but over the last few months we have noticed that a number of supporters’ email addresses are no longer valid. These seem to be those ending in eircom.net. If you know of anyone who has moved to another provider please would you ask them to contact us so we can re-establish communication.

With all good wishes for a safe and peaceful autumn from Linda Freestone on behalf of Kate and Stephen Dixon and the Trustees.

Data Protection:

If you have received this email by mistake or no longer wish to subscribe just reply to it and you will be taken off the list. Do remember to tell us if you change your email address.

Legislation was introduced in May 2018 strengthening the rights of individuals to protection of their personal data held by organisations. We have prepared a privacy statement, which has been published on our website (www.friendsofstjosephskids.org)