



# Sierra Leone Initiative Newsletter

June 2016

## Facts about Sierra Leone



Sierra Leone is located on the western coast of Africa.

Size: 27, 699 sq. miles—slightly smaller than South Carolina

Bordering Countries: Guinea and Liberia

Climate: tropical, hot, humid; summer rainy season (May-December); winter dry season (December to April)

Population : 6,205,000 (est.)

### Religions:

- Muslim - 60%
- Christian - 20-30%
- indigenous beliefs - 5-10%

In a Health Index Study (10/2014) of 142 countries – Sierra Leone ranked at the BOTTOM

Infant Mortality Rate is 87 per 1,000 births (WHO 2015)

Average Life Expectancy in Sierra Leone (WHO 2015)  
Men – 49 years  
Women – 51 years

The Sierra Leone Initiative celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2016. The support Susquehanna Conference churches provide through the SLI allows Sierra Leone’s pastors to be in full time ministry, making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This defines the foremost goal of the SLI.

The Susquehanna Conference churches fulfill the words of our Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* By supplementing the salaries of the pastors in Sierra Leone, we connect churches with the SL pastors through the power of the Holy Spirit and participate as Christ’s witnesses in a religiously tolerant, but 60% Muslim country. The pastors deeply appreciate the contributions.

Several SUSUM churches connected with their partner church, cultivating a relationship with the pastor and congregation, upholding their dreams, and promoting development within the church, school, and community. Being in mission together with partner churches defines the secondary goal of the SLI.

Relationship building from a distance is difficult, but worth the time, travel, and trials. On this year’s trip to SL, I cried as partner pastors hammered a piece of zinc off the wall of the old small church building located inside the new larger church currently under construction. An awesome time of fellowship occurred after that ceremony. The SLI Team thanks partner churches for writing letters, traveling to SL, providing school scholarships, school supplies, food, books, and monetary support for church and parsonage remodels, wells, latrines, compostable toilets, and agricultural development to name only some of the work accomplished. During this year’s trip 10 Sierra Leone churches received first-time visits while another church its third visit. Thank you for loving your partner congregation as Christ loves us.

Although the country developed well in the post war years, 2003-2013, Ebola brought a halt and reversal to that growth and development in 2014 and 2015. Life in SL continues to improve but severe poverty still exists. Congregations cannot pay their pastor’s salaries although the will and drive to do so exists.

Each year from 2016 through 2024 multiple churches fulfill their initial 10-year commitment to the pastors and parishes of Sierra Leone. Is there still a need for pastoral salary support? ABSOLUTELY! Are the Susquehanna Conference churches still called to be in relationship with the Sierra Leone Conference churches? ABSOLUTELY!

We invite you to prayerfully consider making a commitment to our brother and

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## Phileas Jusu visits the Susquehanna Conference



Phileas Jusu, Director of Communications for the Sierra Leone Annual Conference, visited several churches during his time in the Susquehanna Conference area from April 15 through May 1. Some key points from the presentations he gave follow.

Much information about Sierra Leone, the Initiative and Ebola was shared. Phileas shared about how churches struggled with resources to take care of pastors as they grappled with post-war rehabilitation, reconstruction and reintegration. This is why the Sierra Leone Initiative was created. He added that with the Initiative young people opted for ministry, which was previously viewed as the waiting room for retired and aging people. Also, life for pastors improved, hence sermon messages improved and value was added to the messages.

More UM churches have been built in the past ten years and the denomination, previously restricted to just 7 districts, is now in all 12 political districts in the country. More churches meant more recruitment of pastors and more pastors means more people on the conference payroll. In 2013, with the economy growing, the SL Conference was rethinking taking on full responsibility for pastors' remuneration. Then Ebola hit.

During the Ebola crisis, the Sierra Leone Annual Conference initiated and funded a coalition of faith leaders to fight Ebola. The Conference also trained youth and young adults to take the Ebola messages to the public, including communities that felt left out because of their remoteness. In Sierra Leone, 8,704 people were infected with the virus and 3,589 people died, including 211 healthcare workers. On a positive note, Sierra Leone now has personnel and a health system good enough to handle future outbreaks. The health system is strengthening and the focus is now on care for Ebola traumatized orphans, families, communities and the country. Ebola survivors face several health challenges from hair loss to hearing problems and eye sight defects.

Phileas shared that because of the salary support of the Susquehanna Conference Initiative, no pastors or their immediate families died from Ebola since they were able to obey Ebola restriction laws. Phileas had several video messages from pastors thanking the Sierra Leone Initiative for their support.

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sister pastors and their congregations in Sierra Leone. Your commitment connects you to the United Methodist missionaries from Pennsylvania who served in SL in the 1890s, early and mid-twentieth century, and the renewal of that commitment in the Work Study Teams of the 1980s and 1990s. Be in mission together with our brother and sister pastors and their congregations to help develop one of the poorest countries in the world.

In service together,

Pam Perna, Chairperson, Sierra Leone Initiative

## A Message from Rev. Daisy Gbloh



I bring you greetings from our Resident Bishop, Bishop John K. Yambasu, his cabinet, clergy, evangelists, and the laity of the entire United Methodist Church of the Sierra Leone Annual Conference, and other related communities. It is your financial contribution to the Sierra Leone Initiative that has made provision for one clergy and one laity to visit the Susquehanna Conference every year except for the Ebola years.

I am Daisy S. N. Gbloh (Rev.), one of the many pastors that are beneficiaries of the Sierra Leone Initiative money. The Initiative money sent by the Susquehanna Conference to the Sierra Leone Conference of the United Methodist Church is a plus in many ways. It is helping us to improve our individual lives, pay fees for our children, provide food for the family, and it helps to build confidence in us as we move about doing our work and on many occasions helps to lift us above embarrassment.

It was a blessing meeting with the people of the Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church. The glory, honor, praise, thanks, and adoration are due unto God's Holy name for all that you have done and continue to do for the Pastors and their families, to partner churches, and in the area of education. It is our prayer that God in a special way continue to bless you as a conference, as a church, as a family, and in your individual lives (Eph. 6:9)

"Were not ten cleansed, where are the nine?" This was a question that Jesus our Lord and Savior asked. This question states clearly that Christ wants us to be grateful. In this regard, I have been given the opportunity as a clergy woman to come and say thank you to the Susquehanna Conference for practically obeying God's Words of Scripture as written in Matt. 28:19-20.

People of God, not everybody can go to the mission field, but your prayers, words of encouragement, gifts, and financial contributions will go a long way in doing the work of God. "Therefore, Go!" How are you going? When are you going? Where are you going?

How talks about preparation. If you cannot go, help to prepare somebody that is strong enough to go. When talking about time, the time is now. Tomorrow will be too late. And where are you going shows how determined or weak you may be for the journey. Leave your comfort zones, families, friends, loved ones and go out there to God's children who are in need of God's love and the Good News.

Susquehanna Conference, because you are willing and have obeyed God's command, His Grace will continually be sufficient for you all. In the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

After serving smaller churches, including Old Wharf, Daisy currently serves the Mother Church of Sierra Leone, King Memorial United Methodist Church.

## Sierra Leone Initiative Committee Susquehanna Annual Conference

Paul Amara  
Randy Ball  
Marsha Banks  
Kathy Bickel  
Kristin Brown, Treasurer  
Fred Clark  
Rev. Jeff Fisher, Emeritus  
Steve Herman  
Ken Mengel  
Beth Notarfrancesco  
Pam Perna, Chairperson  
Rev. George Reynolds  
Hildegard Sollenberger, Emeritus  
Donna Thomas  
Chris Wagner, Recording Secretary  
Kent Wyatt

## Sierra Leone Initiative Committee Sierra Leone Annual Conference

Rev. Winston Ashcroft, Connectional  
Ministries Director  
Rev. Mariama Bockarie  
Beatrice Fofanah  
Leonard Gbloh, Education Secretary -  
Primary  
Lydia Jalloh, Financial Services Officer  
Phileas Jusu, Communication Director  
Joseph Pormai, Education Secretary -  
Secondary  
Rev. Solomon Rogers  
Smart Senesie  
Business manager/Estate Officer -  
Ex-Officio

### What Can I Do?

- PRAY, PRAY, PRAY
- Sponsor a covenant to provide Pastor Salary support individually, church-wide, cluster-wide
- Encourage your youth, UMW, UMM or Sunday school classes to unite to provide Pastor Salary support
- Collect needed supplies and funds to ship them
- Create a fund raiser to raise money or make a one-time donation yearly or as able
- Travel with a team to Sierra Leone or send someone from your congregation
- Involve your congregation, you will help and bless others & provide joyful fellowship

### How to make a donation

- Send monetary donations to the Susquehanna Conference Office, Accounts Receivable.
- Funds may be listed on your monthly treasurer's report under SLI Advance Special #8030
- Email Kristin Brown, Initiative Treasurer at [treasurer.sli@gmail.com](mailto:treasurer.sli@gmail.com). Include the amount and purpose for the donation.

Funds for wells for a partner church should be sent to the Initiative **not** the Well Development Project.. Any funds above the cost of the well will be given to the partner church.

### Communications Reminders

- Sierra Leone has no surface mail delivery system and electricity is sporadic which limits use of email.
- Send all correspondence to SLI-SLAC contact Rev. Winston Ashcroft at [REVWINASH2013@gmail.com](mailto:REVWINASH2013@gmail.com). He will arrange for your email/letter to be delivered to your partner church
- Please copy all correspondence you send or receive to SLI-SC Chair, Pam Perna at [pam04sierra@gmail.com](mailto:pam04sierra@gmail.com)
- Send letters with delegates that travel to and from Sierra Leone, usually in January, April and September. Give letters to the delegates if they visit your church or to Pam Perna via email at [pam04sierra@gmail.com](mailto:pam04sierra@gmail.com) or mail to 2084 Paxtonville Road, Middleburg, PA 17842