

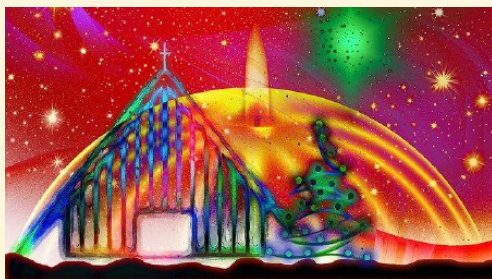


SELL CONNECT

Sharing Education & Learning for Life

A Peacebuilding Programme for Young Adults

SELL- An Initiative of St. Patricks Missionary Society



Fr. Leo's Christmas Greeting

What a year this had been. Where do we start to express our feelings about it? How do we hold it all together, the confusion, the anxiety, the pain and for so many across the world the pain of loss and grief? Eternal life to all who have died. Amen.

The amazing solidarity of our God with us means God has been, and is, with us in the confusion, anxiety, pain and loss. This is the God made known and revealed in many diverse ways, and to us Christians, most especially in Jesus, whose birth we celebrate as each year ends.

It has given me great joy and lifted my spirit to know that the young people connected to the SELL family have done so much in this 'covid year' to reach out with love and care to the people of their communities. They organised information sharing with street programmes and radio advertisements (in seven different languages) they distributed masks, sanitisers, soap and set up hand washing facilities at market places. They visited health centres with supplies and did so much to help the vulnerable in their localities. This was all happening in Nigeria and Ghana. All this done by your support. So as this year ends the words Thank You must be said to you all again and again.

It's amazing that this is our sixth newsletter. We have come this far due to your interest and support. I remain ever grateful to each of you and to my Society of St. Patricks for believing in the importance of this work. Our world is changing so fast in so many ways and young adults who will shape the worlds future need encouragement, support and guidance as they take up leadership at this time. A time when the love of God for them and us needs to be communicated in creative and respectful ways. Something the SELL Programme continually seeks to do.

It's exciting for Fr. Tommy and myself that in the springtime of 2021 we hope to be reaching out to another African nation Malawi. With your continued support, we can continue to dream dreams of inviting young people to SELL Programmes, awakening in them, and in ourselves, the call to protect our earth from environmental destruction, to more profound relationships between women and men, deepening respect for all life, all religious paths, all ethnic identities, and to grow towards a deep sensitivity of the presence of God in EVERYTHING.

Every day, as long as we live, let us wake up with gratitude to the author of our lives and give thanks for the amazing amount of blessings we have already had. May God give you all the courage needed for anything that comes your way, and may you know comfort and joy this Christmas.

Fr. Leo

SELL GHANA IN TIMES OF COVID-19

In March 2020, Ghana started to record her 1st COVID-19 cases. As a SELL Programme, our hearts and minds guided us in making little efforts in the best interest of our communities. Even though Fr. Leo and Fr. Tommy had to return to Ireland, with their support by phone, email etc, we channeled our energy towards creating awareness of COVID-19.

Examples of the activities we undertook were:

Community Based Awareness Raising Campaign: through Word on the Street Campaigns (posters and placards), we made people aware of the safety precautions.

Radio Awareness Campaign: we translated the safety precautions, into 8 local languages, and aired on 9 radio stations across the Northern Ghana.

COVID -19 Reflections & Inspiration: we sent text messages each week to our volunteers. (words of inspiration and Covid-19 related prayers).

Distributed:

- ◆ reusable fabric face masks for the vulnerable.
- ◆ Supported 3 community-based clinics with items such as Gloves, disinfectants etc.

Highlight: It was heartwarming to receive support from St. Patrick's Missionary Society and Friends of Africa, Ireland, in giving support to our communities. The commitment level of the volunteers was also outstanding. Our deepest gratitude to all our benefactors and friends. Thank you for your love and generous spirit.



SELL support at Immaculate Conception Clinic

SELL Ghana celebrates International Peace Day

Ghana went to the polls on 7th December, 2020 and as with many national elections, there are usually tensions. With Peace Building being at the heart of what we do here at SELL, we decided with the support of one of our partners, Catholic Relief Service (CRS), Ghana, to campaign for peace in the Northern sector of Ghana where the SELL Programme is currently being run. Our aim was to prevent vulnerable young adults from participating in electoral violence. In September, SELL Ghana joined other organisations to commemorate the International Day of Peace. The day was marked with SELL volunteers and local youth groups going out on the streets with placards sending out the message on our role in sustaining Peace during our election period.

Volunteers met some key community stakeholders to call on them to commit to promoting peace in their communities. Stakeholders signed a Peace Signage Banner. Stakeholders included; the Overlord of Tamale, The Chief Imam, the secretary to the Justice and Peace council of the Northern Region, the Regional Police Commander and Youth Groups that are key during Political/Election Periods. Radio awareness campaign, Peace Walks, Stakeholders Engagement, workshops on Peace Building were organised to help create awareness on the importance of peace.



SELL Volunteer on a Covid-19 awareness campaign in Ghana



Signed peace banner.

Our Thanks to you all for your great support and prayers
Vincent Agyei and the SELL Team Ghana

SELL Nigeria

Greetings from SELL Team Nigeria. Fr. Robert has joined the SELL Team Nigeria. He is a St. Patrick's Missionary priest like Frs. Leo and Tommy. This year has been remarkable, however despite the challenges we were able to achieve some milestones.

Through the generous support of Saint Patrick's Missionary Society (SPMS) Irish Embassy, SELL Connect Ireland, Friends of SELL and the Resource Team, our new Resource Centre, is about to open. The unit will contain an admin block, accommodation, healing garden, sports facilities etc, and will serve youth across all spheres of life

We look to 2021 with hope and remain appreciative of your concern for us and our work. As a team, we pray together each morning and most especially on Wednesdays for you our benefactors past and present.

Thank you all for your unflinching support.

Beji and Fr. Robert



Our New Resource centre in Nigeria



The SELL team in Nigeria

SELL FOUNDATION CONDUCTS TRAINING FOR YOUNG ADULTS IN BAUCHI NIGERIA

SELL Resource team trained another set of young adults in Bauchi and Gombe states on Child Safeguarding and Protection. The training was aimed at safeguarding and protecting the rights of children and vulnerable in the society. The training also aimed at creating awareness among people on the appropriate ways to engage stakeholders on the need to implement the child rights act in Bauchi and Gombe states respectively. The training participants from SELL volunteers in Gombe and Bauchi States, Religious groups (NACOMYO, YOWICAN), Civil Society Organizations, Government and Security Agencies.



Mr Umar Magaji representative of the police division receiving certificate of participation after the training

Are we in this together?

Fr Tomas O'Connor SPS

When I penned a short piece for last year's Newsletter little did I know what was around the corner. 2020 will be remembered as the Year of the Coronavirus. It has been described as a once in a century event. The last event to resemble it was the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918 to 1920. Every continent and every country has been affected by it. No one has escaped.

Of course the people that are suffering most during the Pandemic are the poor, the old, the sick, the marginalised, the refugees, the prisoners and the homeless. Coronavirus has forced us to change our habits. People who have the luxury to work from home are encouraged to do so. People who have the necessary resources to shop on-line are advised to do so. But one thing is very noticeable. Again it is the poor and marginalised who are most affected. They do not have the luxury of working from home nor of shopping on-line. Another frightening fact is that the richest people in the world were not affected by the Pandemic. It has been stated that the founder of Amazon, Jeff Bezos, saw his fortune increase by US\$29 billion during the first six months of 2020. So the rich are getting richer and the poor getting poorer even during a Pandemic.

The work of SELL continues to be as relevant as ever before. In fact, it becomes even more necessary in today's world. We need people who are able to critique what is going on in the world and offer solutions which are sustainable and which promote justice, the protection of the environment and inclusion. The work of SELL has been hampered by the Pandemic. We hope and pray that it will soon be able to resume where it left off and continue to make its important contribution to the creation of a more just, equitable and inclusive world.

Our sincere thanks to all who have contributed to the SELL Programme in 2020. We wish you a very happy Christmas and every blessing in 2021.



Compassion fatigue. (Orla McCullagh)

While Covid-19 dominates the headlines and many parts of our lives have been put on pause, you could be forgiven for thinking that all else that ails the world has paused also. Unfortunately, the problems of the world have continued unabated and exacerbated by the global pandemic. The refugee problem continues to grow: By the end of 2016, nearly 5.2 million refugees and migrants reached European shores, undertaking treacherous journeys from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries torn apart by war and persecution. The conflict in Ethiopia has led to more than 43,000 refugees crossing into eastern Sudan since fighting started in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region in early November. As of March 2019, over 909,000 stateless Rohingya refugees reside in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas. The vast majority live in 34 extremely congested camps, including the largest single site, the Kutupalong-Balukhali Expansion Site, which is host to approximately 626,500 Rohingya refugees. Since 2018, the UN committee on human rights received credible reports that up to one million Muslim Uighurs in western Xinjiang region, were held in re-education camps. The impacts of climate change are being felt across the globe, causing catastrophic events. This year has seen Australia experience one of the most devastating bushfire seasons ever recorded, and locusts swarming across parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia, decimating vital crops. Like covid, the effects of climate change and natural catastrophes are experienced more severely by our poor, marginalised and vulnerable. Let us open our hearts to the wider needs of the world with the same compassion we have seen rekindled for our neighbours as we face the challenges of living with covid, and our reawakened sense of our own humanity.

Note from the Editors

Thank you to the many people that are supporting us financially over the last number of years. Also, thanks to the people that have recently signed up to our request for a contribution of a £5 minimum, monthly, paid by Standing Order. Your support is vital to work of SELL. We are planning to have SELL up and running in a new African country, Malawi, in 2021. Your support will allow us to set up in our 3rd location. Gratitude must go to St. Patricks Missionary Society (SPMS) for their support of Fathers Leo and Tommy. We are proud to be an initiative of SPMS.

If you would like to get more information about SELL, make a contribution, or if you would like to receive our newsletter by email, please contact:

Kevin Vaughan, (sellconnectireland@gmail.com)

Noleen Neill (noleen.neill@virgin.net)

Tommy Traynor (tommy.traynor@btinternet.com)

Website: www.sharingeducationlearningforlife.org

Editorial Team: Kevin Vaughan and Orla McCullagh.

