



CHURCH OF BANGLADESH BULLETIN

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Annual Religious Conventions of the CoB

Annual religious conventions were held in the four deaneries of the Church of Bangladesh. Our Lord Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the desert to prepare himself before his public ministry. These religious conventions are arranged just before the lent season inviting Christians to hear the Word of God, to look into themselves, to pray to God for forgiveness, to renew their faith and to strengthen themselves to participate in God's mission in our country. Although arranged by the CoB, Christians regardless of denominations and a few people from other faiths attend the

conventions giving the conventions an ecumenical character. Each convention is held for two to three days. People come from near and far, and from very remote places. They get an opportunity to meet each other after a year and share their temporary shelter, food and fellowship. Therefore along with spiritual renewal they also have a chance to renew their relationships and enjoy a festive mood that helps the church to grow more in faith and to be strengthened in activities.

Another special attraction is Prayer for Healing, said at the end of the whole program. Hundreds of people wait for this special time throughout the year to offer their gratitude and prayer of thanksgiving along with their offerings for the abundant blessings from God they had received in the previous year and to offer their special prayers especially for physical healing. They kneel before the Bishops, Priests and Sisters who lay their hands upon them and pray along with them. At the same time the choir leads the whole devotees in Kirtanas, a special form of religious song. The devotees are moved by the Spirit. Some of them break down in tears and emotion. There seems no end of giving thanks and prayer. Who says man is not grateful? Not righteous?? Ultimately they want relief, inner peace and joy from the Creator, Sustainer and Savior God by offering themselves at God's feet.





Holy Ordination into Priesthood

Five deacons Albert Halder, Anil Murmu, Michael Soren, Duke Baroi and Jonarson Dio were ordained as presbyters of the CoB in different conventions held in four deaneries which were led by Rt. Rev. Paul S Sarker along with other Bishops and clergies of the CoB. The newly ordained presbyters were given a reception and gifts after their ordination. The ordination services were included in the schedule of conventions so that more people could witness it and give thanks and praise God for His glory.

Confirmation Ceremony



The Rt. Rev. Paul S Sarker has been confirming many candidates in different pastorates of the Dhaka Diocese during his convenient time. Recently in a confirmation service at Baurajani parish in which he confirmed 16 people, he said that “Confirmation is a very important sacrament by which we accept the discipleship of Christ. We are given special responsibility to serve the Lord according to our calling so that we lead a new life with Christ and bring others to Him. We rediscover ourselves and take up our own cross to follow Jesus. Everyday we have to do many sacrifices, go through hardship and suffering, bear neglect of others and pay the cost of discipleship. If we believe that Jesus is with us, the Holy Spirit is there as our helper, we will be able to lead a good life. In confirmation we receive the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit and a new heart.”

Lent Collection For Renovation of Karpasdanga Church Building



The Bishops Paul S Sarker and Samuel Sunil Mankhin sent an appeal to all the pastorates of the CoB earlier this year saying that the lent collection of this year would be spent for the renovation of the church building in Karpasdanga, Bollovepur deanery. The church was built in 1843 and is in a high risk of falling down at any time at present. It had been being repaired all these years but it has become an emergency now to renovate it. Karpasdanga pastorate is one of the biggest pastorates of the CoB. The lent is over and all the collection is coming to both the diocesan offices. What we have realized that with the price hiking of everything in the recent years, the local collection will be very less compared to the need. So we are expecting financial help from UTO, Episcopal Church of USA.



Function of Special Award of Recognition

Six people of the Santali community in Rajshahi deanery, who have been playing a great role in the different activities of the CoB, were given a special award of recognition in a function. Their contributions in preaching Gospel, founding new churches and in the social life of the people deserve high appreciation and are worth mentioning. They were Mrs. Kamola Tudu, Mr. Kumar Hembrom, Mr. Motilal Hansda, Mr. Bajun Hansda, Mr. Dhiren Murmu and Rev. Shalku Murmu. The recognition of the contributions of the elderly people encourages the new generation in their vocation and work and makes the church enriched and more alive.

Making Profession of a Sister

Novice Shobha of the Sisterhood of St. Mary, Haluaghat took her First Vows on the 6 March 2011 at St. Andrew's Church, Haluaghat in the presence of their Visitor Bishop Rt. Rev. Paul S Sarker and the Sister Superior Sr. Meera Mankhin. Rt. Rev. B D Mondal preached the Word of God in the service. Rev. Ashish Mondal, Rev. Martin Hira Mondal, Rev. Romeo Chambugong, Brother Guillaume from Taize, the Sisters and the people of local congregation were present in the service. After the service, Sister Shobha was given a reception and gifts arranged by the local parish and St. Mary's Girls Hostel. There was a feast attended by all the guests after the reception.

Bishop Paul S Sarker in his address said that the CoB is proud to have a Religious order, although the members are a very few in number, therefore more boys and girls need to come forward to join them. Sister Shobha is a Bengali and comes from Jobarpar deanery. She was brought to Haluaghat by Rt. Rev. B D Mondal in her childhood and admitted in St. Mary's Hostel for her schooling. As she grew up, she was attracted by the life and devotion of the Sisters living in the same compound and became a Postulant in 2005. She entered into Novitiate in 2006. Now, including her, there are 5 Professed Sisters in the Sisterhood of St. Mary. Please remember Sisters Meera, Anita, Brijita, Mala and Shobha in your prayers.



Aboriginal Santali Tribe's Cultural Competition

For the first time in the history of the CoB a cultural competition for the people of aboriginal Santali tribal people was arranged in the Rajshahi deanery. Bishops Paul S Sarker and Samuel Sunil Mankhin inaugurated the competition with the lighting of candles. Mr. Joseph Sudhin Mondal, the honorary secretary of the Synod was present. There were 29 teams of different Santali pastorates participated in the competition. The competition was presented by the newly ordained presbyter Rev. Michael Soren and arranged by the cultural festival committee.

At the end of the Competition, Bishop Paul S Sarker in his address said that the month of February is the month of language in Bangladesh, therefore arranging a competition like this in February is very significant. We must keep our own tradition, culture and language by practicing them more. God has created different cultures, traditions and languages because God loves diversity and variety. We should also keep this diversity. The Santalis were very happy and encouraged to have this enjoyable and attractive competition.





Where to begin?

I began my work as Community Health Advisor with CBSDP in April 2010. So what has been achieved in a year?

Life is so different for me having been previously employed within the National Health System in Northern Ireland where treatments, consultations and surgery are free as are medicines for many.

There are six nurses working in five sections within Barisal/

Gopalganj area. All the nurses now attend the village areas each morning where they are actively seeking and treating many patients. Each afternoon they are then in the clinic setting of their respective region. Each nurse will visit and treat a greater number of patients within the village than previously within the clinics.

In Jobarpar there are now three new mobile clinics in different areas and each one I attend with the Jobarpar nurse each month where we treat approximately 20-25 patients in a morning session.

God has placed me in a beautiful place in Bangladesh to do His work. I have been given the opportunity to meet with many people within the neighbourhood. Along with the nursing staff and programme organiser I have been able to visit all the particular working areas on many occasions.

What next? Having carried out some training at the end of last year with Dr Cynthia Morgan I hope we will be able to proceed with some further training within the next few months. A medical manual in English for each clinic is almost completed and I will also have these translated into Bangla before distribution.

Pat Jamison - Community Health Advisor, CoB



Centenary Celebration of St. Stephen's Church, Baraujani

St. Stephen Church, Baraujani of Haluaghat deanery celebrated her centenary on 27th February 2011. The Rt. Rev. Paul S Sarker and the Rt. Rev. Samuel Sunil Mankhin together unveiled a centenary stone founded near the church building. The Synod secretary Mr. Joseph Sudhin Mondal, the Chairperson of Nalitabari sub-district, respected people of Haluaghat deanery, and the local church members were present in the ceremony.

A colorful rally of Garo tribal people in their traditional and cultural dress and with their musical instruments singing and dancing under the leadership of Rev. Promosh Chambugong cycled around the church playground and ended at the centenary stone, prior to its unveiling. After the Bishops unveiled the stone, there was a memorable function and discussion in which tributes were paid to the first believers and founders of the church. Nobin Sangma, Losku Richil, Nazia Sangma, Thoma Marak, Chanda Sangma, Panna Marak and Rongu Nabal gave money and labour. Marai muni Mrong, Pal Muni Nabal and Chinmoy Dio donated land. The church remembered them with gratitude and respect.

Sulota Drong Awarded

Sulota Drong has recently received a Labour Day award from the Government of Zambia in recognition of her work as matron of a Christian hospital in the north of Zambia. Sulota, Laya Mazumder and Marina Sammader were sent by the Church



of Bangladesh to work for the United Church of Zambia as nurses. They were later joined by husbands, Liton Mazumder and Edward Sammader who work in accounts and in social work respectively. All their work is much respected by their colleagues and the church. The Church of Bangladesh can be proud of their ambassadors.

In May 2011, there was also a great opportunity for Church of Bangladesh Mission Partners to meet those originally from Bangladesh and now working in Zambia. CWM mission partners working in Africa and South Asia met together in Durban, South Africa for training, refreshment and learning together. As part of the conference there was time for each to share from their respective countries, including the work within the Church of Bangladesh.

Mother Susila Sitter, the Founder of CSS joined the community in heaven



The Founder Superior Mother of Christa Sevika Sangha (CSS), a religious community of the CoB, Mother Susila Sitter CSS, aged 87, died peacefully at 7:37pm in the CCU of the Birdem Diabetic Hospital on the 16th of May 2011. She had been suffering from various health problems due to diabetes and old age.

Mother Susila's dead body was taken to the Oxford Mission, Barisal on the 17th of May 2011 night and kept with singing and praying overnight in the Epiphany Church until midday on 18th of May 2011. The Bishop M S Baroi, CSS Sisters, Father Francis, Manager Mr. Tushar Kanti Byapari, Clergies of CoB, all the staff and students of Oxford Mission and many long-time friends of Mother Susila and well wishers of Oxford Mission regardless of class, denomination and faith gave thanks for her dedicated life and work, offered special speeches and prayers for the peace of her soul and showed respect and love with flowers.

It is mentionable that Mother Susila came from a Tamil family in Chennai, South India and entered into novitiate of the Sisterhood of Epiphany on the 4th October, the day of St. Francis of Assisi, in 1950. She took her profession as a Sister of Epiphany and lived there until she was called to begin a community of local Bengali Sisters in Jobarpar namely Christa Sevika Sangha (the Handmaids of Christ) under the guidance of Fr. George Golding B. E. and the Epiphany Sisters which was finally consecrated on 25th January, the day of St. Paul's conversion in 1971. In the meantime she was responsible for running St. Agnes Girls School and Hostel and to work on the constitution and by-laws of the CSS. Although Jobarpar became the Motherhouse of CSS Sisters, from the beginning two Sisters alternatively stayed in Barisal helping the Epiphany Sisters in the church work, and that made Mother Susila look after her Sisters both in Jobarpar and Barisal.

The morning after, on the 18th of May 2011, a service was held in Barisal, Mother

Susila's body was taken to Jobarpar and kept in St. Mary's Church until the evening. There again the Sisters, institutional Heads and staffs and hundreds of people from near and surrounding villages crowded to see her for the last time and honoured her with flowers. Many burst into crying and lamenting. All the Bishops of the CoB, most of the clergies, representatives of Dhaka and Kushtia Diocese, students and friends of the Mother from all over Bangladesh, representatives from different NGOs and government offices reached Jobarpar on the day for the funeral and burial next day. Mother's body was kept in the Sister's chapel overnight. There was a chain of prayer and thanksgiving and singing by Kirtan (spiritual songs) groups.

Early morning, on the 19th of May 2011, the CSS Sisters according to their tradition and customs read their constitutions and litania standing and kneeling around her body in the chapel. Then the body was taken to St. Mary's Church for the funeral sung mass at 9:30 a.m. led by the Moderator of the CoB and the Visitor Bishop of CSS Rt. Rev. Paul Shishir Sarker. The former Moderator of the CoB and Visitor Bishop of CSS Rt. Rev. Michael S Baroi preached in the service. The Bishop of Kushtia Diocese Rt. Rev. Samuel Sunil Mankhin and the first Moderator and Visitor Bishop of CSS Rt. Rev. Barnabas Dwijen Mondal paid tribute to her. There were hundreds of people present in the service.

The secretary of Barisal District Awami League (the ruling party) and former chief whip of the parliament Alhaj Abul Hasanat Abdullah, the member of the parliament from Barisal-1 Advocate Talukdar Md. Eunos and the Agailjhara sub-district chairperson Mr. Golum Mortuja Khan brought honour and respect on behalf of the government of Bangladesh for Mother

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Reporters and Representative Workshop Held

A workshop to train up reporters and representatives for the bimonthly Bengali magazine of the CoB was held in the retreat and conference centre, Savar on 25-26 March under the leadership of the two staff of the publication department Mr. Francis Bala and Mr. Jones Loton Roy. The participants were trained how to write reports and news. There were also lectures on the history of Bengali literature and on the importance of spiritual communication. Sixteen participants from different deaneries attended the workshop.

Schools Visit



In March 2011, staff from the education department in Dhaka, Mrs. Sarker, Mrs. Hall and Mr. Prokash, made a three day visit to Suagram, Chourkhali, Narkelbari, Askor, Bakal, Rahutpara and Sanuhar schools, in the Barisal-Gopalganj area.

The visits to the schools were both enjoyable and informative. Over the last year improvements have been made to the infrastructure of some of the schools. Electricity has recently been installed in the large Suagram School, meaning there will be light available during the monsoon when there is little sun. Additionally, a new toilet block was recently built in Bakal.

Improving and maintaining relationships with Government and NGOs is a key aspect of the current schools work. It is encouraging to hear of successes with these relationships at local level, which has resulted in the schools obtaining the necessary government text books for the pupils in all schools.

Mother Susila Sither CSS,

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Susila's social and spiritual development work and her initiative for the peace and harmony among the people. According to them, she was very welcoming and friendly with a good manner to the local leaders and people, aware of social problems and very kind to the poor people and was able to relate to everyone regardless of their faith, class and culture.

At 11 o'clock the body was brought to the CSS Sisters compound and was buried in the Sisters graveyard close to their chapel.

Mother Susila CSS was born on 27th December 1924 in Chennai (Madras), India. Her mother was Mrs. Sundari Sither and her father was Rev. Thomas Sither, a priest of the Church of South India. Therefore from her childhood she was brought up within a very Christian environment, tradition and teaching, especially in the Bishop's College of Kolkata when her father was a teacher. It happened many times that she met Sadhu Sundar Singh in her childhood. She was a humble, gentle, faithful and dedicated person. She joined the English Sisterhood in Bangladesh but had a special love for the local people. The Foundation of CSS and leading the Sisters affectionately and efficiently until her death is a proof of her faithful dedication to Jesus Christ our Lord and of her leadership quality. She had many friends from all over the world who time to time visited her community in Jobarpar and Barisal which gave them an opportunity to know the people and culture of Bangladesh. An autobiographical book of Mother Susila and of CSS namely 'A Well Watered Garden' was published in the UK. Mother Susila translated many spiritual books into Bengali, published and distributed them. She touched and influenced many people's lives and left 10 professed Sisters in the Christa Sevika Sangha (one of them yet to take Life Vows in August this year). Please pray for the soul of Mother Susila, and for the Sisters and the smooth running of the Sisterhood and their institutions under the guidance of the CoB.



Fourteenth April is the Bengali New Year in Bangladesh, called Pahela Baishakh. Baishakh is the first month of the Bengali calendar. The day is observed with a great importance and a big festival. The Bengalis celebrate the day with joy and happiness. Fairs are held in cities and villages. The people regardless of class, faith and age celebrate the first day of the Bengali year together. Therefore it is a festival for all.