

# PARTNER PLAN

An ecumenical appointment with:



The **Methodist Church** 

## Gillian Rose - Bangladesh March 2013

Bollobhpur Hospital  
PO Kedargonj  
District Meherpur  
Bangladesh

Gillian Rose is an  
Ecumenical Partner of the  
Church of Bangladesh Group

Dear friends

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and the last Sunday before Advent (or “stir-up” Sunday as it was always remembered in the days of the common Prayer Book) and a long time since I posted my last letter to you at the beginning of September.

It is also the beginning of the examination season, and I am in the classroom invigilating the Hospital Final Examinations as I begin my letter to you. Most groups have exams this month, so the lights burn well into the night as they study in preparation, and once again we are grateful for our wonderful backup solar lighting which springs into action when there is a power cut (or load-shedding as it is more politely called).



The weather is beautiful at the moment, the beginning of the first days of Bangladesh’s winter, with bright blue skies and sunshine – sunshine to be sat in and enjoyed, no one seeks the shade any more – and the temperature beginning to drop at nights. And to add the joy and beauty of the season, clouds of small birds arriving across the river in the early mornings, stopping for a noisy break in the bamboos lining the river bank, before setting off again in groups for some obviously determined venue. For Bangladesh has many water bodies, haven to winter visitors as these migrant birds are picturesquely called, or “Guests birds”. There is a private university on the outskirts of Dhaka which has extensive grounds and seven large water lily filled lakes – heaven indeed for guest birds and bird lovers at this time of the year.

But at the moment the country is reeling in horror at the terrible fire at one of the many ready-made garments factories, that claimed more than 100 lives, and has pointed out again not only the risk of those who work there, with no fire escape routes or safety measures, but the callous neglect of the owners who do nothing about it year after year. The ready-made garments industry is perhaps the country’s biggest exporter and number one foreign exchange earner and employs thousands of people. But we hear too often of accidents and fires at workplaces.

But to return to Bollobhpur Hospital, where a lot has been happening in the past few months.....

And number one will be the evaluation! For our previous visitors from USPG, David and Rachel, had asked for an evaluation of our work. In my experience this has never happened before, and though obviously necessary, we were a bit concerned as to how a hospital and community health programme, without any doctors on the staff, could stand up to an evaluation.

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We were happy to host Dr Cynthia Morgan (an old friend who with her husband, also a doctor have worked many years in various parts of the country) and Dr Chris and Dr Tracy who have worked many years at the Lamb Hospital in the north of the country, for a few days in September for the evaluation. We have not received a report yet, but they verbally pointed out good and bad points to help us improve our work. And the hospital seemed to want to show what it could do, for suddenly every bed filled up, and we could hardly find room for patients wanting to be admitted, all the incubators had small occupants, and we were all rushed off our feet!!

Anyway, we were very grateful for their visit and hard work, and to USPG for arranging this. Thank you all very much.

Friday October 5<sup>th</sup> and today a group of young men have sat entrance examination for the 18 month Laboratory Technician course and finally 5 are selected to commence training this month. They will replace the five who completed the course and left last month. It is good also to hear that all of them have started work and will soon be in the position to help their families. Praise God.

Monday October 8<sup>th</sup> and our newest batch of students sat the three month Preliminary training examination, written paper in the morning, and practical examination in the afternoon, and it is good to be able to report that all have passed the examination and will be able to commence their training in proper. They are all so keen at the beginning, pray God it lasts as with so many girls in training, we obviously get problems with some of them. They are all now busily trying on their new uniforms ready for the capping ceremony.

Monday October 22<sup>nd</sup> and we are more than happy to welcome Dr Paul Boidya, an old friend of many years, now retired, whom Bishop Mondol has persuaded to come to Bollobhpur for a month to see if he feels he is able to fill the chronic need of a resident medical officer. It is good to see him again, but sad to see him so obviously unfit, and with a severe hearing and memory problem. But, although very uncertain himself, he has bravely responded to Bishop Mondol's call, and arrived for a month's trial. May God be with him.

Saturday October 27<sup>th</sup> and we are pleased to receive visitors from Wales, Rev John Webber, again an old friend, and Dr Chris and Beve Reaney from Llandaff Diocese. The girls put on an excellent show for them in the evening, song and beautiful Bengali dancing, interspersed with some hilariously funny comic sketches which had everyone in stitches of laughter. And after the entertainment they were invited, along with our Bishop Mankin, to a supper of egg curry, curried vegetables and lentil soup. We hope they enjoyed the evening with our student nurses.

Sunday October 28<sup>th</sup> and with our visitors present and taking part, our new girls filed up to kneel at the altar rail for the simple capping ceremony, and then newly capped, stand to repeat the Nightingale nurses oath, promising to lead clean lives, to keep away from drugs, and to uphold the standard of nursing. May God be with them.

October 29<sup>th</sup> to November 2<sup>nd</sup> and we have Dr Cynthia Morgan with us once again to help our sister Mary with the annual Breast Feeding seminar. Each year two groups of new case nurses take part in the seminar with the aim that every student should be capable of helping a woman to successfully breast feed her baby and to overcome any problems that may occur when she starts feeding her baby after delivery.

It is wonderful to have Dr Cynthia, for she includes the spiritual dimension of everything, and on the last day we all joined in a two hours prayer and meditation in the chapel together, with Dr Cynthia leading us. Our grateful thanks go with her.

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Sunday November 4<sup>th</sup> 2012 and more visitors. This time we welcome Katherine from USPG and Ann, a mission partner working at Jobarpar. They had been in Dhaka for the Mission Partner Consultation meeting, and came to visit us afterwards.

And it was a great day to be here, for during a simple afternoon service in church, our student nurse Surena accepted Jesus Christ as her saviour and was baptised by Rev Daniel into the Christian faith. What a joy for us. Surena is a Santali tribal girl from an Animist background.

And on Sunday November 18<sup>th</sup>, Surena, along with another eight of our student nurses, was confirmed by Bishop Mankin during a long and joyful Parish Communion service. The group includes Topoti, who comes from a Hindu house, and was baptised into the Christian faith from her sister's home in Ratanpur shortly before starting her training with us. Also Moina, who comes from a Muslim home in the far north of the country. The others coming from Christian families in remote parishes and had not had the chance to be confirmed before. But I forgot Sonia, who has also come to Christ from the Hindu religion. Please keep them all in your prayers.

And in the meantime we have had a round of meetings, a management committee meeting here, meetings of the village clinics we have at Karpasdanga, Ratanpur, Kejura and Nityanandapur villages. Also another monthly trip to Khulna for the change of students there, and to join in the clinics Management Committee meeting. We are grateful to all committee members who give us their time to help and advice.

Friday November 23<sup>rd</sup> and we are sorry to have to say goodbye to Dr Boidya. For though he had nobly stopped the breach for a month, he has had to accept the fact that his poor health will not allow him to practice his beloved medicine anymore. So we wave him and his wife Bondona farewell, and give thanks for his lifetime of service. May God be with them both.

Sunday December 9<sup>th</sup> and Advent Sunday has been and gone and Christmas is on the horizon. Entrance examinations for the next two intakes of student nurses have been held here and in four other centres during the last week, and I will soon be receiving papers for marking, and frequent calls on my mobile phone are arriving – very keen girls wanting to know if the results are out yet!

Politically the country is being disrupted by frequent calls for 'hartal' (general strike) across the country by different political parties, and there are constant reports in the papers and on the news of damages to people's lives and property, a special target being cars and buses which are torched randomly and destroyed completely. Today I should be in Khulna for marketing and the girls change over at the clinic. But today there is another strike, and today any vehicle seen on the road, and any policeman on duty have been targeted. So no one is venturing out on the roads today.

But yesterday December 8<sup>th</sup> saw me on the road to Khulna and not only that but in our own new (second hand) hospital car, a 12 seater micro, which we have recently received from Dhaka, and we are grateful indeed to Bishop Sarkar for going to the trouble of purchasing it for us. It was bought with the sale money of the last two vehicles, Bishop matched the sum from his accounts in Dhaka. Thank you so much.

And another big thank you to Mr Spiers of S K Foundation, Netherlands, for, at last, yesterday, I was able to receive the long awaited second incubator which has been on order for an age and which S K Foundations wonderful gift has allowed and to bring it carefully back to be set up here in readiness for new arrivals.

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And I returned from Khulna last night to find that indeed two tiny new twin babies had arrived and been placed in one of the old incubators, the previous two occupants are big enough to come out and be promoted to a baby cot by mother's bed. The baby will still be given 2 hourly feeds by tube but will also begin to suck at mother's breast. Then gradually the amount the baby receives by tube will be reduced until he is fully suckling at mother's breast and able to go home. We aim for a weight of more than 2kg before the baby is discharged.

The Advent 'Prayer Meetings' are underway in the village. This is another lovely tradition of the Church of Bangladesh. The village is divided into sections and a team of lay people are selected for each part. They visit every house in turn during Advent for a time of prayer and praise and teaching, no family is missed in the run up and preparation for Christmas. We too will be hosting a team for an Advent meeting here in the hospital grounds. We sit outside by candle light under the lichu tree adjacent to the wards, so all the patients can listen and learn and join in too if they wish. Soon, too, the girls will be busy cutting coloured paper to make decorations for the wards and departments and preparations are in way for the musical competition on Victory Day, December 16<sup>th</sup>, when the girls will compete for prizes as they entertain their patients and relatives with national songs and dances and sketches depicting what happened during those months before victory came for an independent Bangladesh.

On the home front our newest cow to become a mother produced a delightful tawny female calf three days ago, but she does not seem to like her calf much, and has to be persuaded to let the calf feed. And as a big surprise we returned from church this morning to find Jhunu now an elderly cow, licking down a small wet calf that she had just given birth to. This is her 14<sup>th</sup> calf and she is a good mother. Between them they stoke up the biogas plant every day, and we cook one full meal with gas, saving greatly on the firewood.

My dog, Tom is looking distinctly grey, as he is attached to the ash heap in the cold mornings, lying out in the morning sun on a bed of warm ash which Putul scrapes out from the wood stove in my kitchen when she comes to make tea in the mornings and mounds of chappaties (flat breads) for diabetic patients, occupants of the geriatric ward and of course for me and the dogs. Tom's young sister has a puppy, only one this year, which is a relief!

I come to a close as dusk falls early in a "wintery" Bangladesh, in time hopefully to bring Christmas greetings to you all, and God's every blessing for the New Year.

Thank you for keeping alongside us with your prayers and your caring.

With Christmas wishes from us all.

