

PARTNER PLAN

An ecumenical appointment with:



Gillian Rose - Bangladesh July 2014

Bollobhpur Hospital
PO Kedargonj
District Meherpur
Bangladesh

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

Dear Friends in Scotland

Sunday April 20th 2014, Easter Sunday and a glorious day to begin a letter to you all and bring you up to date with our news. Holy week has been a joy, starting with the Palm Sunday procession around the village and the joyful packed-out parish communion service, not a spare inch of room left in the church, palm crosses in everyone's hands and the children waving fronds from the date palm trees, each spike festooned with a tiny cross.

Maundy Thursday found us all in church for the foot washing ceremony and the service of Holy Communion, receiving the sacrament together and remembering anew how it all began that night in the upper room at distant Jerusalem. And then the stripping and washing of the altar table in a mysterious darkened church and a time of meditation in Gethsemane garden. Good Friday as last year turned out to be all change day for the girls at Kejura clinic, Kejura village has a tiny Christian presence – 7 Christian families in a sea of Muslim and Hindu homes. Rintu, our new driver, has the car out early and we arrive in time to see all the patients waiting for medicines, finally going over to the tiny church to join the three hours of devotion at the foot of the cross. What a joy and privilege to worship again with this village Christian family, and our clinic in charge Pascolina's two daughters, each have a part to play and speak on one of the seven words from the cross.



We arrive back at Bollobhpur in the late afternoon to see that our girls have created a most beautiful Easter garden underneath the mango tree in the middle of the hospital grounds. It is all there, the river Kedron, the hill of Calvary with three empty crosses and the cave with the stone rolled away – a wonderful witness to their interested Muslim patients and relatives.

Saturday evening brings the service of light with everyone lighting their candles from the Pascal candle on the altar, the girls returning to the hospital singing and dancing and decorating their Easter garden with a myriad of lighted candles; and later the night nurses sing Easter carols and dance in a ring round the lighted garden, trying to pass on to their sleepy patients the joy of the resurrection – for Christ is risen – Hallelujah!

Today, Easter Sunday, all my trained staff have a special day off, the student nurses (girls) run the wards with me in the background to help them. And in the girls hostel a delicious smell heralds the arrival of a chicken curry on their plates, a special treat for we can only afford to give them meat on high days and holidays!

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Friday April 25th brings the three months preliminary training final examination for the new batch, and lights have been burning well into the night for the past week as they prepare, eager to pass and be able to wear their first uniforms. And it is good to be able to report that all passed well, some on second chance, and on Sunday May 18th, during a joyful parish communion service, they filed to the front to kneel at the altar rail to receive a blessing and their new caps at Rev Billiom's hands, finally standing to make the Nightingale nurses oath, promising to lead good lives and uphold the standard of nursing. Please keep them in your prayers as they start their nursing life together.

May 10th Saturday brought another of our monthly community health meetings, when the community staff come from the clinics and everyone brings and presents their month's report, and we have a time of learning something new together. There is a healthy competition between the four village clinics and each tries to outdo the others in numbers of patients seen, number of laboratory tests done, amount of medicines sold etc. Maybe one day, in the distant future our clinics will be able to be self-supporting.

Friday May 23rd found me invigilating the final examination of the five laboratory students who have completed their training. Unfortunately the results should have been better and three of the five will have to sit the examinations again.

Monday May 26th and in the middle of an exceptionally hot spell when the thermometer has been reading 40°C on my verandah, we welcomed three visitors from Us (United Society) England for a three day evaluation visit. We have been grateful to Us for their generous grant for our work in previous years. Carly, Naomi and Fran visited the village clinics, met the field workers and talked with them, were entertained by our girls to an evening of song and dance, were feted by the elderly in different villages and enjoyed the seasonal fruits, lychees and mangoes. And to everyone's joy and relief, they also brought rain, for on the Tuesday the clouds broke and the cooler rainy season began. Well, we hope you enjoyed your visit as much as we did. Please come again!

And the hospital has been busy with all the beds full, and tiny occupants in each incubator so they were able to see the hospital in action too. The case nurses have been busy too, looking after the others and delivering their babies and getting their case notes up to date in preparation for their final midwifery examinations next month. Our wonderful solar lighting springs into action when there is electricity "load shedding" and their studies are not disrupted.



Mikhael in his laboratory

May 26th Monday and an exciting day for the laboratory for the new equipment on order has arrived from Germany and a team from the importing company have spent the day here setting them up and demonstrating the different tests. Our laboratory is now the most well equipped in this area and we can offer a wide range of tests to the people of this neglected border area who cannot afford to go to the capital for treatment. I enclose not only some photographs, but also our deep gratitude to our generous friends at S.K. Foundation, Netherlands, for their wonderful grant that has made it possible for us to improve the services we can provide in so many ways.

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Many, many tiny babies who have received care in the incubators you donated would send their thanks too if they were able. And our new doctor is able to provide ultra-sonography scanning to patients every day. Thank you so very, very much.

June 2014 brought end of the year examinations for most groups and final examinations for the senior group. For to comply with our Bishop Mondol's request to give opportunity for training to more and more girls, we started a second entry in July of each year instead of new groups entering in January only. So now we have two intakes a year and year final examinations twice a year, giving a chance to twice the number of girls seeking training. It is obviously more work for everyone and Nilsury has returned from her study leave to take over the bulk of the teaching.

And on June 30th a further sixteen successful students received their hard earned certificates and left us to seek employment. No one stays idle. We will soon be receiving news of their new jobs, and Bollobhpur trained girls can be found in private and governmental hospitals and clinics, in industrial nursing posts and in community programmes across the country. Some are abroad in nursing posts in Libya, Saudi Arabia and in Zambia. We are proud of them all.



Sunday July 6th and time to bring my news to a close. A visit to the students hostel this morning finds them all busy moving rooms! For when a senior group leaves, each group moves up "higher" and with great excitement too. And the greatest excitement is for the group that is promoted from the ground floor to the empty room on the first floor! They really feel they have made it!!

And we expect the next group on Monday week, July 14th, so no doubt they are all excitedly packing and preparing to come at home. Please keep all our students in your prayers and for us as we try to guide them through the three years of their training.

And a notice in church this morning reminds me that a new intake of students for our laboratory training is due next month. Our training course is now two years, and we are now looking to see if our centre can be accepted for the four year government diploma course. Please pray with us as we apply. At present our boys complete their training with us, start work and then try to do the diploma course alongside. Many of our trained boys now have a diploma certificate too.

I was late for church this morning as I was busy with a complicated patient in the labour ward. Which reminds me that I forgot to mention that I had the joy of delivering triplets three weeks ago, and in the middle of the night too! The mother was resting with us because she was expecting 'twins' and there were some complications. And lo and behold there were three!! Two girls and a boy. The second girl was very tiny and weak and died after birth but the other two are 20 days old now and thriving. The tiny boy weighing 900gm at three weeks of age and his sister 1.2kg.

They were promoted to another incubator yesterday as that baby was promoted to a cot by his mother's side. And I returned from church this morning to find Staff Nurse Molly replacing them with tiny twin girls that had just arrived. In this way Bollobhpur Hospital has become the receiving centre for tiny premature baby care and it is a joy to be able to provide the service.

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I am alone this morning as I write at the table in my "open-air office" on my verandah, as my two dogs are remembering that Sunday is bath day and are keeping away! Eventually hunger will overcome and they will arrive. Everything is green, with the green that the rainy season brings, and thanks be to God we are having rain this year and the sound of water dripping from the roof and the trees is a background to my letter. And it is pleasantly cool with my room thermometer reading just under 30°C, a relief after the 40°C of the past month.

Politically everything is quiet as the Muslim month of Ramadan (fasting month) has begun and Hasina's one party parliament runs the country. But rival Khaleda is threatening action after Eid festival that ends the month of fasting. So we wait and see!

I hope you are enjoying seasonable weather too and will be enjoying summer holidays. I enclose some verses to share with you. Thank you for keeping alongside us with your interest and your prayers.

May God bless you all.



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Pilgrim Day

His hand was light upon me
in the morning of the day,
and the buds on the tree swelled and burst
and young leaf showed green and gay.
And bird song was sweet in the new light
as the child skipped at play,
and all was green and glorious
at the springing of the day.

He strode ahead as the sun rose tall
and called me by my name,
and I knew his voice, and I heard Him call
and I followed along the way.
And the leaves shone green and flowers bloomed
and the tree grew strong and gay,
and the air was full of the singing of birds
as I followed along the way.

I followed all through the noonday heat
though oft I stumbled and fell,
for the way was rough and the path was steep
and it led to the side of a hill.
And there was a tree, and marks of nails
and blood upon the ground,
and the sky grew dark and stormy
and thunder rolled around.

No bird sang in that place of death
and the leaves hung shrivelled and grey,
but I followed the path across that hill
for I knew He had gone that way.

Then the way led through a garden
and the sun above rose high,
and flowers bloomed before an empty cave
and birdsong filled the sky.
And the leaves on the tree glowed green and brave
in the brightness of the day,
and my heart grew light within me
and I went singing along the way.

I shall follow that way though the sun sinks low
and darkness gathers around,
though the leaves fall, the tree grows bare
and frost lie thick on the ground.
And when the evening fades in the west
I shall still be following on,
for the way lies through the sunset
and into the arms of the sun.

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