

PARTNER PLAN

An ecumenical appointment with:



The **Methodist Church** 

Gillian Rose - Bangladesh November 2014

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Gillian Rose is an
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Church of Bangladesh Group



Christmas

1. Child in a manger,
Star in the sky
Shepherds come seeking
Kings riding by.

2. Bringing their offerings
myrrh, incense and gold,
Costliest treasures
For a king long foretold.

3. We too would follow
That star in the sky,
seeking the king
We too would draw nigh.

4. Offering ourselves
to our king from on high,
Enthroned in a manger
Near a start in the sky.

Dear Friends in Scotland

Sunday November 2nd and time to get a Christmas letter in the post to you all, and I hope it will arrive in time and not get lost in the post as it did last year!

We celebrated All Saints Day during our parish communion service this morning and this afternoon there will be special prayers in the graveyard. A lovely tradition of the church for All Souls Day and all around the church yard and burial ground we have seen everyone busily cleaning and tidying the graves of their loved ones, and our women's group have made and sold hundreds of candles for the occasion. Every grave will be decorated with candles and incense sticks and flowers for the occasion and everyone will be there.

Pause to go with the staff nurses and some students to clean and repair our two hospital graves in the old church yard. Our hospital founder, Miss Ellen Dawe, is buried there. Ellen came first to this as then un-proselytised area to preach Christ Jesus to the mainly Hindu people who lived here. She was a CMS Missionary, a preacher and teacher, but she saw the need of medical care for her new converts and so Bollobhpur hospital was born.

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As her grave so beautifully stated “she fell asleep” in 1921. We thank God for her life and work, and for the legacy she has left for us to carry on in Christ’s name. Beside her is the unnamed grave of an Indian (I think) doctor who worked at the new hospital – Miss Singh.

They were brave people those early missionaries coming at a time when there were no vaccines to prevent disease, no antibiotics to fight any infection or illness, even simple common medicines such as paracetamol were not available then. Indeed many died at a young age, many lost small children, women died in childbirth. The church yard at nearby Ratanpur village church was the centre, has graves of many wives and children and priests who lived, worked and gave their lives in this area.



The laboratory area at Kejura Clinic

It was a time of no electricity supply, no clean water, no metalled roads, no bridges. Transport was by bullock cart (two cows to a cart!) and Saturday mornings at Bollobhpur hospital saw the football field full of cows grazing beside their carts as women attended the clinic for antenatal care. Nowadays, motorcycles screech up to the hospital gate, motorised vans and pedalled vans bring patients for admission and treatment, and light-flashing ambulances bring tiny babies for incubator care along the newly metalled roads.

Mud roads and bullock carts are rapidly becoming things of the past, and power tillers and tractors can be seen at work in the fields, though farmers can still be seen ploughing their patches of land with their two cows and wooden plough. And our student nurses who come from the low lying south of the country now reach their homes in five to six hours ride by bus, a huge contrast from the long two day journey by river steamer and country boat of the past.

But to return to the present –

It is a beautiful day as I sit on my verandah and write to you. The heat of the summer days has suddenly switched over to autumn, overnight, like the rising of the curtain for the next act of the play. Sunshine and blue skies and the chilly misty mornings that autumn brings. The newest groups of students have been issued with their new navy blue cardigans and light bedding has come out again for use at night.

Monkeys have been in low profile as there is little in the garden now to suit their taste, but I have a large company of mynah birds (starling family) coming to share my prayer time in the early mornings, and to enjoy the left-overs of the dog’s supper! Our Junu’s new calf is big and naughty now and has to be tied up next to her mother at the feeding trough to prevent her making havoc of the vegetable garden.

But to recap.....

August 2nd & 3rd brought examinations for those who had not managed to pass their 1st Year examinations



At work at Kejura Clinic

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and it is good to be able to report that all did well on the second try, and at the end of the month sat and passed the final nursing examinations, ready to start midwifery classes with me, always a coveted event for every group.

August 27th was highlighted by three beautiful blooms on my Night Queen cactus plant, bringing everyone to gaze in awe at this beauty at midnight, students, staff and patients alike. This is the first time three flowers have bloomed in the same night together and it was indescribably beautiful. Some returned for another look in the morning, but were disappointed, for her beauty lasts only for three hours or so in the darkness of the night, and by the morning the blooms lie limp and closed. Amazing indeed. How great is our God, the author and creator of all things.

The beauty brings to my mind that wonderful passage from Isaiah 35 – “the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose – it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing – they shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God.”

It is through times such as these, and beauty such as this that we find the way “the way of holiness”. May God give us grace to walk along it, with the “redeemed”, the ransomed of the Lord”.

Saturday September 13th brought our monthly community health meeting when our community health workers, community midwives Hannah and Nomina, and staff from the village clinics gather together to share their monthly reports and achievements and to learn something new together. And today we enjoyed a thought-provoking teaching session by Sister Nilsury on the “Ebola virus” an issue very much to the forefront in this part of the world at the present time.



A happy group at work at Karpasdanga Clinic

Our community clinics have been regularly visited for weekly clinics.

- each Tuesday has found a team from the hospital assisting Sister Lakhi and her staff at the clinic at Karpasdanga village, our busiest clinic, where we give medicine and treatment and necessary laboratory tests to over 100 general patients, and nearly the same number of women come for routine antenatal care.
- each Wednesday finds us at Anandabash, serving village people of the large villages of this area situated alongside the border with nearby India. There is a high prevalence of diabetes in these villages and people are happy to have blood tests and treatment available in or near their home, rather than having to make an expensive and time consuming trip to the town for treatment. It is a service we are happy to provide.
- each Thursday finds me at our Ratanpur village clinic, and Dibakor, our “village Doctor” at the clinic at more distant Nityanandapur village.
- Friday mornings bring weekly clinic day at our Kejura village clinic and on Saturdays, twice a month, a clinic is held in a new area at Fugindo village.

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In this way we are able to bring services which are easily accessible for village people and at a minimum cost. Basic laboratory tests are brought by senior laboratory students as part of their training.

And our community health workers visit mothers in their village homes, monitor the weight of their babies and bring helpful advice and teaching. And the elderly care workers visit the elderly at home, giving them time to talk and checking their blood pressures and helping with their daily living. This is a service I am especially happy to provide and only wish funding would allow more workers!

October 13th Monday found the newest group sitting their three month preliminary training school final examination, eager to earn a good pass mark and to be able to wear their new uniforms, and it is good to be able to report that this is a good group of girls and all passed easily and well. Pray God they complete their training in the same way.



The newest group

October 18th Sunday found us in a packed church for a long awaited confirmation service during which five of our girls were also confirmed. Always a beautiful and moving event. Pray God they remain firm in their faith.

October 29th – 30th brought the annual breastfeeding seminar for two new groups, led by Sister Mary and Nilsury. The aim is to equip every student to be able competently to assist a mother breast feed her baby and to overcome any problems arising. The students seemed enthusiastic and did well in the final reporting session. Pray God they put what they learn into practice in their professional lives.

And I finish as I began on Sunday November 2nd when our newest group of students filed to the altar step during the morning service to receive their caps, blessed and placed on their heads by Rev Billiani, finally rising and standing before the altar to make the Nightingale nurses oath promising to lead good lives and uphold the standard of nursing. Please pray for them as they start their training. They are a good group of girls and I expect great things from them. God bless them.

The year is flying to a close and the senior group will be coming in from the community clinics to sit their final examinations, their seniors will leave at the end of the year and new girls will be sitting the entrance examinations eager to train at Bollobhpur hospital.

And so the life and work of the hospital goes on full circle and the hospital has remained full and busy.

With Christmas greetings and thanks from us all.

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