

## **United Christian Hospital, Lahore**

The son of one of the workers in the hospital in Jalalpur Jattan where I worked in the past is leading a team helping restore United Christian Hospital. Part of the impetus was the fact that schools and other institutions were closed because of Covid19 Pandemic. This piqued my interest and I am sharing the situation.

Partition saw a huge mass of Muslims march towards Pakistan via Wagah, either by train or on carts, and the Sikhs and Hindus towards India. Many of those who managed to reach Pakistan were critically injured in riots. The Presbyterian American missionaries at FC College, fully realising that their Muslim brethren coming into Lahore via Walton Railway Station needed immediate medical attention, opened their doors and converted two dorms into a medical facility. After migration, these facilities became almost non-functional, and little staff was left to look after the patients.

Prominent among the missionaries were Dr F Collier, Dr J Vroon, Dr R Blocksma and Dr J Ballard. They chalked out a plan to build a hospital for the Christian community in Lahore where those not belonging to the community would also be treated. American Presbyterians purchased a piece of land, Methodist Church of USA constructed the building with the help of Anglican Church, UK, and the place was named United Christian Hospital (UCH).

Back then, it was a state-of-the-art facility. This was also where Pakistan's first open-heart surgery was performed, in 1964, by Dr Boss, on a Muslim man who is still alive and based in Lahore. Over the years, this teaching, 250-bed hospital trained nurses and laboratory and X-Ray technicians besides serving people around the globe.

From around the millennium the situation at the UCH has deteriorated deplorably. The reasons cited are shortage of funds, mismanagement, internal intrigue, the mushroom growth of private hospitals, obsolete and out-of-order medical equipment etc. Out of the five operation theatres, two are closed for want of qualified staff. The whole appearance of the hospital was shabby and dilapidated, the waste water of buildings around gathered in the grounds.

For two months the Christian Community has worked to improve the situation and it seems to be winning. I gather this effort has united many churches and that is very much the hope of Fellowship of St Thomas.

Many ex-pat Pakistanis have given money to help. This is stage one in a three-year project. Ahead is re-establishing it as a fully operational hospital with dedicated staff, the third stage will be re-establishing the training facilities for nursing, paramedical and laboratory staff.

As I write much has been accomplished on refurbishing Out-patients and other buildings, my friend Sajid Siraj writes, 'We need an extravagant prayer and financial support.'

Let us join our prayers with his that United Christian Hospital may once again meet the needs of the people of Pakistan. (Margaret Nutter)

