

# PARTNER PLAN

An ecumenical appointment with

The **Methodist Church** 

## Pat Jamison - Bangladesh April 2015



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Hello Everyone

This month I celebrated my fifth anniversary in Bangladesh. I cannot believe how quickly time has gone, how much I have packed into the five years and so many people I have met and places I have visited. I was wondering how to celebrate and as I was on holiday I just had a great day reflecting and being thankful for having so much, knowing so many wonderful people and enjoying doing what I do and have done in Bangladesh.



Quite recently I was reading in a daily newspaper about some traditions in Bangladesh. One is that of married Hindu women wearing a certain type of bracelet on each arm. The bracelets are carved into intricate designs from conch shells. They are called Shankha and can be bought in tiny shops in Shankhari Bazaar Old Dhaka. Due to the import of commercially produced Indian making of shankhas the ancient craft in Bangladesh is now on the verge of extinction.

April 14<sup>th</sup> is when Bengali people celebrate New Year or Pahela Baishakh as its known (15<sup>th</sup> in West Bengal India). It's a time to have traditional food especially fish and sweet dishes, dress in new red and white clothes, enjoy time with family and friends and go for walks to parks. Although other colours are being added into the red and white traditions the actual day and all that's involved is still being celebrated by all regardless of age.



I was part of two different celebrations on the day. The first was for breakfast followed by a small cultural programme and a walk to Parliament Building with my friends at the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) where my close friends David and Sarah are country reps. It was lovely to have Zandra David's sister who was on holiday in

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Bangladesh and for me to feel part of the MCC family where I am always made most welcome. I then had lunch with my friends Ajim and Luna and their families and again felt so happy to be part of a traditional Bangladeshi family celebration. We had customary elish fish amongst many other things and finished with payesh a dessert made from rice which is very tasty however not part of my diet!! I ate so much food I thought I would burst however it was really enjoyable.

The photos above are of one of the main roads near my home which was painted free hand by art students on New Year's Eve starting at midnight and completed about 5-6am, breakfast at MCC which comprised of fish, rice and alu borta (a spicy potato dish), some of my friends at MCC with several of their children including Sarah my friend and family and Ajim and Luna's niece in her traditional Pahela Baishakh sari.



Around Dhaka University people gather where there are floats, lots of music, and people dress in traditional costume, some have their faces painted, roads are painted and families enjoy a day of celebration all of which begins at 6am. I have never been brave enough to go it alone to the area as it's so crowded however I have arranged with some friends that I will definitely attend the celebration next year with them.

April was also Easter and a time for the Church of Bangladesh people to celebrate their wonderful traditions of hospitality to all. I was delighted to be asked to visit homes of some Bangladeshi friends for dinner on Easter Saturday, some foreign friends for brunch after church and another Bangladeshi family for Easter Sunday dinner. It's wonderful to be part of a community where



Christian festivals are well supported. The churches are packed with people returning to their family homes and then eating of traditional food as families gather to celebrate the Risen Christ.

As I sat in the garden of the church celebrating on Easter Sunday morning I was reminded of many traditions around the world and how different friends were celebrating Easter as I have done in my home country. Some of them stay at caravans in various places in NI, my Mum with my older

brother's family eating lots of lovely food, children rolling eggs in Tullymore Forest Park or Belfast zoo and yet all worshipping the same risen Lord Jesus where they are. So whether eating traditional food, dyeing eggs as we did at Nelleke's home or rolling them, attending church in your home town or just being with family, whatever you were doing at Easter may you know you are loved by the one who died, rose again and lives in my life and many other lives, my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I just returned from a wonderful holiday in Cambodia where I met many lovely people, seen some wonderful sites and ate way too much scrumptious food. I have soooooo much to be thankful for.

I was shocked to hear of the earthquake in Nepal and having visited this beautiful country in 2013, seen such beauty and yet such poverty my heart just aches for them all, for those who have lost loved ones, their property, the injured and those trying to help to get aid and reconstruct homes.

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Thanks for

- Wonderful friends and colleagues who make me so welcome at their homes
- An amazing holiday in Cambodia although I visited a lot of places I still had time to relax and enjoy the stillness
- Meeting several Christian people on holiday, in a hotel, a tuk-tuk driver and on a bus travelling to Kampot
- Getting to visit a small Christian run hospice in an area of Cambodia where I met staff and patients and even joined them for morning devotions
- Gods provision for me as I travelled and was kept safe at all times
- Although many people killed and injured I was pleased to know several Mission Partners from UK based in Nepal connected to my sending organisations are safe and well
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Prayers for

- The many affected by the Nepal earthquake
- Safety and good health for aid workers travelling to Nepal especially the hard-to-reach areas
- Work I need to do in preparation for training in the next few months
- Several visits to rural areas to be carried out this month
- Overall management of CBSDP as we continue to prepare for the programme launch in July with new staff to be employed, training and much more preparation to be done

I am learning more and more to live in the moment not looking back and not worrying about the future so I thought I would finish by sharing words from one of my favourite little ladies. *'Be happy in the moment, that's enough. Each moment is all we need, not more.'* Mother Teresa

Until next month

Pat 🌈🙏