

# Bangladesh News

Link letter no 6 May 2011

Hello Everyone



At the end of April I celebrated my first year in Bangladesh. As I reflect on the past year I really don't know where to start to share with you all as so much has happened.

I think I need to write a book however will it be a love story? horror? fiction? murder mystery? just a plain good old-fashioned bedtime read? and what about the title? I will ponder on that decision for a while!!

As I have served God in this land I know at times maybe I have not said or done things the way my Lord would have liked however I do endeavour to be more like Him in every way. I try to live by what Paul describes in Galatians 5:22-26 as the 'fruit of the spirit.' I don't always get it just right however I do strive to.



When I was contemplating this I thought of how we are all so different. We are all shapes and sizes. God has made us this way. Our walk wherever that may be with our Lord will also be different. Where God takes us, how He uses us and the people we will help along the way are all so different.

At this time of the year in Bangladesh there are many different fruits around. Some fruits are available all year however these are mostly imported. At the moment jackfruit (Bangla kathal), mango (Bangla am), lychees (Bangla licho), water melon (Bangla tormuj) and of course the most delicious pineapples (Bangla anaros) have all been appearing on the market stalls.



The fruits just like us are all shapes and sizes. Some are a bit rough on the outside however soft on the inside. Some are sweet; some not so, some need a bit more care than others and some can get bashed and bruised and still remain intact.

All above could describe me at times! Since I arrived in Bangladesh I have been stared at, laughed at, questioned, waved to, and shouted at however most importantly welcomed and encouraged by many. I look

so different from anyone else especially in the rural areas.

So what does Paul say about the fruit of the spirit. The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Paul doesn't see each as separate he describes all the above as 'the fruit of the spirit.' I need to be reminded of that again and again.

I want to share just a few thoughts from the past year.

When I finally arrived in Bangladesh there was a great deal of waiting around. My visa which had been troublesome from the beginning was still not yet sorted. I had two visits back to UK. Eventually I obtained the long awaited M visa and since then it has been extended for a further year!!!!!!

During this time of having to be very patient I visited several projects in Dhaka. This is a street children project. The children come either for the morning or afternoon session.



This is a place where children who live on the streets and may even be employed get

a chance to be children. They play, draw, write and receive basic education and some food before they leave.



The local children bring great joy to my life. This was sports day I attended earlier in the year at the local school. I am encouraged by the enthusiasm of the teaching staff and enjoy visiting them all regularly.

I was asked by the principal to come to the school every week. I spend a short time every Tuesday afternoon with class one. We sing and dance to some very modern kids praise and they have also taught me several Bangla songs. We all enjoy it so much!

The Girls Brigade Company in St Mary's Jobarpar is very different from Girls Brigade in my home church.



It was tempting to try to change what the girls are doing. Instead I have been faithful attending each week and fitting into what they do. I have also introduced some modern praise and worship which they love to dance to. The Sisters enjoy it also!



As well as being generous I have had to accept the generosity of many. These are some of the boys from the local Church of Bangladesh hostel who are so willing to help me especially when they know there is a sweet or two at the end of it!



I have visited all of the project areas many times by local transport. One day as I waited for the local bus along with a few young boys nearby I looked around and within minutes this crowd had gathered to 'see the foreigner.' They were all so

interested in the reason I was in their country and most of them thanked me for coming. They may see me as physically different with my short red hair and pale freckled face however I am welcomed as a family member or a close friend.



This is the nursing team. I do have to keep reminding myself that I am dealing with many staff who have received very basic training and no follow up when they leave the training hospital. I do strive to help in any way I can by encouraging, mentoring, challenging and most of all being there as a role model for them and good self-control is certainly needed.

This land of Bangladesh has so much to offer. Beauty surrounds me every day. The people are so welcoming, generous of nature and love me to visit their homes. I am invited almost every day by someone to share a meal or drink tea. Of course it is impossible to accept all the invites!

This is sunset in Jobarpar. What beauty! As I look to the green paddy fields it's a reminder of the beauty of my homeland I miss so much. In N. Ireland I am also surrounded by lots of greenery although no paddy fields!



I have so many occasions I would love to share with you all, weddings, births, Christmas and Easter celebrations, joys, sorrows and then there is of course my work! Time and space does not permit however. The love shown to me has been amazing. I pray each day that I too will show love to everyone I meet. I want people to see the love of my Lord and Saviour through me in everything I say and do.



So what has this year taught me? It has taught me to be more patient with myself, my colleagues, the local people, the visa office, the language and most of all to be patient with God to work in and through me, to enjoy the celebrations and be near

the people at times of joy or sorrow, to show kindness where this is needed and strive to be more like Jesus every day.

I see my Christian walk as not a list of 'don'ts' but of 'do's.' The focus is to follow in the love of Jesus Christ. The fruit of the spirit is evident in all believers who live out their faith. Am I living out my faith? I ask God every day to help me to do this.

Thanks to God for

- Blessings I have received in the past year
- The extension of my M visa just before Easter
- Many new friends and colleagues
- The beautiful area I am living in
- The acceptance and love shown to me by so many

Prayers

- To be able to do so much more and that the church will be interested in the new ideas I do have
- Further training I have planned with the nursing staff
- For all the Sisters from the Bangladeshi Sisterhood as their founder Mother Susila died recently
- My family at home in N. Ireland
- The CBSDP team in Barisal/Gobalgonj area
- To be able to continue to cope with the intense heat and humidity
- That I am able to purchase my transport very soon
- My safety as I travel around

Many many thanks for all your prayers and support over the past year.

God Bless  
Pat

