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*Moderator's  
 Commissary appointed  
 for the Diocese of  
 Peshawar*



Revd. Humphrey Peters

Bishop Mano Rumalshah after extending dedicated services to the Diocese of Peshawar has retired on December 15, 2009.

The Rt. Rev. Samuel Azariah, Moderator, Church of Pakistan has appointed the Revd. Humphrey S. Peters as Moderator's (Bishop) Commissary for the Diocese of Peshawar, which covers the entire NWF Province.

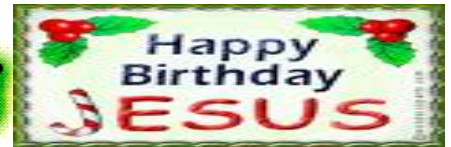
Kindly keep this change, in your special prayers. The whole of NWF Province is passing through an extremely difficult period.

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 We are on Web, visit us at:  
[www.peshawardiocese.org](http://www.peshawardiocese.org)  
 Email: [Commdeskdp@gmail.com](mailto:Commdeskdp@gmail.com)

# The Frontier News

## Merry Christmas

Christmas 2009



**DIOCESE OF PESHAWAR**  
 CHURCH OF PAKISTAN

### CHRISTMAS MESSAGE



Bishop Mano Rumalshah

This last year can be described perhaps the worst year at least in the Life-time of the present generation of people of the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan. We seem to have become the 'capital of suicide bombers' of the world and the region has been described aptly as "the most dangerous place in the world" by President Obama. On the day when there is no terrorism act, it is deemed to be an abnormal day, the normalcy of life has been completely devastated and travel and shopping for general necessities is very restricted and above all the normal social life of the ordinary people has been completely ruined.

And yet as we enter this Advent and Christmas season we talk about **peace** and **harmony** in a wishful way as if it is just around the corner. What message can be proclaimed in such a tortured situation or will we just glibly continue to offer some soothing anecdotes. It is a real dilemma at least for us preachers and we must seek new motivation of faith to be truthfully hopeful of God's Peace to prevail upon us.

This year my own thoughts are leading me more towards the **Parousia** the Second Coming of our Lord, as that hope becomes more meaningful as we go through this turbulent period in our lives. But such a hope, of course, has some very stringent conditions. This condition requires that we the

faithful, those who believe in God's purpose in our lives must become **active and effective agents for peace and reconciliation** in our neighbourhoods. In this way we will become God's messengers and labourers to prepare the way for the God's Second Coming; remember that at His First Coming it was only one person, John the Baptist who in his inimitable style did this job.

What it boils down to is the fact that we as the Church of God, the Body of Christ have been called out to live out this message of **peace** and **harmony** and to **re-enact God's love as we have experienced in Jesus Christ to the whole people of God including saints and terrorist, friends and foes, common people and taliban / Al-Quaida**. How we do it is to seek God's guidance for this purpose and to be faithful in delivering it. Collectively, in the Diocese of Peshawar we as the Body of Christ endeavour to do this through our Healthcare Centers, Educational Centers and through Development and Welfare programmes. The ultimate aim of this service to the others is to help us to proclaim the message of **peace** and **harmony** and thus leading people towards a **reconciled** relationship which indeed is God's ultimate purpose for us all.

During this Christmas tide I hope and pray that God will make us His instruments for His purpose so that His Coming into the world is fully realized through our humble obedience. May this season bring you and your family and friends a special hope and may it be a blessing for us all.

May I especially say to our foreign friends that please continue to uphold us in your thoughts and prayers as we go through this painful and traumatic period in our lives.

With prayers and good wishes.

**+ Mano Rumalshah,  
 Bishop of Peshawar.**



*Advent 2009*

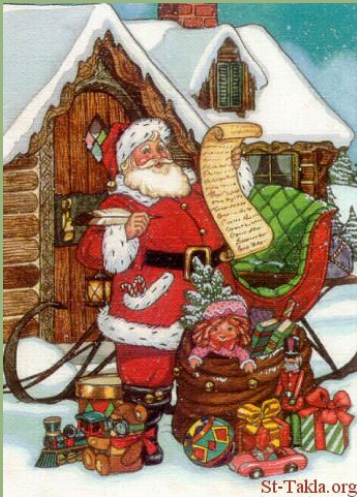
### Prayers Requests

Please Pray for;

1. Remember Pakistan and especially Christian Community of Parachinar, Hangu, Tank, Waana, D.I. Khan, Bannu, Swat, Thall and the other Tribal areas in your prayers, as they are passing through a very difficult time, due to Terrorism and War on Terror.

3. Foreigner Christian Prisoners in Peshawar and Haripur jails, as the winter has come and they are in need of warm clothes.

4. The Diocesan Relief Work in Pateka, Balakot, so that God may help the Diocese to work more effectively for the development of the Earthquake victims.



St-Takla.org

*May this Christmas bring you a lot of joy and happiness in your lives*

*Merry Christmas & Happy New Year*

## First Women Inter-Faith Conference

The Faith Friends (World Council of Religion – Frontier Chapter) organized the First Women Inter-faith Conference with the cooperation of the Women Desk, Diocese of Peshawar.

The Conference was held on 13 November 2009, at the Diocesan Centre, Peshawar, in which women from different religious community participated.

The purpose of this conference was to develop awareness in women of our region, regarding inter-faith peace and harmony, so we all live together and support each other in all spheres of life.

Friends gave an the introduction and shared the aims & objectives of the Faith Friends.

The other office-bearers of Faith friends, Rev. Joseph John (Christian), Dr. Qiblla Ayaz (Muslim), Mr. Charan Jeet Singh (Sikh), and Mr. Haroon Sabdial (Hindu) also motivated the women to come forward for this good work.



**Participants of the Conference**

The women leaders from different faith communities also delivered speeches on the importance of Inter-faith Peace and Harmony in the present situation, Ms. Bimla Yousaf (Christian), Ms. Ambreen (Muslim), Ms. Harjinder Core (Sikh), and Ms. Shista Prem (Hindu) were among the speakers.

*(Continued on page 4, col.3)*



**Mrs. Reena Patrick delivering speech**

In the beginning, the women from different religions welcomed the office-bearers of Faith Friends. In the opening speech, Qarri Roohullah, the Chief Coordinator, Faith

## Unity in the Body of Christ



Saint Johns Cathedral Peshawar

***“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”*** (Ephesians 4:3)

**30 November 09, St. Andrew’s Day:** A Special Prayer/Worship Service was organized by the Diocese of Peshawar.

The Christian community of Peshawar belonging to different denominations participated in a large number in this united service, held at the St. John’s Cathedral, Peshawar.

The Christian community of Peshawar knelt before God and prayed to bring Peace in our region, and our country Pakistan, as Pakistan is passing through difficult times due to the war on terror. It was a united service, as all the denominations in Peshawar participated and showed unity and solidarity with each other. They expressed deep concern over the current tense scenario, and the loss of human lives in the bomb blasts and suicidal attacks, on innocent civilians and forces alike.

The worship started with a prayer, introductory words were delivered by Rev. Joseph John (In-charge, St. John’s Cathedral Peshawar). Earlier, Rev. Joseph also welcomed all the guests and participants. Pastor Emmanuel from the Jesus Pentecostal Church prayed for peace and harmony in the country. Pastor Hashmat from Assembly of God Church, shared a few words from the Holy Bible about Peace.

*(Continued on page 5, col. 3)*

## **X-mas preparations gaining momentum**

Islamabad: The Christian community has begun preparations to celebrate Christmas with enthusiasm and started buying Christmas cards and composing songs in connection with Christmas Eve.

The Christians have also started decorating their homes and almost all churches are being decorated with colourful lights.

Several programmes like tableaux and carols have been prepared by various educational institutions run by churches to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Another important ritual of the Christmas celebrations is decorating Christmas trees to welcome the arrival of Santa Claus also known as Father Christmas.

The Christmas tree is usually decked with several ornaments including baubles, small bells painted gold or silver, stars of different shapes and sizes, pine cones, apples, candies, tinsel and balloons made from glass, metal, wood and ceramic.

Christmas tree symbolizes happiness and love and is an important part of Christmas celebrations. According to an official, the Ministry of Minorities Affairs is planning several programmes to celebrate Christmas and would support the Christian community in this regard. --- APP

## **Military Operation in Waziristan**

Military operation against the Taliban in South Waziristan is at its full swing. Thousands of people have evacuated the area and are getting themselves registered as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in D.I. Khan and Bannu.

As a result of this operation the Taliban hideouts, and dens have been destroyed, their ammunition dumps and weapons have been destroyed and/or confiscated by the Army. They are on the run and confused, so as a reaction they have started hitting the soft targets, i.e. main cities and civilians, hundreds of people including women and children have been killed by suicide bombers. But the public opinion is still against them, people say that they will sacrifice their lives to defeat this menace of terrorism, once and for all.

Section 144 is imposed in Peshawar and carrying weapons or its exhibition and the use of tinted glass vehicles is strictly prohibited.

(Communication Desk, DoP)

## **(The National Scenario)**

(courtesy, the News Int'l, Dec, 10, 2009)

## **Blasphemy law 'gave way to intolerance'**

**Myra Imran; Islamabad:**

Terming 'Blasphemy Law' a weak legislation, participants of a seminar Wednesday said that it had always been used against minorities and had given way to intolerance in the society.

Organised by National Commission on the status of Women (NCSW), the seminar titled 'Violence in the name of religion and its implication on women, was attended by known scholars, human rights activists and civil society representatives.

The panelists included MNA Sherry Rehman, NCSW Chairperson Anis Haroon, Council of Islamic Ideology Chairperson Dr. Khalid Masood and human rights activist Hina Jilani. Dr. Fauzia Saaed moderated the event.

In her brief remarks, Sherry Rehman disclosed that she had prepared the proposed amendments in the Blasphemy Law with the help of Asma Jahangir. These would soon be tabled in the Parliament for discussion. She urged civil society to take media and general public into confidence against all discriminatory laws that can be used for violence against any community.

The event was organised as part of NCSW's activities for '16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence', which is being observed throughout the world including Pakistan. Starting in 1991, it has become an annual event all over the world. The NCSW is observing these days as a strategy to sensitise and make the policy makers, opinion makers and the masses aware about the issue being faced by women in the country.

Talking about the background of the law, Hina Jilani said that it was made with a political intention to oblige extremist segment of the society. Being a weak legislation, she said that the law had been largely abused in the past. "A well designed law can never be abused as frequently as the Blasphemy Law", she said.

She said that the right policy to control the situation could be to marginalise the religious extremists instead of repressing them.

I A Rehman said that violence against women in the name of religion has a long history in the country. He said that section of fundamental rights in the constitution do not even deal with women issues separately. "The present waves of extremism is the consequences of the wrong policies of the past government," he pointed out.

(courtesy, the News Int'l, Dec, 8, 2009)

## **Gojra lessons**

An inquiry tribunal headed by an LHC judge and set up following the violence in Gojra this year, which saw the homes of Christians hardly being set alight and leading to the deaths of seven members of the community, has recommended that the country's blasphemy laws amended. This of course is hardly surprising.

Over the past decade in particular it has become clear that the legislation, placed on the statute books in the 1980s as part of the late General Ziaul Haq's 'Islamisation', has been used chiefly as a weapon of victimization.

Fifty Christians have been killed since 2001 after being accused of blasphemy. Hundreds languish in jails; most of them are Muslims. They have suffered due to the major flaw in the law that allows for the accused after a complaint of blasphemy. The unscrupulous have used this to have business rivals and others with whom they have petty disputes put away.

The Gojra tribunal also took up the issues of the diverse threats facing the country—including terrorism—and noted there was a need to avoid adding to the dangers. It noted that the Gojra incident was an indication of how an unruly situation could be quickly created. To avert any repetition of this, it suggested that the security apparatus and intelligence agencies keep a more stringent watch on happenings in their area. This is significant.

The events that unfolded in Gojra were preceded by days of activity by an extremist organisation. This played a key role in building up the mob frenzy that led to women being burnt in their homes following an unproven allegation of blasphemy.

It is apparent the group was able to operate in the area with little serious effort by law-enforcers to prevent it from doing so. There are accusations too that elements within the security setup may have backed it as hatred was spread. We need to act now to prevent such hatred from staining our society. It has already created fissures that run deep through it.

We must act to prevent the cracks from deepening by amending the blasphemy laws and ensuring that banned organisations are not able to function as

### Two Christians among the dead of Bomb Blast

Oct, 13, 2009: Early in the morning, a bomb blast in front of a Secret Agency Office killed 19 and injured a high number of people, among them were also two Christians, civilian workers of the Pak-army. Mr. Akram Masih left behind his two little children, and Mr. Saleem Masih left behind five little school-going children.

They both were sole providers of their families, a great loss. Both the families have lost their only supporters and the children face a very unpredictable future.



Bishop Mano with family of the deceased

The adjacent colony to the place of bomb blast, comprising of mostly Christian workers, was badly damaged and caused severe loss of property and lives.



Bishop Mano visiting the injured at Hospital

The Bishop of Peshawar, Mano Rumalshah visited the colony and houses of the people affected by the bomb-blast and prayed for them. He also went to visit the other injured persons in the CMH hospital.

The Bishop strongly condemned the suicidal attacks and also prayed for Pakistan and for the regional peace and prosperity.

### (Mission & Ministry)

#### Youth & Women Desks

Nov, 09: The Youth Coordinator Mr. Insar Gohar and Women Coordinator Mrs. Reena Patrick visited the parishes of Nowshera, Abbottabad, Kohat, Charsadda and University Town Parish, Peshawar. The purpose of these visits was to motivate and strengthen the youth, and women fellowships in this tense situation.



Women Meeting in Risalpur Parish

New projects and programmes were also discussed with youth and women groups, and they were encouraged to work more effectively for the community development.



Youth Meeting in Nowshera Parish

Both the coordinators expressed their solidarity with the youth and women groups, as they are working in a very tense situation area. The peace of our Lord Jesus was also shared with them during prayers.

Both the coordinators also participated in the Sunday Services in these parishes and shared messages regarding the importance of youth and women ministries, and special messages about hope and consolation in the present situation. These visits were very affective, and a source of encouragement for both the youth and women groups of these parishes, as expressed by the local community members.

### Sunday Schools Desk

The Junior Church's (Sunday School) Coordinator, Mrs. Noureen Altaf visited the Sunday School of the All Saints Church, Peshawar. During her visit she attended the Sunday School and met the children and their teachers. She presented special message to the children through stories and activities. She also spent some time with the teachers and shared new techniques and methods of teaching with them, in order to enhance their teaching skills.

(Continued from page 2, Column 3)

### Women Inter-Faith Conference

Organized by the Faith Friends



Shia Leader Presenting Shield to a Speaker

On the last session, the Faith Friends presented shields to the women speakers of the Conference, Mr. Fakhar-ul-Hassan Qararwi (Shia Community) presented these shields.



Shield to a Speaker

The faith friends also thanked the Diocesan Women Desk for all its support and cooperation. The women Coordinator, Mrs. Reena Patrick also thanked the Faith Friends and its organizers for organizing such an important Conference. The programme ended with prayers offered by different faith community leaders.

## Youth Counseling Class

The Diocesan Youth Desk has started a Youth Counseling Class at the Diocesan Centre, Peshawar. Basically, it is a Bible study class for youth leaders, held on every Friday led by the Youth Coordinator, Mr. Insar Gohar, about 20 to 25 young leaders attend the class. The main purpose of this class is to prepare youth leaders for counseling ministry.

Topics related to Counseling are discussed and guidelines are derived from the Holy Bible, including practical issues of daily life. Sometimes, it is an Open-discussion on religious or social topics related to youth, and/or about any new challenges faced by the youth. The participants also spend some time in prayer, and are also given separate tutorials and counseling about their personal problems, and concerns.

Although the situation is tense in the region due to terrorism and the war against it, but the youth has not given up the hope and keep receiving the teachings of Peace & Love, found through our Lord Jesus Christ.

### A Testimony:

*A young man joined our counseling class, he was very depressed and confused and had suicidal thoughts. He wanted to go abroad but couldn't, on other hand his parents constantly kept pressurising him to do something to secure his future. Whereas, he had no plans and was indecisive about everything.*

*During counseling sessions he recognized God's love and his plans for humans in this world, and his life changed drastically, he has rejoined his college, his family relations have become normal, and has found peace at heart, thus he now leads a normal life.*

*Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!*

## The Christians of Parachinar



A Scenic View of Parachinar

The Christian community of Parachinar has really been hit hard in this 'war on terror'. In the past two years their daily life has become under immense social and financial crisis, and the situation is deteriorating day by day, reported Riaz Masih, a local community leader and Mr. Irfan James, Edwardes College Peshawar student (from Parachinar).

The war between Shia and Sunni sects of Muslims in Parachinar is over as a result of a truce, but still sparks of violence erupt time to time in various pockets of the community, killing a few every now and then.

The main road and other traveling channels have been blocked, and anybody who wants to travel out of Parachinar has to pass through Sadda, the main town in the middle, which is still under the control of Taliban and extremists. People have to walk through Sadda to get transport to enter other towns. So it is up to Taliban's discretion to let pedestrians pass through or not, sometimes they let them, other times they don't.

The local government is unable to collect toll-tax, as a result it is unable to pay salaries of its sanitary staff, who mostly are Christians. They didn't receive any salary in the past twenty months. Their children have stopped attending schools, as they can not afford, it appears to be the end of the education and their dreams. After having one meal, they are never sure if they'll be able to feed their children the next day. Uncertainty, violence, poverty, hunger and instability prevails everywhere.

The Diocese of Peshawar, even with its limited resources did manage to

provide them with relief packages a number of times, but that's simply not enough. The Shia community does get relief packages from Iran, and sometimes they also support the Christian community, but that's not enough either.



Food Items Distribution in Parachinar

Even in this tense situation, the Church activities are going-on without any hindrance as the Diocesan Priest from Thall visits them regularly, which is the nearest parish to Parachinar.

**We request our readers to kindly remember our brothers and sisters of Parachinar who are in dire need of everything, for survival, only. As the Christmas is coming, may God be with them and they can also celebrate the Christmas and receive the blessings of God with birth of Jesus Christ in their lives.**

(Continued from page 2, column 3)

### *Unity in the Body of Christ*

Bishop Earnest Jacob of the Anglican Orthodox Church also shared the Word of God to console the people living in a very tense situation. Rev. Patrick Naeem (of St. John's Cathedral) read a passage from the Romans Chapter 12.

Overall response of the people was very positive, as real unity and solidarity was visible. People from different churches had gathered for a good reason and a common cause, and some of them were fasting as well. The Christian community of Peshawar insisted that this kind of united services should take place more often, and that there is a need to work together to bring peace and harmony in our region, through collective prayers and worship.

### **Support to the People of Parachinar**

Recently, the Development & Relief Sector extended financial support to the Christian families of Parachinar. About 9 families from Parachinar were living in Peshawar for the last 4 to 5 months. They moved from Parachinar, due to tense situation there and couldn't go back because of the road-blockage and some financial crises plus shortage of food and other problems in Parachinar. They were staying with their relatives here in Peshawar.

They wanted to go back to celebrate Christmas at their homes, as the situation has improved over there.

On 10 December 2009, the Development sector made arrangements for their travel back to their homes, they were also provided with some necessary things/items, so that they could start a new life in their home town.

They were very happy and thankful to the Diocese for providing them this opportunity to celebrate Christmas at their homes.

### **Relief Package for Parachinar**

The Christmas package is ready for the Christians of Parachinar. The Development & Relief sector will send this package to Parachinar before Christmas. The package comprises food and non-food items.

### **(Development & Relief) Shawal Health Clinic, Balakot**

Shawal Health Clinic for the earthquake victims of 2005, is running smoothly and serving the people of the surrounding villages of Balakot.



Shawal Health Clinic, Balakot

Recently a volunteer doctor from UK has joined the health sector in Shawal, Dr. Jane visits clinic twice a week, the local population of the area is very happy over this new development, they believe God has gifted her with healing powers, so the number of patients is increasing day by day.

### **Visit of the Development Sector to Balakot**

The Programme Officer, Mr. Rabnawaz of Development & Relief Sector of the Diocese went to inspect the various projects run by the Diocese, for the Earthquake victims of Patika and Shawal, Balakot. During his visit he also held a meeting with the Community Based Organization (CBO) leaders, to further promote the on-going projects.

He also paid a visit to the Diocesan run New Light Public School, Shawal Health Clinic and various other projects.

### **Relief Package for Swat and Malakand**

Swat and Malakand have been badly hit by the militants, and later due to the war against them. Basic infrastructure has been affected as well, so still there is very little prospect of people lives coming to normal, as far as their financial situation is concerned.



Food Items Distribution in Swat

Keeping the situation in view, the Peshawar Diocese sent another Relief package to Malakand and Swat, on 5 & 6 November 2009. This package comprises of food items for one hundred families (70 Christian & 30 Muslim) of Swat and Malakand. Mr. Rabnawaz and Mr. Shahzad Bhatti of the Development & Relief Sector of Diocese, took this package to Swat for distribution.

The people were so happy to receive this gift, and they were thankful to the Diocese for taking care of them in this difficult time.

### **Survey Visit of Swat**

A team of Development & Relief Sector visited Swat and Malakand on 17 & 18 November 2009.

The purpose of this visit was to conduct a survey, to identify other needs of the people living in Swat and Malakand, to further help for the local community.

*Merry Christmas*