



Promoting Inter-faith Peace & Harmony



February 23, 2011: A delegation of Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), paid a visit to the office of Pakistan Council of World Religion (Faith Friends), in Peshawar.

The purpose of their visit was to conduct evaluation meetings with the Faith Friend members and other community members, who are involved with the Inter-Faith ministry.



The evaluation meetings were conducted to evaluate the work and progress of the inter-faith activities, and how they are beneficial for the community in bringing peace and harmony in the regions, and what other programmes/activities could be organized in future to develop further work.



In the 1st Phase of the Meeting; the senior members of the Faith Friends were interviewed by the NCA delegation and the effectiveness and benefits of the Inter-faith activities were discussed. The hurdles and

problems/issues regarding Inter-faith initiative were also sorted out. Revd. Joseph John, who is also a senior member of Faith Friends, represented the Peshawar Diocese in this Phase.

The 2nd Phase of the meeting was attended by the community members and the youth representatives, they were asked various questions regarding the benefits and outcomes of the inter-faith activities in this area. And what new programmes do Faith Friends can initiate/start for the promotion of Inter-faith peace and harmony. Revd. Naeem Patrick and Mr. Insar Gohar, the Youth Coordinator, represented the Christian Community and the Diocese in this phase of the meeting.

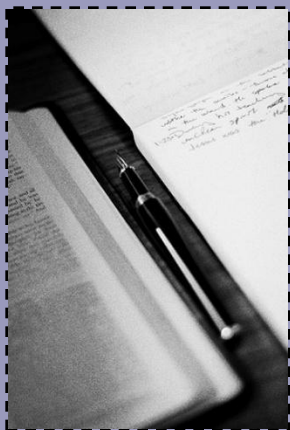


The 3rd Phase of the meeting was with the women representatives from different faith communities, in which the effectiveness of the inter-faith programme among the women folk was evaluated. Mrs. Reena Patrick, the Women Coordinator, represented the Diocese of Peshawar in this meeting.



A number of new ideas and plans were discussed in these meetings. The Diocese of Peshawar is working hard to promote Peace and Harmony through Faith Friends, and Interfaith in this region.

Needless to say that Faith Friends group was initiated by the Diocese of Peshawar in 2005.



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Thanksgiving & Prayer Requests



Diocese of Peshawar is grateful to God for His blessings and Mercies and also to the Partners for their financial and prayer support.

Please also Pray for;

1. The War on Terror is still going on, kindly pray for those who are determined to eradicate this menace for good.
2. We need your prayer support for those who are living in hostile areas of KPK, especially the Pakistani Christians and their institutions.
3. The Diocesan Relief Work in Pateka, Balakot. May God help the Diocese to work more effectively for the development of the Earthquake victims.
4. Construction work of the following churches is in progress:
Church of the Holy Name, Bannu; Christ Church, Nowshera; St. Xavier Church, Thandiani.

Special Prayer requests;

1. Please remember Pakistan and especially the minorities as they are facing the daily scarcity of flour and other food commodities; the prices have gone extremely high.
2. 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.

The Frontier News

(The National Scenario)

(Courtesy 'The News Int'l', March 3, 2011)

Shahbaz Bhatti silenced Forever



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs and a vocal proponent of religious minorities rights, Shahbaz Bhatti, was gunned down by unidentified assailants in broad daylight in the federal capital here on Wednesday.

The minister was attacked seconds after driving away from the residence of his mother in I-8/3 sector Islamabad at around 10.50 am.

According to details, the minister had called upon his mother and was en-route to attend the federal cabinet meeting when his official vehicle was blocked by two to three men riding in a white Suzuki Mehran. As his car came to an abrupt stop, the attackers armed with automatic weapons sprayed his car with bullets. The minister, who received about 26 direct bullet hits was pronounced dead upon arrival at the nearby Shifa hospital. The 'Punjabi Taliban' have claimed responsibility for the murder.

It is pertinent to point out that the slain minister had adopted a bold stance after the assassination of the late Governor Salman Taseer under somewhat similar circumstances and had been receiving death threats for long now. Surprisingly however, he was traveling without his official escort. At the time of killing, his car was being driven by his personal driver.

Talking later to the media, the IG police Islamabad said that the minister never allowed the escort to accompany him on his visits to his mother's house. It was Bhatti's routine to see his mother everyday before starting his day engagements. The minister, aged 43, was single and had planned to marry in the coming months.

Before fleeing, the assailants also dropped some leaflets attributed to Tehrik-e-Taliban Punjab at the crime scene. The

pamphlets warned of a similar fate for anyone opposing the blasphemy laws. Bhatti had been receiving life threats from various proscribed outfits for demanding amendments in the blasphemy laws.

Extremist clerics had also issued decrees calling for him to be killed. He had also requested the government for extra security and a bullet-proof car as he rightly believed himself to be a high-profile target following the assassination of Punjab Governor Salman Taseer on January 4.

Bhatti belonged to the minority community of Christians, and often spoke for amending the blasphemy laws, a demand which is suspected to be the main reason behind his assassination. Bhatti was killed some two months after Punjab governor Salman Taseer was shot dead by one of his police guards in Islamabad, who later confessed that he had murdered Taseer for allegedly speaking against the blasphemy laws.

(Courtesy 'The News Int'l', March 3, 2011)

Christians rally against Bhatti's murder

Sialkot: Hundreds of Christians staged a protest rally here at Allama Iqbal Chowk Wednesday to protest against the brutal murder of federal Minister for Minority Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti in Islamabad.

Bishop Samuel led the demonstration. The protesting Christians were holding banners and placards and chanted anti-terrorism slogans. They also marched on various city roads and demanded immediate arrest of the killers. --- PPI



Bishop Humphrey Peters with Shahbaz Bhatti

The Bishop of Peshawar and the whole Diocese strongly condemns the murder of Shahbaz Bhatti and demanded justice and protection for minorities in Pakistan.

All the missionary schools in Pakistan remained closed for 3 days in protest.

FELM Representatives visit the Flood affected areas



Jan, 2011: The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) is one of the old friends and partners of Peshawar Diocese. They have always stood by the Diocese in every thick and thin. Their support for the Diocesan relief and rehabilitation efforts is also worth mentioning.



In January 2011, their representatives visited Peshawar Diocese and saw various projects and programmes of the Diocese. Primarily, their interest was to see the flood affected areas, people and communities, and the Diocesan efforts for their relief and rehabilitation. They went to see the worst hit areas, such as, Rislapur, Nowshera and Charsadda districts.



Although, they were saddened to see the devastation caused by floods, they also showed their satisfaction over the Diocesan efforts for the flood affectees. The FELM representatives also showed their willingness to cooperate by continuing their support for the flood affected communities, through the Diocese of Peshawar.

**A success story
Sadiq Masih, a flood victim rehabilitated**



Sadiq Masih, is one of many who lost everything in the last year's floods. He is a resident of Charsadda district, one of the badly hit areas of the province. He is a man of limited resources, and the floods washed away everything he once possessed. His house was completely damaged. As a result, he, his wife, 3 daughters and two sons were left with no roof to live under, and no place to go.



The diocesan teams who went to visit their area were shocked to find Sadiq's misery, they consoled him, and on emergency basis provided him tents, food, non-food items, along with other household goods. Although, there were other badly or mildly damaged houses, but the community of the area wanted help for him on priority basis. As, the ladies shouldn't be living in the open, it's against the cultural norms and values.

The Diocese of Peshawar, in coordination with other organizations, having similar aims & objectives, started rebuilding his house. Still, the construction work is in progress, and a bed room, a kitchen and a bathroom would be completed very soon. Sadiq Masih and his family have moved in. His children have started going back to school. The Diocese, once again provided him with food items, and other non-food items. His life is back to normal and hopefully, the construction work will be completed soon. But, it will take a while for him, and his family to get-out of the trauma caused by floods.

Skills education for Minorities

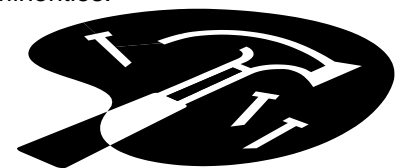


The Provincial Minister for Religious & Minorities affairs emphasized on Skill education for the minorities. He expressed these views in a certificate distribution ceremony held at Auqaf Auditorium, organized by an NGO, named 'Sava'. "It's the first time in the history of the province that a provincial government is expanding its 'Social Uplift' programme for the minorities". He said.

The 'Sava' NGO provides various skills training programmes for the Minorities Youth members. The Minister, who was also the chief guest, informed that the Government has decided to take concrete steps to tackle the unemployment, via extending the skills education programmes, especially for the minorities".

The Faith Friends members Qarri Ruhullah Madni (from Muslim Community), Rev. Joseph John (Christian Community) and Mr. Haroon Sarabdial (Hindu Community) were specially invited to attend this ceremony.

The Arch-deacon, Revd. S. P. Asghar represented the Peshawar Diocese in this Programme. In his speech, he thanked the provincial government, and the Sava organization for launching a much needed training programme for the minorities.



The Kids Games



Pakistan Sunday Schools Ministry (PSSM) was established to equip the School going children with religious education.

This forum has involved various other organizations with similar aims and objectives, such as, Peshawar Diocese, National Sports Coalition and OM, Pakistan.

This year PSSM with the Collaboration of Junior Church (Sunday School) Desk of Peshawar Diocese arranged the Kids Games at Peshawar, in the St. John's Cathedral Lawn.

The organizers of the 'Kids Games' involved different churches/denominations from Peshawar, Charsadda and Tarnab Farm.



About 545 children, age group 6 – 14, from various schools, parishes participated in the 'Kids Games'.

The kids were divided into various groups, and under the supervision of their Sunday Schools teachers the kids participated in various sports, fun games, etc. Christian songs with actions were also presented, which were much enjoyed and appreciated by the audiences.



The programme started with prayers in the morning and was suppose to last till late afternoon, but the unexpected rain spoiled the show by 12, noon. So, the children were quickly taken to the shelter and were served with lunch boxes. However, the children were much happy to participate in the programme and enjoyed every moment of being together.



The Revd. Aftab Gohar (UK), Adnan Azar Sindu (PSSM), Victor Lal (OM), Emmanuel Asad (PTEAS), Mrs. Noreen (Junior Church Coordinator, DoP), and the Revd. S. P. Asghar (the Archdeacon, DoP) were also there to grace the occasion. They prayed for the progamme and encouraged the children and their teachers for making the programme a success. Revd. Altaf Gohar (Incharge, Northern Office, PSSM) was the host.

Youth in Swat

Although, the floods last year destroyed the whole infrastructure in Swat, but gradually the life is coming back to normal, and so are the Church activities. The Peshawar Diocese has two parishes over there, which are looked after by Revd. Fayaz Channa and his assistant Stephen Sani.

The Mingora (Swat) Parish has re-established its Church Youth Group, and a new executive committee of the Youth has also been formed. Ms. Hina Patras is the new President.

On Sunday, Feb, 6, 2011, a 'Youth Sunday' was arranged, and a 'Youth Seminar' was held as well. Mr. Insar Gohar, the Diocesan Youth Officer, and Mr. Kamran Younis, President of Youth Council were especially invited from Peshawar as speakers of the Seminar.



Mr. Gohar's session was about the Youth's leadership role for the Church and for the Community development, whereas, Mr. Younis provided guidelines about developing unity, thus achieving better results while working as a team.

Similar kinds of Youth Seminars were also held in Risalpur and Haripur parishes. The youth coordinator and his team are looking forward to hold such seminars in other parishes of Diocese, as well.



After the seminar, the visitors were taken to witness the destruction caused by floods in Swat. The youth discussed various ideas and possibilities of helping the communities overwhelmed by floods.

Commdesk adds: The new youth president in Swat is an energetic young lady who works for an International NGO, "We do not have a proper Church building, at the moment a rented building is being used as Church". She said, "I have talked to the local community, and also discussed this matter with a few NGO's, to provide funds for this purpose, and the response was positive. It might take a while, but let's hope for the best". She added.

A Success Story

Mental Health Centre, Peshawar

Oliver Caleb

Imran Qadri was 12 years old, when he was brought to special school by his parents. He was a well built child, fair complexion, dark brown hair, light green eyes, and a naughty smile on his face.

He belongs to a respectable religious family. Mostly, his father is out of town, and Imran is looked after by his mother and two elder brothers, but he is very fond of his younger sister who studies in a school.

His mother told that they took him to several schools, but he never settled, hits other children and distracts the teachers. So, he never learned to read and write. He spends his day roaming around in the neighbourhood, teasing other people and smashing windows of the neighbours. The whole neighbourhood is agitated because of his behaviour, and that the family is becoming sick of paying for the damages. During interview his mother wept in tears. When asked, why do you do that he laughed and said, "Just for fun"! "Besides I don't know what else to do". I guess he had a point.

During the interview, and assessment it was observed that he had a nicely developed speech and language comprehension, but had very little attention span.

He had no problem in self-help skills, but his social behavior was not up to the mark. He didn't know his numbers and had no reading/writing skills. But know his colours. Anyhow, he was a suitable candidate for the special school.

In the beginning, he used to disturb the whole class, and used to bully the other children as well. But the class teachers used to keep him occupied in various activities. His hyperactivity was channelized by keeping him busy in Gardening, plus sports also used to absorb his extra physical energy.

The teachers started praising and encouraging him for his nice work and acceptable behavior, and his undesired behavior was followed by no reward at all. This worked, and he started paying attention to his studies and started to participate in group activities, and his aggressive behavior gradually vanished. His teachers taught him how to play constructively in a group and to help others.

After a few months he started acting like a big brother to the younger children, and started acting as a leader of the boys of his age group, and an extra helping hand for the teachers.

After a year or so, he did learn to count, but his reading and writing skills didn't improve a lot, he could write basic alphabets or read a few words, but was still an underachiever in his cognitive domain. The general observation is that he was not much interested in studies, but stories especially religious stories used to fascinate him.

Mental Health Centre, Peshawar is a training and resource base institution in the field of Special Education and Community Based Rehabilitation. Its facilities are utilized by the government and various NGO's.

Since he was not so good in studies, it was decided to equip him with skilled-education. So he was transferred to the sheltered work of the Mental Health Centre's special school. Soon he learned to make coat hangers, and decoration pieces, but then lost his interest.

So the teachers decided to teach him to make candles. **The sheltered workshop produces quality candles which are sold at the utility stores, and share of the profit is divided equally among the trainee students. And this was the breakthrough for him.** He loved to get his share of the money, which he used to spend on fast food and sweets.

After a year, he started asking for a raise in his share, rather he wanted the lions share, which was not possible. So instead, he started helping the office staff as a small time peon. He would fetch a cup of tea, a sandwich or a snack, and expected tips from the staff, thus he was not disappointed. Everybody liked him as he had turned out as a charmer, his

conversation was much more mature than his age, and usually he would make sense.

One day, an old teacher of the MHC came to school and informed that one of your pupils was collecting money from the people in a Mosque, and described his identity. We quickly realized he was Imran Qadri.

During the holy month of Ramadan, the Muslim community offers additional prayers till late night, and the believers are more generous those days. And Imran Qadri was telling people that "we run a school for mentally handicapped and physically disabled children at the Mission Hospital, kindly donate generously". He confessed, and promised that he will never do that again. We trusted him, and never heard that complaint again. But he kept asking for a rise in his share.

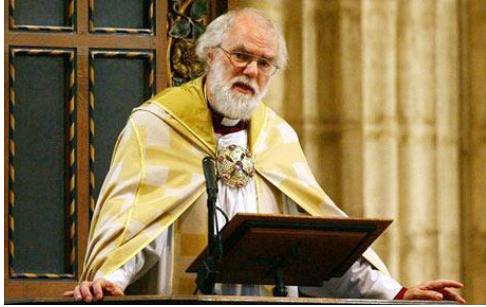
So it was decided to give Imran Qadri a chance to run his own workshop at his house. A meeting was held with his family members, they were a little hesitant, but were later convinced by the staff.

Imran Qadri was given a set of candle moulds as a gift, he and his brother were introduced to the wholesale store for wax. Thus, his family cooperated and Imran Qadri started making his own candles at home, and used to sell them in his neighbourhood; Because of the frequent power-cuts and also because of the quality of his candles, demand for his candles increased. Now, Qadri runs his own workshop with the help of his brother and his business is growing gradually. Thus, he has become a productive citizen.

Mental Health Centre's Sheltered Workshop was the only place in town where the grownup mentally handicapped persons were equipped with vocational skills, opportunities to become financially self-reliant, and socially independent. But, due to the global recession, lack of funds and the donor's lukewarm response, the Sheltered Workshop of the MHC, has become a history in its self.

(Editorial, 'The News Int'l', March 3, 2011)

Archbishop of Canterbury calls upon Pakistani government to protect Christians



Prayer and action are urgently needed to address the "deepening tragedy" unfolding in Pakistan for the country's Christians, the Archbishop of Canterbury has said.

by Karen Peake Posted: Monday, March 7, 2011, 11:10 (GMT)

Writing in The Times today, Dr Rowan Williams voiced concerns over the level of security being provided to safeguard Christians after the murder of Minorities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti last week.

The Archbishop said Bhatti's death had taken Pakistan "a further step down [the] catastrophic road" to the breakdown of the country's legal and political order.

He criticised the Pakistani government for failing to do more to keep Bhatti safe and questioned the political will to resist extremists.

"Shahbaz Bhatti knew what his chances of survival were. He was not protected by the Government he so bravely served," he said.

"How many minority Christian communities, law-abiding, peaceful and frequently profoundly disadvantaged, are similarly not protected by their government?"

The Archbishop said that a just Muslim state would provide for the rights of minorities and called for a "rational debate" on the blasphemy laws, which human rights groups say are being misused to harass Christians. "If the state's willingness to guarantee absolute security for minorities of every kind is a test of political maturity and durability, whatever the confessional background,

Pakistan's founding vision was a mature one," he said.

"The disdain shown for that vision by Bhatti's killers is an offence against Islam as much as against Christianity in Pakistan."

Protests by Christians have continued daily across Pakistan since Bhatti's murder. Crowds of Christians have taken to the streets to demand amendments to the blasphemy laws and tougher action on terrorism.



Pakistani Christians light candle next to portrait of their slain leader Shahbaz Bhatti, during a demonstration in Lahore, Pakistan on Saturday, March 5, 2011. AP

ANGLICAN CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL - RESOLUTION

The Church in Pakistan highly appreciates statement of His grace the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams on the assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti.

The issue of extremism was also raised at ACC-14 Kingston-Jamaica 1st - 13th May 2009 by the present Bishop of Peshawar the Rt. Revd. Humphrey Peters. It was discussed and the following resolution was resolved.

Resolution 14.24: Conflict (from APJN)

Resolved, 12.05.09
The Anglican Consultative Council:

remembers people in places of conflict and injustice everywhere, especially in Pakistan, where blasphemy laws allow persecution under law of Christians, and encourage religious extremism.

Another tragedy

Yesterday saw another murder linked to the country's blasphemy laws. The late minister for minority affairs, Shahbaz Bhatti, had spoken out against the use of the laws to inflict suffering on minority communities. He had reported threats made on this basis.

There are reports that a pamphlet left at the scene in Islamabad contains a claim of responsibility for his murder. An investigation is required into this latest killing. Mr. Bhatti, a Christian, seems to have become the second public figure to die simply because, like the former governor of Punjab Salman Taseer, he had chosen to voice an opinion. The barbaric killings of the two men mean that few others will choose to speak out on the issue.

The government appears to have already surrendered and this may have been a factor behind the death of the minister. It is unclear if the additional security Mr. Bhatti had demanded in the wake of the threats had been offered to him. His demise will mean a deepening of existing fractures in society, as minority communities face a still greater sense of the threat and isolation within a nation that seems unwilling to offer them any space.

The government's reaction to this latest outrage is awaited. It can simply not afford to wring its hands, make weak cries of condolence but do nothing in concrete terms.

We must not stand by and watch people perish because they chose to voice an opinion about a piece of legislation they wish to see amended. Certainly, disagreements exist about the blasphemy laws. But the basic right of citizens to voice their views and for their lives to be protected must be ensured; otherwise we will continue to descend into chaos and an environment in which matters are decided by the force of guns rather than through dialogue and discussion.

Civilization has, over the past years, seemed often to be receding from the country. With the tragic assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti it has slipped a little further away.