



Farewell Party for the FELM Missionaries

Two missionary ladies of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM), Ms. Anni Sohanan and Ms. Arja left the country after having served for a long time in the North West Frontier Province.



A farewell party was arranged for both the devoted and committed missionary ladies by the Diocese of Peshawar. On this occasion, a graceful ceremony was held to commemorate the services of both the ladies.

The programme started with prayer by Rev. S.P. Asghar, and the ladies were given special gifts, i.e. souvenirs of Peshawar. Mrs. Bimla Yousaf, the senior coordinator Development, gave briefing about their services/ministries in Pakistan.



In their speeches, both the missionaries thanked the Peshawar Diocese for their kind hospitality and for providing them friendly working atmosphere. They also shared their stories and experiences while serving in Pakistan, which were much appreciated by the participants. In their presentation, both of them said, "we hope and assure that friendship between Peshawar Diocese and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission will remain intact in future and we hope, Peshawar Diocese will further develop in the days to come".

The Diocesan Secretary, Rev. Humphrey Peters in his speech appreciated and praised their services, he also appreciated their efforts and bravery as ladies, since they served in a very tough and threatening situation and areas. The ceremony ended with a fellowship dinner.

'Faith Friends' supports religious communities



The platform formed by the Diocese of Peshawar for Inter-Faith dialogue called "Faith Friends" is supporting the religious communities and providing the necessary requirements for worship Centers of the different religions. The Faith Friends is providing/donating religious worship books, fans, sound systems and other equipments, which is a need of any Worship Center, now a days.

Rev. Joseph John, member of the Faith Friends, who is the Priest In-charge of St. John's cathedral, Peshawar, reported that our parishes/churches need the Prayer/Worship Books in the churches. And the organizers of Faith Friends are committed to donate the required books.



Some parishes have already been given the Prayer Books on 8 May 2009, during a Quarterly Clergy Meeting and other parishes were given the Books on 20 May 2009, in a special ceremony organized by the Diocesan Centre, Peshawar.

"Faith Friends" also provided electric fans and sound systems and religious books to the Temples of Hindu and Sikhs through out the NWFP. This has created an environment of solidarity and good-will among the people belonging to different faiths.

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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 Pray for;

1. Now a days, there is much political chaos and unrest in the country, kindly pray that political stability and sanity may prevail in the region.
2. We need your prayer support for those who are living in hostile areas of NWFP, 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. Pray for the people of Swat, as they are suffering because of the ongoing military operation. Especially for the displaced Christians of Swat and its surroundings.
5. Youth and Women Summer Camps, will be held in August 09.
6. The Youth Desk, DoP has started a one-to-one Counseling Ministry among the youth and also started a Counseling Class for youth.

Special Prayer requests;

1. Please remember Pakistan, and especially N.W.F.P, that peace and stability may prevail in our region. The country is passing through a very difficult period, because of Suicide Bombings and Terrorist Attacks.
2. 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.

(The National Scenario)

Christians ask for tribal domiciles

(Courtesy, The News International)

BARA: The Christian community living in Khyber Agency for the last more than 100 years have demanded tribal domiciles in order to get due share in job quota reserved for these areas.

In an open letter to the President, nearly 120 Christian families residing in Landikotal, Jamrud and Bara tehsils of Khyber Agency appealed for the grant of tribal domicile so as to enable them to have equal share in government jobs and entitling them to purchase personal property in tribal areas. Arshad Masih, chairman of the community in Khyber Agency, in his letter contended that despite living in the tribal areas for more than hundred years, they were yet to get tribal domiciles. He said without a tribal domicile, they were not entitled to purchase property or construct a private house in these areas as such an act is considered as against local customs and traditions.

He said their forefathers had migrated to various parts of the tribal areas, including Khyber region, in 1914 and despite their permanent settlement in Landikotal, Jamrud and Bara, they had been continuously deprived of their basic rights. Arshad Masih said about 119 Christian families comprising 1,700 persons were residing in official quarters situated inside the army camp, Landikotal. He regretted that despite separate appeals and applications to the President, Prime minister, NWFP Governor, they were still deprived of their basic and constitutional rights.

Sikhs & others scumb to militants Jazia demand

(Source 'The News International', 4 June 2009)

Landikotal: The non-Muslim communities - including Sikhs, Hindus and Christians living in Khyber Agency - have agreed to pay tax to the Bara-based Lashkar-e-Islam (LI) in exchange for ensuring their security in the area.

Sources said LI had asked the non-Muslim communities in Bara, Chora, Karamna, Bazaar Zakhakhel and Tirah Valley of Khyber Agency to pay Islamic tax.

The sources said that warning came from LI two days back following which the

community agreed to pay the tax instead of leaving the area, where they are living for decades.

Several jirgas were held to settle the issue and finally a jirga attended by the leaders and elders of the Sikh, Hindu and Christian community at Tirah Valley decided to pay tax to LI.

Under the decision, only women, children and handicapped persons had been exempted from paying the tax, while other members of the communities would be bound to pay Rs1,000 per head annually.

Search Operations, Peshawar (Communication Desk, DoP)



A few days ago, the metropolis police of Peshawar arrested two 'suicide bombers' from Hayatabad, Peshawar, a posh area but adjacent to Jamrud, the tribal area. Both the suicide bombers were teenagers and had plans to blow themselves up somewhere important, and/or in a crowded locality of Peshawar.

Now a days, the police, and the secret agencies are cracking down the Taliban's networks, and if they are informed about the presence of any suspicious activity they conduct search operations and raid the houses, wherever the miscreants maybe. This kind of quiet search operations are producing excellent results. Recently, the Police in Punjab Province identified and arrested the culprits/attackers and planners of the Lahore 'Police Rescue Centre' and the people involved in the attack on the Sri Lankan Cricket team. The Police, Military and the Para-military forces have put their lives in the line of fire and are taking casualties, which is highly respected and appreciated by the masses as well, as a result the general public has also come forward to help the authorities by cooperating with them. We as Pakistanis can only defeat the menace of terrorism and the Taliban factor only by acting together as 'One Nation'.

Pakistani Christians & Misconceptions

Oliver Caleb

A few days ago, while attending an International Conference, I came across a very interesting misconception about Pakistani Christians. Since it was an Int'l Conference, there was a good number of participants from the western world, as well. The hotel management was advised to set-up separate tables for the vegetarians, which were mainly occupied by Hindus and a few westerners, and the tables set for the "Halal" food were occupied by Pakistani Muslims and guest from the Gulf.

During conversation at dinner, one of the Pakistani participants said, "it's good that they (the hotel management) have separated the faithfuls from the infidels, "Kadfir" is the word he used. 'What do you mean' I said, 'Well' I mean the halal food', as its only consumed by the Muslims". He replied. "But I am not a Muslim, yet I prefer halal food", since I am a Pakistani, and that's the culture we are used to. My response was a bit of a surprise for rest of the people on that table.

On their enquiry I explained them that the concept of 'halal and haram' existed long before Islam and is still practiced by the Jews, and also by a number of Christians in the sub-continent. It's all written in the Old Testament, 'The law or Sharia by Moses', infact, the present Islamic Sharia about Haram and Halal is the continuity of the same law.

Most of the Pakistani Christians have English names, they wear western dresses and have dark complexion, which sometimes becomes a source of negative discrimination in the society at large. Nevertheless, when it comes to professionalism such as accounting and financial matters, the common phrase used by the Muslim majority is 'Christians are honest'. Whereas, health and education is concerned missionary institutions are preferred, as the common belief is 'they (Christians) are the best.'

This concept or the positive discrimination also has a history which

goes back to the early days of Islam, the most popular/famous Caliph Hazarat Omer's, Finance minister was a non-Muslim.

Having said that one can not deny the fact, i.e. Pakistani Christians are faced with many misconceptions in everyday life. Some Westerners think that all the Pakistani Christians originate from the Hindu caste system, who were later converted by the British missionaries, it is true, but not necessarily.

The medium height and dark complexion is not an indication that majority of the Christians have roots from the Hindus schedule caste, but it is as simple as that 'they' have not been mixed up by the Ariens, such as Chudherys, Pathans and/or the Brahmins (the Hindus top caste), but they are a symbol of the original/ancient inhabitants of the sub-continent.

Similarly, the Muslims think that Christianity among natives have been spread by the missionaries of 'the British Raj' whereas, the fact which is always not taken into consideration is that Christianity was brought to sub-continent by St. Thomas and the Christians of Goa, India are amongst the early Christians of the sub-continent, long before the British invasion into India.

The Pakistani Christians do have a separate identity of their own as well, thus, once again influenced by the British Missionaries and their roots to the Hindu Culture, e.g. the Christian men prefer to wear western dresses, which is understandable, as the masses always copy the fashion and dress code of the ruling elite. So, their life style represents a mixture of the historical factors, cultural values and social norms and taboos.

In a Christian wedding the Bride and Groom wear western dresses, especially the bride wears the traditional European white veil dress, and the ceremony takes place in a Church, with all the so called 'western pomp and show'. However, once the church ceremony is over, the bride wears a typical red dress, which is a symbol of Hindu tradition in Pakistan, consciously or unconsciously practiced by Muslims and Christians alike.

Similarly, the pre-marriage rituals, such as 'Mehndi/Hinnah, the yellow dress worn by the friends and family is again a tradition and ritual of the Hindu religion.

The other misconception faced by the Pakistani Christians is about Fasting. Majority of the Muslims think that Christians can eat fruits and raw vegetables during their 'fast' which is a Hindu way of fasting. Many believe that the Christians have liberty to choose the way they want to have their fast, e.g. taking fluids during fast (to avoid dehydration), or the number of hours of fasting. But the Pakistani Christians 'Fast' is very similar to an Islamic way of fasting, according to culture Christians observe 24 hrs fast, and they do not consume any kind of food or drink during a fast.

The Muslim majority also thinks that pornography, drinking, and other evil deeds shown in the Hollywood films or the material available on the Internet, is all about Christians and/or Christianity. Sometimes, its quite difficult to explain that all the Europeans or the Westerners are not perverts, which they associate it with Christianity in Pakistan, or else where. Sometimes it's even more difficult to explain to the ignorant illiterate people that, *"We are Christians, but not 'Angreez' (the English.)"*

The truth of the matter is that Pakistani Christians are the followers of the Jesus Christ, they believe in Triune God, and follow footsteps of all the Saints mentioned in the New Testament, thus presenting a true picture of a 'religion influenced by social and cultural values of the land.' This we as Christians want to maintain in our country Pakistan.



Peshawar Diocese and the IDP's

About three months ago, the Pak-Army started operations against the Taliban in Swat and Malakand, as a result the local community had to evacuate the area, and amongst them was a large number of Christians as well, and the Diocese of Peshawar in its Relief Camp is looking after hundreds of Christian IDP's. Their physical, as well as spiritual needs are being taken care of by the Diocese, even their children are provided educational facilities at the Diocesan IDP's Camp at Mardan.

As soon as the situation starts improving, these suffering IDP's will start leaving for their homes in Swat and Malakand.

Food Distribution



Diocese of Peshawar with the kind support of its friends and partners provided food commodities to the Christian IDPs. Some of these suffering families are living with their relatives in different areas of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP).



The Food distribution was carried out at the Diocesan Center, Peshawar in the presence of the Diocesan Treasurer, Col. Kanwal Isaacs along with the Senior Management of the Peshawar Diocese.

"A friend in need is a friend in deed."

Youth Seminar/Workshop for the IDPs

The Youth Desk of Peshawar Diocese organized a Training Workshop for the Youth of Christian IDPs in the Christian Vocational Training Centre (CVTC) Mardan, on 23 & 24 June 2009. Three para-church organization were invited from Lahore to facilitate/lead this Training Workshop, i.e. Prison Ministry led by Mr. Sohail Johnson; Save & Serve led by Pastor Sami; Vast Vision led by Mr. Shahzad. Ms. Lubna Younas, the Ex-president of the Diocesan Youth Council was the host and main organizer of this Workshop. There were 50 youth members from the IDPs as participants.

First two sessions were about the "Teaching Methods of Sunday School", i.e. How to teach the children in a Sunday School. And the third session was about "Role of the Youth in Church and in Society".



In the evening session, the guest organizations presented a "Magic Show", followed by other Social & Entertainment Programme, which was attended by all the IDPs, with a Fellowship Dinner for the IDPs. Later, they also distributed some gifts amongst the IDP's families.

The next day's sessions were about "Youth Leadership & Cooperation". A message was delivered about "Hope from the Word of God in Crisis and Difficult Situation". Pastor Haneef shared ideas about correspondence ministry and motivated the youth.

In the end, certificates were distributed among the participants. This workshop was beneficial for the youth to develop their leadership skills and training for the Sunday School Ministry.

Wedding ceremony among the IDPs



Another Wedding ceremony took place among the Christian IDPs in CVTC, Mardan, on 27 June 2009. Ms. Saima Suleman, 24 year old, is a resident of Swat. Her parents are retired; she was engaged to be married in Lawrencepur, Punjab. Saima had never imagined to be married as an IDP. However, she is happy that she and her family are nicely looked after by the Diocese of Peshawar at Christian Vocational Training Center, Mardan. The wedding took place in the Diocesan Relief Camp. In an emotional but humble Wedding Ceremony Rev. Fiaz Masih, Diocesan Priest, declared Yasir Yaqoob and Saima Suleman as husband and wife.

The Diocese of Peshawar took responsibility of all the arrangements of the Wedding.

Youth Prayer Meeting



The Diocesan Youth Council organized a Watch-night Prayer Meeting on Saturday night, 13 June 2009. The main focus of this whole-night prayer meeting was to pray in this current tense and threatening situation of our country, especially the North West Frontier Province. The youth knelt down before God Almighty and prayed for Peace and prosperity in the region and his blessings for all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Continued from Page 1, Col.1)

Services of two great missionary ladies

Ms. Anni Sohanan came to Pakistan in 1984, and spent her first year to learn Urdu in D.I. Khan and at Murree. After that she served as incharge of a Pharmacy at the Christian Hospital, Tank. Then she joined the Healthcare Christian Fellowship (HCF) and worked at different places, i.e. Risalpur, Bannu and Peshawar. In HCF her ministry was to arrange/conduct Seminars, Bible Studies, Discipleship Courses, Summer Camps for nurses and health related personnels.

Ms. Arja came to Pakistan in 1986. In the beginning, she started teaching at the Murree Christian School (MCS) and taught the Finnish children.

In 1988, she went to D.I. Khan and started her ministry about:

- * Adult Literacy Classes for local people of D.I. Khan.

- * Bible Classes for girls.

- * Served at St. Thomas' School, D.I. Khan as an Administrator and taught English and Bible/Religious Education.

- * Served at the Pakistan Bible Correspondence Institute (PBCI), and at the Health Clinic in D.I. Khan.

- * She also led the Open Theological Classes (OTS), since 1996 in Tank, D.I. Khan, Bhakkar, Daryakhan etc.

Tense Situation in Southern Districts of NWFP

The towns of Bannu, D.I. Khan, Tank and Hangu are located in South of Peshawar. These towns are under the curfew once again, and the people are restricted to their homes, and the business is closed. The suicide bomb blasts, killing and kidnapping of people is a day to day business. The Army has launched a military operation against the militants in these areas.

The church activities have also become limited, as people can't move from homes.

Please pray for the local residents and especially for the Christian community.

Are we busy?

Insar Gohar

Are we busy? In present times, when we ask anybody, usually people say, "**we are very busy, we don't have time,**" sounds like they even don't have time for the Lord. We read in the Bible, "*But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than God.*" (2-Timothy3:1-5)

This passage presents a picture of the present world situation and the attitudes of today's people. And we have become busy as the lovers of pleasure and worldly comforts, instead of God. We don't have time even to pray and to study Bible.

Do we have time for God? Are we aware of the importance of spending time in His company and presence, in prayer?

Jesus stressed to spend time for the Word of God in this passage: "*But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, Lord don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me! Martha, Martha, the Lord answered, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.*" (Luke 10:40-42)

Jesus also replied to Martha in the same way, "**you are worried and upset about many things,....**". Like Martha, we too sometimes worry too much about many things, but we leave "**what is better**", the Word of God.

Faith comes through hearing and hearing from the Word of God. Jesus declared the Word of God as the most important thing in our lives and to spend time to hear and study the Word of God which is better than anything else. Do we have time to hear/study Bible?

Often we involve ourselves with the worldly affairs too much, and keep ourselves so busy with our worldly work, even sometimes we as servants of God are so busy in our Christian ministry work that we forget to personally devote time for Him, in a routine, in privacy. Sometimes we become workoholics and forget that one can never finish work, or nobody ever accomplished everything and one must remember that one day we all have to leave this world, its business and confront the Almighty. So, be prepared and ready for the moment, just like the five wise virgins who were alert and prepared to welcome the Groom.

SACYN Meeting in Colombo



The South Asia Christian Youth Network (SACYN) was formed in the first South Asia Youth Conference held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in the year 2002 and the Second Conference was held in Bangalore, India, in the year 2005. Follow-up workshops and core group meetings were held after its formation in various South Asian countries, to strengthen the Network and to address the issues faced by the South Asian Youth.

The 7th Core Group Meeting of the SACYN was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 28 June to 2 July 2009. Youth leaders from all the members churches of India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Pakistan were among the participants. The church partners from CMS, USPG and Methodist Church-UK also attended this meeting. The Bishop of Colombo, Rt. Rev. Duleep also graced the meeting by being there and led a Bible study session. The meeting was about the planning for the next South Asian Youth Conference.



Mr. Insar Gohar, the Youth Coordinator of the Diocese of Peshawar-Church of Pakistan also participated in the meeting. Mr. Insar Gohar has previously served as the Coordinator in the SACYN, and Peshawar Diocese offered the facility of the office for the SACY Network for three years, i.e. 2004 - 2007. The youth from Peshawar Diocese participated in both of the South Asia Youth Conferences.

(Education)

Diocesan run Schools Show excellent result

In the previous newsletter we mentioned about the top 5 positions holders of the 2009, SSC exams from the Pennell High School, Bannu.

We are happy to announce that all the Diocesan run schools in the North West Frontier Province have shown 100% results in the same Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exams.

We congratulate the Teachers, Students and the administrative staff of all those institutions, above all the Diocesan Directorate of Education, specially its Academic Section, for keeping total quality control in the institutions.

Following is the results table of the various schools run by the Peshawar Diocese.

Elizabeth Girls High School, Peshawar	100%
Edwardes High School (U.M), Peshawar	100%
Edwardes High School (E.M), Peshawar	100%
St. John's Cathedral High School, Peshawar	100%
Edwardes College School, Peshawar	100%
Edwardes College School (wing 1), Peshawar	100%
Christ Church School, Nowshera	100%
Pak-United High School, Nowshera	100%
St. Paul's High School, Mardan	100%
Pennell High School, Bannu	100%
New Light Public School, Pateka (for Earthquake Victims)	100%

Distinction

Mr. Arif Boota is a student of MBA (Finance) at the Sarhad University for Science & Information Technology. He secured 1st Position in the 3rd Semester. We congratulate him on his success.

Mr. Arif Boota is working as the Finance Programmer, in the Diocesan Account Office. He is also serving as the Secretary, Diocesan Youth Council.

For early schooling he went to a FELM Educational Institution, Diocese of Peshawar. He was also sent to Finland last year to share his success story with them.

IDPs, a future in the waiting.....

Oliver Caleb

The internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Swat and Malkand have gradually started going back to their area, but most of them are still residing in the camps, and a good number of IDP's from 'Some Camps' have refused to return until, and unless there is complete security and the war against Taliban is over. But that's a gradual process, the government is trying its best while utilizing its all means and resources.

The NWFP government has doubled the number of the police personnel in Swat and the police constables and/or workers who previously had abandoned their force because of the fear of Taliban, have rejoined their duty and ranks, as the era of Terror is almost over in the area. Anyhow, in some pockets of Swat and Malakand still the stiff resistance is going on, and every now and then they attack an Army convoy or blow up a truck of two, but its true that they are on the run and a good number of Taliban and their commanders have been arrested, and many killed, as well.

The Federal Govt. is cracking down on all kinds of terror net-works of Taliban and the extremist outfits and organisations, especially in Southern Punjab, now a days.

It has recently been learnt that Taliban do not only come from NWFP, but the Southern – Punjab is also a breeding and training ground of the so called 'the Punjabi Taliban', who have links with Bait ullah Masood of Waziristan and with the Afghan chapter of the Taliban. Usually when their Leadership flees the areas, they take refuge across the Pak-Afghan border. Anyhow, the government is not conducting any major operation in the area but efficiently conducting search operations and cracking-down the extremist out-fits. The government's determination is clearly visible and much appreciated by the general public.

The Diocese of Peshawar is still serving and hosting hundreds of Christian IDP's from Swat and Malakand, they are provided with every necessity and their basic requirements are fulfilled, but a refugee camp can never become an alternative for a 'Home'. They can not go back yet, as they are waiting for the Governments infrastructure to be re-instated and the improved law and order situation in the area. On return, they not only need to reconstruct their homes, but they also have to rebuild their lives as well, which will never be the same again!

Visit of the Earthquake Affected Areas



An evaluation team along with the Asstt. Director Development, Mr. Asher Dean visited the Earthquake affected areas of Pateka, Balakot, where the Diocese of Peshawar is running relief and development projects for earthquake victims.

Their visit was to asses the progress and development of the projects and to evaluate all the work done in that area after the Earthquake 2005. They also assessed the needs to start some new projects.



During their visit, they visited the New Light Public School's staff and discussed further development of the school. The team also visited the Micro-credit and the livestock's beneficiaries, the Sewing Centre, and the Shawal Health Clinic, as well.

The most prominent feature of their visit was the meeting with the Community Based Organization (CBO). The Chairman of the CBO gave a briefing on the development and relief work in Pateka, which is run by the Diocese. All the community leaders were present in the meeting and shared their views about the development projects of the diocese. They were quite happy and satisfied with the current projects and thanked the diocese. They also discussed 'new needs' and asked to start some new projects.