



Halls Happenings

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Link Letter No 18

March 2011

Dear Friends,

Slightly different to our usual style of link letter, we thought we would give you a glimpse into what goes on during a typical week for us here in Dhaka. However, having said that there is nothing really typical about any week here and that is one of the things we love about being here. This one focuses mainly on Sarah's week - taken from activities in early February.

Sunday

For us, this really is the start of the week. The weekend is over and it's back to work. The day starts really early with Reuben waking up with the 'call to prayer' about half 5 in the morning. But it's already bright outside and warm. Rebecca and Reuben leave for school at quarter past 7.

David left on Sunday to go the Meherpur (in the west of Bangladesh) as he was helping run a workshop for senior CBSDP staff as part of the reorganisation process. David led sessions on values, vision and mission of CBSDP, a rights-based approach to development and project management systems. It is always good to get out of Dhaka and to meet more of our project based staff. It was a fruitful and encouraging week.

Today Sarah usually works at home, preparing lessons for the week ahead. Sarah is delighted when Rehana arrives at lunch time to help for the afternoon. She takes the children up to the roof in the late afternoon when the sun isn't so strong so they can play for a while. This past year it has been amazing to see how this

time on the roof has enabled us to get to know people in our building. The children meet with others on the roof and regularly share snacks, play games and Rebecca often comes home with a new hair style or with henna designs on her hands. These photos were taken when David's brother and family were visiting and the time on the roof was even more fun than usual!





Monday

Another early start, but today it is needed. David is away, so after Rebecca and Reuben are off to school, Matthew and I set off at half past 7 to find a CNG (the 3 wheeler scooters named after what they are run on - compressed natural gas). It's a bit of a hairy journey today as the CNG ducks in and out of the traffic. Rebecca often wants to know why everyone wants to get in front of us - good question! And this is early - before the mad traffic rush begins! We arrive at the Church of Bangladesh offices - a large 6 storied building with the church on the ground floor, small school on the first floor, development programme offices on the second floor, the Bishops flat and diocesan office on the third floor, Synod offices and meeting room on the fourth floor, guest rooms and canteen

on the fifth and a large meeting room on the sixth.

At 8:00 am I start a very informal English class with the teachers from the small school on the first floor, St Andrews School. Although English is a compulsory subject in all schools from class 1, many people really struggle with the language and feel it's a necessary skill in order to progress in their career. I have been trying to develop the confidence of the teachers to help them in their own teaching of the English language. I also occasionally teach some other lessons in the school later in the morning, alongside the teachers, hopefully providing some training and giving some practical ideas for their own teaching.

Tuesday

Today the bus to work took a diversion so we ended up getting off the bus early to walk part of the way, and what a lovely walk. The weather isn't too hot yet and there is a beautiful pavement lined with small palm trees with newly painted curb stones - this is not the norm! Our office is in Mirpur, close to the cricket stadium and the area has undergone substantial 'beautification' in advance of the cricket world cup! David was delighted to get tickets for the Ireland - Bangladesh game at the end of February. It was a fantastic experience, only slightly spoiled by Ireland losing! But that meant he experienced Bangladesh victory celebrations - thousands of people outside the stadium blocking the roads, so it was impossible to get home. It was all good natured, but David and the 6 other Irish supporters with him ended up getting a lift home with the police who escorted the team buses back to their hotel! The banter in the office has been great fun - the fact we are mixed English-Irish causes great amusement - especially when Ireland caused an upset and beat England!

Wednesday

Sarah's destination is the other end of the city today! We're so pleased that we live in the middle of Dhaka as it makes travelling round much easier. Once a week Sarah travels to the south of the city, known as Old Dhaka. It is here that the ferry terminal is located, along with all the narrow streets and bazaars. This is where St Thomas Cathedral Church is, on a lovely old compound, a real oasis amongst the hustle and bustle of Old Dhaka. Until a year ago the diocesan offices were located here and so we are quite familiar with the area. Sarah still goes once a week to teach English to students of the Theological College.

In January 2011, the Church of Bangladesh opened a new school on this compound, St Thomas Mission Primary School. Three classes (preschool and kindergarten) have been opened initially but it is hoped that the school will grow and each year an additional class will be opened. The Church has many other primary schools throughout the country but it has been seeking ways of being more self sufficient and relying less on external funds to run these schools. By opening this new school in a city the Church



seeks to attract middle class families who are willing and able to pay higher school fees. The profit from this school will be used to run the poorer rural schools. At the opening of the school, the Bishop clearly shared this objective, and openly stated that it was a church school and would be based on Christian values but is open for all in the community. This is an important feature of all different types of the church's work.

In addition, Sarah continues to visit the smaller community school also based on the compound in the veranda of the church, which we wrote about in the

last link letter, and also often visits the Ekota project offices. By then it is nearly lunch time and Sarah braves the traffic and returns home for the afternoon.

Because the journey to Old Dhaka is not an easy one, Matthew often stays at home and David works from home on Wednesday mornings. In the afternoons David currently has a Bangla lesson - another attempt to get past the basics.

Thursday

Thursdays are typically a day that Sarah spends at home catching up on things that need to be done. That is often a long list! This week David returned home from Meherpur in the afternoon, having spent 8 hours travelling. As he was travelling in the CBSDP car this time, it did include a few stops for the strangely named 'Italian tea' - tea at a roadside stall.

The staff workshop went very well, and it was encouraging to see the staff suggest values such as Christ-focused, honesty and accountability. David now has started preparing for a similar workshop to be held in later March - this time with senior clergy and church lay leaders - which will focus on vision, mission, values and governance issues of CBSDP. Part of the CBSDP reorganisation process aims to better define CBSDP and give church leaders a better understanding of CBSDP, and so this is an important workshop for both of these aims.

Friday

Fridays are the start of the weekend here in Bangladesh. And for us it begins with an English service at the Church of Bangladesh. Last week as we drove to church we were delighted again to see that the reason for the slow traffic was an elephant walking down the main road! It's happened once before in our time here, when the elephant's trunk knocked on car doors asking for money. Reuben bravely wound his window down to pass out 10taka (the equivalent of 10p) which the elephant blew back in disgust (it was not enough!) giving Reuben a real shock!

The church family of the English Service is very small with about 5 families who come regularly. Fortunately we all have children similar ages, so Sarah has helped start a Church school and with



another mum take it in turns to do an activity for the children, as the number of children often outnumber the adults!

This week Sarah and Reuben will be going to support the 'sports day' at the Community School in Old Dhaka. Great fun and much enjoyed by parents and pupils.

Before the weather really heats up, the schools take the opportunity to have their sports days and annual picnics. In a couple of weeks, Sarah and the children will be going with this school for their annual outing to the 'shishu mela' (children's fairground).



Saturday

Phew... Saturday is here! We enjoy having time as a family, and sometime visit other families. And get ready for the new week ahead.

Join us in thanking God for....

- Safety when travelling on the roads
- The variety of work that the CoB does and we are involved with.
- The workshop David helped lead was very helpful, engaging many different staff in the re-organisation process. A further workshop with bishops and senior church leaders is planned for March - please pray this success continues.
- The teaching staff in schools in Dhaka (including the new school) have worked hard at the beginning of the academic year.
- We've had quite a few visitors this month and look forward to David's sister coming at the end of March.

Please pray for....

- The CBSDP reorganisation process - especially further workshops and major decisions to be made.
- That our friendships with our neighbours will continue to develop.
- Sarah is working on a short term spoken English course, which was to start at the end of March, now for June/July. Pray for these plans, and the possibility of some volunteers coming to help lead it.
- Continue to pray for the success of the new school that opened in January, we would like to see more pupils enrolling. This is planned to make a profit to be used to help run the church's rural schools.
 - One of our good Bangladeshi friends had a premature baby boy in February. Another good friend had a heart operation in mid-January. Please pray for their continued recovery and their families.

With love from the five of us....

David, Sarah, Rebecca, Reuben & Matthew