



**STARFISH  
ASIA**

giving hope to the children of Pakistan

50 • December 2016

**News**

# 2017

**a year of hope for  
Pakistan's Christians**

**"The people living in  
darkness have seen  
a great light."**

**(Matthew 4:16)**



**We wish all our friends and supporters around the world a very Happy Christmas and a year full of hope and light. May 2017 be a special year of blessing for Christian teachers in Pakistan and their students.**

# 2017

## a year of hope for Pakistan's Christians

### *We have a dream ...*

- ... that people of all communities in Pakistan respect and value one another, treat each other as equal citizens, whether they be Muslim or Christian, rich or poor, illiterate or educated.
- ... that all have equal access to justice, opportunity, education and work, without discrimination or prejudice from caste, creed or religion, and that no community be looked down on as "sweepers" or "outcasts".
- ... that all Pakistanis be proud to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in dignity and self-respect as equal before the law and before one another.

### *We have a dream ...*

- ... that the Pakistan Government commit to their obligation under the constitution to provide free secondary education to all Pakistanis.
- ... that Christians may learn to respect people of all faiths, and yet do not feel intimidated and compelled to conform to the teachings imposed upon them by Islam.

### *We have a dream ...*

- ... that Christians will begin to believe that, with God, everything is possible — that they are not all destined to remain sweeping floors, cleaning drains and working as servants in rich people's homes.
- ... that Christians will achieve high grades in their exams, aim for higher studies in first-class colleges, and a good job in a place of influence in the future as lawyers, doctors, teachers, engineers and academics.
- ... that a generation of Christians will leave school with a firm understanding of the Bible and deep convictions about their faith — and be proud to be known as Christians in Pakistani society.

### *We have a dream ...*

- ... that Churches across Pakistan will grasp their responsibility to equip the next generation of Christians by ensuring that tomorrow's church is in school today.
- ... that Christians with compassion and ability will take the initiative to educate the children of their community — and that Christian parents will understand the value of education for their children.
- ... that both local and international supporters will provide help to pay reasonable salaries to the inspired teachers who are the leaders of a generation of hopeful children.
- ... that today's Christian graduates will become tomorrow's donors to provide for the education of future generations.
- ... that schools run for the poorest of poor Christians will be equipped to provide the best possible education, and that no Christian child will be deprived of the opportunity to prepare for a place of dignity in Pakistani society.

## Overwhelmed by Opportunities?

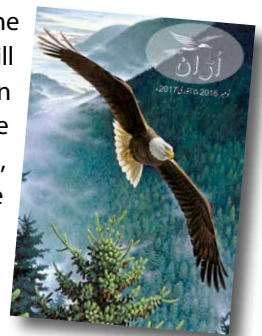
We have many hopes, dreams and ambitious plans for the coming year. These have only increased since the publication of our Survey Report, *For a Better World*. Please be sure to send for a copy or download it from our website.

With the results of the Survey, we now hold contact details for almost 700 schools. This presents us with the huge need of Pakistan's Christians -- but, much more, presents us with the huge opportunity to make a difference to the lives of the next generation of Pakistani Christians.

Here are some ways we are responding:

### The Christian Teachers' Magazine

A 16-page magazine in Urdu, sent to all the schools on our Survey list in December, will launch the Pakistan Association of Christian Teachers. It will provide teachers with some essential guides to better teaching skills, and also serve to bring a sense of the significance of their service to the Christian community. The title is URAAN (Inspire!).



### School text books

According to the Survey results, several thousand children in the surveyed schools have no text books. Can you imagine the standard of learning with no access to books? We can make a difference! In partnership with friends in the USA, Starfish Asia is working on preparing a set of primary school text books suitable for Christian schools, but this will take time.

**Our immediate opportunity is to respond to the need for school books for hundreds of Christian schools for the new school year, starting in March 2017. A set of five essential books for a student for one year costs £4 / US \$5 / SGD \$8.**

**Our hope is to give sets of text books for up to 10,000 children. Can you help by providing 10 sets of books?**



# An interview with Anser Javed



**Anser Javed, Director of Starfish Pakistan, visited Britain at the end of October for 3 weeks, partly at the invitation of Mr. James Dornan, MSP and Co-convenor of the Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Pakistan. Anser spoke at a meeting in the Parliament building to introduce the work of Starfish Asia in Scotland.**

**We asked Anser some questions about his visit and his vision for the future in Pakistan.**

## **I understand you had a few problems getting here.**

Not a few!! I only got a visa at the fourth attempt, as they weren't convinced that I would return to Pakistan. In Edinburgh, I was questioned intensely: "What do you do? Where have you come from? Where is your family?" I told my whole story ... and finally they let me in! Was it worth the trouble? Of course it was!

## **What were your first impressions?**

The bus came right to the gate of the airport, which of course it doesn't in Pakistan for security reasons. I loved the scenery, the sense of order, the cleanliness and the nice people.

## **How did you use your 3 weeks?**

The first thing was our Starfish programme at the Scottish Parliament. I'm still telling people about it! This former sweeper speaking at the Scottish Parliament! I was really proud that I could tell people about the difference Starfish Asia is making and how education can change lives — and I'm living proof of that!

I spent a lot of time meeting friends and supporters, which was great. I was nervous because I was aware that some donors are unsure about supporting projects in Pakistan, so I felt a lot of pressure. Whatever I said had to be backed up. But I don't think they saw it that way: they listened to me! Really it was the Starfish Asia team they trusted; I could speak and the presence of the team gave them confidence that what I said was true.

## **What was your impression of British people?**

I met many who have a big heart to serve the Lord, and I realise that most of our supporters are not rich. Some have made a big sacrifice in terms of time and money. We at the Pakistani end should do the same: work hard and give of our best.

## **Looking ahead to 2017, what are your priorities?**

We are very concerned about the standard of teaching in our schools, so teacher training is a high priority for us. We are preparing for several 3-day workshops for teachers, but we want to do more. We would like to give a one-year training so that teachers can gain a certificate equivalent to a professional degree. That would enable them to get good jobs and lift their families out of poverty, even if they do not continue to work in one of our schools.

## **How are you planning to respond to the Christian Schools Survey?**

Of course that really depends on what resources are available. We have a database of more than 600 schools and we need to separate those that have the greatest needs and yet are doing a good work among Christians. Maybe we will make a short list of about 100 of the most needy schools.

We will then invite teachers from those schools to training events. We are sending the teachers' magazine to all 600 schools. Then we want to look for funds to help those schools that have no clean drinking water and those that have no reliable electricity supply.

We want to give schools books and the Bible curriculum. We have a great possibility to work on a new school curriculum with a Christian emphasis. There is no lack of opportunities.



## **"Here is my Engineer!"**



**In many of his UK meetings Anser told this story of one young man who received a scholarship from Starfish Asia.**

*Raja Ayoub comes from a poor family. His father abandoned them some years ago and remarried, and his mother suffers with breathing difficulties. He has two sisters at home, one of whom works in a factory to support the family.*

*Raja studied in a private school and graduated with an A+. His mother heard about us and came to see me to ask for help for Raja to go for further studies, which she could not afford. I asked him, "What do you want to do?" "I want to be an engineer," he replied. Starfish Pakistan supported him for three years in the Christian Technical Training Centre in Gujranwala to study for a Diploma of Associate Engineer.*

*In August Raja came to my office with his mother. With pride in her voice and tears in her eyes she said: "Here is my Engineer".*

a Canadian in Pakistan

## First Impressions

This is Karen Gledhill's story — her journey of discovery of the world of Pakistan's Christians and her impressions of Starfish Asia's schools.



I first connected with Starfish Asia in 2012 after watching a BBC documentary on Pakistan's brick kilns. This alerted me to the fact that many of the bonded workers are Christians and a quick Google search led me to Starfish Asia.

I enquired whether I might set up Starfish Asia where I live in Canada. Before embarking on this Mike wisely invited me to see the work in Pakistan first hand, so in September I accompanied Mike and Kerstin to Lahore.

The week was too short. The heat, pollution and security worries were physically and emotionally overwhelming at times, but meeting so many remarkable people with humble hearts to serve the Lord was one of the most incredible experiences of my life. Frequently I was ashamed of the occasions that as a teacher I'd complained about lack of resources! Many of the teachers I met labour with huge class sizes in tiny classrooms, with few or poor quality books.



I visited about 10 schools, from brick kiln schools in villages to city schools, and at every one the electricity failed at some point during the visit. This meant that already baking hot classrooms, cooled to just bearable levels by overhead fans, became dark ovens. The classes continued.

I have enormous admiration for the teachers who are so desperate for training and who sacrifice to serve in such challenging conditions, often with little compensation. But it was the children who had the greatest impact. Their pride in their uniforms and their tremendous gratitude and joy at being able to attend school, so often brought me to the brink of tears.

I hope that this first visit is just the beginning of a new chapter in my own educational journey. I am very thankful for Anser and Kashi and all the staff who made a complete stranger feel so welcome and taught me so much.



## Prayers answered

The children at Shama School have been praying for a new school building. Living in the shadow of the brick kilns, they have seen the plot, the boundary walls and the foundations and they are praying. Up to now they have been studying in small rented bare-brick rooms with little space.

Their prayers have been answered! A caring Church has sent the funds to construct the first stage of the new school building. The children will watch as it is being built in the next few weeks. Watch this space!

## A day in the park

The special young people from Agape Home Day-care Centre enjoy a day in the park, thanks to the staff who care for them.



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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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