



The Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us.

We have seen his glory

Back to school



We wish all our friends and supporters a very happy Christmas and the hope of a glorious year ahead.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth to tell them: *"We all, with unveiled faces, contemplate the Lord's glory"*. (2 Corinthians 3:18) We all find it hard to have to wear masks to protect each other, but thank God, this Christmas we can contemplate the glory of the birth of Christ with unveiled faces.

Holy Field School

This is a class at the Holy Field School in Lahore. Asher, who oversees the school, writes:

"Our teachers work according to the rules set by the Government. Children cannot wear masks all the time because it is suffocating."

"Students are happy to be back in school, as they missed their classes. We conduct Bible classes every day for half an hour in the morning before other classes."

"Many in the community could not afford proper food during lockdown, but thank God, Starfish helped many through the ration distribution."

Pray for Christian teachers Holding the future in their hands

More than 500 teachers and staff are dependent on Starfish Asia for their regular income. Without them, our ambition to raise the hopes of Pakistan's Christians would be in vain.

Increasing support

For a long time we have wanted to increase our support for these front-line workers, and in November we did it. What we provide is still less than they deserve and, in international terms, still a very low wage for those who have such a significant role. A teacher with a BA degree now receives £60 (US \$75) a month from Starfish Asia. Many have expressed their thanks that we care. We want to do more.



Developing teaching skills

Due to the general disruption of school activities this year, we have engaged in very little teacher training. Kashi and her team of project heads are now working on a regular schedule for teacher development in 2021. Among other dreams is the possibility of opening a residential centre for short-term teacher training. At present it is a dream, but with faith dreams sometimes lead to plans, budgets, progress and success.

Our new UK Administrator

For the past four years, Margaret Robson has served as a dedicated administrator, working closely with Kerstin to manage office affairs, database, finance and so on. She was virtually irreplaceable until she told us she needed to spend more time with her family. We are delighted to welcome in her place Liz Ellis, mother of three daughters, member of a local church, who has learned quickly from Mags and relishes the challenges and opportunities of the job.



Looking back at 2020 Trials & Triumphs

2020 will probably go down in our memories as a difficult year — a year we would prefer to forget. We all hope the New Year will bring better things, a vaccine, a return to “normal”, a year to rebuild the damage.

It is easy to look at the night sky and see the darkness — how much better to look at the sky and see the stars! Here are some of our trials — and triumphs — of 2020. God has not forgotten His world, and we have much to thank Him for.

1 Our year began with a crisis. The Government of Pakistan blocked our access to funds from overseas. For six weeks the future looked very uncertain until our application was accepted for registration with the Economic Affairs Division.

Permission was finally given in November, and an agreement signed with the Government, after further months of investigation and uncertainty.



2 In March the virus struck and the lockdown began. Thousands of poor people lost their jobs and income. Hunger became a greater threat than the disease.

We launched a special appeal and you responded with great generosity. Through our project partners we were able to provide food parcels or cash to 1,600 families for more than three months.

3 At the same time schools closed. Final exams were interrupted or cancelled. Uncertainty reigned about the future as three months closure became 6 months.

We continued to provide funds for all the teachers' salaries in schools we regularly support. Some arranged private classes for students, and Edkasa continued their online science and maths classes for class 9. Schools re-opened in September.

4 The delivery of textbooks for the new school year was delayed due to the virus, and the books had not been printed in time. Pakistan TV aired special programmes for students, but there were no books.

In August at last the books arrived and were sent out to 89 schools and 14,023 students. In addition 8,059 students were given Bible Curriculum books. Bible study groups in 26 schools began again and the teachers received free Bible study books.

Although 2020 has been a dark year for many, God has watched over His people. Many stars have been shining.

As stars in the dark equipped to shine

Anser recently received a phone call from someone who had received a scholarship from Starfish Pakistan.

"Sungzar lives in a village 172 miles south of Lahore. He called to say that he has been appointed as a Junior Engineer in the Hydel power department, Government of Pakistan. In 2012 Starfish provided him a scholarship for a degree in Engineering at Bahaudin Zikriya University. He was excited and grateful to Starfish and the donors who supported him when he had no money to pay fees for his course."

Tomorrow's Christian nurses and accountants *"Maths is my favourite subject"*

Ilesha is the oldest of five siblings. Her mother is a housewife and her father retired from the army with a heart condition, leaving him unable to work. They were supportive of Ilesha and her sisters going to school. Ilesha studied at the **Community Development School** and passed Matric with a B. *"Maths is my favourite subject. It has always been my dream to be an accountant, to earn money to support my family"*. Thanks to a Starfish scholarship she is now studying Commerce at Aspire College.



"I always wanted to be a nurse"

Samson has wanted to be a Nurse ever since he was a child, and now he has the chance, thanks to the Starfish Pakistan Scholarship programme. He passed his Matric with a B grade from **Dean Public School** and is now studying Intermediate Pre-Medical. His father works as a tailor. Samson's desire is to secure a good job and support his family. He has attended Church since childhood.



The next generation of scholars

The **Community Development School**, led by Nazir and supported by Starfish Asia, is a secondary school for about 130 students in Lahore. Heavy rains damaged the school and funds were recently given for re-painting.

Staff and students had a lot of fun last month, celebrating 'Colour Day' — all the primary class students had their faces painted — and of course their photos taken. These children are the generation that will be needing scholarships for their studies in years to come.



A very happy Christmas and a blessed New Year

The CGA Home for Special Young People was one of the first homes we began to support in 2004. Mike recalls:

"Pastor Iqbal was always coming to me to ask for help. I didn't respond. Then one day I called at his home unannounced. I found him there, sitting on the floor with three disabled children. He was playing with them, caring for them, showing them love and giving them a sense of security they would never have found at home. I said to myself: 'We have to help these people.'"

Meet Najma

Meet Najma Mushtaq, age 15, from Pattoki. She is challenged with intellectual disability. She joined us last year. Her mother died in 2010.

Najma's father works on daily wages at a brick kiln, and could not give her proper care. He told us that, due to her disability, several times she had been beaten up by the villagers. She ran away once and he only found her after 4 days. He had to lock her up to stop her leaving again. Now she lives happily with us."



We wish her a very happy Christmas



The amazing family of the CGA Foundation live next door to the Starfish Pakistan office in Lahore. They sing loud hymns of praise early every morning.

<https://www.facebook.com/cgafoundation>

Looking back... so much, for so many

2020

We cannot deny, it has been a difficult year — nor can we deny God's grace and astonishing provision that has enabled us to do so much for His people in Pakistan.



The construction of the Holy Shepherd School is going ahead. The foundations are complete and the walls will soon begin to rise. Classes should start in the new building by mid-Summer 2021.



That is not all! New classrooms have been built at the New Life School in Bahawalpur, and new classrooms should be ready for use in December at the Light School in Lahore (see photo). Furthermore, work will soon begin on a major renovation of Dean Public School.



In the past four months, funds for material improvements have been sent to 35 schools and homes. These vary from painting and decoration (6 schools), toilets or washrooms (8 schools), water cooler (2 schools), desks and chairs (8 schools), Uninterrupted Power Supply (6 schools), 2 extra classrooms in Hope School, Karachi – and solar panels to provide 24-hour electricity for the blind girls at the Ananias Home.



4th Annual Speech Competition



More than 200 students took part in the fourth annual Speech Competition, held in Lahore on 30th October. Before an audience of parents and teachers, 30 students each gave a 3-minute speech. A panel judged them on content and presentation, and awarded prizes to the winners. In fact everyone was a winner and all received a certificate and a Bible Encyclopaedia.



The First Prize for seniors was awarded to David Emmanuel for his speech on "The role of a new generation in the developing nation". The First Prize for Juniors went to Laiba Patras. She spoke on "I am a Pakistani too". Both winners study at Ghouri Wisdom High School.

The afternoon's entertainment included colourful dances, dramas and songs, performed by the students of Starfish Pakistan schools.



2021

Challenges of the year ahead ...

- 1 Kashi and her team are working on a schedule for teacher development in 2021.
- 2 Considerable funding is still required to complete the Holy Shepherd School in Karachi.
- 3 In March textbooks will be needed for 10,000 students _ always a costly challenge.



Looking forward... so much more to do

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