



The light
shines in
the darkness
and the
darkness
has not
overcome it

John 1:5 (ESV)



the light of life in the life of a child

Ansa is a privileged girl. She is one of the 130 who attend St. Peter's School in a small village of bamboo plantation workers east of Lahore in Pakistan.

There is a Government Primary School in the nearby Muslim village, but no accessible school for the Christians. Ruth and William took the initiative to open their home and start a school.

This is no ordinary school. The children are happy and secure and they want to learn. No students drop out or play truant—in stark contrast to the national student failure rate.

But there is another reason why this is such a successful school. As well as learning their Maths and Urdu, Science and English, the children learn about Jesus, the Light of Life — gaining an invaluable foundation for their future.

St. Peter's is a beacon of hope for the next generation of Pakistan's Christians.

When children from a neighbouring village came asking to be admitted, because they had been abused in the Government school, William started a daily pick and drop service for 35 more children.

"Every boy and girl should go to school"

"The world is coming together with the people of Pakistan with one simple message: Every girl and boy should go to school."

So wrote Gordon Brown, Britain's former Prime Minister, celebrating the courage of the Pakistani schoolgirl, Malala Yousufzai. Malala, who is recovering from her wounds after being shot by the Taliban in her home town in October, symbolizes the tragedy of a generation that is being denied education in Pakistan. He continued:

"The good news is that there is no technological or scientific barrier to universal education. All we need is a collective determination to achieve our aim."

"I don't mind if I have to sit on the floor at school. All I want is education. And I'm afraid of no one."

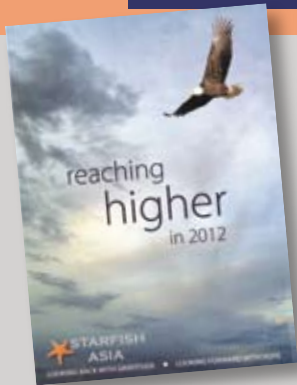
Malala Yousufzai on Facebook

Ansa's school (continued from page 1)

When Geoff, our Board member (see his article on the opposite page), visited St.Peter's School in Burj Klan, he declared that this was his favourite school.

It is easy to fall in love with St.Peter's. It is quiet (no traffic in the village), peaceful (the gentle rustling of bamboo plants), cool (especially after September) — and the teachers are enthusiastic and appear to really care for their students. They follow the example of the Principal. Ruth clearly is happy in the village, happy in the school. She is a happy person and she loves the children.

These photos were taken at a meeting for staff and parents in the little village chapel in September.



Looking back

Did we Reach Higher in 2012?

One year ago we sent you a brochure: *Reaching Higher in 2012*.

It outlined our dreams for the year.

How did we do? Did we reach our goals?

This was one of our goals for 2012: to begin to support ten more schools.

Other priorities and budget restrictions have made this impossible, but we have managed five. Here are the details.

**SUPPORT
TEN MORE
SCHOOLS
IN 2012**



Two other schools are on the brink of receiving at least some funds to help them provide better for their communities:

4 Christian Primary School Johore Town, Lahore

A very poor Christian community lives at the heart of Johore Town, a rich new housing development in Lahore. Zafar Daniel and his wife, both inspiring teachers and passionate about education, begged the Catholic priest to allow them to use his church as a school for Christian children. We will soon provide help to rent a building, provide furniture and increase salaries.

5 Calvary Model School Zia Colony, Karachi

This very well-run private Christian High School runs up to Class 10 and can complement the nearby Morning Star School. This would enable Morning Star to remain a high standard Primary School up to Class 5. Calvary needs our help from January to enlarge their space and pay better salaries. We plan to help in 2013.

Many schools — and hundreds of children — remain on our waiting list and we will be working hard in the coming year to provide some help to them. If you would like to "adopt a school", please contact us: mike@starfishasia.com

1 The Assembly of God Light School, Youhannabad, Lahore

Thanks to specific support from a Church in the UK, we began to support this small Primary School in April. It saved the school from closing and enabled them to renovate the building and enlarge and equip the classrooms. The number of children in the school rose from 30 to 60.

2 The Mission School System Shahpur Kanjara, Lahore

This is the school featured on our leaflet: *The Crisis facing Pakistan's Christians*. The dedication and commitment of the staff are an inspiration. A donor has provided funds to enable the school to rent better premises and we will be providing a small regular subsidy to increase staff salaries. The school is a model of initiative from a compassionate and capable team.

3 Baghanwala (Brick Kiln) School, Faisalabad

This school is a new initiative, underwritten by a concerned supporter in Singapore. Baghanwala is a community of very poor brick-kiln workers. About 50 children attend the school, and they are from the poorest of poor families.



Life in the Punjabi village



Sohail is a fervent advocate of the needs of rural southern Punjab. Though his home is in Lahore, Sohail spends almost every week in the village, where his mother lives and they oversee a school that teaches up to Class 9, mainly for girls.



Walter likewise lives in the city but spends much of his time in his village close to Khanewal where he oversees a School for village children and a clinic that meets the basic health needs of the village. The school is supported by Starfish Asia.

His village is typical of hundreds of Punjabi villages. Life moves slowly, everyone is engaged in tending the cotton crops or the buffalo. Sohail's village has a high proportion of Christians who would have no other access to education, though the school runs for the benefit of all communities.

Sohail is specially concerned to provide a pick and drop service to bring Christian girls from three neighbouring villages. Due to poverty, culture and safety it is impossible for the girls to travel alone, so a vehicle and running costs are a priority requirement.

Please help us to do more in 2013 to help Pakistan's Christians

Walter's brother is a farmer and he owns the school building. This was a good year for his cotton crop and now wheat sowing has begun.

The school is also beginning to show a good harvest. Last year the first student passed her Matric exam and is now nursing in Multan. Her brother passed Matric this year. Their father is the village blacksmith. Four students are in this year's Class 10. An urgent need is for a new vehicle to bring teachers to school from the city. The present Suzuki van is being shaken to bits by the rough village roads.



Geoff with Anser

Reflections

Geoff Larcombe joined the Starfish Asia Board in July and visited Pakistan with Mike in September. Geoff and his wife Dee served for many years with Regions Beyond Missionary Union and in pastoral ministry in Britain. Here are some of Geoff's reflections after two weeks in Pakistan.

A 12 year old girl was telling the Gospel story of the 10 lepers during our visit to the **Life Transforming Centre** in Akhtarabad, about 30 miles from Lahore. Her English was outstanding. A school friend translated her into Urdu. She was expressive and lively as she addressed the 120 school pupils.

She is just one of the girls at this High School, which is ably led by Sajida Iqbal, bussed into school each day from a Christian village — just one girl among hundreds for whom Starfish is making all the difference.

A couple of days after our visit, Sajida received threatening phone calls from someone claiming to represent the Pakistani Taliban. Thankfully, the school remains open, serving Christian families from a wide area.

This is just one of a number of outstanding memories of my visit to Lahore with Mike. Others included listening to the blind girls sing and play at the Ananias Home for Blind Girls in Youhannabad; seeing the enthusiasm of the girls and boys at the Brick Kiln Miracle School and being impressed by the holistic care provided by Angela Michael and her team; and visiting the excellent St. Peter's Primary School in the middle of a bamboo plantation near the Indian border.

So I returned to the UK with images in my mind of happy, singing children, thrilled to be at school. And of teachers who are serving the boys and girls with resilience and commitment, despite meagre salaries and inadequate facilities.

I was humbled to visit other schools in very poor areas, not yet supported by Starfish, led by Christian head teachers who have demonstrated great courage, vision and determination to succeed, and who are asking for Starfish assistance. Pray for Anser Javed as he responds to these requests in a way that

respects the initiative shown by the teachers and yet results in positive improvement for the children.



Giving out milk to the children at the brick kiln school



Inspired teachers inspiring students

A Pakistan Government survey of low-cost schools concluded that "many students drop out because they are not interested in school". *We conclude that students will be inspired to pursue their studies if their teachers are also inspired.*

Holy Shepherd, Karachi

We were concerned when Anser and Kashi left Karachi to take up the leadership of Starfish Pakistan in Lahore. We need not have worried. The school is in good hands.

Two ladies, close friends of Anser and Starfish Asia, visit the School each Saturday to

teach, train and motivate

the staff. Beverly works full-time in a bank and Florence teaches in a city school. But they are committed to developing the Holy Shepherd School. Beverly writes:

"We are pleased to help out at the Holy Shepherd School in whatever way we can. It is a privilege to be a part of the blessing that the Lord is pouring out on the people in that Colony.

Since administrative aspects of the school have been streamlined to quite an extent and training of teachers is in progress, I felt that it was time for us to move into the classrooms. So Florence and I have started teaching the 9th and 10th graders.

The Lord is doing wonderful things in our midst and it is a privilege to be a part of the work He is doing.."



Teachers that inspire

It is sad to say that, even in schools that we are supporting, many teachers just work for their salaries and have little inspiration or motivation. We are aware of the need for more training and better advice for school Principals.

But there are outstanding exceptions. Here we give an insight into some of them: teachers who are an inspiration and are inspiring their students.

One quality that stands out in the best teachers is the **love** they show for their children. Many have been moved by the special care taken by Angela and the staff at the Miracle Schools. We have already commented on the example of Ruth and her teachers at St.Peter's in creating such a **happy atmosphere** in their school. It is a joy to study there.

The example of **pastoral concern** for the children is a mark of Kanwal and the staff at the Sada-e-Aman School in Sargodha. Sajida (pictured below) and her staff in Akhtarabad are an inspiration in the way they **care** for their 130 children.

Needless to say, the drop-out rate in all these schools is impressively low.



Inspiring teachers

Inspiring people can often trace their inspiration back to a teacher at school. Teachers are in many ways the true leaders of the next generation

My Primary School teacher had the ability to make kids feel like they were individually important. And she had a sense of humour.

(Sharon Horgan, Comedian)

I still don't know how my Class 5 teacher did it – but in the kindness of her manner, in the way she asked a question, she made me feel confident.

(Kamila Shamsie, Novelist)

My English teacher treated us as grownups. She introduced us to books outside the curriculum, and somehow to life itself.

(Deborah Moggach, Author)

Two teachers had a big impact on me. They loved their subjects, knew tonnes about them, and were brilliant at communicating their learning and their enthusiasm.

(Robert Peston, BBC business editor)

**GOOD TEACHERS
♥ TEACH
GREAT TEACHERS
INSPIRE**

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STARFISH ASIA

giving hope to the children of Pakistan

I was walking on the beach one morning and I saw a young man picking up starfish from the sand and flinging them back into the sea. I asked why he did it.

"If I don't, they will die in the midday sun," he said.

"But there are thousands of starfish," I replied.

"What difference does it make to save a few?"

He looked down at the starfish in his hand and flung it to safety in the waves.

"It makes a big difference to this one!" he said.

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