

mission matters

INSIDE



11m Takeover Day



Arsenic in Bangladesh

Issue **26** March 2008

In this issue of Mission Matters we hear about school building in rural Kenya and water hygiene work in Bangladesh. We feature the work of one church in response to a genuine

UK disaster; enter the world of online giving; and see what happens when classes of 9 and 11-year olds take over Methodist Church House! Remember, we are always interested in hearing

stories of your responses to mission; please contact us using the details on the back cover if you have something you would like us to feature in a coming issue.

2007 Floods 2007 Floods 2007 Floods

It is often in times of crisis and emergency that communities are empowered to come together and make a difference. This was certainly the case during the floods of summer 2007, which affected thousands of people throughout the country. One of the worst hit areas was the town of Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire, which became entirely surrounded by floodwaters over the weekend of the 21 July. The image of Tewkesbury Abbey on a small island of dry land became an iconic image of the floods as news spread nationally and internationally.

Whilst the summer floods may have left the news headlines months ago, for those affected, life has still not returned to normality. The Mission Education Team recently met with the Revd Oséias Barbosa Da Silva, the Minister of Tewkesbury Methodist Church, to hear how the church had reacted to the emergency and its aftermath.

The homes of 47 people, out of a church membership of 170 were flooded, and the majority of these were aged over 75. The church's immediate response when the floods hit was

to visit the affected members of the congregation. Members began by taking food and other supplies, but as the flood continued they simply answered the phone and responded to the needs as they arose. Other practical responses included using an old manse (which was due to be sold the following month) as a refuge for some people made homeless. A flood-team was set up to provide pastoral care and support for those affected and to establish what their crucial needs were.

The process of recovering from the floods was always going to take months, and therefore the church's response also

needed to be a long-term one. In total, more than 1,800 people in Tewkesbury were forced to move into temporary accommodation whilst their homes were restored. The church offered holidays in Christian hotels to enable some of those affected to spend time away from Tewkesbury, resting. A monthly meal, open to anyone affected, was set up, including entertainment and music. Coffee mornings were provided as an opportunity for people to relax and talk to one another. This support has continued over the months that have passed, and will carry on until the need is no longer there. *(continued over page)*



Central Tewkesbury flooded

Credit: Cheltenham Borough Council

Extract from 'When the rains came to Sheffield' – a reflection by the Revd Inderjit Bhogal, published in the Methodist Recorder on July 26th 2007

Our own floods will help us to empathise even more with people in other parts of the world who are victims of extreme weather and disasters. Floods in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India during the same period in June killed 600 people and a total of 1.2 million have been affected by the storms.

We have learnt from the tsunami and the situation in New Orleans' floods that our care strategy is judged by how we respond to the needs of the poorest and the most vulnerable people among us.

(continued from previous page)

Those affected were initially optimistic because the floods took place in the summer, so they thought that living in a caravan for a short period of time would be bearable. However, at Christmas more than three-quarters of those in caravans still had not returned to their homes. Then there are those who managed to secure rented accommodation or stayed with friends and family. This amounts to around 1250 people who are unlikely to be back in their houses until March 2008 at the earliest. All face the same issues of stress, lack of space, loss of personal belongings and uncertainty over the future. This prolonged period of homelessness is causing a great deal of distress and depression amongst the community. Even those who were not flooded are affected psychologically.

Oséias is a participant on the World Church in Britain Programme, having arrived with his family from Brazil in 2006. His experiences in Brazil taught him to be always prepared for new challenges, such as violence, crime and poverty. Whilst he had not previously faced floods, he felt that the feeling of having to take action is the same. 'For me it is easier to do because I am from there [Brazil], but the people in Tewkesbury realised their opportunity to take on mission. Their response was "we need to help our brothers and sisters".'

As this edition of Mission Matters goes to press, Tewkesbury and several other parts of the country have again

experienced flooding. The floods are occurring more regularly in the region and the chaos it causes has prompted the church to promote discussion around the issue. Meetings have been held on the subject of global warming and climate change, including screenings of Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth*. The congregation feels that the issue of climate change is one that the Church really can take a stand on together, in the same way that it united against slavery two hundred years ago. There is also the problem of new housing developments being built upon the flood plains surrounding the town. Many have felt that this was a significant factor in the summer's floods. The church organised a meeting with their local MP, Laurence Robertson, to discuss this issue further.

The way in which the congregation has come together in this emergency shows how mission can be central to the community. It realised that it was bigger than just its 170 members, and that it had a real role to play in the life of the town. Oséias told us that the reputation of the church had begun to change: 'the church is not just hymns and prayers that they [the community] do not understand. When we are the church, our hymns, prayers and actions have a direct meaning and purpose in the world around us.'

Pray with Oséias on Day 7 of the Prayer Handbook.



Mexico Flood Appeal



In November, devastating floods swept through south Mexico in the wake of the heaviest rains to hit the country for 40 years. The extent of the flooding was massive with the states of Tabasco and Veracruz particularly affected. At least 500,000 people were made homeless and are facing the destruction of their crops and outbreaks of disease.

In response to this emergency, the Fund for World Mission provided a solidarity grant of £7,500 and an emergency appeal was established. The grant has been supplemented by a further grant from the Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF). We are very grateful to all who responded the Mexico flood appeal, which in total raised an additional £2,564.39, including gifts given via our new online giving facility.

Pray with the church in Mexico on Day 11 of the Prayer Handbook

"Knock some unnecessary walls down"

Takeover Day 2007



November 23 saw Methodist Church House taken over by the Year 4 and Year 6 classes from St Mary's Bryanston Square Primary School. The Methodist Church was participating in the first national '11 Million Takeover Day', enabling children throughout the UK to takeover a variety of workplaces. The aim was to give young people a taste of life in the workplace, and empower them to try out new tasks.



The idea of 60 children from a local school taking over The Methodist Church for the day may sound chaotic, but thanks to the organisational skills of the Methodist Children team, it all ran like clockwork! The day incorporated the work of a diverse range of teams, including: Network, Inter-faith Relations, Communications, Safeguarding, Public Issues, TFIG (Team Focus Implementation Group) and the World Church.

"I liked World Church and the coffee break."

Each class spent an hour and a half in the building, beginning with a welcome from David Deeks and had 20-minute sessions with three different teams. The activities were designed to give the children a taste of what it's like to work

for the Methodist Church. For example, those working with TFIG had the opportunity to tour the building and suggest where different teams might sit in the new structure and what improvements could be made to the conditions. Others working with the Communication team took photos and interviewed people for November's podcast.

Mission Education prepared a World Church themed activity designed to get our young colleagues thinking about communicating across different cultures, overcoming the barrier of different languages. The aim was to help children see how challenging it can be to work with partners all over the world and what it would be like trying to communicate an important message to people who didn't share our language. We used the example of mission partners who, over the centuries, have travelled to unfamiliar places to share their passion for the gospel, overcoming many challenges along the way.

"I really liked today because they didn't only speak about Christianity, they talked about every religion and I really liked that."

Like many schools in central London, St Mary's pupils represent a number of different countries, ranging from the USA and Jamaica to Poland and Morocco. As well as using mime, drawing and speech to communicate things that they loved or hated, some used other languages. Andrew, in year 6, showed the importance of having linguists in the World Church Relationships office when he told us: 'Nie lubi kiedy mój brat gra na mojej Playstation 2'. Both adults and children were at a loss, until, thanks to some quick thinking from Tom Quenet

(Area Secretary for the Americas and Caribbean), we were able to consult with his Polish assistant, who gave us the translation! ('I hate it when my brother plays on my Playstation 2'.)

Both MCH staff and the pupils from St Mary's really enjoyed the day, and our new colleagues definitely made a positive contribution to our work.

"I really liked doing the activities, because they made you more interested than having someone just talk to you. I also liked pretending to work here."



You can download the Takeover Day podcast on the Methodist web pages and see more of the children's work on the Takeover Day pages: www.methodist.org.uk/takeover.



VIEWS from Abroad

Arsenic in Bangladesh

Arsenic is known as 'the king of poisons' as it has no taste, colour or smell. Arsenic poisoning is a big issue worldwide. In Bangladesh alone at least 29 million are currently at risk from arsenic dissolved in the groundwater. Worldwide there are currently more sufferers of arsenic poisoning than people infected with HIV/Aids.

In my three years working with the Arsenic Mitigation Project of the Church of Bangladesh Social Development Programme (CBSDP) I have visited badly affected villages and have heard firsthand from many who had lost friends and family. In the village of Alumpur over 90% of the tubewells contain water with concentrations of dissolved arsenic over 40 times the amount considered 'safe' by the World

Health Organisation (WHO). Here and throughout the region this poisoning causes symptoms such as skin diseases, lack of energy/weakness, cancers, gangrene, and other horrible complaints that eventually lead to death.

In Bangladesh the arsenic in groundwater is a purely natural phenomenon. A component of the rocks making up the mighty Himalayan mountain range, it has been eroded and brought down by the mighty rivers of the Ganges, Jamuna and Brahmaputra, and deposited with the sediment that makes Bangladesh one of the most fertile lands on earth.

The arsenic is located in a layer between about 50 to 150 metres below the surface. Until the 1970s and 1980s people drank mainly pond and river

water, but too many children were dying of diarrhoea from drinking bacteria-contaminated water. So the Bangladesh Government, along with international aid agencies spearheaded by UNICEF, achieved a remarkable success in bringing bacteriologically safe water by sinking hundreds of thousands of pump tubewells. Unfortunately many of these tubewells were tapping arsenic contaminated water. This only came to light when villagers began to show signs of arsenic poisoning.

Understandably this is a complicated problem and it has taken time to develop our response. Much of my first year was making contacts and collecting information from hundreds of sources, eventually resulting in reports summarising the current situation of

School building in rural Kenya



'Make sure you have plenty of supplies in,' warned my next-door neighbour a few weeks before the rainy season started. 'We can be cut off for two or three months.' It was good advice because when the rain started in October there was no way I could negotiate the road between

Marimanti and Meru.

Living in a very rural setting in the rainy season can be quite an experience. There is very little sun during the day, so in the evening the solar power is limited. Most evenings we only had light for about two hours. I soon learned to get everything done within those two hours - reading by candlelight is not to be recommended!

The rain also drives many creatures into the house. Scorpions, snakes and rats were some of the visitors I had

during the last few months. I thank God for his protection because to have been bitten by any of these creatures would not have been pleasant.

However, whatever difficulties the rain may bring, everyone is glad to see it because it means there will be food for the following year. Marimanti, which is usually so dry and dusty, becomes green for a few months. At school we planted 66 trees around the boundary of the compound, which will provide shade for pupils in the future.

Despite the rain, building work at the school has continued. We had a busy time in September getting all the materials transported to Marimanti before the road became impassable. In October we celebrated the laying of the foundation of the first dormitory - by slaughtering a goat!

By the beginning of December the builders were roofing the first dormitory (for girls) and they had laid the foundation of

arsenic in Bangladesh, and what was known about the situation in Meherpur District. From this research we have been able to improve CBSDP's already well-established work in arsenic mitigation.

CBSDP's response to this problem includes:

- Testing 1,000's of tubewells throughout the region
- Finding new, improved test kits
- Mapping arsenic distributions at a village level
- Digging new, safe, wells: both above (shallow dugwells) and below (deep-tubewells) the contaminated layer
- Installing 'Chuli' water filters, which pasteurise dugwell water through a metal coil imbedded in a clay cooking stove
- Providing three-month courses of vitamins A, C and E for victims of arsenic poisoning
- Developing a stronger focus on using nutrition as a route to recovery from poisoning, through kitchen gardens, soya bean cultivation and eating of lentils
- Raising of awareness of the risk to health through rice cultivated in arsenic contaminated water.

A real highlight of my work this year was when we installed six 320ft-deep



James testing a tubewell for arsenic

Credit: James Pender testing well - Helen Brannan

tubewells, that go beneath the arsenic containing groundwater layer, in five villages where we had recently mapped the pattern of arsenic distribution. It was an interesting process: a rig was set up and two men turned a giant corkscrew-like apparatus for three days, while another fellow pumped water down to loosen the soil. As they manually drilled in shifts, they sung work songs to keep up their energy and spirits. When they pulled out the drilling pipe sections, they all swung on the rope shouting; a tremendous effort!

Now the communities in these

five badly affected villages can drink bacteriologically and arsenic safe water from these wells (each providing for 50-100 families). No longer will they become sick from consuming life's most precious commodity – water!

James Pender is an ecumenically-funded mission partner in Bangladesh, working with the Church of Bangladesh Social Development Programme. Pray for James and the Church of Bangladesh on Day 16 of the Prayer Handbook.

the second dormitory (for boys). If all goes well, they should be completed by the end of March.

This term we admitted our first girl - Rebecca. She had completed a year at a school for the deaf in Nairobi but her parents had had to withdraw her, as they couldn't afford the transport cost. She has fitted in well with the boys and the competition between them all is very strong, as the boys are determined that a girl is not going to do better than them!

We are hoping to admit ten more deaf children at the beginning of the second term 2008, and then a further ten in January 2009 - and so on each year. Ten is the optimum number for a class of hearing-impaired children.

It is very encouraging to see these children develop both educationally and socially. They are a pleasure to teach and it is a privilege to share in God's plan and purpose for their lives.

Helen Moorehead is a mission partner living in Marimanti, in the remote Tharaka District of Kenya. She is working with Kamatungu Primary School to build a school for deaf children. Helen is from Ireland and is jointly supported by the British Methodist Church and the Methodist Missionary Society (Ireland). Pray for Helen and the church in Kenya on Day 8 in the Payer Handbook.

Mission partners are supported by the Methodist Church Fund for World Mission (FWM). You can give to the fund online, or send cheques to: World Church Relationships, Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR. Please make cheques payable to 'Methodist Church Fund for World Mission'

BOOK

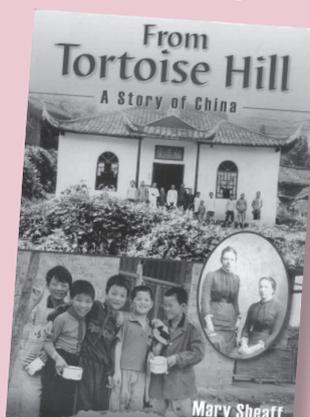
REVIEWS

Book: *From Tortoise Hill*
Author: Mary Sheaff
Review: David MacDonald
Publisher: Orphans Press
Price: £9.95 p& p included
 From M.R Sheaff 58 Callington
 Road Saltash Cornwall PL12 6DY
ISBN: 978-190336-011-8

I first met Mary Sheaff on a religious study tour visiting China in 1984. Mary was born there, her parents, grandparents and numerous relatives were all missionaries in central China, and she wanted to return to the place of her birth. It took some persistence for her and her sister to be allowed to leave our tour to travel north to the city of Changsha in Hunan Province. The welcome they received was overwhelming, such that Mary determined to find out as much as possible about that part of the mission enterprise in China. As she said, it was a story that just had to be written.

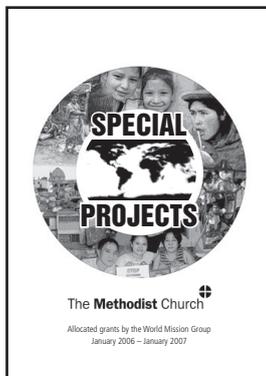
What has emerged is the book, *From Tortoise Hill – A story of China*. Set against a background of persecution, political unrest, Japanese occupation and finally communism, it gives a powerful insight into church life in central China from the mid 19th century to the present day. The book has taken many years of meticulous research into Missionary Society archives and personal letters to and from families. The result is neither a trip down memory lane, nor a dry academic exercise; it is a profoundly moving and yet objectively told tribute to missionaries and Chinese colleagues - a story so well written that at times you feel you are there. Whilst filling in the historical

background, it also puts us in touch with the World Church today, and encourages us to share actively in world mission. I found the book riveting and strongly recommend it.



New Mission Education resources available:

Over the last few months, several new resources have been published which show the ways in which the Fund for World Mission and Fund for Home Mission are supporting projects and personnel around the world.

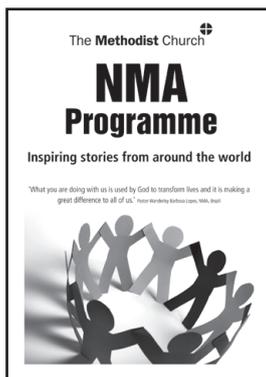
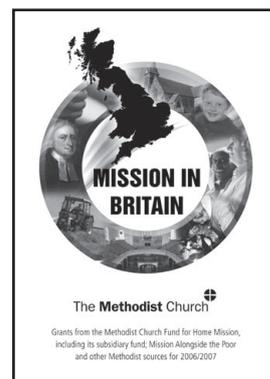


Special Projects Booklet: 2006-7

Contains information on a selection of the projects funded by special grants from the Fund for World Mission between January 2006 and February 2007.

Mission in Britain Booklet: 2006-7

A selection of stories from projects around the UK which received support from the Fund for Home Mission during the 2006-7 connexional year.



Nationals in Mission Appointment (NMA) Programme Booklet

Highlights some of the stories that illustrate the impact that the NMA Programme has had on our partner churches throughout the world.

The above resources are available from the Mission Education team at Methodist Church House, or can be downloaded in PDF format from the website.

A new poster highlighting the work of the Fund for World Mission and the theme 'God's mission is transforming lives' is also available from mph (www.mph.org.uk or telephone 01733 325002 ref: GA336).

Don't forget to look out for 'Breaking New Ground', Mission Education's bi-monthly feature in the Methodist Recorder, for more stories of the work supported by the funds in the UK and around the world.

Overseas opportunities

Partner churches around the world are always looking for people with professional skills - both lay and ordained - to serve with them in their mission.

One current request is for an agricultural director of the Methodist Mission Agricultural Project in Brikama, The Gambia.

We are always looking for teach-

ers and theological educators, for positions throughout the world.

If you are interested in finding out about this particular post or offering other skills - whatever they might be - please call 020 7467 5154 or email wco.personnel@methodistchurch.org.uk to find out more.



Liz Clutterbuck, Funds Adviser

A new way to give:

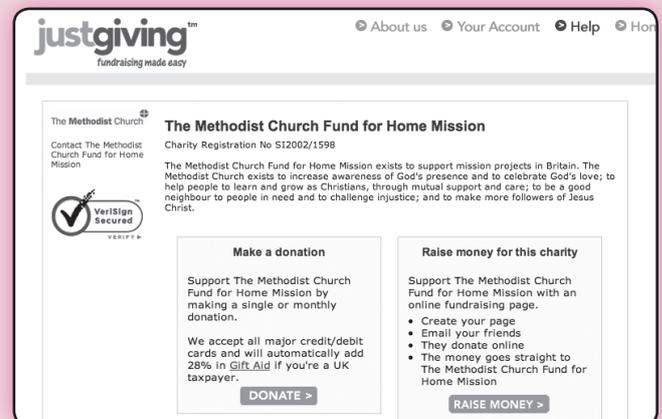
As of November 2007, it is now possible to donate online to four of the Methodist Church Funds: the Fund for World Mission, Fund for Home Mission, JMA and the Methodist Church Fund. Using a facility from the JustGiving website, individuals can make a one-off donation, or set up a regular gift using their debit or credit cards. Donations are also gift-aided automatically (when eligible).

It also means that we are able to ensure that donations can be made quickly to urgent causes. For example, when the recent devastating floods hit Mexico, we were able to set up an online appeal almost immediately. (see page 2)

The new system can also be of use to the Connexion as a whole. JustGiving enables individuals to set up sponsorship pages to encourage people to support them. So, should you be running a marathon or climbing a mountain in the near future, and would like to support one of the Methodist Church funds, this could be a very useful tool. These pages can be added to websites, blogs and social-networking sites like Facebook – so there is no excuse for not finding sponsors!

Our hope is that this online facility will make it easier for individuals to give in a way that suits them best and will encourage more people to make a commitment to supporting the funds. You can find links to the donation page throughout the World Church and Mission Education web pages, as well as in the 'Open to the World' section of www.methodist.org.

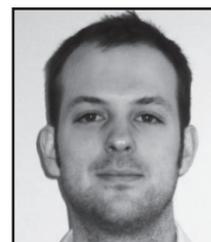
donate online



Comings and Goings

Mission Education said goodbye in September to Abidemi Sanusi (Publications Editor). Abidemi has moved on to devote more time to her creative work as a Christian writer. Her post has been filled by Andy Moore, who has joined us from Christian charity Oasis UK. Andy will be editing written publications and developing the web

pages of the World Church Relationships Office and Mission Education. Kevin Fray has taken over from Roy Crowder as Africa Secretary on an interim basis, whilst Roy has been seconded to the Team Focus Implementation Group. This is Kevin's second role at MCH, having previously worked with MRDF.



Andy Moore



Kevin Fray

News & Events

Conferences

Reconstructing Mission World Mission Conference The Hayes, Swanwick, 6-8 June 2008

When South Africa was given freedom, people talked about reconstructing their country. After the Tsunami in South and South East Asia, governments and communities debated how to reconstruct the lives of affected people. Reconstruction is an essential process through which people can rebuild new communities, new ways of life and new relationships among themselves. Can reconstruction be a method of mission in God's world?

Speakers include:

- *Dr Philomena Mwaura, President, IAMS International Association for Mission Studies*
- *The Revd Dr Carlos Emilio Ham, World Council of Churches, Programme Executive for Spirituality: Latin America and the Caribbean*

Plus a variety of workshops, worship, crèche, full children's programme, and bookstall.

Booking details: Philip Scribbins,
email:mwmps1@waitrose.com
Tel: +44 (0)1442 823202 or go to
www.mwm.org.uk

Reconstructing Mission 2008
is sponsored ecumenically by
Methodists for World Mission, USPG
Anglicans in World Mission, Christian
Aid, Christians Aware and The
Methodist Church. It is organised by
staff of the Selly Oak Centre for Mission
Studies, The Queen's Foundation,
Birmingham. www.queens.ac.uk

Leadership Models and Styles in Churches in India: The Missionary Legacy and New Challenges

Saturday 17 May 2008, St Philip's
Centre, Leicester (www.
stphilipscentre.co.uk) 10.30am to
4.00pm

- With Revd Dr Daniel O'Connor
(Former missionary in India, mission

historian and writer)

- And a team of scholars and leaders
from India

Organised by Friends of the Church in
India, Friends of UTC Bangalore in UK
and Partners for World Mission

Please register by sending a cheque for £8 towards Indian lunch and refreshments (payable to Friends of the Church in India) with your name and address to: Ms. Shoba Gosa, St Philip's Centre, 2a Stoughton Drive North, Leicester LE5 5UB. Tel. 0116-2733459. E-mail: gosagirl@gmail.com

Courses

MA/PG Diploma in Consultancy for Mission and Ministry at York St John University

The course is designed to help you refine the way you work and develop your own theologically-based model of consultancy. Study of mission, organisations and consultancy is integrated in a framework of practical theology. 2 year course, part-time and part distance learning, with three 4-day residential each year.

Full information can be found at: www.theologyinthecommunity.org.uk

To request a course handbook contact Sian Henderson, s.henderson@yorks.ac.uk

Mission and Leadership Formation in the World Church

An exciting MA pathway in global mission studies offered through the Selly Oak Centre for Mission Studies at the Queen's Foundation in Birmingham, designed for experienced practitioners who wish to expand and deepen their leadership in mission as they extend their studies in a global, ecumenical, cross cultural context. The course offers

- a 1 year full time course (MA in Applied Theological Studies) validated by the University of Birmingham.
- tutors and course members from

partner churches across the world

- a course particularly suited to people seeking vocational and professional development
- opportunity to do independent, supported research
- placement experience in churches and communities in Birmingham
- emphasis on relating thought to practice and building upon prior experience
- course structures with choice and flexibility

www.queens.ac.uk



Further Information

Please contact John Nutt, Mission Education Co-ordinator,
Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR
Tel: 020 7467 5116 Fax: 020 7467 3763
E-mail: misioneducation@methodistchurch.org.uk
Website: www.methodist.org.uk

Who have been sent copies direct?

- District mission officers
- Circuit mission officers
- Ministers and deacons in pastoral charge
- Mission Funds supporters

Who else in your church might find this useful?

- Members of your Local mission committee
- Local preachers
- House group leaders

Please write their names and get them to tick the box when they have received or seen a copy.



This newsletter is free. Further copies are available at £2.25 per 10 copies as a contribution towards the distribution cost from mph (see address below)

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