

Link Prayer letter Feb. 2018
Rachel Ullmer. Lahore, Pakistan

Dear Friends and prayer supporters,

I hope you are all keeping well and have survived the snow and winds that I keep reading about in the UK! The weather is fine here, mostly hot sun during the day and colder evenings and nights. We have had some cold days where the day temperature has dropped to 17°C, which is very cold for The Pakistani children. Night time temperatures are about 4 – 10 degrees.

November saw the city swathed in smog from India and local vehicle exhausts and we could hardly see. At this time, we had the sports' training in the Christian Institute Raiwind school and we had to drive carefully along the bumpy roads. Although the children could barely see the finishing posts, they all had great fun, and a competition was arranged with St. Mary's School Raiwind and another independent Christian school in Lahore. All the children received certificates and refreshments.

The Big Ben clock in London is now silent, but we have our own new clock tower here that plays the Westminster chimes and 'bongs.' It is at a busy road junction near where I work.

Before Christmas, I did one week's cover at Murree Christian School, working with pupils from different nationalities so it was a change for me to teach a more western style curriculum. It was good to meet with other teachers and have fellowship together. I also went into Murree with friends for shopping and a meal as generally things are cheaper there!

Christmas was busy as usual, and I enjoyed attending the carol services and nativity plays at the schools. St. Peter's School performed a play based on the shepherds and wise men, and St. Anthony's Catholic School performed a drama which was based on Mary looking back on her life and events leading to the birth of Christ.

CIR school made many props and decorations from a limited budget, and, as well as a play about 3 trees, who became the manger, boat and cross of Jesus, produced a moving drama in memory of the Christians injured in the church attack in Quetta.

The teachers and children of many schools also enjoyed Christmas decoration workshops where they made various decorations for their schools.

There was also a midnight service in Dorothy Memorial church where I live, although a street party had to be cancelled for security reasons.

Teachers at CIR school are in good spirits now as their salaries are being paid on a regular basis. Sadly, the previous head teacher left the school due to non-payment of salaries, but the new Bishop has appointed another head who is doing a fine job at motivating the pupils and organising the school.

The Kitchen garden at the school is doing fine, with turnips, saag and spinach growing. I went on a course at the British Council Library on kitchen gardens, so now I know when to plant the vegetables and where to buy manure etc.! One good thing here is that there are no frosts!

My rickshaw driver has now purchased a carry-van, which is very comfortable to travel in. Uber and Creem transport are popular now and people call them from their Smart phones or at a pick-up point.

The Bishop has instigated a Bible curriculum project for the schools, and I am in charge and also training a new lady who will take over and become the Bible Trainer for the schools. She is a very good person, trained at Bible College and is the wife of a pastor. She is experienced with children and runs a daily Sunday School at her home.

We have had meetings and chosen a Pakistan-produced curriculum which has a very good syllabus, including Bible stories, famous Pakistani Christians, 'What we believe,' Bible history and maps.

Our task now is to train the teachers as we want the curriculum to be properly taught. Two workshops have been held so far with the publishers, and by a local padre who gave an interesting talk on child development and spirituality. I am busy with Bible trainer writing lesson plans and visiting schools to distribute the books. Friends are translating some of the lesson plans that will help teachers with little Bible knowledge to teach and understand the lessons.

I go to a Bible study every there week at the cathedral and we are studying 1 Timothy. Also, at the church, a 7-week course on witnessing has started which is very good - we start off with memory verses so that we know how to answer people are give comfort and reassurance.

The Girl Guides are very keen. They made pop-up angel cards at Christmas which they were encouraged to give to a neighbour. This term they are learning first-aid and making a first-aid box. They have learnt how to treat common injuries and put people in the unconscious position. The first-aid book

came in handy also when the padre's wife's 3-year-old daughter had febrile convulsions due to a high temperature as she has mumps.

A day course about general health, Hepatitis and HIV/AIDS was held for the senior pupils and staff at the Riawind schools. The team from Operation Mobilisation ran the course and the teachers were very interested as these diseases are now spreading in Pakistan and the government is having campaigns about them. Staff and children from the majority and Christian community found common ground in the idea of having a moral lifestyle – being faithful and no drug taking. They also discussed the need for cleanliness and to use clean razors at the barbers and be careful to buy sterile syringes at the hospitals.

Regular visits are made to the schools, and the children and teachers enjoy practical math lessons and Montessori activities. The class 1 and 2 children enjoy the Urdu activities and I hope their reading has improved. Many children fail their Urdu exam in class 10 and many cannot read by class 5.

We have now made 6 visits to the informal village school and the teachers and children are always late and disorganized! But once they have settled they love it! The new Bible trainer gives a good Bible teaching, active songs and a memory verse and I teach the Urdu and maths with the help of the teacher. We are using more effective methods than is usual in schools and trying to get the children reading quickly.

Prayer points:

- The new Bishop and the Diocese as plans and changes are made.
- Thank God that I have been granted a visa.
- For the future of the schools and that teachers will be encouraged to be more effective in their teaching.
- For the Church in Pakistan as it deals with contemporary issues, that it will stay close to God.