

# The Fellowship of St Thomas



Newsletter 2018

## Editorial

Welcome to the 2018 issue of the FOST Newsletter. This year marks the bicentenary of Serampore College in West Bengal, India. William Carey, the Father of Modern Missionary Movement, arrived in Serampore on November 11, 1793. After spending about seven years in North Bengal, Carey, along with Joshua Marshman and William Ward established the Serampore Mission of the Baptist Missionary Society on January 10, 1800. They started the Serampore College in 1818.

"In one short evening the labours of years are consumed. I had lately brought something to utmost perfection of which they seemed capable and contemplated the missionary establishment with perhaps too much self-congratulation. The Lord has laid me low that I may look more simply to Him. How unsearchable are the ways of God?" wrote William Carey in his diary for the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 1812.

It was six 'o' clock in the evening, Wednesday the 11th of March 1812. Carey's companion and fellow missionary William Ward was working late at his desk. The staff had all left. Totally lost in his work, Ward suddenly became aware of smoke seeping into his office. He looked out through the window and the stationary store with all manuscripts was on fire. By two in the morning the fire had burnt itself out. Day light revealed a smouldering heap. Carey was in Calcutta that night. Ward didn't know how to tell Carey that all precious manuscripts were destroyed, the draft of his great polyglot dictionary, Punjabi and Telugu Grammar, ten versions of the Bible and the translation of Ramayan, all now ashes to ashes and dust to dust. It was then he wrote 'in one short evening, the labours of years are consumed.

For a theologian, this would have been the end of their commitment to theology, for a missionary this would have been the end of their zeal and for a man of faith, this would have been the end of their prayer. But for William and his companions, this marked the beginning of their absolute trust in the God who called them to this service, in love. They committed afresh to the guiding and leading of God.

The Church in India is a defining witness to this transforming event in Serampore 200 years ago. We join them in the celebration of the Bicentenary of the Serampore College on the banks of Ganges, a Jordan for the Church in India. They crossed the river of trial by faith, we join them in prayer and praise.

The Editor

## Letter from the President

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Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Committee, I bring greetings to you all, as members of the Fellowship of St Thomas. We had a very enjoyable and meaningful annual celebration in September last year and we all left Dunblane uplifted after the Communion Service, where Rev John Munro spoke of his links with Serampore, through Dr Bill Stewart and his wife, and the afternoon address of Elaine Duncan, and as usual, a most enjoyable lunch at the India Gate Restaurant, with Mr Singh himself making all of us feel very welcome!

The committee has been busy over the months since, not least in analysing the results of the questionnaire which was sent out. For those who responded – there is still time! – it was clear that the Annual Celebration was appreciated, particularly the Communion Service and the opportunity for fellowship over lunch. What was equally clear, however, was that no-one was willing to volunteer to be on the committee! I shall return to the Questionnaire later in this letter.

Two Scottish events stand out in my mind from the last few months – firstly the St Thomas of India Unity Lecture in the Martin Hall of New College, given by Professor Daniel Jeyaraj, which was well attended by both FOST members and students. You can read a summary of the lecture on our website [www.fost.org.uk](http://www.fost.org.uk)

The next event was a meeting over lunch at Tuk Tuk on Lothian Road with Dr. Vansanglura, the Principal of Serampore College & Secretary of the Council of Serampore College and Rev. Dr. Dipankar Haldar, Associate Professor of New Testament in Serampore College, Theology Department during their visit to the UK marking the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of Serampore College. This was a most enjoyable time and a copy of their report can be emailed to anyone who would like to read it. Please contact me. There is also to be a Conference in Oxford from 19-

20th October 2018 at Regent's Park College, Oxford (OX1 2LB) to celebrate the Bicentenary and both Dr Vansanglura and Dr Haldar will be present. The cost is £35pp for entire conference or £20 pp day rate. If anyone is interested please contact me for further details.

I spent 6 weeks in Bangladesh at the end of October and throughout November, visiting friends whom I have known for 40 years since I first went to Bangladesh and others I have met during more recent visits. It was a wonderful (if tiring!) 6 weeks and I covered all the places where I had lived and worked during my Bangladesh years. It was wonderful to meet youngsters from those days who were now working with various Christian organisations in Bangladesh (one is the Bishop of Kushtia and a number are priests within the church) and to meet friends again, some of whom I had not seen since I had left Bangladesh in 1983. You can read a brief report of that visit on the website.

And so to the Annual Celebration in Dunblane on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2018. We have taken on board some of the views expressed through the Questionnaire. We will gather from 10.30am (please note later start time) for tea and coffee before the Communion Service at 11.15am. We are delighted that using the Liturgy of the Church of Pakistan, Rev Aftab Gohar will celebrate and Rev Aquila Singh will preach. Both were pleased to accept our invitation.

From there we will cross the road to the India Gate Restaurant for lunch, before moving back to the church hall for the AGM. I will give a short talk about my Bangladesh visit, and this year instead of having a speaker in the afternoon, we will have a discussion about the future direction of FOST based on the feedback from the questionnaire. We hope that as many of you as possible will be able to be with us for the Celebration.

The registration form for the Annual Celebration will be sent out separately from this Newsletter – so please check your emails!

In the meantime, do have a look at our website, and I look forward to seeing many of you in Dunblane on 29<sup>th</sup> September.

Yours sincerely,  
Matthew

## **Blog from Diocesan Visit to Diocese of Calcutta April 2018**

*The Diocese of St Andrews has a companionship link with the Diocese of Calcutta and in April the Revd Liz Baker along with Canon Bob Harley led a visit by three young members of the Diocese. The following are contributions from the group to their travel blog.*

An exciting time before we finally arrived about 12 hours late in Kolkata. Our flight from Glasgow had a series of hold ups on the runway, 3 in fact, not sure what the first one was, but number 2 was a sick passenger who had to be removed, then the flight plan was lost. So we took off about an hour late for Dubai. We arrived in what we hoped was in time, but were told (but only after hiking what felt like miles at power walking speed) that we were now booked on the next flight at 1.15pm (by now it was almost 2.am. Tired and weary, off we went to the Emirates Hotel. At least we now have stamped passports.

Finally arriving in Kolkata at 7.15 in the evening, we spent the next hour+ driving to the Oxford Mission where we had a lovely supper and listened as the boys played music and danced for us. A traditional Punjabi dance and a tribal dance about a bear hunt.

Today 5th April we have been at the Sr Florence Nursing College, St Pauls Cathedral (and their Cathedral Fellowship Programme) and at rehearsals for the Youth Music Festival on Saturday. We are pleased to announce that in the production James is to play Jesus

Now handing over to everyone to write their impressions from the last few days.

### **Liz**

It has certainly been a nonstop day, with all the visits and getting used to the 35 degrees heat, after leaving Scotland in snow. Everywhere we have been the hospitality has been amazing. The nursing college started the day, with a guided tour of the campus and a programme

of entertainment inside a tent, followed by lunch. This afternoon we visited the Cathedral and their youth fellowship programme where we found out more about the project. Then it was into the Cathedral itself for the rehearsal for a musical living the last supper. I knew I had a part to play, but wasn't expecting to be Jesus.

### **James**

It has been a busy day today. Going to all different places which I extremely enjoyed. I went to the nursing college and they gave a wonderful presentation to all of us, followed by a lovely lunch. After we found out about more of the project they do by going to the Cathedral. In the afternoon we went to the Cathedral building to rehearse for a musical, which I will be part of.

### **Leeanne**

After our very short stay in Dubai, we finally arrived in Kolkata, seeing its night life decorated beautifully with all the lights. We got greeted at the Oxford Mission by a bunch of talented boys who gave an amazing performance while we dug into our first Indian meal of the trip.

### **Hannah**

We arrived in Kolkata after dark, which meant that we saw the recently decorated lamps, with blue and white glowing rings – designed to make Kolkata even more beautiful than it already is. Keeping up my tradition of floral elegance I asked the duty manager at the Kenilworth Hotel where I could get a flower for my button hole and she presented me with a rose.

### **All the best from Bob**

Perhaps we can all say that we have been welcomed with amazing hospitality and some wonderful insights into the working and the thinking and the work of the Diocese of Calcutta.



Day 4

On a stiflingly hot day we walked through the slums of Kolkata to visit 2 schools and 2 women's projects run by the Cathedral Relief Service. This was the first time we had ventured onto the streets. Conditions

are difficult for the people with whole families in one room, irregular water supply and washing and bathing only available in the street in view of everyone, men, women and children included. With traffic and bikes coming up behind you without warning and a fan and lights failure in the first school we very quickly had a taste of what life without these things is like as we felt the temperature rise.

The children in the schools were excited to see the visitors and receive some gifts from us, they sang and danced for us. They performed in classes, the first class did 10 ripe mangos to the tune of 10 green bottles. We presented our gifts of pencils and rubbers for the children, post-it's for the teachers and gave the children some shortbread we brought with us.

The women in the projects learn the skills of tailoring and embroidery and their work is sold in the shop at the Cathedral. Some lovely things were purchased for Lochgelly. It was interesting to talk with staff members who spoke English and learn that some of the teachers were former pupils of the projects.

Hannah comments that it is amazing to see how small things can make the children so happy. In one class we praised a small boy's drawing skills and the look on his face was a joy to see. (See picture)

After lunch at the Cathedral Relief Service and some long and interesting conversations, as well as the regular staff we met a few people from Derby (the Diocese of Derby also has a link with Kolkata) who were students on placement and we enjoyed their fellowship before heading back to the hotel for a restful late afternoon. Then back to the Cathedral for the final rehearsal before the performance tomorrow. Prayers for James (Jesus) P.S. below.

**Liz & James**

P.S.

*The living the last supper rehearsal today was a stage rehearsal with mics and lights. In the already warm Cathedral it was very hot under the stage lights for nearly 2 hours. Hoping the costume is light weight.*

**James**

Day 5

Today was very special in that our morning was spent at the Arunima Hospice where much work has been done supported by our Diocese and in particular by Ross Stirling-Young, who we know will be delighted with the progress made. While there we officially opened the girls dormitory extension.

Leeanne takes up the story.

Today, (Saturday) after we got lost we in the car. We went to the Arunima Hospice which the children all have HIV/AIDS. I was extremely happy to see these beautiful children for the first time in person. They showed us each room including the new Girls dormitory which was great to see the improvements of it being done. Afterwards the children put on a programme of dances and songs which I enjoyed. We were each given a picture in a frame. Mine was a beautiful coloured in cross. We were also were given a red rose. I think this means that the children have HIV/AIDS. This meant so much to me. Back home in Scotland I do a lot of fundraising for the children at Arunima Hospice. This September I will be doing this year's kilt walk.

**Leeanne**

After our visit we all met up at St Paul's Cathedral, where I was dropped off for the afternoon. The Cathedral was being set up to make the set for the upper room. It was a long process but also really

interesting with the projector screens clicking together like jigsaw pieces and once they were all connected the projection was though little LED lights. During this time I had a wander around the grounds and made connections. The director Aniket and I had a long conversation about other productions he has been involved in, and his idea to maybe have a travelling group from his school as his profession is a secondary school drama teacher. Aniket has been to Scotland and through our diocese area, and hopefully we could do a production in partnership in the future.

I also had a conversation with Shreejai who is their Diocesan youth fellowship coordinator. The set up here is very similar to our Provincial youth committee with young people taking a lead, but they have a rep from every church in the diocese.

After some food and talking outside with a group of the young people, which included showing pictures of home, it was time to practice where we were sitting and the mic checks. Before getting changed into costume.



The production was really good and I got to send a lot of photos from it. A memory from the technical side of the performance was sitting down and in my ear a voice saying ‘Jesus turn your microphone on.’

**James**

## Day 6

We have just arrived back at 10.45pm local time from a very busy day which started with an 8.30am Eucharist at St Paul's Cathedral, where Liz preached and Bob presided. Then we shared fellowship at a special Easter Breakfast where it was lovely to meet people that Bob and Liz had met on the 2015 visit.

Then we were indulged with a bit of sightseeing going round the Victoria Memorial, one of the key attraction of Kolkata, but it did seem as if we were a big attraction as people kept wanting to have their photos taken with us.

Then back to business as we then visited the Bantra St Thomas Home Welfare Society, in Howrah which treats TB patients and others. We went round the wards, met some of the non infectious patients and had some lovely encounters.

For light relief and ice cream we visited and walked around the Howrah Botanical Gardens, famous for the Great Banyan Tree before heading off to St Thomas' Church and Church School Howrah for a bit of a rest then a programme of dance and music by the pupils ( lots of opportunities for people to come and work in all these places) before a lovely supper with Rev Paritosh Canning at his residence, with lots of good conversation and company.

### **Liz**

Sunday was an early start to allow us to get to St. Paul's Cathedral in time for the 8:30am Service. Liz preached and Bob celebrated. Afterwards there was an splendid Easter breakfast which consisted of mince with peas and carrots, puff pastry and something like shortbread. Bob had a conversation with an American women from St Louis who had emigrated to Kolkata when Kennedy was the president of the USA. James had a conversation with one of the congregation

who organises the Vocation Bible School that they have in May. It was wonderful to hear about how they include children and young people from Hostels and broken homes.

Next we walked round the corner to see the beautiful gardens and impressive architecture of the Victoria memorial. We were shown the history of Kolkata and we were all asked if we could get in other peoples pictures and have our photos taken, this was a command request all afternoon.

We crossed the Hooghly to visit Howrah, where we had a very interesting tour of the TB hospital. We had seen a painting in the Victoria memorial hall of a Banyan tree which prompted Paritosh to take us to see a massive 250 year old specimen in the Howrah Botanical Gardens. We had a restful hour in Paritosh's house before a performance of music and dance in St Thomas' school followed by a delightful dinner back at Paritosh's.

All in all a very full and stimulating day.

Tomorrow is our last day and visiting the local connection to the diocese with the school founded by Alexander Duff who was born in Pitlochry.

**James and Bob**



## Day 7

Our visit is slowly drawing to a close but still much to see and do. Today we visited the Union Chapel School. The school term has not yet started but children were there being measured for uniforms. We were greeted with marigold garlands, given by the children with special needs who are taught and supported by the school which works with the very poor and disadvantaged, giving them the chance of an education.

One of the children we met, Arkojeet, had just had a kidney transplant and was blind and suffering from heart problems. The head teacher Mrs Angela Ghose asked us to pray for him.

### Liz

After lunch we were treated by the bishop to shopping in Fabindia. To our surprise we all had traditional Indian outfits picked for us and we got to try them on and choose the colour. It was a very humbling experience and the generosity was amazing. We then went to the new market and were shown around by the principle Mrs Angela Ghose from the school we visited in the morning.



This local knowledge was invaluable. We spend some money buying

gifts for home, before coming back to the hotel to get ready for the dinner party we were hosting. We decided we could all wear our new outfits so that is what we did.

At the dinner which we organised at the hotel restaurant we had 16 men, and 7 women. All from the diocese and projects we had visited during our stay. It was a great evening to say thank you to everyone who had been involved in this trip.

### **James**



### **Day 9**

We travel home on this day and at the time of writing we are praying for a safe and smooth journey.

We would like to say Thank You to all who have supported this trip and got behind the Diocesan appeal. There are so many things for the Diocesan Overseas Committee to move forward with. Some things are already sparking conversation and excitement, for example connections with the youth between the two dioceses.

Presentations and talks will be available for those who want us to come and visit your churches or area councils or indeed any clubs,

events you run. If you would like us to visit and tell you more about this trip please contact Liz Baker on email or phone.

[bethmaybaker@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bethmaybaker@yahoo.co.uk) 01796 472005.

### **Moumita Biswas Ordination**

The Executive Secretary of the All India Council of Christian Women, Moumita Biswas was ordained deacon at Shillong in the North East Diocese of the Church of North India by Bishop Michael Herenz on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2017. Moumita continues her work with the AICCW based in Nagpur for the present but will in the future be engaged in ministry in the North East where Bishop Michael is keen to expand the ministry and leadership of women.



# **FOST OBITUARIES**

## **Dr Krishna Goel**

(Glasgow)

Dr Krishna Goel died on Saturday 11th August while on holiday in Oban. The funeral was a private cremation and a Thanksgiving Service for his life was held in Cardross Parish Church, Station Road, Cardross G82 5NL at 1.00pm on Monday 27th August.

Dr Goel was member of the Fellowship for quite a number of years, he retired from Royal Hospital for Sick Children Glasgow some years ago. He had returned to India several times to teach in the Christian Medical College hospital in Vellore and in Ludhiana.

## **REV DR ROBIN BOYD**

(Edinburgh)

(14/05/1924 - 14/06/2018)

Died in Edinburgh. Dearly loved husband of Frances (deceased) and Anne Booth-Clibborn, much loved father of Elizabeth and Clare. Caring step father to four; grandfather of sixteen and recent great-grandpa. Scholar, pastor, missionary, ecumenist, friend to many. Thanksgiving service was held at St John's, Princes Street, Edinburgh, at 2pm, on Friday, June 22. Donations were made in lieu of flowers to Christian Aid Refugee Crisis Appeal.