

PARTNERPLAN

The **Methodist Church**

Susan Clark - Pakistan

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Women Development & Service Society
Diocese of Raiwind
Church of Pakistan
17 Warris Road, Lahore, Pakistan

Dear Friends

Lahore is an energetic, busy city. Traffic jams abound and new roads are being built including dedicated bus ways. One is being built south/north in the middle of the road with fencing to ensure only designated buses use it. But, and there is a large but, how will traffic and pedestrians get from one side of the road to the other? It looks as if there will be big detours as they are not constructing crossing points but I foresee many pedestrians and motorists will try. When it is built, and it could take a while, it will affect me visiting and working at the Rehabilitation Centre at Youhanabad.



It is the Bishop of Raiwind's Silver Jubilee and the Church and schools are taking the opportunity to celebrate. Bishop Samuel Azariah is also Moderator of the Synod of Church of Pakistan. It is interesting how there is a mixture of Anglican and Presbyterian terms. The predominance is Anglican. The English Medium School St Peter's started on the campus by the Bishop and his wife gave a celebration concert and I was invited. Like many school concerts each class performed and parents, grandparents and aunties all wanted to see and take a picture of their particular child, which meant it, got a bit chaotic. The children performed very well, their teachers had prepared them well.

The Diocese's celebrations took place on my birthday. They started with a service in the Central Cathedral of Praying Hands followed by speeches and dinner. As usual with these events there were many presentations and speeches. Dinner was very late. My birthday was noted and I cut a cake and people sang happy birthday. It was quite a night.

Every guest was given a booklet documenting achievements and personal details of Bishop and his wife. This was compiled by Alice Garrick the Director of the Women's Development Service. My contribution was to check English and grammar.

On a personal note: I developed toothache during this week. The Bishop arranged for me to visit a dentist and Ayra (see December Life and Work) accompanied me. She was very helpful. I had to return two days later but unfortunately no transport had been organised and Ayra despite not knowing the way took me. I had the tooth extracted and could not have managed without her. She is a great friend, and I thank God that He brought us together.

Getting out and about remains the challenge. Although I have made visits there is not a regular schedule organised. One Saturday morning I met two women whose children are adults and a young woman about to be married. Through the manager's translation we were able to hold a

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limited conversation. I learnt something about their lives and concerns. These are very similar to our own, their children's future and employment, as well as financial constraints. What of course is different is that there is no welfare state; schools have to be paid for as do all health services. Both of the women had suffered some hardship. One had been widowed young and had a child who died, the other had a teenage son who had left school and was in a dead end factory job that hired on a daily basis. This was not the future she had hoped and prayed her son would have. When I asked them both said the Church had only been a little helpful. I am sure there have been prayers and thoughts but people still want practical help. The women all welcomed the opportunity to attend the rehabilitation centre and talk about their problems. I found I could understand more than I could say but it will be a while before I do not require an interpreter.



My next visit was at an evening to present four young women with their midwifery certificates. They study theory at the rehabilitation centre and the practical at Zia hospital. The course does not give the full qualification, as the Punjabi Board does not license the centre. I visited another centre, which does offer the full qualification, and there are stringent requirements about rooms and materials that are difficult to achieve at the Youhanabad Centre without a great deal of investment. This is still a very successful project as the majority of entrants pass. They are given a great deal of support, advice and encouragement

– good mentoring – by Rubina, the manager, who is a qualified nurse. She was widowed young, has three teenage children and is now the manager of the rehabilitation centre. Rubina works very hard to ensure her students pass. Those qualifying are successful in getting employment at a reasonable salary. Also better-trained midwives will help maternal and infant health.

I met with a group of women at the Centre. The women are of different ages but all have children and talked about educating them. Some work as domestic help and are poorly paid. Life is full of hardship and they want to get better paid work. Some of the women are widows. Notably some own their homes which means they do not require to find rent or be under threat of eviction. This has probably happened due to inheritance. There was a woman, who was who looked after by her daughter-in-law. Both are widows and they all talked about their children. Many here have large families of four or more children. Most of the children were at school and one woman spoke about trying to educate all her children and not have them at work. Some had daughters who had completed the midwifery course.

I visited Baath Health Centre, which holds daily clinics with a doctor and offers physiotherapy treatments. It also offers midwifery training. The facilities are basic and there is a need for investment. Investment is needed for equipment but also staff. Having the means to provide 24-hour care and maternity facilities would help the local community. This facility is in a rural area south of Lahore, although Lahore now stretches far that there is little separation. There are factories round about which means the electricity supply is sustained. The community is mostly Muslim.

Christmas preparation includes gifting food and warm clothes to widows and orphans. St Peter School assists by collecting clothes and senior pupils help with distribution. It does get cold here, it is a lot cooler in the evenings and at night, and even I am wearing jackets at these times. The food parcels are staples not luxuries to try and help the families over a few weeks. The money to buy these is donated by staff. Some of your donations will be used for this as well.

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In addition the service tries to give blankets and food to homeless people who live under bridges and flyovers. All this happens during the weeks of Advent.

Thank you, for your prayers and encouragement. I appreciate all the emails and letters. It is not easy to reply to letters, as I have to get to the post office for stamps and to post. The good news is that I bought a printer so you will not have to try and decipher my writing!

Please continue to pray for the work here, for all the staff, all those who are training or participating. Please pray for my friend Ayra and her joy at Christmas as she visits her sister. Include in your prayers over advent the gifts of food and warm clothes to be given to those without.

Susan