



Kolkata Action Team

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Prayer Letter March 2009

‘Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.’ Psalm 37: 4.

We would love to say a big thank you to all of you who are praying for us. We felt this especially over Christmas. It was never expected to be the easiest time but we all managed to contact our families, share our personal Christmas quirks, and fellowship with each other over this surreal seasonal period!

Christians in India really show how they want to do the best they can to honour God, especially at Christmas. It is a fantastic opportunity to witness to parents as well as letting the kids show their talents. It would be amazing if, one day, we saw Christmas celebrated with the same zeal we shared here, back at home.

Our fondest Christmas memories came from the day we took all the presents to ‘our kids’ at Hatibagan. We had a party with sweets, games and loads of fun. It’s sometimes the smallest, simplest acts that can mean the most and this was never truer than when Robbi, one of our older boys, took a member of the team aside and said, “Thank you, and happy Christmas”.

We also had a mountain of cards from the girls at Entally Girls Hostel, who we see every Friday afternoon. We sing, dance, chat, giggle and take craft activities to share with them and they are so much fun and so generous. They even invited us to their all-Bengali church a couple of times, which has been really positive. Jenny and Eli have decided to wear their saris every Sunday after wearing them to church with the girls. The first time we went to church with them the boys sat with us too, but, when it was time for communion, they were hastily instructed to come to the front... on the men’s side of the congregation! They were then asked to pray for the elements and serve communion. This took them by surprise but they did a very good job once they were reminded to take their shoes off!

After Christmas we went back to work for a few



weeks and threw ourselves into the projects. We had taken some time over Christmas to plan out the next stage of our time here, and planned lessons for Hatibagan and Union Chapel as well as our crafts for Entally. We feel that we have made significant progress in all of our projects, not just in terms of what the kids remember, as encouraging as this is, but also in the relationships we’ve been able to build.

We love ‘our kids’ at Hatibagan to bits, and really wanted to show it. So, following Jesus’ example, we decided to wash their feet. Most of our kids don’t have shoes, those that do have them intermittently and their sandals are as dirty as the streets they live on. For these kids it was a really big deal. We had 12 of them come up during the Bible story and two of us did the part of Jesus by washing and drying their feet. Without hesitation, we were thanked by each child we washed, and plenty more once Prodeep had translated the reasoning behind it. It was wonderful that they understood the significance of what we were doing for them. It is amazing how so simple an act can have such an effect. It was a truly awesome experience for us and we will never be able to read that story without thinking of ‘our kids’!

While we have always told Bible stories at Hatibagan, we realised that we had no overtly Christian input at Union Chapel School. We were inspired to start telling them very simple Bible stories in Bengali. At Hatibagan, Prodeep translates the stories for us but at Union Chapel, the teacher is learning most of her English as we teach the kids! At the start of every lesson, we read them

the story in Bengali, translated in advance for us by Monica our Bengali teacher, (praying that our pronunciation isn't too awful!) and then they tell it back to us. They love story time and we quite often hear stories from previous lessons too.

We took a couple of weeks at the end of January to go on holiday and travel to the south of India, where we met up with the Delhi Action Team. It was awesome to see them again and share all our stories and fellowship with them. It was fantastic to explore other parts of India as we travelled all over with them. It is such a beautiful country, truly awe-inspiring, and God was with us every step of the way. He was faithful to the end; we were only delayed by a total of one hour on a journey that kept us on the move a great deal. We were sorry to say goodbye to the Delhi team at the end of our trip, but we were all hit by how little time remained for us here in India.

We returned refreshed and ready to do as much as possible in our last few weeks. There are projects we still want to visit before we leave. One project we have been to is the blind school called the Divine Fellowship. We were bowled over by everything this amazing and God-filled project is doing. We had heard stories of children shunned by their families, ignored completely and, in some cases, left to die. They were so tragic and yet these kids are full of joy, of hope and of an overflowing love. They chatted with us, sang, arm-wrestled and even picked Thom up and carried him across the room! The school grows vegetables and keeps geese, which are important in the practical skills that are being taught there as well as the purely academic lessons.

We continue to meet people at the guesthouse as they come and go, working here. There are two American ladies called Lynn and Nancy who have had a real impact on us recently. They came out to India for prayer ministry with other missionaries already here. They have had such an effect on us and have touched many others in the guesthouse too. We knew that, as a team, we had let ourselves grow lazy in devotions together and knew this had to change. We were unsure what to make of it when we were invited to pray with them but we all had a really powerful session. It was fantastic the way we all saw and experienced God working through us and ministering to us through one another. This fired us up for more and gave us the spiritual kick we really needed as well as bringing us closer as a team. We spent more time with them during their short stay here and were really blessed

through them and each other. We now have new directions to take our team in spiritually. We have also decided that, instead of giving something up for Lent, we are each going to share a different Bible verse with the team on a daily basis. We hope this continues to inspire us as we come the end of our time here.

Please join us in continuing to thank God for:

- ◆ The amazing time we've had in Kolkata over the last few months
- ◆ The progress in projects and relationships we have been building
- ◆ God's grace to us – as we know we mess up
- ◆ The people he has put here to help us on our journey with him

We continue to ask God:

- ◆ To keep us healthy and full of energy for the last few weeks
- ◆ For his wisdom and timing in visiting projects before we leave
- ◆ For strength as we say our goodbyes and that he brings us safely home
- ◆ That he would continue his work in this city that he loves and uphold the projects that so many are running for and through him, especially those close to our own hearts.

*From Elinor, Thom, Jenny and David
India Kolkata Action Team*

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