



Spring 2010 Newsletter

STEPPING STONES MINISTRIES UK

Hello and welcome once again to our Spring newsletter.

It is with great pleasure that we bring you this update on the work of Stepping Stones in India and we hope that you will be as encouraged and thrilled, as we are, by the progress that has taken place over the Winter.

Richard & Tracey



Bethel House



Bethel House with new coat of paint

The new boys' home is all that we hoped it would be with lots of space and good facilities for the boys to develop in and a great staff team who love and

support them.

As a result of a number of generous donations received over the Christmas period, we have been able to complete all the necessary work on the ground floor including – electrics, plastering, tiling, kitchen - including work surfaces, storage, gas cooker and new pans, paintwork (inside and out), dining tables and benches, bunk beds, mattresses and bedding for all the boys, ceiling and extractor fans, staff bathroom suite, curtains, office equipment including a large desk, filing cabinets and a new computer!

Although the electricity board have yet to give us a permanent connection, we were blessed in October '09 by a friend who provided the home with a generator which has been used daily. Although this is a great temporary measure we are still praying that the authorities will fulfil their obligation soon. Let's hope so!

We really are thrilled with all the new developments, as are the boys and staff at Bethel House who thank you for your help in making it possible. It really is a special place.

Stepping Stones Christmas Catalogue:-

In November we launched our first Christmas catalogue to give supporters the opportunity to purchase items that would bless the children in our care and improve the living conditions at our specialist children's home Bethel House in Ranaghat, West Bengal. The response from supporters was very encouraging and we

managed to buy most of the items that were listed, in fact items were selling so fast in December that we had to update the catalogue 5 times! The boys at Bethel House were thrilled to receive their Christmas gifts, sports, games and musical equipment which were presented during the Christmas celebrations. At the request of a

number of our supporters we have produced a standard gift catalogue that you can use 'all year round'. The catalogue also contains a few useful fundraising ideas including the option to leave a legacy. Please contact us for copies.



You can view all the catalogue items purchased by supporters, on the 'Gallery' section of our website—www.steppingstonesministries.co.uk

Bethel House Boys—Update



Preschoolers home tuition



Raju and Sonu after the sports' day water game!.

NEWSFLASH !

ALL OUR BOYS
HAVE PASSED
THEIR EXAMS
AND WE ARE
PROUD TO
ANNOUNCE THAT
ISAAC CAME TOP
IN HIS WHOLE
SCHOOL YEAR!.

The first 6 boys that came to Bethel House, 4 years ago were all classified as destitute, some had lost both parent's, some were very weak, malnourished and sick. All were uneducated and arrived without any personal possessions. Some were so ill that we thought they might not survive. However, 4 years later what a transformation! All the boys are strong, healthy, and thirsty for knowledge and enjoying school. They know that they are very blessed and enjoy each day participating in all the daily activities at Bethel House. Their love for each other and their acceptance and care for subsequent new additions is exceptional.

A number of our boys like Raju, Sonu and David are pre school age so they receive daily lessons at the home in preparation for when they are age 5. Like other 3 and 4 year olds they love to sing and play and it is always great fun to watch them enjoying each other's company.

One of our boys, Monaj, has recently had a plaster cast removed from his arm following an accident practising the long jump. He is OK now but is convinced he could have won the competition if he hadn't tripped!.

Our eldest boy Rakesh has made a complete recovery from T.B. and has started back at school following a 3 month absence. (for more information on Rakesh, see back page) Rakesh has a particularly caring nature and

once he was out of the contagious stage of his illness he used his absence from school as an opportunity to help staff with the smaller pre-school boys at Bethel House.

At point of writing, the older boys are all revising for school exams which will determine if they will graduate to the next class come September. We have provided the boys with additional support through home tuition to prepare them and we are praying that they will all do well.

In January '10 we received Prokas aged 6 and Motisil aged 8 from Jarkhand State bringing the total to 28 boys now living at the new Bethel House. Prokas and Motisil, have quickly adjusted to their new home and will start their new school once they have learned the local language (Bengali) which they are taught daily at Bethel House.



All 28 Bethel House Boys

Church Mission Centre

Bethel Church, as it is now known, has been a great location to host a wide variety of teaching and worship seminars as well as being the home for our local church under the leadership of Pastor Belsay. A number of our Bethel House boys and some of the local village children play musical instruments and lead worship on Sundays and the meetings are always vibrant, challenging and good fun.

Plans to further develop the building with the addition of 2 new rooms, walls, windows and doors has been put on hold until after Easter as there are a number of seminars and outreach events already scheduled for this period. Our vision to use part of the building as a health clinic will hopefully happen later in the year.



Some of the worship team warming up

Mission Team - Jan 2010

A small team from Scarborough including Tracey, Jean, Jade, Sharon, Ben and I spent 3 weeks in West Bengal, India as guests of our Indian Secretary and his family. This is a great base for the teams as it is only a short walk to the Stepping Stones mission centre and the boys at Bethel House.

We were joined for a few days by Elim Missionaries Johnny and Heather Prentice and their friend Jolene who is a mission doctor from North East India. Our boys all received a medical check from Dr Jolene who also gave us lots of advice and ideas about running a future health clinic. After a week of rehearsals and

the making of face masks and scenery, the boys were able to present an amazing production of Noah and the Flood with all the boys participating as Noah's family and the animals. (Well done team, you know who you are) The boys then performed at a special outreach event on stage, attended by about 300 local villagers. Along with the presentation of Noah's Ark, the outreach also included, preaching from Tracey and dance and lively worship from 15 members of Agape church in Kolkata who came to support the event .

The team also spent time visiting some of our village projects including one of the schools in Krisnagar where

they distributed clothing and blankets to all the kids. On the final weekend the Bethel Boys sadly lost at football to the village boys but all had a brilliant sports day with lots of fun. (although some of the English team leaders got a bit competitive). The day ended with a great water fight and ice cream later which the boys loved!



Cyclone Relief

In November 09 fellow trustee Pete Hick and I took a trip down to the Sunderbands region of



Using tarpaulins has been a life saver for many families

West Bengal to meet with some of the villagers who had lost family, homes and possessions during the devastation of Cyclone Aila in May 09.

Our purpose was to see the effects first hand, to meet some of

the villagers that we had helped with aid during the aftermath and to distribute warm blankets to as many as possible in preparation for the coming winter.

The people we met are very resilient and immensely grateful for the help they received but we were overwhelmed by the destruction and unmet need in that area.

One man I met asked me to pray for him. He told me that he used to make a moderate living as a fisherman but Cyclone Aila had smashed his boat to pieces, then destroyed his house and took all his belongings. Thankfully his wife and son survived and he used a tarpaulin that one of our workers gave him to make a temporary home on a high mud bank that they still live in. All these hardships he had accepted and still hopes one day to get a new boat and build a new home.

However, to put food on the table he now has to wade waist deep in infested water to try and catch fish with a small hand thrown net that he borrows. As a result he contracted an awful skin condition covering all of his lower body. After listening to his story we prayed. I laid my hand on his shoulder and asked for God's mercy, then I found that I needed to ask forgiveness for all the benefits that I take for granted.

God willing, this year's monsoon season (April – Sept) will not be so costly in terms of lives and human suffering.

Our little team of Stepping Stones staff and trustees will be on standby to do what they can when they are needed. Please pray for them and for finances to purchase essential food, water, shelter and medical supplies.

THE PEOPLE ARE VERY RESILIENT AND IMMENSELY GRATEFUL FOR THE HELP THEY RECEIVED, BUT WE WERE OVERWHELMED BY THE DESTRUCTION...



Peter looking at one of the thousands of family homes destroyed by Cyclone Aila



Rakesh

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NEW PROJECT !!! Bethany Girls Home

People are always asking us, 'Why don't you have a girl's home?' The truth is it has always been our hope to set up a girl's home once our boy's home was running properly and to capacity.

That time is approaching so we are now looking to rent a property near Bethel House where we can take in our first orphaned girls.

Please pray as we proceed to locate a suitable building, staff team and sponsors for 10 girls aged 3-10yrs.

Rakesh Ray - by Tracey

Rakesh came to us in May 2006 and quickly became the big brother of all the smaller boys. He is slightly lame and also has some hearing difficulties, he does not know how old he is, but the current estimate is about 16.

During our recent trip to India Rakesh told me his story. He lived with his Father, Mother and elder sister in a village called Chottisippur in the Sunderbahns area. His father died when he was about 4 years old and at some point after that, his sister decided to become a Catholic. Rakesh also wanted to follow God but his Mother, forbade him, telling him he would have to leave the family home if he chose to go ahead. However, in 2006 his mother sadly died and he was left an orphan, but rather than let this put him down, he used it as his chance to follow the God he had started to love. It was shortly after this he joined us at Bethel House. Since that time, although he lost the end of his finger in an accident and contracted TB (now totally recovered), he still continued to seek God and look for ways to love those around him. He told me that while he was praising God on his sick bed, during his bout of TB, he had a vision of Jesus who put his hand on his head and told him to go and preach the Gospel in his own village. Wow!

Just before we returned to the UK, he saw me sitting on a step looking contemplative and said to me (NB - translated from Bengali) **Rakesh** "Aunty, are you thinking/worrying?" **Me** 'Yes Rakesh', **Rakesh** "Aunty, I don't think, I simply rejoice!". A message to us all - stop worrying and 'simply be grateful for what you have'!.

We're on the Web - www.steppingstonesministries.co.uk

Outreach

Pastor Belsay and his team continue to take the love of God to villagers in and around Eruli, which includes providing, education, safe water, medicines and hospital treatment for those who cannot afford it. This year 6 villagers with cataracts have received their sight through medical support from the team!

In November we hosted our second government blood camp. Local villagers donated 22 pints of blood, including one from Peter and myself that was then stored in the local hospital for future use. Last year's blood bank saved 6 lives.

Regular mid week children's meetings where they learn Bible stories, songs, dance and drama have proved popular and we now have a thriving village house church which Tracey, I and this year's mission team attended recently. Approximately 25 people managed to squeeze into the tiny mud and bamboo house with about another 80 spectators and some worshippers left outside.

Our plan to purchase land here and build our next mission centre which will incorporate a purpose built girl's orphanage, a clinic and a place of worship is still in the pipeline and subject to funding.

Not too far from there is the village of Krisnagar where a young man aged 20 voluntarily teaches 80 local children who receive tuition whilst sat on the floor in the open air. Families here are extremely poor and live far from the nearest school. A few kilometres away another student aged 14 tutors 20 children daily. Both classes run between 8 and 10am, 5 days a week. Stepping Stones are supporting this work by providing teaching materials and shelters for classes during the forthcoming monsoon season.

Our hopes of starting a much needed permanent mobile maternity clinic later in the year are subject to locating further funding for a part time qualified Nurse.

If you would like further information about any of our projects, make a donation or find out how to become a regular sponsor, please don't hesitate to call us. Also if you would like to see the latest pictures of the ministry in India go to www.steppingstonesministries.co.uk and just click on 'Gallery'.