

Missionary

HERALD

The magazine of the Baptist Missionary Society

BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY LIBRARY
GHEISTRASSE 2
8803 RÜSCHLIKON SWITZERLAND



DECEMBER 1982
PRICE 15p



Baptist Church, Luanda, Angola

General Secretary

Rev R G S Harvey

Overseas Secretary

Rev A T MacNeill

Editor

Rev D E Pountain

Enquiries about service to:

Rev (Mrs) A W Thomas

Films, slide sets, posters, maps, literature
are available depicting our work

Departments concerned with
Young People's, Women's, and Medical
support work are always available to offer
help and advice

We share in the work of the Church in:

Angola
Bangladesh
Brazil
Hong Kong
India
Jamaica
Nepal
Sri Lanka
Tanzania
Trinidad
Zaire

Copyright material – not to be reproduced
without written permission.

Photoset and printed by
Stanley L Hunt (Printers) Ltd
Rushden, Northamptonshire

COMMENT

The Society's 190th birthday linked with changes to the Mission House team seems like a good time to take a long hard look at ourselves. This is not to criticize anything that has been done and achieved in the past, but rather to reshape ourselves for that same task of mission in the changed and changing world of the late twentieth century.

As we think through what it means to be engaged in God's great mission of love to the whole world, we are convinced that it is not an optional extra for a few keen Christians. We exist as the people of God, as the Church, because he has reached out to us through Jesus Christ His Son. He is the missionary God ever wishing to make Himself known to everyone from the rich neighbour in our street to the poorest person on the other side of the world, and He has created the Church to help Him in that task.

To all peoples everywhere

But how often is world mission on the agenda of your church meeting? Sadly we learn that some churches only consider it at the time of the missionary deputation. Is there no way in which the call to 'Go to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples' can be kept constantly before us?

We think that there is. As part of the task of looking at ourselves, we have been examining all of our published and audio-visual material. We feel that there is a need to produce good material to help churches think through their part in mission. To this end we shall be busily preparing new aids which will be available for the Autumn of 1983.

A continuing source of information

Of course the *Herald* will continue to be a main source of information and learning. From January it will be larger by four pages. It will have a full colour cover and a greater variety of articles, features and news. Unfortunately the cost will have to go up. It would have increased anyway to cover the price of postage. We are sure that you will consider the new price of 20p is well worth it. We promise to try to keep it at this level for some time to come.

IN THIS ISSUE

I AM THE RESURRECTION by Vivian Lewis	178
LOOKING BACK OVER TEN YEARS by David Grainger	179
WE ARE ALL ONE – Praying for National Christians	183
A WELL ORGANIZED LIVING CHURCH by Kamal Sarkar	185
CHRISTMAS IN BANGLADESH by John and Nan Passmore	187
CHRISTMAS IN ZAIRE by Alan and Anne Goodman	189

I AM THE RESURRECTION

by Vivian Lewis

TODAY I have had my first experience of Zairian grief and mourning. George, a young Zairian, and his Swiss wife, were members of the French speaking congregation that share our premises, but they often came to our English services. George has been ill for some time with a kidney complaint and was recently taken into hospital. He was scheduled to have surgery today, but early this morning collapsed and died.

When I heard, I went to the home with an ex-BMS nurse who is married to a Zairian. She is very knowledgeable about Zairian customs and culture, and so was able to explain to me what was happening, and the significance of some of the things that were being done.

Keening and wailing

In the courtyard alongside the house there was a bed, draped in clean linen. Above and about it was woven a canopy of palm leaves. Around the courtyard were set all the chairs they could muster, men and women sitting in separate sections. We sat down and waited. Then in the distance we heard the wail of the hearse's siren — and as if in response the women of the household began keening and wailing aloud as they expressed their grief.

The coffin was carried into the courtyard, placed on the bed, and the coffin-lid removed, so that all could see the body. There followed the most abandoned expression of grief I have ever seen or heard. For the Zairian the depth of one's love and loss is shown by the intensity of one's mourning.

No one would want the other people around to think you did not love the person who had died, so a very vocal expression of sorrow is expected. Some of the closest women relatives threw themselves on the ground, crying out and beating their fists on the earth. Most of the cries were addressed to the dead man. 'Why have you left us? Where



Congregation of Church where George worshipped

have you gone? We did not want you to go away. Why have you gone?' We sat for a while, as an expression of our sympathy, and then quietly got up and left.

All so quick

This afternoon there was a service at the church, and afterwards the funeral and burial. All so quick by our standards, though necessarily quick out here in this hot climate. But then, of course, there follows the wake. It is Wednesday, and as this is Kinshasa, and George was married to a European, the wake may end this coming Sunday, and not all the Zairian customs will be observed. How different it would be if this death had happened in a village setting.

Then the wake would have gone on for at least a week longer. Throughout that time the widow and closest relatives would not go to bed to sleep — how could they think of their own comfort when their loved one had just died? Nor would they wash, comb their hair, or change their clothes. Friends, relations, and acquaintances would come, sit awhile, as an expression of sympathy, and thus share their grief. The wake would close with an all-night gathering, and then the mourners would bathe, and put on new clothes as a sign that another chapter in life had begun.

Who has done this?

In the first rush of grief the question is 'Why have you left us?' But this soon changes to 'Who has done this?' — for the Zairian, disease or illness or accident are only the means of death, but never the cause. Death is always caused by another person. They will therefore try to determine what enemy has done this, so that appropriate retribution or recompense can be sought. The dead man's possessions would be distributed amongst his male relatives, the children cared for by other members of the family, and the widow would become the responsibility of, and often the wife of the dead man's youngest brother.

Grief then is public and openly expressed. This may seem strange to our Western minds, for we are used to hiding death and masking our feelings. Yet there is a 'purging' in this mourning process that helps the bereaved to come to terms with the loss, and to face life again. Nevertheless it is only in Christ that the power of death is broken. We sorrow, when loved ones are taken — but not as those who have no hope. George was a Christian, and therefore underneath all the expression of grief was a sense of trust in One who said, 'I am the resurrection and the life.'

LOOKING BACK OVER TEN YEARS

CONTINUING DAVID GRAINGER'S STORY



On his return to Brazil, David Grainger took up the work as Secretary of the Ivai Association. A Brazilian pastor had already been inducted at Campo Mourão, but the Paraná Baptist Convention asked David and his new wife Elidia to take on the challenging work at Loanda in the northwest of the state.

Loanda proved to be very different from Campo Mourão. It was much hotter, and unlike the rich red earth of the centre of the state, it was surrounded by sandy soil. In Campo Mourão the main crops were wheat and soya beans, but around Loanda it was cattle rearing which dominated, with the occasional remaining coffee plantation. It was much smaller too, with a population of little more than 10,000. At one time the church had six congregations in the surrounding region. When we arrived only one of them was functioning and the central church was reduced to a small group. The building was in need of repairs and painting and the monthly income was very low. But Elidia and I took an instant liking to the people and town. By then we were expecting our first child.

After a few months I persuaded the leadership of the church to accept a plan of action based on the two year period that we were likely to stay in the town. Many hours were spent analysing our resources and trying to match them with the needs. People were no longer moving into Loanda. In fact the change from coffee growing to cattle rearing had

caused a massive rural exit. A hundred acres of coffee requires at least 25 families to tend and harvest the crop. But the same area given over to pasture requires only one family. So inevitably many of the congregations and preaching points of the churches in that area closed down in a short space of time. It was clear that we need to begin from the central church and work outwards, the precise opposite of what we had done before.

Francisco, a very keen church member, took part in the hard task of opening the congregation in Monte Castelo, about 25 miles away. It had closed and the building was in a bad state. From a slow start it quickly built up under his leadership until a regular attendance of 70 could be seen at the weekly services. I went there once a month. The building was practically rebuilt by a team from Loanda. We also reopened a preaching point on the farm of a church member. The services were held on the concrete area used for drying the annual coffee crop. When it was cold or wet we would crowd into the grain storage barn, with the congregation sitting on the sacks of rice or maize.

Their first experience of worship

Little by little the work in the central church picked up, and we eventually were able to repaint the whole church and pay our part for the asphaltting of the three streets which surrounded it. For a small group it was no mean effort. The tragic shooting of the son of a church member led to the biggest funeral I have seen in Brazil. The whole town stopped and our church was packed to capacity, with a huge throng surrounding it outside. Inside many local dignitaries had come. It was their first experience of worship in a Baptist church. I took the opportunity of speaking out against mindless violence, the gun toting image which was still only too popular, but which at times stretched forth its bloody hands to strike loved ones down. It was a word which left a distinct impression in the town, and we noted a lot more visitors in the services afterwards.

We made particularly good friends with the family of a Spanish coffee farmer called Gaspar Quiles. Gaspar was tough and sometimes stubborn, but a warm hearted man. We spent many hours chatting at his home, or striding through his plantation. Although rich by most



Church at Loanda, Brazil

standards, he had remained very simple. His family formed an important part of the leadership of the church. He died last year, and we made a special effort to return to Loanda for the funeral, once again attended by a large section of the town's population.

Whilst in Loanda I also became Secretary of the North West Association, and offered assistance to the churches in

Diamante do Norte and Terra Rica. Occasionally we made trips on the nearby River Paraná to visit folk on the islands. That has become the major operation of my colleague Gerald Myhill who lives in Nova Londrina.

Our daughter Cynthia was born in March 1978 and later that year we had the joy of a visit from my mother. Early in 1979

we were already making plans for our next furlough.

Back to College

Earlier plans of studying for an MA had been shelved, but not forgotten. So I was grateful to the good offices of the BMS and the Northern Baptist College, which made it possible to study in Manchester. We stayed at Linton House, a hostel for overseas families in the grounds of Fallowfield Baptist Church. I was given a study area in the library of the College and Principal Michael Taylor was the supervisor for my thesis to be submitted to Manchester University. I pinned a little notice in my study area announcing 'Grave Danger is back',

It was a tremendous year. Apart from working on a thesis based on Theological Education, by Extension, of which I had experience in Paraná, it was possible to read widely and to take part in several aspects of college life. By then it had become an important centre for lay-training and the focal point of a joint training scheme involving students from a number of different denominations. I wondered what the former Principals,



Preparing to visit islands, Paraná river



Curitiba Seminary

As long as my work at the Seminary was confined to teaching I could help a local church. In fact, not long after taking up the work at Jardim Esmeralda, I was also asked to take on the interim pastorate of its central church, Parolim. It was hard work, but very rewarding. The Parolim church had gone through a distressing period and needed encouragement and solid preaching. The congregation was a new work and needed organizing and evangelism.

whose large portraits gazed down on all I did and read, would think of the present day courses. The old familiar features of intense academic study remain much in evidence, but at Manchester there is more. Students become involved in the local community and churches, and they learn to do their theology in the context of the contemporary world. There is little danger of anyone leaving there with his head in the clouds.

Some students have taken advantage of the Alternative Pattern of Training in which they work half a week in a local church and spend the rest of their time on their studies. Others study full-time together with a number of Methodists who now use the college. The fourth year course is undertaken together with students from other denominational colleges. At weekends and during the holidays the college becomes a conference centre, offers courses on a wide range of subjects for the laity and serves the local churches by offering its staff for lay training activities.

As I left Manchester in September 1980, having successfully presented my thesis, I was grateful for this renewed contact with the College, its staff and students and with the local ministers' fraternal. I

was returning to Brazil to take up teaching duties at the Paraná Baptist Seminary in Curitiba and had seen many things which would be helpful there.

Curitiba again

This brings me to the last two years of experience in Brazil. At first we had to settle into the routine of lecturing at the Seminary. But early on I was persuaded to take on the pastorate of a small congregation on the outskirts of Curitiba.

At the Seminary I was teaching a mixture of New Testament Studies and Contemporary Theology. As 1981 drew to a close I knew that added work and the need to spend more time at the seminary was going to mean cutting down a lot on the time we spend in local church work, even though I would not want to lose that important contact altogether. When the BMS asked me to take on the administration of the field in Brazil during the period from March to



Jardim Esmeralda

June, I knew that the time had come to define our commitments more clearly.

A new pastor was inducted to Parolim and he was also willing to take on the congregation at Jardim Esmeralda. So at the end of April this year we relinquished both responsibilities. It was just as well. The BMS administration took a lot of time, and I would not have been able to handle it alongside the pastoral work as well as the seminary teaching. When the Field Secretary returned from furlough, the Seminary asked me to become Academic Dean and Head of the Department of Theology during the three years absence of Lauro Mandiro, who will be studying at Spurgeon's College. I will be expected to keep up my usual teaching responsibilities, so involvement with local church work has been restricted to regular preaching and speaking at training courses and retreats. Elidia and our children attended a church just around the corner from where we live. Speaking of children, our son, William Alexander was born on April 26.

Full circle

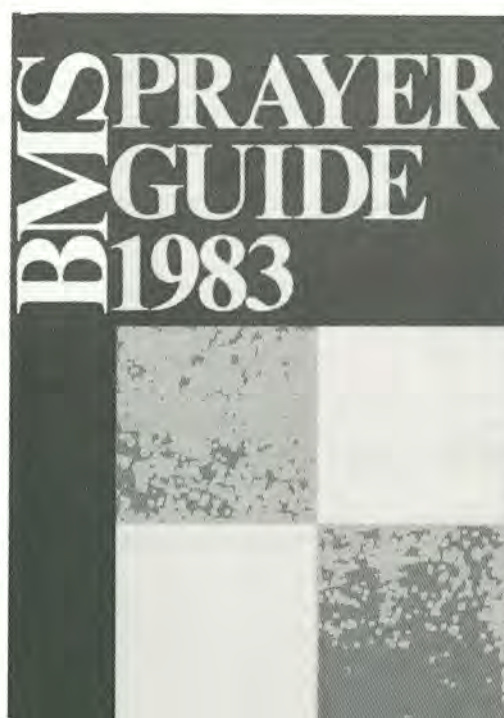
So I have come full circle. Once again I am working with Pastor Marcilio helping with the preaching at the First Baptist Church. But it is a journey which has included many things. I have not mentioned the Extension Course in the interior, held to help local church leaders and preachers twice a year. Nor have I included the important commitment and experiences with the Brazilian Evangelical Centre for Pastoral Studies, of which I was one of the founders. We try to help pastors and local church leaders in several states and from several different denominations in a critical but practical reflection on the work they are doing in the Brazilian context. Although I am not a Brazilian, I have tried throughout my

time here to get to grips with what we call 'a realidade Brasileira' — the true Brazilian situation. Through CEBEP, as it is called, there has been regular contact with many leading experts and, more importantly, with literally hundreds of pastors with vast experience.

Ten years on. Ten years of surprises. Ten years of thanksgiving. In this short span Brazil has laid hold on my heart and cast its spell. It has thrilled me with its beauty, seen in magnificent waterfalls, fantastic

beaches and endless tracts of terrific countryside. It has challenged me with the emergence of huge cities and the sheer vitality of its growth in all directions. But it is the Brazilians themselves, this odd mixture of a hundred different races which has left the most telling mark. God is at work in Brazil amongst the poor, amongst the farmers, amongst the rich, amongst the factory workers. God is at work and we are called to work alongside him. Ten years on. What a thrill to anticipate the next ten!

THE 1983 PRAYER GUIDE



PRICE 45p
ORDER NOW
Publications Department
Baptist Missionary Society
93 Gloucester Place
London W1H 4AA

PRAYING FOR NATIONAL CHRISTIANS

A Minority

In many parts of the world Christians are in a minority. The church there has to learn to live within a community where most people belong to another faith. The pattern of living, ways of eating and dressing, national laws, public holidays, in fact the national culture are all related to another religion.

In Bangladesh Muslim pressure is very strong. The weekend is now Friday and Saturday, with Sunday a working day. The church is having to decide whether to gather for worship early on Sunday, or to meet at some other time.

It is hard for us in Britain to understand what it is like in such circumstances. Let us pray that 'God from the wealth of his glory will give them power through his Spirit to be strong in their inner selves'.

Corruption

Trying to get things done, persuading officials to issue permits, retrieving dockbound goods, and generally making any progress through the maze of regulations may sometimes need a bribe in the right quarter. Occasionally those in positions of authority may take advantage of the opportunity not only to advance themselves but to gain privilege and wealth for members of their family.

Christians have to cope with this and it is hard, especially when an essential project of Christian love and care is held up for the want of the right documentation.

They look to us. 'Keep on praying for us. We are sure we have a clear conscience, because we want to do the right thing at all times.'

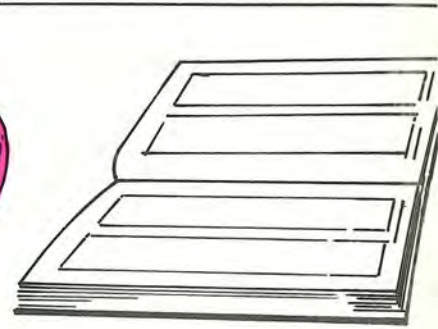
Culture

It is difficult to separate that which is part of a country's culture, and that which is part of another religion. Christians need wisdom to discern the difference in order never to compromise their faith.



WE ARE

If it is hard to pray for missionaries how much harder for Christians in the countries where they live. Their culture is vastly different from our own, yet they are all one in Him. Let us pray for them.



Family Pressure

Unlike in Britain family solidarity is very strong. Often the person who has a good job is expected to pay not only for his own children's welfare, but for the education, hospital fees, weddings, and many other needs of the extended family.

When a person from a Hindu or Muslim background becomes a Christian there can be hostility, violence, and even the threat of death. The least that can happen is for him to be cast out from the family circle.

The tension between family loyalty and loyalty to Christ is acute. Pray for the ability to stand up to such pressure and yet still to love.

Economic Hardship

Most of the countries with which the BMS is connected are very poor. Inflation, many times that which we know in Britain, means that such countries cannot afford even basic materials. Fuel, when available, is



Valdelina, an evangelist at Don Aquino, Brazil

ALL ONE

much harder it is to pray for national
serve. They are coping with situations
are our brothers and sisters in Christ. We



Christian Education

Because of the many problems surrounding the church in the poorer countries, there is a wideness in their activity and Christian service. However, this can be at the expense of depth. There is a real need for teaching and Christian education to develop and strengthen faith.

Pray for churches as they work out their priorities, sort out their programmes, and arrange conferences and seminars.

Pastors

In Asia there are still few national pastors and training for them is often in another country. Pray for more local leaders and less reliance on missionary personnel to pastor churches.

In Africa the pastor holds a different social position from ministers in Britain. He is regarded as an important leader of the community and serves on school and hospital committees. He needs to understand how to use his position and power responsibly for his Lord.

Rural educational opportunities are far less good than those in the towns. Most Christian outreach is in the rural setting, but it is costly to deny your children the best schooling, when by moving to the town you can obtain a good education for them. The attractions of the urban life work on pastors sometimes making it difficult to care for the rural churches.

Regionalism

Regionalism, tribalism and language differences all create barriers especially in areas where the concept of nationhood is very new. Such divisions can and do infiltrate the church causing many unhappy situations.

Pray that they may discover the truth that 'all are one in Christ Jesus'.

expensive. Unemployment is vast. Population increases rapidly. Medical care is not available to everybody. Child mortality is high, often because of malnutrition, and life expectancy is low.

The church is serving and ministering among the poor and down trodden, and trying to understand what it should be saying and what it should be doing.

Literature

Britain, it is often said, is living in a post-literate age of television and electronics. Most third world countries are in the pre-literate age. Education is not yet widely available, and many can hardly read and write. For those who are literate there is very little to read. Hymn books, Bibles and Christian books are in very short supply. They long for the opportunity to read God's word for themselves, and will travel miles to obtain a copy of a Bible.

Pray for the work of translating, writing and producing good things for them to read.



, and his wife



Barisal Church

To help us understand something of what it means to belong to a church in Bangladesh, Kamal Sarkar talks about the church at Barisal, where he is Secretary.

A WELL ORGANIZED LIVING

BARISAL is an old historic district in Bangladesh. As far as we know the Portuguese settled and founded a permanent station at Padrishipur, a small place near Sunderbon to the south of this district, in 1830. Later, by the efforts of Portuguese missionaries a Roman Catholic church was founded there.

The headquarters of Barisal district are in the town of Barisal. With the development of the town the Catholic authority of Padrishipur proceeded to establish a new Christian station in Barisal about 1850.

Dependent on foreign support

At present there are three Christian denominations in the town – Catholic, Baptist and the Church of Bangladesh. Each Christian centre contains more than a church. With the help and co-operation of missionary societies various educational and social institutions have been established. In fact the churches are mainly dependent on foreign support. All

the church buildings, school buildings and hostels have been built on mission compounds.

The history of Barisal Baptist Church is not very significant and has not been distinguished by great local figures, nor endowed with great funds. But it has been successful in that today it is a well organized, living church largely due to the untiring labour, zealous preaching and sincere prayers of missionaries, especially some of the lady missionaries of the BMS.

Dedicated and untiring

Up until 75 years ago the Baptist Mission only had a small compound near the town. Because of various difficulties this was sold to the steamer company and the mission bought a few acres of land in the southern part of the town and built the present big mission buildings. Who was the dedicated person, and how did he, without any capital, but only by his

untiring effort and prayers build such large, excellent buildings for school, church and mission quarters here? The Christians of Barisal remember the name of Dr William Carey's descendant, the Rev William Carey (1906-1920), with deep devotion and reverence.

Although I have been trying to carry out the duties of church secretary here for only two years, I was previously treasurer for ten. I look upon this church as my mother church, and I thank Almighty God that, in spite of many struggles, I have been able to perform my duties within the church.

We need educated members

However, having the opportunity to tell you about the Barisal Baptist Church I shall now try to give some particulars.

In the last census it was shown that the Baptist population of Barisal was 685, and that the number of church members was

CHURCH

283. Although there are two High Schools here, the church members are not educationally well qualified. Most of them are daily labourers, or skilled labourers. Those who go through one of the high schools take jobs under Government or private organizations. The numbers of Christian business men and contractors are small and a few qualified persons are teachers in the schools.

Neither are the womenfolk well educated. Most of them are housewives, but many of them earn a little by working in various institutions, or working in homes.

For a long time parents were not interested in educating their children, but recently this attitude seems to have changed. This year we have 42 candidates sitting the matric (HSC) exams and I think that the church should encourage them. Although the number of candidates is encouraging, many, after

passing the examination, do not take any further examinations and are absorbed into different organizations.

In the future some of these people will become the deacons and leaders both of the church and the community. I think that the lack of education is one of the reasons for the backwardness of the church, and is the cause, sometimes, of confusion and party feeling.

A new Church

Now to the administration of our church. As the Christian families live in scattered areas all over the town, we had some difficulty in serving and looking after them properly. So in 1980 a separate church was started in a northern suburb of the town. This is called the Barisal Bagurapara Baptist Church. The other part of the town was divided into eight areas. According to our rules, one deacon is elected for every ten members. Thus we have 25 deacons in our church. Among them are the Secretary, Assistant Secretary and Treasurer. Beside these workers we have a Pastor and an Assistant Pastor, who are whole time workers paid by the mission.

Our church has several organizations. The Endeavour Society is for the youth. It was more or less half-dead but thank God it may now be called a living organization. A youth choir helps in

Sunday worship and the young people also do some social work. The Women's Society has about 50 members doing various religious and social work regularly and successfully.

Outreach and care

We have an excellent Bible Reading Room and bookstall attached to our church. A recently formed committee runs it. There is also a Primary school on the church compound, but this is closed on Sunday and the Sunday school uses the house on that day. About 150 children attend Sunday School. Last year a Hindu girl came first in the Sunday school examination.

We believe that it is our responsibility to preach the gospel out in the villages, so we have formed a Lay Preacher team which goes out at its own cost. The church also does some social work and we recently formed a Social and Development committee to think about the welfare of the community. Sub-committees such as those for Rehabilitation and the Co-operative Bank have also been created. As yet they have not made much progress.

It is not easy to maintain a Christian witness when we are very much in the minority within a Muslim Society. This Church fellowship will be very much encouraged by your prayer support.



Christian community linked with Barisal Church



A CHRISTMAS IN BANGLADESH

Before John and Nan Passmore went to Khulna, where they are engaged in church and agricultural work, they were in the Dinajpur district of Bangladesh. Here they describe what celebrating Christmas is like in a Christian village in that district.



'BLANKETS, mosquito nets, warm clothes, boiled drinking water, nappies, soap. . . ! And so the mental check list was ticked off as we loaded up the Land Rover. It was Christmas Eve and we bumped off up the dirt track of a road to the village which had invited us to spend Christmas with them.

We arrived at a clump of mango and banana trees under which bamboo and mud huts nestled. This was a little village in the north of Bangladesh, known by the surrounding and Muslim neighbours to be a 'Christian village'. The villagers were fairly young converts, having turned from Hinduism to Christ about ten years previously.

Squatting around the fire

There in that village the Bethlehem Christmas seemed very real to us. The simple home, animals and bustling people all reminded us of that stable of long ago. Darkness fell quickly and by 5.30 all was black. It grew cold as the sun dropped and a communal bonfire was stirred and brought to life. The old men squatting around the fire with woollen shawls thrown about their shoulders looked so similar to those shepherds we have seen on many a Christmas card.

But this was Christmas Eve in Bangladesh and as on every other night of the year the meal was rice and curry, which that night we shared squatting on a mud verandah. Our little baby James was asleep in warm clothes tucked under the mosquito net covering the large wooden

'table' which would be our shared bed on that Christmas Eve. No stocking was hanging on the foot of that bed. The presents were all under the tree back in our home to be opened on Boxing day. We had tried not to take any of the Western trappings of Christmas to that simple village lest we clutter or obliterate Christ – the centre of Christmas. No Bengali child has heard of Father Christmas, though some might hope for a new garment to be worn to church on Christmas day.

Christ is born

Christmas Eve passed into Christmas day as we still sat around the dying embers, but sleep was far from our mind. We sang gusty carols to the accompaniment of drums, cymbals and tinkling bells. Even when the weakest of us went to our hard, but welcome, beds, the young men trooped around the village from house to house for the rest of the night, singing carols to let the people know that Christ was born!

Normal village life began again at dawn with various members rising and sloping off into the jungle. We were fortunate in that a pit had been dug and roughly screened off for our 'ablutions'!

The cows and oxen, covered in rough hessian coats, were led from their sheds to feed on piles of rice straw, their warm breath condensing on nose and whiskers.

Our Christmas morning breakfast was dry puffed rice, a banana and hot very sweet





Sunday School children presenting Christmas Story

tea. The village folk went about their daily tasks. Christmas or no Christmas, cows had to be milked, rice husked, water drawn from the well, mud courtyards swept.

Bringing their babies

At 7 am the first bell rang to remind folk that a worship service was to be held. At 7.30 another bell rang. At 8.00 John went to the church building, another bamboo hut, but extended on this special day with a tarpaulin awning to hold all the Christmas worshippers. People began to congregate. Some children wore new shirts or frocks, some women wore newer saris than usual, all were dressed in their best. At the last minute John was asked to dedicate a baby, then another and another . . . and another! What more suitable day for parents to bring their

child in thanksgiving and dedication than the day upon which our Lord's birth is celebrated.

At last with a final ringing of the bell the service began. A service not so very different from one in Britain, with the essential ingredients of hymns, choruses of praise (though perhaps noisier than our carols), prayer scripture readings and a message. The little bamboo hut was full to capacity with the overflow seated in the awning. The men sat on rush mats over the smooth mud floor on the left and the women, heads covered with the end of their saris, sat on the right. The ceiling and walls were decorated with folded tissue paper, with the words, 'Happy Christmas' ingeniously cut into it in Bengali.

After the service the tradition of sports for the children was maintained. The usual three legged and egg and spoon races, amongst others, were run, which delighted our James although we could not get him to join in. Meanwhile, the adults cooked and prepared the lunch in which the whole village participated. That year duck, curry and rice was on the menu. Everyone had to help catch, kill and pluck, cut and cook, stir and season.

Beggars celebrating Christ's birth

Following their sports, the children washed a mountain of banana leaves to use as plates because there were not enough tin ones in the village for everyone to eat at once! We sat cross legged in lines around and across a large courtyard. No one was turned away and so some Hindu and Muslim beggars joined the feast to celebrate Christ's birth! For the children, James included, the climax came when a very sticky sweetmeat, called a *jelabi*, was dished out at the end of the meal.

After a 'compulsory' afternoon rest we once more piled into the Land Rover and headed for home. We were all dirty and sticky, but very happy. Our Christmas had been different from yours, no doubt, but the joy we felt celebrating His birthday with our Bengali friends was very real and the memories of the simple village Christmas will remain with us always.



Building extra seats for Christmas service



Actors in an African Nativity Play

A CHRISTMAS IN ZAIRE

Last year Alan and Anne Goodman spent their first Christmas in Zaire. It was quite an event and turned out to be vastly different from anything they had experienced in Britain. Pastor Mondengo, referred to in the article, is the Secretary of the *Equateur nord* region.

UNLIKE Christmas in Britain, the birth of Christ is only celebrated in the church. In Zaire there is no big build up in the shops, on the radio or television, no official lighting up of the main shopping street.

Our first Christmas in Zaire started with an inspection of all the homes on the mission to make sure they were decorated and ready for the coming of Christ. The houses, and many of the trees, were freshly whitewashed and looked very nice with their decorations of palm leaf arches, flowers, paper decorations and even, in one house, a Christmas tree made from the strips of metal from corned beef and pilchard tins.

The biggest knot in Africa

The next day was Sports Day. The schools in the morning, the school versus staff football match in the

afternoon, followed by the tug of war. Missionaries were few and far between on the football field, it was 95°F in the shade, but they made an appearance for the tug of war.

There was no proper rope so two huge jungle vines were tied together in the biggest knot in Africa. The most important tug was that between the men and the women. The men won the first tug easily, then the fun really started. It took twenty minutes of arguing and shouting to start the second tug going. The women were ranting and raving and the men just stood there laughing at them. Pastor Mondengo, the referee, was blowing his whistle in between bouts of hysterics. The inevitable happened, on the second and third tugs, the knot broke and all the men fell over. This was considered to be a judgement on the men!

Carols by Tilley Lamp

Wednesday evening was the musical evening or 'Carols by Tilley Lamp'. It began at 6.30 when the missionaries arrived liberally soaked in anti-mosquito lotion. The missionaries did four songs and then sat back and listened to the other performances. As the evening continued, voices deteriorated and people began to drift out and go home, even the platoon of soldiers asked to guard the houses fell asleep on the church steps. We eventually crept into bed at 1.30 in the morning after six hours of listening.

Christmas Eve was the Nativity play. The platform in front of the church became the stage, complete with stable, inn, and Herodian Palace, in front of an audience of one thousand people. This was no 'kiddies in old curtains' stuff but a fully

MISSIONARY MOVEMENTS

Arrivals

Mr A Rossiter on 20 August from Mbanza-Ngungu, Zaire
Mr and Mrs G Phillips and Simon on 21 August from Kathmandu, Nepal
Miss S Headlam on 25 August from Chandraghona, Bangladesh
Mr M Ewings on 25 September from Chandraghona, Bangladesh

Departures

Mr J Mellor, Joy and Andrew on 18 August for Tondo, Zaire
Mrs N Clark, Raquel and Daniel on 19 August for São Paulo, Brazil
Miss O Satterly on 25 August for Pimu, Zaire
Mrs L Hinchin on 26 August for Cuiabá, Brazil
Miss R Montacute on 31 August for Kinshasa, Zaire
Mr R Hughes on 31 August for Yakusu, Zaire
Mrs C Jelleymann on 31 August for Kingston, Jamaica
Miss S Chalmers on 7 September for Yakusu, Zaire
Mr and Mrs R Smith on 7 September for Bolobo, Zaire
Mrs E Grose on 8 September for Delhi, India
Mr and Mrs D Drysdale and family on 15 September for Kinshasa, Zaire
Miss P Gilbert on 15 September for Mbanza-Ngungu, Zaire
Dr D and Mrs Masters and Ian on 15 September for Bolobo, Zaire
Mrs I Mellor on 15 September for Tondo, Zaire
Miss P Woolhouse on 15 September for CECCO, Kimpese, Zaire
Rev D Jelleymann on 18 September for Kingston, Jamaica
Mr A Rossiter on 26 September for Mbanza-Ngungu, Zaire

Birth

On 18 September, at Kimpese, Zaire, to **Mr and Mrs A North**, a daughter, **Elizabeth Esther**

Engagement

Mr Stephen Mantle (Tondo, Zaire) and **Miss Isabel Tooms**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Secretaries acknowledge with grateful thanks the following legacies and gifts sent anonymously. (19 August-23 September 1982)

Legacies

	£	p
Miss I Cargill	200.00	
Mr E R Castle	93.08	
Mrs E Davison	39.81	
Mr E C Goddard	1,000.00	
Mrs D Gurowich	6,095.84	
Miss S G Howells	1,324.31	
Miss F M Hussey	1,400.00	
Mrs C M Jones	3.00	
Mrs O H Marley	250.00	
Miss E M Milward	100.00	
Mrs M S H Moulton	50.00	
Miss O W Pursey	100.00	
Mr D A Reynolds	100.00	
Frances Edith Seal	100.00	
Mrs G A Tadman	400.00	
Miss A Wilson	250.00	
Mrs G M Wood	100.00	

General Work: Anon: £5.00; Anon: £5.00; Anon: £2.50; Anon: £20.00; Anon: £30.00; Anon (Cymro): £55.00; Anon (FAE - Aberdeen): £10.00.

Agricultural Work: Anon (Charlbury): £2.00.

Women's Project: Anon (SS): £100.00.

fledged, although free wheeling at times, portrayal of the Christmas story. The main highlight was an occasion to poke fun at the army, a squad of blindfolded soldiers doing square bashing. The moving star was actually a storm lantern on a very long string.

A hearty smack

There was a piece of pure theatrical genius in the shepherds' scene. About 100 yards to our left, a fire appeared instantaneously, helped by a few litres of paraffin, and the dialogue between the shepherds and angels was heard over the normal night noises of insects, frogs and bats. It was very realistic and Ken Tynan would have been proud of it. The birth scene was complete with midwife, groans, hearty smack and crying. We managed to get to bed before midnight, which was just as well, because choristers arrived at 4.00 in the morning to wish us a happy Christmas.

The Christmas Day service started at 9.30 and was only three hours long. Both of us had readings and had to sit in the front of the church so that everybody could see us. Christmas lunch was held on the lawn in front of the mission overlooking the river. Pongu, kwanga, monkey, beef and fish were on the menu, not exactly the traditional English fare, but nevertheless not too bad. We made up for the lack of tradition next day with roast chicken, roast potatoes, saved and stored for over two months, sweet corn, peas, stuffing and gravy, followed by a kind of Christmas pudding, mince pies and custard and cream.

Altogether Christmas was quite a marathon. In a 42 hour period Alan spent 17 in church.

MAY GOD'S PEACE AND JOY BE YOURS THIS CHRISTMAS

We offer Christmas Greetings to all our readers, praying that God's blessing will be with you at this time and in the New Year.

As you celebrate Christmas, will you think of our missionaries and the churches where they are serving around the world?

And next month, will you remember the widows and orphans of Baptist missionaries? January has been the traditional time when the love of Baptists has been expressed for them in a very practical way. Churches have usually donated their communion offerings to this cause.

Will you give generously?

PRAYER GUIDE NOTES

Dr Digby Withers (10 December) is home for his mid-term holiday.

Luke and Kathleen Alexander (15 December) are on furlough.

Susan Shields (29 December) has finished her course in Belgium and leaves for Zaire in early January.

THERE IS STILL TIME!!! ORDER NOW

1983 BAPTIST UNION DIARY

Price £1.40 including postage

Colours: **Black**

Green

Yellow

1982/83 BAPTIST UNION DIRECTORY

Price: £3.95 + 56p postage

BAPTIST PUBLICATIONS

Baptist Church House
4 Southampton Row
London WC1B 4AB
Telephone 01-405 9803

BAPTIST HOLIDAY FELLOWSHIP

HOLIDAYS-1983

WESTHOLME FAMILY HOTEL, MINEHEAD

Owned and operated by Baptist Holiday Fellowship. Many visitors insist that it has a distinct and particularly happy atmosphere, and return year by year.

Our special rates for young families and for Senior Citizens have proved very attractive, and our charges generally are within 5% of last year.

Our team of Hosts will be available to lead devotions, to counsel individually and to ensure that all our guests enjoy their stay to the full.

Westholme is superbly situated on the Esplanade, opposite the beach, near the main shopping area and only a short walk from the beautiful Blenheim Gardens.

SELF-CATERING FLATS, MINEHEAD

Spacious, fully equipped, situated on the seafront.

Available April-October. Friday to Friday, or Saturday to Saturday bookings.

SPECIAL RATES FOR ACCREDITED BAPTIST MINISTERS

UK HOLIDAYS

Lake District, Oxford, Scotland, Wales

OVERSEAS TOURS

HOLY LAND – April and September, MAJORCA – May,
SWEDEN – June, SWITZERLAND – July, ITALY – July/August,
FRANCE – August.

Please write or telephone for Brochure to:
Baptist Holiday Fellowship (MH), 1 The Esplanade, Minehead, Somerset TA24 5BE
Telephone: Minehead (0643) 3473