



Look back in wonder

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

(Matthew 1:22-23)

Look ahead and be inspired

Looking back, Looking ahead

Equipped today to face tomorrow

The end of the year enables us to look back with praise and thanksgiving. It is a time to review what we did well and what we should change — and to re-focus on our core values. We now look forward to a New Year. What are God’s priorities for the next 12 months? It is a time to dream, to plan and to do.

One thing is sure — so appropriate as we come again to Christmas and our celebration of Jesus Christ’s birth — we re-affirm our commitment to practical and spiritual support for the poor, especially among Pakistan’s Christians. We are a Christian organisation, rooted in the belief that the greatest gift we can give to the next generation is our faith in God’s love for a lost world and His gift of a Saviour.

Together with a good education, we will provide our Bible Curriculum books to thousands of Christian school children, together with training and spiritual guidance for teachers and staff. In all we do, our aim is to glorify God and strengthen the faith of Pakistan’s Christians.

We wish you a wonderful Christmas — and an inspiring New Year



looking back at

2022

Training teachers: improving standards

Raising teaching and classroom standards and improving school management have been a major focus in this past year. Danishmand, Jasmine and their staff have grappled with schools coming out of lockdown. Some have faced a drop in student numbers. Some have struggled with unqualified teachers, poor facilities and the consequences of catastrophic inflation.

Starfish Pakistan responded by meeting with project leaders in May and November, providing greater help and training in accounting and regular visits from Jasmine to ensure teaching improvement. In September we were delighted to be able to increase teachers' salaries.

A highlight of 2022 was the two months of training for teachers in the cool of the northern hills in June and July, which is now being followed up by regular visits by Jasmine to assess progress and ensure implementation of lessons learned.



Spiritual support: Bible teaching in schools

Starfish Asia also supports the much smaller ministry of Walter Waheed. As an experienced tutor with the Open Theological Seminary, Walter is now overseeing Bible studies for teachers in 13 Christian schools that so far are not covered by regular Starfish Pakistan support.



He also gives training to teachers to help them use the Bible Curriculum in their classes with Christian students. He writes:

"When the focus of a Christian school is to meet the spiritual needs of Christian children, then similarly Christian teachers must be equipped with theological understanding and with a strong and practical faith."

The year in numbers

The past year has seen some great progress in our work in Pakistan. We do not aim just to support schools — we are determined to ensure that they are providing the best possible education for some of Pakistan's poorest children.

46

Schools regularly supported — plus 6 centres for children with special needs.

9,076

Children attending these schools.



18

Schools that have received new classrooms, furniture, toilets or other equipment in 2022.

400

Teachers or staff on regular salary support from Starfish Asia.

226

Teachers who attended the training sessions in Abbottabad this year.

9,813

Sets of school books given to children in 59 schools in 2022.



6,073

Bible Curriculum books given to Christian school children in 73 schools.

318

Young people who have received scholarship awards for further studies.

77

Students who passed their Class 10 Matric Exams from schools supported by Starfish Asia, disappointing but understandable in light of the effects of the lockdown.

looking ahead to 2023

“Immanuel”

Reflections by Rob



Immanuel, God with us – that is, Jesus Christ, who being in very nature God, made himself nothing and took the nature of a servant. This sums up for me the amazing paradox of Christmas. He gave up his “right” to heaven for the sake of all humanity, and changed the lives of millions of people.

On my recent trip to Pakistan I was hit a number of times with stories of self-giving and sacrifice for the benefit of the local community. Project leaders following Christ’s example, who humbly live in a small space (one or two rooms for the whole family) because the school has grown and expanded to fill their family home.

Not only that, but so many use their own wages and the fees they collect to add rooms and make improvements so that the young people can have as good an experience of school as possible and hopefully be inspired to stay on till their matric exams and beyond.

As Christmas draws near I want to express my deep gratitude to all in schools we support who are touching lives and investing in young people through hard work and sacrifice — as well as my thankfulness to all of you who have given sacrificially this past year (and the 23 years prior to that). I also look forward with great hope and expectation that in 2023 each of you will enable us to do even more and in a deeper way have a greater impact for some of the poorest people in Pakistan.

Blessings and Happy Christmas!

Inspirational leadership



This was my first visit to the Ghauri Wisdom School. I was very touched by meeting Salamat Ghauri, the founder, and hearing of his vision to give good quality education, which has been realised with Starfish’s help.

Not satisfied that the school has grown from a single room to a fully-fledged high school with over 500 children, he wanted better results. He therefore took a brave step and appointed an experienced principal to take over while he and his wife returned to the classroom.

This kind of self-sacrificial leadership is inspiring.

Reaching higher

Strategic Planning:

During his October visit to Pakistan, Rob spent many hours with Danishmand and Jasmine. They began the process of analysing our current situation, looking at each of the 46 schools currently supported. This was the result:

We identified 13 poor schools, 20 just improving, 7 much improved and 6 Star schools.

Having done that, we discussed where we wanted each school to be in two years’ time — and then looked at what it would take to get there. The obvious aspiration is that each school will have taken steps forward towards Star status.

Our ambition is that every school we support will become a “STAR SCHOOL”

What will that take? Ambition, planning, sacrifice, support, encouragement, training.

- ❖ 13 schools need special attention, extra support, inspired teachers and help with some of the basics.
- ❖ 20 schools need encouragement, training for the staff, greater motivation and improved facilities.
- ❖ 7 schools need appreciation, congratulation, just a little more ambition and some specific equipment such as computers, lab equipment and specialised teachers.
- ❖ 6 schools need to consider how they can be weaned off subsidies and become more self-sufficient.

Scholarship Awards

for those who dream bigger dreams

The Annual Achievement Awards ceremony took place in Lahore during Rob’s visit:

“At the Annual Award Ceremony we congratulated 33 students from Starfish-supported schools who did well in their Matric exam. We also recognised the hard work of the teachers.”

Most of these students have been awarded scholarships for further study. A total of 212 are now receiving awards for further studies, some for higher degrees.



Liz and the Bedgebury Half Marathon

First and above all, *thank you* to all the 43 people who gave generously to support Liz’s appeal for scholarship funds. You raised **£2,278**. Fantastic! Sadly Liz fell ill two days before her run, but she still plans to do the run when she has fully recovered.



POSTPONED
NEW DATE COMING SOON

Pakistan's devastating floods

After torrential monsoon rains hit Pakistan in early June, one third of the country suffered catastrophic flooding. More than 1,700 people died, villages were washed away and a third of the country lay under water. A national emergency was declared.

As most of the flooding was in the South of the country, no schools supported by Starfish Asia were affected. However, we launched an appeal, which resulted in considerable funds from many generous and concerned supporters. Much of the money was provided to close Christian partners who have teams working in flooded areas — OM Pakistan teams distributing food and emergency aid, the Brethren Christian Fellowship providing tents, and others.

We have also provided funds to Faisal Kamran, pastor and leader of the Hope School, Karachi (supported by Starfish Asia), who has also been working with his church in flooded areas. He has written:



"We visited the village area of Sanghar district. The situation was very bad, still plenty of water, crops are destroyed, people are jobless, many houses damaged or destroyed. People need to repair or rebuild their homes. They urgently need food packages, mosquito nets, tents and medicine.

"By the grace of God, last Sunday we organised Starfish Pakistan's food distribution programme

in district Sanghar to provide food packages to 30 flood affected families. People were very happy to get food packages that would be enough for a month."



In memory of an exceptional young lady



Azra Yaqoob was an exceptional young lady. From birth she had polio and was never able to walk. She started to come daily to the Agape Home for young people with special needs in Lahore, run by Farzana and Imran and supported by Starfish Asia.

Azra's father died five years ago and life at home was often difficult for her. "She was the heart of our school. We miss her. She shared many of her problems with me and often cried," wrote Farzana.

On 10th October she attended a family funeral in a village, and fell ill on her return home. On 17th she died in her sleep. She was 27 years old and Farzana was devastated.

"Azra was a shining daughter of the Agape Home family. She was studying in Class 10. She loved school and sometimes helped as an assistant teacher. Her art and drawing were amazing and God gifted. In 2018 she won third prize in the national Toyota Dream Car Art Contest. Azra was a girl with a beautiful heart."



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