

MEDICAL MISSION NEWS

Winter 2011



All the African candidates together with their coordinator after the ceremony

Young women joining us in Africa

In February 2011, during a beautiful prayer service prepared by the new candidates themselves, four African women, Malawian, Ugandan and Ghanaian, were officially received into the Sector Africa Candidacy Programme. The ceremony took place at the Formation House in Umoja, Nairobi, Kenya. Each candidate interpreted the initiation ritual as symbolic journey based on her home culture and cultural symbols. The initiation ceremony was followed by a celebratory meal, then various traditional songs and dances by the candidates and MMS present.



Nichola sharing stories from her time in mission in Africa

Young Women Joining us in Germany

In July sisters and associates in different phases of integration (which means those who have recently joined us or are exploring joining) and some interested women gathered in a retreat house near Frankfurt. They spent a weekend listening to the history of MMS Society and the development of our healing charism. Afterwards the canonical members continued for five more days. The Integration Team, German Sisters Beate and Magdalena prepared an inspiring week, filled with the spirit of Anna Dengel and the first pioneering sisters. German Sisters Michaela, Maria and Walburga and English MMS Nichola shared their stories and their personal fire and flame. Michaela and Maria are living in Germany but Walburga and Nichola live in England and went over for this workshop, to share their different experiences with the younger ones. They encouraged the sisters to reflect on and discuss the ways in which mission has developed over the past decades and today's challenges. In the various liturgies, in groups and in personal reflections everybody was invited to contribute her/his own unique mission to the whole.



Dutch MMS Jeanne and Juul examine the footprints

Two Generations of MMS Meet

Recently our group of eleven sisters in Integration in Germany visited our Dutch and Belgian Sisters in The Netherlands with Beate, our coordinator. We received a warm welcome with time for visiting, talking and praying together prepared for us so that we really felt at home. Altogether we had the opportunity to meet about 40 sisters.

In Arnhem we enjoyed personal experiences of mission: Dutch MMS Hanny had prepared paper 'footprints' for each of us. The "elderly" sisters each wrote about the footprints they had left during their life in mission, while the younger sisters wrote about which footprints they would hope to leave in their future mission. Then we put all the footprints on a wall, their footsteps coming from the right and ours from the left, meeting each other.

In Tilburg our sisters shared about how they experience healing presence in the way they live with each other in different phases of life, in times of ageing and sickness and with their neighbours. In Utrecht we heard more about the historical background and development of the District; in Amsterdam we were given impressions about the social and ecumenical engagement of MMS. It was altogether a most enriching time.

Interfaith dialogue in the UK



English MMS Nichola writes about the 25th London Multifaith Pilgrimage for Peace in 2010

This peace pilgrimage is an annual event organised by Westminster Interfaith. For the past 25 years it has brought together people of different religions and cultural backgrounds from all over London and beyond in a spirit of friendship, prayer and reconciliation. Last year four of us took part: Indian MMS Elizabeth, German MMS Agnes, and English MMS Rita and Nichola. Stage one was a Mass at Westminster Cathedral, followed by prayers at the tomb of Cardinal Basil Hume, who had, quietly and persistently over the years, encouraged and supported interfaith dialogue and who looked on life itself as a pilgrimage.

We joined the pilgrimage at the West London Synagogue. This is a centre for London's leading Jewish community of Reform Jews. It was moving to be present at a Jewish service echoing a tradition of the worship of God over thousands of years. This was followed by lunch for the pilgrims in the synagogue hall, provided by Sachkhand Nanak Dham International. This gave us strength for the lengthy journey by bus and foot to the impressive Peace Pagoda in Battersea Park, constructed in 1985 by monks, nuns and followers of Nipponzan-Myohoji to further humanity's quest that the world may be saved from nuclear annihilation. The venerable Nagase, Buddhist monk, offered prayers at the shrine. More bus journeys and walks took us to the Fazi Mosque. We sat in the mosque and were given an account of the main tenets of Islam. After this we walked to the Sikh Gurdwara not far away. Many of this community came from East Africa in the late 1960's. The Gurdwara is a purpose built centre for religious worship and cultural activities. Here we were welcomed with refreshments before being given a short account of Sikhism. As we were told, Sikhism represents a spiritual path to God and a just social order for all. It was a fascinating if tiring day.



Interfaith Dialogue in the USA

American Medical Mission Sister Maria Hornung Coordinates Interfaith Education in Philadelphia.

Trained as a pharmacist, Maria spent many years in Africa and the US and then, after six years in international leadership she was drawn to a new mission. She returned to Temple University and graduated with a Master's Degree in Religion, with a focus on Interreligious Dialogue. She wrote a book: "Encountering Other Faiths," published by Paulist Press, along with an accompanying workbook. In 2005, Maria began working as Coordinator of Interfaith Education at the Interfaith Center of Philadelphia, whose programs reached over a thousand people last year. She works with adults in various settings, helping them to understand what they have in common and to accept their differences.

In 2010, the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia piloted "Gateway to Religious Communities," a new program in its area of Adult Learning and Leadership. The hope of this program was that people interested in other faiths would over the year receive hospitality from different faith communities, learning from them and enjoying the experience. Twelve different communities from the Biha'i, Buddhist, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Native America, Protestant, Society of Friends and Universalist welcomed them. They received many new insights and, friends were made across religious boundaries, awareness about the great number of people of good will in this city grew. A real brother/sisterhood grew among all those involved and those visited experienced great affirmation. The evaluation of the participants and those visited has affirmed the continuation of the Gateway program into 2011.

Maria tells us that *"In my encounters with peoples of many countries, cultures and religions...I have met God in many places and under many guises...interreligious dialogue has become a passion with me."*



Ritual of renewal of commitment to partnership

Partnership in Patna

Mission in Kurji Holy Family Hospital (KHFH) has been moving forward in partnership with the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth (SCN) since 2000. Ten years of this successful partnership between two religious congregations in the healing ministry of the church was a significant happening for the church in Patna and was marked by a two-day celebration at the beginning of 2011.

Kurji Holy Family Hospital is in its fifty-third year. It is a three hundred-bed general hospital with four basic specialties with full-time medical staff and several other special clinics staffed by visiting consultants. The hospital has two health centres: Community Health and Development Center (CHRD) for outreach within the radius of the hospital, and Community Care Center (CCC) responding to some of the needs of HIV/AIDS affected persons. During the last three years 530 employees and 180 students served about 380,000 outpatients and inpatients. It is a great joy to see people getting well and going home. The hospital goal is to serve with love and to practice the values of compassion, honesty, excellence, spirituality and teamwork. We create a patient-friendly atmosphere, relating to one another with care and human respect. Over the past three years many services have been started to benefit the poor. Children's primary education was promoted and a special economic package developed for health services to women. The Community Care Center for HIV/AIDS was opened in collaboration with the Catholic Bishops Conference of India. In 2010 KHFH was recognized by the state for the paramedical courses it conducts. The community health centres are very happy to see the growth in leadership by women that brings into focus issues that cause untold suffering and oppression of women in society. The commitment of all personnel at the hospital brings joy in service to make a difference to the sick and their family members who tell us "We come for health and return with a God experience." Our great challenge is to make the health care affordable and accessible to the poor while being sustainable.



International MMS Leaders Meet

In 2011 Our MMS leaders went to India for their annual meeting which was held in Pune in our Holistic Health Centre. It seemed fitting that as the meeting began India celebrated Diwali. This festival marks the start of the Hindu New Year and honors the victory of good over evil, light over darkness. At the Holistic Health Centre we could look over the city of Pune which shimmered with a warm glow of lights. Buildings were decked with garlands, paper lanterns, and rangoli (traditional art patterns) while the air was filled with the sound of exploding firecrackers. In the evening the night sky burst into a million points of lights from an abundance of fireworks displays.

India is a land of many contrasts and over a billion people. There is rich mineral wealth, Information Technology experts, technological wizards, highly specialised hospitals, a rich cultural heritage, persons of good will and integrity, a deep spirituality. But there are also the poor, the slums, people living with less than a dollar a day with no access to basic health facilities and education, corruption and violence, the evils of the caste system. It was an appropriate place to look at our mission, using the advantages of modern technology as we look for life to the full for all but especially those living in poverty. Looking at our biggest resource, our own sisters, we are grateful for our diversity and the wisdom, spiritual power and gifts of members of all ages and cultures. Learning from many cultures has widened our perspectives. We are pleased to have many younger women joining us. The presence of newer members adds enthusiasm and vibrancy to our lives. It gives new energy for mission and hope as we move into the future. We value the wisdom of our older sisters. They are a source of inspiration, giving witness to living our healing charism through the whole of life and we value their presence in our communities. Ageing and illness continue to draw us deeper into the process of letting go and the mourning that comes with the death of members who have been friends and colleagues.



The leadership team exploring the hilltop at the MMS compound above the city of Pune

OBITUARY

*Rev Fr Maurice J Murphy - Manchester
Mrs Pam Andrews - Knutsford, Cheshire
(Sister of MMS Gill Horsfield)*

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