# The Hennigs Missions in Kanchanaburi Province Thailand

#### Newsletter 12 2023 - 03 2024

#### Dear friends and prayer partners,

Thank you for your interest, your prayers and your gifts. Actually, we should still be in the cold season now, but in the meantime it has become so hot during the day that it is even stressful for our Thai staff. Christine is particularly hard hit by the heat.

The most important part of the past few weeks for us was our trip to Bangladesh, which Christine is now reporting on.



## **Travelogue Bangladesh**

10. January - 01 February 2024

## What was the reason for our trip?

As Christine has been in contact with Somor Biswas for over 2 years and supports the work in his village financially, we wanted to see with our own eyes and hear with our own ears. Especially as it seems that we are in spiritual agreement. After joint deliberation and prayer, and a green light from the Lord, nothing stood in the way of the flight.

## Where will the journey take us?

To Bangladesh with its 118 million inhabitants. We travel to the district of Meherpur. Meherpur is an administrative district in the south-west of Bangladesh with around 580,000 inhabitants, which belongs to the Khulna Division. 716.08 km² in size, the district borders the Indian state of West Bengal to the west.

Our final destination is the village of Bollovpur. It is a village with 5000

inhabitants. Muslims and around 120 Christians live here peacefully together. We will spend almost 3 weeks there.

#### Here we go.

First we went from Lum Sum to the hotel in Bangkok. A friend took us to the hotel in his pick-up and Christine's wheelchair. We stayed there for one night. The next day, we took a large cab to the airport at 7am.

It was the first flight with a wheelchair and Christine was already very excited about what it would be like.

The first surprise was at the THAI AIRWAYS check-in counter. A manager organized an employee who took care of us and all other matters right up to the plane. Fabulous! Everything went very smoothly, and the crew on the plane did everything they could to make it a very pleasant and relaxed trip.

Departure at 10.55 a.m. with TG 0321, arrival in Dhaka at 12.30 p.m., i.e. flight time 2 hours 35 minutes.

We were picked up at the airport by Somor Biswas. We then took the van to Bollovpur. We had no idea what awaited us.

Christine's first impression: "Oh God, help. What does it look like here! What a poor country!"

Reiner's first impression: "Oh, I'm in the right place, I already feel at home." The journey continued, we didn't know beforehand that we had to take a car ferry. We had to wait an hour for it to cross the Padma River again. Then 35 minutes across the river and in the dark we arrived at our accommodation at around 10.30 p.m., dog-tired, somehow happy and full of expectation for the next few weeks.

#### Our accommodation

In a former hostel for boys, which has not been used as such for many years, we were given a large room with its own bathroom. To our great delight and even greater relief, it had a sitting toilet and not a standing toilet! We ate our meals on the veranda in front of the house, morning, noon and night. The woman of the house, Eva Kirtonia, did not cook so spicy food especially for us foreigners and adapted to our needs. So we had roti with vegetables, potatoes (oh how delicious!), fresh milk from the cow and often a sweet dessert made by her. Our hosts went above and beyond to make us feel at home.

The first morning, at around 5.30 am, the muezzin sounds the first call to prayer from the mosque. Christine finds it very loud and equally awful. The muezzin had finally finished and at around 6.00 a.m. another call and a song was heard, but it sounded completely different. It came from one of the two smaller churches nearby (Assembly of God and Anglican Church) Yes, and

finally the other small church also took part in the morning vigil with a song and sermon. Of course we couldn't understand anything, but we recognized some of the songs by their melody. It was the same every other morning. You see, we didn't need an alarm clock.

## The first visit to the Christian Hospital and Old People's Home in Bollovpur

We made our first trip by tuk-tuk to the nearby hospital right after breakfast at 8am. You can actually walk there, but it's far too far for Christine and not exactly safe on the country road with her wheelchair.

The hospital has a small geriatric ward, which we call the old people's home. Up to 20 men and women can live here free of charge, who otherwise receive no help or support from anyone else. One woman has been living here for 10 years. Another has already reached the age of 100. We now had personal contact with the residents, whom we previously only knew from pictures. The retirement home is supported solely by donations. The home is currently fully occupied and there are always requests from elderly or sick people in need of help that have to be turned down. Another home absolutely has to be built. But how and with what means? The other alternative is life on the street, where they have to beg.

After the visit to the old people's home, we had a very good meeting with the hospital director and were able to learn a lot about the home and its needs, as well as the concern about how things can go on in Bangladesh. Spiritually, we agreed that we need the Lord and must expect more and more supernatural intervention from God.

After this conversation, the doctor, Sister Jilian M. Rose, came in. She is English, 82 or 84 years old and still in ministry every day and has been for many decades since God called her there. She said. "Medicine can do a lot, but not everything. We need supernatural healing, we can't cope with it all anymore." During another visit, we also got talking to the head doctor there. We got a very good impression of all three of them and realized that we also agreed spiritually. That was a real surprise and we are very grateful for it.

#### Rita

The afternoon was free for both of us and in the evening we received a visit from Eva's sister Rita and her niece. The donations made it possible to finance a cancer operation for her. Now she had come to see who had collected for her and to thank them personally. It took her about 4 hours to go one way. She is very grateful because she is now well, the cancer has been beaten and has not returned.

#### The next visit is coming up.

Once again, we took the tuk-tuk a few kilometers further to the village of Bhabarpara. There we visited the priest and parish priest of Bollovpur, Babul Barnabas Voiragi. Vincent the priest, Santo Michael the catechist and our host Somor, who is also a catechist, were present at the meeting. You recognized it very well, we are in a Roman Catholic rectory. In conversation, we first learned something about Bangladesh, the country and its people and also about Christians of all denominations. The Roman Catholic Church is divided into 8 dioceses with a total of 500 priests.

The first missionaries came to Bangladesh from Portugal around 500 years ago and from England around 1800. The country is currently home to Muslims, the largest group at 90%, as well as Hindus, Buddhists and Christians.

Every year in February, around 5000 Christians of all denominations meet in Bollovpur to celebrate THANKSGIVING. There are no quarrels between the individual churches and denominations and no sheep stealing. We were reminded again and again of John 17. We have fond memories of this meeting, which was so peaceful and informal, and we realized that we were of one mind. After this first meeting, we drove to Somor's store.

#### In Somors Shop

Somor cannot support his family on the salary he receives as a catechist. So he has set up a service store. He helps there with passport photos, document processing, application letters, photo editing, etc.

On another day, we sat in his store while he worked. This gave us a good view of the street and what was going on around us. He has a box in his little store. He puts banknotes in there. 20 taka, 20 taka, etc. 20 taka is 0.17 euros. We witnessed it ourselves: once in an hour, 6 beggars, mostly old women who can no longer cope with a day's work, came in. They are then allowed to take out a bill. There is no social welfare. There are no homes for the poor or widows. If we were to build any, we would need money. At the moment, we don't know how else to help these poorest people. Begging seems to be the only option.

## **Today is Sunday, January 14, 2024**

The Muslims have their holiday on Friday and the Christians celebrate on Sunday. It's 7 o'clock in the morning and we're sitting in the church, wrapped up tightly because there's no heating. It's only 10 degrees outside, but it's a plus. We notice that the women are sitting on the right, the men on the left. Most of them sit on the floor, those who can't sit sit on one of the plastic

chairs. I enjoy my wheelchair and am once again grateful for it.

Eva plays the harmonium and the women drown out the harmonium with their singing. The parish priest says the mass, which we understand: "Jesus Christ, Amen, Hallelujah, Sr. Christine" You can tell a lot from the atmosphere, and it was really good. At the end of the mass, some women came up to us and paid their respects. But then we immediately passed them on to the Lord.

## **Eva's cow January 14 to 16, 2024**

Eva owns a cow. From Sunday to Monday, her cow gave birth to a calf, a beautiful animal. But the calf does not stand and does not drink. The vet comes. It doesn't look well. That worries us too. Everything is done for the calf so that it survives. The vet comes by several times and gives the calf an injection.

#### Another visit to the retirement home

One man there spoke very good English and knew a lot about the world. He had so many questions, all of which we were able to answer, and so we entertained the whole department. This visit also brought some distraction for the residents. We sang another song in the 100-year-old hospital chapel and then drove back to our accommodation.

## January 17, 2024: We go to the cowshed in the morning

The calf is perfectly cared for. We both decide to pray and fast for the calf. We also want it to pull through, but at 3 p.m.we receive the news that the calf is dead. A blow for us all. But life goes on.

## **Today is Bollovpur day**

There is a tour of the village. After all, we need to know what's going on here and where we are. There is a small Christian quarter with 4 churches: Roman Catholic Church, Assembly of God, Anglican Church and another very small one with Koreans. It's a nice village all around. It is peaceful. But even if we didn't know where the Christians live, it's very obvious. We could also see in another village without knowing it: Hindus live here, Muslims here and Christians here. It was generally cleaner and more orderly where the Christians lived and they made an effort to make it somehow beautiful with the few resources available. A few flowers here, a little more paint there and pictures on the walls.

## Fridays are Chicken Day

Eva always cooks chicken for the nursing home residents on Fridays. That's why every Friday is Chicken Day. Some even like to nibble off the chicken feet. After we had dropped off the food, we had another interesting conversation with the hospital director, Sr. Jilian M. Rose, the head doctor, Somor and us. Topics of conversation: Politics, Europe, Germany and Bangladesh.

At around 2.30 p.m. we also got lunch in our accommodation. Fortunately, there were no chicken feet for us to nibble off. We were also always given spoons and forks to eat with. So we were spared having to eat with our right hand. What luck!

## Visit to the village of Anandabas

There are two districts here where Christians live. We visited both of them. That was another special experience. We got out of the tuk-tuk and took a seat on two plastic chairs in the middle of the village street. That's fine, there are no cars here anyway. We were surrounded by Christians, stared at, perhaps we were even the first white people they had ever seen in their lives. And now they were waiting for us to tell them something. And so we spoke out what we had perceived from the Lord and were supposed to tell them. Once again, it was a perfect fit. We then took the TukTuk to the next nearby Christian district. Again, words of encouragement and hope to these people.

## Bhabarpara - another village

3.15 p.m. The TukTuk is waiting to take us to Bhabarpara. We saw the outside of Somor's parents' house, met some of his relatives and visited their land, which is still an inheritance. It is also still waiting to be built on and planted. It could be that they have to leave the current hostel and the house quickly because the church needs the rooms again and then they would have no place to stay. That's why they want to start building a house in March. Somor has already set aside old stones, windows, doors and roofing material, which will make the construction cheaper.

## It is Saturday, January 20, 2024.

Today we stay in our quarters, no trip out, no visit to the old people's home or hospital. We have time to talk to Somor, his wife Eva and then to their son Pritom. Pritom is also there to translate when his father is not present. He usually studies in Dhaka, but that can also be done via the internet for a while. We think and talk about how Bangladesh can continue to exist in the

future, especially the poor rural population.

## Reiner preaches 2 times on Sunday.

You guessed right, in the Catholic church. It's cold in the morning at 7 am and also in the evening at 6 pm. But the evening service doesn't start until 6.47pm, we didn't know that, and ends at 8pm.

There were about 100 men, women and children present.

You can read the sermon texts for yourselves: Hebrews 1:1-4, John 14:1-2 and Ephesians 1:20-23.

## Visit to Joypur

On the way there, we just marvel and enjoy God's wonderful nature. A wonderful landscape! Rice fields, banana plantations, corn fields, rapeseed fields, bamboo groves, such abundance! Simply wonderful and no mountains. Reiner and I enjoy the vastness of a country. In the distance, which is not that far away, we saw a house. "The house is already on Indian soil", Somor explained to us, "but there is no border crossing".

## And whom are we visiting today?

It's the catechist Rupchand with his wife Champa. And we learn something new from them. The two of them have a monthly income of less than 6000 taka! That's not even 53 euros a month! Both work as teachers in the church school and teach 42 children in 6 classes. Champa's monthly salary is 2000 taka, which is about 17 euros. This corresponds to a daily wage of around 0.57 euros. We are shocked - but also grateful that we can see the realities.

#### At last! Christine's wish comes true

We drive to the largest department store nearby. It consists of one floor and you can see from one corner to the other. But the assortment is fabulous. There is everything a household needs, from soap to spices, from stationery to crockery and toys, baby diapers, batteries, cooking pots and baby milk. We buy 20 x body lotion and hair shampoo to give to the nursing home residents at the next Chicken Day, which is on Friday. In the afternoon we are back in our room to relax a bit. Suddenly we hear loud voices, laughing, talking and you can tell that people are happy. Very pleasant! It's coming from the next room. But what's going on there?

## The sewing school

5 women are starting their first sewing course today. First of all, there was something to talk about. After a while, the women's voices fall silent and the sewing machines rattle. Being able to sew strengthens the self-confidence of some women, and being creative also brings a certain enrichment to people, because God is the greatest creator and has placed creativity within us.

## January 24, 2024 - When we are not on the road,

there is still something to do. We study the Book of Ezra during this time, talk about what we notice, think about how the people in this poor region can help themselves in the future. Christine surfs the Internet for appropriate help. Reiner writes his first Bengali letters, he is also a language freak. Some time later we are visited by Mrs. Shefali and her aunt Moshida. It was easier for them to come to us than it was for us to come to her. Mrs. Shefali had a very large tumour on her knee. We were able to pay for her operation through donations and now you can see for yourself. She is happy, even though she is still in pain sometimes.

## There was still a lot going on over the next few days:

It's Chicken Day again. So the food comes back to the retirement home. The sisters prepare lunch and Reiner and I distribute shampoo and body lotion. A brief encounter with Sr. Jilian M. Rose, who hasn't seen a real rainbow for years, but the covenant with God is inside her.

Afterwards, we went to the hospital chapel where 17 schoolgirls who want to become nurses had gathered. Many of them are members of the tribe. Our task was to preach to them, to testify and to encourage them. Christine gave her testimony of how God had brought her out of complete hopelessness, where no one could help.

We had another very nice encounter with 4 widows, actually there are 5, but one of them was not feeling so well that day. They were all wearing blue saris, which the hospital had given them. So everyone in the house knows that these are the women who do the laundry for the people in the old people's home, and they do it voluntarily. There is still a small financial reward. We had another very nice encounter with 4 widows, actually there are 5, but one of them was not feeling so well that day. They were all wearing blue saris, which the hospital had given them. So everyone in the house knows that these are the women who do the laundry for the people in the old people's home, and they do it voluntarily. There is still a small financial reward.

The head doctor met us on the way out and asked why I couldn't walk well. In response to Christine's answer, he said "We pray for you".

## Saturday, 27.01.2024, 11.00 a.m. Meeting of church leaders

That meant: the parish priest, the catechists, leaders of other churches, two women's group leaders and some former Muslims, now Christians, who have their own group. We sat there in a circle, introduced ourselves, at least from 5 denominations, and everyone respected each other. It was almost heavenly. And now we were to preach to them about Jesus, his work, his authority and the authority we have as Christians. In general, what the Lord tells us, what we should tell them. We had a great deal of freedom. Reiner and Christine also like to play theater during the proclamation. It makes a lot of things clearer and people can remember it better.

#### **Visual instruction**

Let me give you an example: Christine asked one of the catechists to come to her. No one dared at first, but then a brave one came. She had a 1000 taka bill in her hand, which is around 25% of a catechist's monthly income. She asked him to accept or reject it. Well, that didn't happen so quickly at first. But then he did take it. Christine asked him to sit back down in his chair. He wanted to give the bill back. "No, it's yours now." It's the catechist couldn't believe it, but then he sat down with the banknote. She asked the leaders: "What did it's the catechist do for Christine to get the banknote?" Everyone answered with one voice: "He didn't do anything for her". Just like that. Jesus gave Himself for us, took our sins upon Himself, forgave us, gives us a new life, helps us to live with Him every day and has already given us eternal life so that we can one day live with Him in glory. All for free. BUT, we must also accept this personally, otherwise it does not belong to us.

After the leaders had had a free lunch, the catechist came to Christine again and wanted to return the 1000 taka bill, saying: "It all costs money here, the food and the travel costs, it's not cheap". "Yes, that's right, but everything has already been paid for and the 1000 taka bill is now yours". He couldn't believe it at first, but then he suddenly burst into joy. (I'm crying as I write this. 1000 taka is just about 8 euros). Around 3 pm, they all drove back to their villages.

## The last Sunday at Bollovpur

Get up at 6.00 am, 7.30 am Mass, 9.00 am breakfast, 12.00 noon last shopping in the "big" department store for what was still missing for the return journey, lunch. Then our hosts said: "Get ready, you've been married for more than 13 years now, we want to celebrate your anniversary with you later. Oops, they actually wanted to do that with us several months later. All right, we're happy for a small family celebration like this.

A few minutes before 4 p.m. Reiner had to go to the sewing school room,

Christine had to stay in her quarters. She was then joined by Eva and another woman she had never met before. So in short, Christine suddenly had a bright red sari on and two bracelets and a necklace, the earrings didn't fit and then flowers in her hair, and then oha, her lips had to be made up too. At least the lips! I wonder what they will do to Reiner? Reiner was given a white suit typical of the country.

In the meantime it got louder and louder outside the church. 80 to 100 children, women and men had come to celebrate our anniversary with us. Some girls danced, a boy, about 9 years old, sang English hymns in English, other pieces of music were played on the hand harmonium and we were allowed to preach again and talk about our married life, then there was cake cutting. But take a look at the photos, they say a lot. By the way, the sari and Reiner's suit were a gift, we had to take them with us.

## Monday 29.01. to Thursday 01.02.2024

Now I'll write more briefly.

Monday morning, packing our bags, a short farewell round at the hospital, a brief meeting with the pastor of the Assembly of God church.

The rented van was due to leave for Dhaka at around 8.00 - 8.15 a.m. on Tuesday. However, the two drivers were first given tea and we talked to each other, we were given breakfast and so we set off on the long journey at 9.00 am.

## The journey to Dhaka took 9 hours - including the ferry.

The ride was good. What was striking, however, was the 2 to 3 hour drive on the country road and almost no cars. Christine only counted about 5 cars in an hour. That's just the way it is in rural areas. On the other hand, we saw lots of cargo bikes and mopeds and even a few tuk-tuks.

It is impossible to buy a car with wages that are not even enough for daily living.

Overnight stay in a hotel in Dhaka. The night cost 4000 taka and the transfer to the airport another 4000 taka. This price really shocked us. But what should we argue about!

Wednesday 9.00 a.m. after a rich Bengali breakfast, a gift from the house, we were taken to the airport.

## On the airport premises and the flight

it was not quite as uncomplicated, smooth and preferred as in Bangkok, precisely because of the wheelchair. Many people were very helpful for 2000

taka. But then we preferred to "hire" a permanently employed man. He helped us a lot the whole time, but ultimately demanded his 2000 taka in return for a receipt. Good thing we still had them.

At the check-in counter, Christine was asked why she was in a wheelchair and couldn't walk for long. Oh, you have to go to the health center first. So a few hundred meters further on. Medical history, blood pressure check, of course it's a bit high, no wonder! Reiner said later: "I was on pins and needles as to whether we would still make the flight". Christine preferred not to look at her watch so as not to get even more nervous. Finally! the doctor gave the GO to fly.

13.40 hrs with Thai Airways TG 0322 to Bangkok. Arrival 17.10 hrs. The hotel shuttle service took us to the hotel, where we took a shower and ate the rest of our food.

Thursday at 13.00 a Thai friend picks us up from the hotel and takes us safely to Lum Sum.

## There's more to report, but that's enough for now.

## What else happened in the last few weeks?

#### a) CTTM

We attended the big meeting of the pastors and missionaries of our organization. It is important to our director that Christians are equipped to live as disciples of Jesus. Therefore we put together what people who want to be disciples of Jesus should definitely learn. Reiner was also asked to think and write about a theology of poverty, a theology of God's provision and a theology of Christian persecution.

#### b) Raising and forwarding donations

and intensive contact with donors and aid recipients has remained a very important part of Christine's ministry. We are concerned about how we can help the poor in concrete terms, both in terms of preaching and in terms of ideas on how to improve their material situation in the long term. Christine is in intensive discussions with our contact person in Bangladesh to develop projects that offer help for self-help.

#### c) New Year's campaign

Reiner was able to visit many offices and businesses in our area, wishing them a Happy New Year and giving them a small evangelistic scripture.

#### d) The trip to Pakistan had to be canceled.

Pakistan has decided that tourist visas can only be applied for via the Internet and no longer in person at the Pakistani embassy. The software responsible was unable to recognize Reiner's passport photo. Christine had had the same problem several years earlier.

#### What we intend to do

a) To worship God because HE is worth it.

#### b) To be available to God for His concerns.

It is a great grief for us to see how little the help that God offers and for which HE has paid so dearly is accepted and used by us.

#### c) Our church at Ban Khaosamchan.

We are currently wondering how to proceed.

#### e) Travels

We will have to see what God wants. Maybe there is still a possibility to travel to Pakistan. We will most likely have to make one or more trips to Bangladesh.

#### f) Our website

Reiner sees his main task here as completing, correcting, maintaining and translating the website. Here we want to provide information about ourselves and, above all, publish helpful documents in various languages.

We wish you God's protection and blessing.

We greet you warmly from Lum Sum

**Yours in Christ Jesus** 

Christine und Reiner Hennig

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IBAN: DE27 7705 0000 0810 918227

**BIC: BYLADEM1SKB** 

BLZ 770 500 00

We are not allowed to write receipts reducing German taxes for all the donations we receive on this account.

Please note on your transfer form: Missionare Hennig

According to German regulation this association is entitled to send you confirmations of receipt for donations, usually once a year. These confirmations can be used in a tax declaration to reduce your taxes in Germany.

#### Our bank account in Thailand:

MR. REINER GEORG HENNIG OR MRS. CHRISTINE MARGARETE HENNIG

Account number: 735-0-25689-2

Branch: Sai Yok

Bank: Krungthai Bank

MR. REINER GEORG DR HENNIG AND MRS. CHRISTINE MARGARETE HENNIG

เลขที่บัญชี่ 735-0-25689-2

สาขา ไทรโยค

ธนคารกรุงไทย

Christine supports needy people in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, all of whose leaders we know personally. 100% of the donations that Christine receives for these projects reach the recipients, as we cover the transfer fees and administration costs ourselves. If you have any further questions, please contact Christine by e-mail at hennigcm23@gmail.com.

## Pictures from Bangladesh January 11-31, 2024



Car ferry across the Padma River. We had to wait an hour for it to leave. The trip across the river then took another 35 minutes.



We arrived at our accommodation at around 10:30 p.m. and were greeted with flowers by our hosts Somor and Eva Biswas.



Conversations in the hospital office with the hospital director, Sr. Jilian M. Rose, the head physician, Somor and us.



from left to right: Reiner, Sr. Jilian M. Rose, Christine, the hospital director



Somor (right) and his friend, the hospital director



One of several visits to the retirement home



Answering questions and having discussions at the retirement home (see report on page 5)



The youngest resident, Zita, has been here longer, but is always cheerful and grateful.



Here in front of our accommodation: Mrs. Shefali came to visit with her niece Moshida. (see report p. 8!)



We greet every single resident of the retirement home with a small gift.



These 4 widows all wear blue saris that the hospital has given them. They voluntarily do the laundry for the people in the old people's home.



Visit to Somor's store. Read more in the report on page 4.



On the way to Joypur. Our hearts soared at the beauty of the country: So much vastness, so much fertile land! (see report on page 7!)



Village meeting with preaching (see report on page 6!)



Open-air meeting in the middle of the street in another village. Nobody drives a car here anyway, nobody can afford it. (see report on page 6!)



Visit to the pilgrimage church



Meeting of church leaders. We were now sitting in a circle from at least 5 denominations and everyone briefly introduced themselves. Everyone respected each other. It was almost heavenly.



Celebrating is fun. That's why our hosts decided that we should celebrate our 13th wedding anniversary. We were given traditional costumes typical of the country.

On the left Pritom, the son of Somor and Eva.



And around 100 children, women and men celebra-ted with us. Some performed dances, .....



... they sang and accompanied the singing with the hand harmonium.



The celebration ended with our wedding cake, which was then cut so that everyone got a piece.

This newsletter was completed on 21. March 2024.

Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator (free version)