

## **Baptist World Aid, Australia**

*(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021, information gathered from BWA website & James 1:17-27)*

Today we celebrate and give thanks for the work of Baptist World Aid throughout the world and pray for them.

Baptist World Aid works with local organisations in about 20 countries across 5 regions.

1. Pacific – Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu
2. Middle East – Lebanon, Syria and Yemen
3. South East Asia – Cambodia, Malaysia and the Philippines
4. South Asia – Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka
5. Africa – Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia

In their work they attempt to put love into action in four ways:

- Community Development Projects
  - a) Support/training for communities to put into place their own plans
  - b) Provide training in agriculture, education, health, children's rights, leadership and savings banks
  - c) Enabling community participation and ownership of projects
  - d) Help find ways to supplement incomes, for example by growing vegetables and raising chickens for food and to sell
- Assisting children to escape poverty
  - a) Provision of educational opportunities
  - b) Children's Clubs which teach sport, creative arts, health & hygiene, education and information about child protection
  - c) Children take these skills back to their families and communities leading to change
- Disaster Relief – the effects of disasters can last for years
  - a) Risk Reduction – help to prepare to save lives and minimise damage should there be a disaster
  - b) Respond – provision of emergency water, food, shelter and medical supplies eg. Lebanon last year Afghanistan now
  - c) Recovery – longterm plans for rebuilding communities and lives
- Advocating for a more just world
  - a) Research – they have for many years looked at what goes on behind fashion brands and produce guides to enable us to shop ethically – ensuring workers are paid fairly and kept safe
  - b) Mobilise – support local 'Catalyst' groups in churches
  - c) Campaign – calling on those in power to act

The theme of their campaign this year is 'it takes a child to raise a village', which of course, is a play, on the adage 'it takes a village to raise a child'.

Children and especially girls are often deeply affected by poverty. During Covid children everywhere have really suffered, but particularly in poorer countries

- 1) Schools have closed and education lapsed
- 2) Family incomes decreased and food became scarce and insecure
- 3) Chances of girls being forced into early marriage increases

The work of the Children's Clubs with young people has been making long term differences. And we will hear something of this in the next little while.

First we will see a video of children who have participated in such programs.

Second, Marlene will share some information about the two children we currently support -Shenna Mae from the Philippines and Romjanur from bangladesh.

Thirdly, we will hear from a young man who was initially supported as a child.

Then I will conclude.

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<https://vimeo.com/446327415> - meeting some of the children

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### Marlene – telling stories about the children we support

When I first came to worship at Footscray Baptist Church many years ago, when Pastor Rainer came to our church, we were involved with Baptist World Aid child sponsorship - Beth Drayton was the person writing to the children and keeping people informed. I have been part of this wonderful project for many years raising money, and have had the privilege of getting to know many children through their letters and yearly reports. Many, many children's lives been changed by being involved in Baptist World Aid projects. Not only the children but their families and communities have all worked together gaining skills, and knowledge to make their future brighter. I would like to thank all people who have made this wonderful project a success and are still continuing to support vulnerable children throughout the world. God bless you.

#### ROMJANUR

*Antor Graduated last year and now we are getting to know a new boy.*

*Some information from Romjanur -*

*Hello, my name is Romjanur, I am a boy from Bangladesh and I am 10 years old. I live with my mum, dad, brother and sister in a house made of brick with a tin roof and a brick floor. My mum takes care of us at home and cooks, cleans and washes our clothes. My dad is a farmer. At school I am in class four. When I grow up I would like to be a teacher at a school. I'm happy when I'm playing cricket. If I could change one thing it would be to have a deep tube well in our house so we can drink salt-free water at home.*

*In his letter Romjanur mentions that due to the pandemic "our school is closed so I am studying at home". "Each day many people are dying here getting infected with the corona virus". In his letter he asks "What is the current pandemic situation of your country". Romanjur mentions his family is in good health and asks "how are we all doing"?. What a caring young person he is.*

*Some information about Bangladesh.*

#### *My Country*

*Romjanur is from Bangladesh. Bangladesh is smaller than Victoria but has a population of 162 million, making it one of the world's most densely populated*

*countries. Despite the decline in poverty rates 26 million children still live below the poverty line, with limited access to basic needs such as nutrition, water, shelter and healthcare. Poor quality teaching resources and school drop-out are serious problems. Only half of all children attend secondary school. With over half of all girls marrying before the age of 18. Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world. Floods, earthquakes, cyclones and tornados also threaten the country's development.*

The project that Romyanur is a part of is based on a new and improved approach to our child and youth development work. Just like Baptist World Aid previous projects, this one will run for 9 years over 3 planned phases, designed to equip communities with skills and knowledge they need to thrive on their own. The new programming approach focuses on the specific needs of children and youth at different life stages, it acknowledges that a child in pre-school will have very different needs to a child of 16. So they are working closely with their Christian partner in the field, to ensure these differing needs are well supported in all project work.

#### SHENNA MAE

Shenna Mae has been part of our lives and prayers for many years since she was small.

The project that Shenna Mae is part of is now in its final 3 year phase – but there are still a couple of years to go.

Shenna Mae's community will begin to take ownership of this project in the lead-up to its completion. With their knowledge and skills, the community's children and families will soon be equipped to thrive all on their own! They will even be able to share what they have learned with other villages nearby.

Shenna Mae – 2019 I have not had any contact from Shenna Mae over the past year, I have written to her. I do hope and pray all is well with her and her family.

Information received from Shenna Mae - a year ago

*Over the past year I've been attending my local primary school and participating in life skills and leadership skills training. Through the project I've learned about health, child rights, gardening and the importance of education. An exciting time for me was my birthday and New Year celebration because we were all together as a family. I am helping my family and school with decision making and planning. Community members have been working together to find ways to end child marriage, protect all children from harm and increase access to education. The most important change for me this year was that I now have good hygiene to keep healthy. I like attending the project activities, especially the lecture on proper hygiene because I now have improved my personal hygiene. I do hope and pray that Shenna Mae is safe, at this very uncertain time. Looking forward to hearing from her, and will let everyone know as soon as I do.*

Please keep Shenna Mae and Romjanur in your prayers. And thankyou again for your support of the vulnerable children over the world. Keep up the good work.

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<https://vimeo.com/581984612> It takes a child to raise a village

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So we have this morning heard about some of the work of the BWA throughout the world. We have met some of the children BWA works with. We have heard about how programs like Children's Clubs can make a difference into adulthood and provide them with a solid foundation. We have also heard a little bit about the two children and their communities that we support in Bangladesh and the Philippines.

In our bible reading from James, we are warned to be careful about how we speak and to take seriously both the written law of God and the word of God in Jesus and respond to it. That response, says James, means action, we need to do and be the word of God, not just simply hear it. We must be active and not passive recipients of God's love.

This might be shown in our active care of the orphans and widows and other vulnerable people.

Maybe our support of the work of BWA might be one way we can be doers of the word implanted in us. There are a number of ways in which you can be involved

- Contribute to our child sponsorship support using our direct debit facility
- Support any BWA disaster or crisis campaigns – they currently have one for Afghanistan
- Educate ourselves about ethical shopping by getting the guide they produce from their website, "Behind the Barcode"
- Start or join a local catalyst group
- At Easter time, buy fairtrade chocolate or instead of giving chocolate buy gift cards supporting farmers overseas
- At Christmas time buy their gift cards for friends instead of other gifts. If we are not in lockdown, I will make sure we have a stall in the lead up to Christmas for this.

We will in our prayers for the world pray for the work of BWA.