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Our Visit to Light of Hope School

It didn’t matter that it was raining on the day we were scheduled to visit the Light of Hope (LOH) School on the campus at FCC. We were excited to experience this special school and meet students.

On Pakistan Day, March 23, 2019, the President of Pakistan, Arif Alvi, bestowed upon Dr. James Tebbe the Sitara-e-Imtiaz award for meritorious service to the nation. The name translates to “Star of Excellence” and is the third highest honor and civilian award given in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. This recognition, similar to our Presidential Medal of Freedom, is awarded for “especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of Pakistan, world peace, cultural or other significant public endeavors.”

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This televised award ceremony was followed up on March 28 with an on-campus event to celebrate Dr. Tebbe’s award.

Dr. Tebbe’s award, Friends of Forman Board Member, Mike Murphy, was in attendance and said this about Dr. Tebbe’s humility and the acknowledgement of his work at the university:

"Jim would be the first to point out that this recognition is really an honor bestowed on the entire community at Forman Christian College. We all feel very proud that the national government has recognized the significance of our institution and the miraculous progress that has been made since the college was denationalized in 2003. And we believe we are making a difference in this nation."
I was on the Mount of Beatitudes, overlooking the Sea of Galilee at the site of a modern, 8-sided church surrounded by a garden, on the spot where Jesus may have preached his famous Sermon on the Mount. Dotting the landscape were low monuments with raised letters quoting the succinct and salient blessings that Jesus shared at the start of this famous sermon. My eyes were drawn to one of my favorite Beatitudes:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

I had come to the Holy Land to share with 30 other travelers how Forman is working for peace in our world today. We need to build better relationships between Christians and Muslims, Arabs and Jews. Too often in our ignorance we write off people as “enemies” or even “terrorists.” It takes work to break down prejudice and internal barriers we have silently constructed inside our heads. Peacemaking happens when we come out of our comfort zone and build relational bridges between divergent cultures and religious divisions in our world.

Peacemaking takes more than wishes, it takes concrete actions. People from churches who support Forman came with me to meet Muslims, like our bus drivers Sala in Jordan or Ashraf in Israel, and Christians like our guides James and Mark, and Jews who are all sharing the Holy sites of Israel and Jordan as they strive to live together. We were in the Arab Christian cities of Madaba in Jordan and Nazareth in Israel. We walked the well-worn streets of the Muslim and Christian quarters in the walled city of ancient Jerusalem. Yes, there were armed guards strategically situated like those pictured here on the Via Delarosa - the traditional path of suffering Christ took as he was driven by his captors towards the cross. Sometimes the rule of law and armed guards are needed to keep the peace. Why? Because the reality is that there are “peace breakers” at work in the world today too.

When I was in Pakistan in February, I was impressed with the challenge of being a “peacemaker” in a society where violence threatens to break out without warning. All the churches we visited, and even many of the Christian schools, have 8-foot walls, locked gates, and armed guards to “keep the peace.” The government requires churches and schools to provide such measures to ensure the safety of their members.

During the Sunday service at the Lahore Cathedral I was struck when we prayed for their guards who were working that day to keep us safe. Peacemaking and peacekeeping are serious business in certain neighborhoods of the world. Those who live in such neighborhoods appreciate the support our donors have given to us as we do the work of peacemaking at Forman Christian College. Forman has a perimeter wall, biometric security measures, and 140 armed guards to allow our campus to be an oasis of peace and harmony in a divided and sometimes dangerous country.

We also applaud our rector, Dr. Jim Tebbe and his wife Beth for making the personal sacrifices they have made to work for peace and interfaith harmony which is modeled so well at Forman.

Finally, we rejoice that now Jim has been nationally recognized by the highest level of government for the work he and all of Forman have done to bring peace through education.

“Forman is providing a safe place for people of different religions to know and better understand each other. In my pre-trip reading, I was struck by how often religion is a divisive force in the country (at times to the point of violence) -- not just between Muslims and Christians, but between various branches of Islam. For Forman to be a safe place where people of different faiths can come together and form relationships and experience their common humanity is a powerful witness to the reconciling message of the gospel and can serve as role model and an impetus for peace in the country.”

Rev. Cindy Frost, Interim Associate Pastor of Outreach
La Cañada Presbyterian Church

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Your tax-deductible donations can be made by sending a check to our office address below or online at www.FriendsOfForman.org/Donate. Here you can make a one-time gift or establish a recurring donation.

For information on making a gift of stock or estate planning, please email Executive Director, Sam Schreiner at sschreiner@friendsofforman.org or phone 866-460-6313 x102.

Mailing address: Friends of Forman Christian College, 3434 Roswell Road NW, Atlanta, GA 30305

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Peacemaking not Peacewishing

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On February 10th, ten visitors from the US met in Doha, Qatar to catch our flight together to Lahore and spend a week at Forman Christian College. We came from New England, Atlanta, DC, Alabama, Florida, California, and Indiana. We were pastors, mission directors, Friends of Forman board and staff members, and the president of the Presbyterian Foundation. Only two of us had been to Forman before, eight were seeing it for the first time.

Here is what I found that was new about Pakistan and Forman on this visit.

1) Visas took days not weeks and in one case just hours! This new government of Imran Khan is trying to encourage tourism. Our fairly rapid visa process might be an indication of how serious they are about this priority.

2) Forman is still in need of a campus center and is ready to begin the construction process any day now. Fencing surrounds the site where the building will be constructed. Our team read Scripture and offered prayers as a ribbon was cut to start the work on the power generation site next to the center. It was a powerful symbol of Eastern and Western cooperation on this next step for Forman. As soon as a permit is granted from the local officials, the work will commence. Meanwhile, students still jam the hallways when it rains and scatter themselves on the grounds when it doesn’t. Meeting space and modern library space is desperately needed.

3) While I’ve always felt secure on the campus, going out and about Lahore also felt safer to me. The Christian churches are required to have gates and fences with concertina wire on top around the perimeter of their property. It takes great courage to be an active and vocal Christian in a Muslim majority society, especially when even the government has trouble controlling the extremists. I found that there are many Christians who practice their faith with joy and gratitude despite these necessary security arrangements.

What hasn’t changed was the free exchanges I had with Muslim and Christian students on campus. Students love to interact with foreign visitors, and we had exciting encounters with students in their dorms (called hostels there), classes, and chapel. Light of Hope students still have first-class facilities and instruction – giving them a life-changing experience. Forman is genuinely flourishing, and its reputation in the country is growing. Each of us who made the journey came away impressed and blessed.

Please join me in praying for Forman to continue to be a blessing to all the people of Pakistan.

Reflections: Our Visit to Forman Christian College
by Rev. Samuel Schreiner III

“People often ask, ‘what was a highlight of your visit to Pakistan?’ Without a doubt, for me it was witnessing firsthand the joy in students and staff. Each person I met shared with me their gratitude for Forman and the opportunity this institution has given each to learn, teach, grow and make difference in the world.”

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Shandana Waheed is going to Stanford!

You may remember Shandana Waheed, the 2016 FCC graduate who received the Falak Sufi Scholarship awarded by the Hagop Kevorkian Center at New York University. Since completing her Master's in Near and Middle Eastern Studies, Shandana returned to Lahore to teach at the University of Management and Technology in Lahore. She is also a columnist for the Daily Times (Pakistan.) Her next accomplishment? In February, Shandana received the news she's been awarded a full scholarship for her Ph.D. at Stanford University in Palo Alto, CA. Congratulations, Shandana!

Rimesha Farooq

I am Rimesha Farooq, a student from 16 series. I would like to share my experience at FCCU as a student and later as a lecturer in the English department at the College.

To have achieved this milestone in my life is an accomplishment that I cannot put into words. These medals are proof of my determination to make my mentors proud. Choosing Education and English Literature as my majors fueled my passion to become a lecturer in the very same place where I completed my education. I was thankful to give back to this community where I received so much experience. This experience catapulted me to receive a full-ride scholarship in Turkey, where I am pursuing a Master’s in Education. I could not have achieved this without the help of my peers, and I owe all my thanks to the inspiring people in my life who assisted me every step of the way.

Kainat Shakil

I have spent, roughly, five years at Forman Christian College as an undergraduate and later a research graduate student. The journey began in 2013, I came to the institution as a transfer student from Government College University, Lahore. Over the course of time, FCCU gave me countless opportunities to grow as an individual through semester abroad scholarship, student-run societies, excellent academic coaching etc.

Today, I am sharing a glimpse of my time at FCCU through this photo of myself and my teammates/life-time-friends (Aneeq and Ayesha) after speaking at the debates final in Lahore. It symbolizes what this institute has given to me: friends like family, confidence, opportunities for critical thinking, leadership qualities and most of all the ability to manage inter and intrapersonal reflections and relations. My university years have definitely played a formative part in my personal and professional development.

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If someone asked me today, “What was that one best decision of your life thus far?” Without any doubt, my answer would be, “My admission into FCCU.” I completed my early education from a small city of Taxila. With dreams of doing something big, and fear of being alone in a city with no friends, I started my 4 year journey at FCCU.

I remember my shaky legs behind the rostrum while presenting my first ever speech in front of my class. I remember the time that I sang, without any fear, in front of more than 2,000 Formanites, as the President of the Forman Music Society. How times changed!

FCCU gave me the opportunity to showcase my abilities and to develop my skills, not only on an academic level, but in co-curricular activities as well. FCCU helped me to fulfill my dreams and all that I have learned is still helping me develop my professional skills. Thank you, Forman Christian College!
A Glimpse of Modern Slavery

These photos were taken in February by our group at a brick kiln near Mardanpur. The man you see squatting down making bricks is nearly blind. He repeats the same motions all day, making bricks by hand one at a time. There is no automation in this process: they are made by hand and stacked by hand, eventually being moved to another pile by donkey cart.

Life at a brick kiln is tedious, dusty, and physically demanding. If any other jobs on this level, there is no automation in this process: they are made by hand and stacked by hand, eventually being moved to another pile by donkey cart.

Over 80% of the Christians at Forman Christian College receive some sort of need-based financial aid. We are grateful for your support of this program. Without scholarships, these students would not be enrolled at FCCU. Every student we educate means Christians and their families are one step closer to freedom from the threat of debt slavery.

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Questions? Contact us:
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