

## Newsletter August 2010

**Welcome to New Members** We usually begin with news from the College, with a welcome to any new members later on. However, this time we begin by saying *Welcome*, because twenty-two new names is out of the ordinary!

An interesting lesson in human nature lies behind their joining! We wrote letters to our family and friends, describing the visit we made to India in February for Edward to receive an honorary DD. As we told you in our last newsletter, this was a ThankYou to us both for our support of the College as secretaries of the *Friends*. For the sake of publicising the College and its work we also wrote articles for various publications. Always we added, "If you would like to support the College..." and gave full details - we received many letters but not a single membership application! After a couple of months we decided to make one last attempt, and sent the following to those who had written to us:

*You are among those who have expressed your pleasure and congratulations at the honour bestowed on us recently by Serampore College... We are therefore sending you an appeal!*

*Like us, you doubtless have to be selective and turn down many approaches, and we shall not hold it against you if you do so with this! A main reason for the honour was our support of the College through running Friends of Serampore, with a twice-yearly newsletter, and we would love to see new Friends joining. We do hope that, with your personal link through us, you will consider this appeal very carefully.*

*In particular, the Theology Department, with nearly 150 students training for the ministry of churches throughout India, has great need for funding. Most of India's Christians are among the poor of the land, and churches which have members on the staff of the College do their best - but it is a struggle, and in recent years it has been the annual gift of about £3,500 from Friends of Serampore that has kept the Theology Department from going into the red.*



*It is not only basic salaries that have to be considered, but schooling for the children of staff members, and health care (no NHS!) And there is so much else that needs to be done in the College, not least maintaining the wonderful old buildings.*

*When we were there in February the Principal urged us, "Please try to enlarge the support through Friends". So that is our appeal, for your prayers, your interest, your giving - and your membership.*

This was the letter that brought so many new members to support Serampore College.

And the lesson in human nature? - preparing the ground is not the same as actually sowing the seed by personal approach; and both are necessary! Why not, all of you, see if you can recruit new support for Serampore by gentle, personal appeal? Have a go!

**The Principal and his wife.** Lalchungnunga and Hliri are going to Denmark in November at the invitation of Aalborg University for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding for partnership in academic studies and teacher/student exchange. This link is based, of course, on the fact that when the college was founded, Serampore was a Danish colony. They had hoped to come on to the UK afterwards, but this has not proved possible. However, they hope to come next spring or early summer - if you would like to know of the possible venues and times, or if you would like to arrange a meeting yourself, do contact us nearer the time.

### **The Council of Serampore**

**College** The Master for nearly twenty years, Dr K Rajaratnam, Director of Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, was too ill to take part in February's Convocation; sadly he died two months later. His successor is Dr John Sadananda, on the left here, who became Bishop of Karnataka Southern Diocese in the Church of South India last September. We were very impressed by



him at the Convocation - he was the one who, at the Council meeting we attended (where this picture was taken), emphasised the significance of Serampore as "the Mother College" of all the affiliated institutions. Next to him is the Vice-Master, Mrs Hilda Peacock, who is Principal of La Martinere College in Calcutta, one of the most prestigious girls' schools in India; she recently received an annually-given award for 'the most outstanding woman teacher in India'.

On the right of the picture is Dr Lalchungnunga, Principal of Serampore College. He is expecting to retire at the end of October next year, but the government talks of raising the retiring age of teachers from 60 to 62. He writes, "If so, I may have to continue till the end of October 2013, so the search for my replacement may not be too urgent... Our preference is to retire at 60, and do something else if God wills." But certainly we, as Friends of Serampore, should make the Council's search for the next Principal a matter for our prayers.

**The "Senate of Serampore College (University)"** directly serves the whole "family" of affiliated colleges. In our last newsletter we reported that the Registrar, Dr Ravi Tiwari, had been able to raise money for a fine new Senate Office, alongside Mack House - with offices, exam prep and marking rooms, electronics rooms, archive filing areas, conference halls and visitors' living quarters.



These pictures show Ravi (on right of picture) with his office staff, and the new building. This is an extension of the former Women Students' Hostel, next to Mack House, which some of you will remember.

The Senate website has been revamped and is a mine of information,

historical and current. Among other things, it is interesting to see the list of 37 universities world wide which recognise Serampore degrees, including these eleven in the UK: Birmingham, Cambridge, Coventry, Durham, Kent, Lancaster, Leicester, London, Oxford, Sheffield and Open University. The place to look is [www.senateofseramporecollege.edu.in](http://www.senateofseramporecollege.edu.in) (a slight change from its previous address).

**Now, at last, the news of the College** - the Principal has sent us the following update:

1. *Theology Department started the new academic year with a retreat on June 19. There are 152 students. We have raised the students' fees considerably in order to meet the rising needs on account of the raise in Staff allowances and overall expenses necessitated by price-rise for every item. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church has come to our rescue for the huge financial deficits of the Theology Department with their one-time donation of Rs.10 lakh (about £13,500). This is a great relief. (The Theology Department is the main beneficiary of all the money that we send as Friends of Serampore.)*
2. *The Arts-Science-Commerce department started the new session with a Freshers Welcome meeting on 15th July. There are more than 600 new students, and admission is still going on. The total number is expected to be somewhere about 2600. The National Accreditation and Assessment Council's Peer Team is visiting our College for Re-Accreditation on 20-22 September. We need to have thorough preparation for this in all aspects of the life and work of the college. I have to cancel my speaking engagement at Guwahati, where Manipur Christians plan to organize South Manipur Gospel centenary, because the dates are too close with the NAAC Team's visit.*
3. *We have bought, with donations from friends of some of our teachers, 20 new bicycles for the theology students' use on outreach ministries on second and fourth Sundays every month. They are following in the footsteps of Edward (!!) who used to cycle out to neighbouring villages on Sundays for such outreach.*

4. *Our Theology Teachers have been invited for various speaking and paper presentation programmes from organizations and churches in and outside West Bengal. The new batch of BD, M.Th. and Doctoral students are very talented and committed. They really are an encouragement not only to other students but to the teachers also.*  
(These presentation programmes are presumably part of the college's ongoing endeavour to generate income.)
5. *We had the visit of Mrs (Dr) Gladys Staines on 9th July. She spoke on Forgiveness. It was a very moving speech especially because the memories of the brutal killing of her husband and two sons by fanatics in Orissa in 1999 are still fresh in our minds.*
6. *We have started the work of constructing additional classrooms for ASC department with the one time grant of £34,000 we received from the Government of West Bengal. We need to improve our infrastructure on account of the opening of new Post Graduate classes in Zoology and Human Physiology, and addition of some new courses.*  
(We mentioned the Postgraduate class in Zoology in our last newsletter. It is a new departure for the College to be offering higher level courses under Calcutta University.)

*We always appreciate and are thankful for the continued support from Friends of Serampore.*

**That support, in interest, finance and prayer, is our whole purpose as *Friends*.** As far as finance is concerned, your further gifts are welcome at all times. The "Membership" section of the website gives details of how to send, which apply equally to donations as to subscriptions.

As for prayer, we came across a "Prayer for Iona" shortly after writing in our last newsletter that 'Serampore is to Indian Christians as Iona is to us in Britain'. So, suitably changed, we invite you to use it:

***Lord, we pray for Serampore.  
We pray that there the wind of the Spirit may blow,  
that there the cause of Christ may prevail,  
that there the work of God may prosper.***

With our warmest good wishes,

*Edward and Rosemary*