



June/July 2010

In partnership with God....

Strawberries and cream, serve and volley, Cliff Richard and rain – just some of the partnerships that Wimbledon has become famous for! The last two weeks have seen the courts of Wimbledon come alive with the Championship; with hopes and dreams being realised, and dashed, for the players.

Somehow, there is nothing more forlorn than to see a player walk away, head down, defeated at the end of a match. In doubles, at least there is a shoulder to cry on and a sense of the burden being shared. In the work we are involved with at Bible*Lands*, it is partnership like this that makes a long term difference for the communities we seek to help.

We have worked with Bethany Girls' School (BGS) since 1956, and were delighted that Sister Martha, director of the School, visited the UK in July to give a series of talks about the work she's involved with.

At just 28 and following a call to a monastic lifestyle, Sister Martha began her work at the School in 2005; after being baptised into the Russian Orthodox Church less than ten years before.

Since then, the students and teachers at Bethany Girls' School have become her passion – there are 30 teachers and nearly 350 girls from kindergarten up to ninth grade. All of the children are from poor Arab families and 98% are Muslim. Whilst most of the pupils are girls, there are a few boys in the kindergarten. Most of the children attend as day students but around 10-15 Christian girls, whose journeys would be too difficult to make every day, board at the school.

Whilst it is illegal to teach Christianity to Muslim pupils, the parents are happy to allow their children to be taught by Christians and are keen to build up a good relationship with the staff – there is actually a waiting list for places.

The School faces many challenges including high unemployment in the area and the difficult journey faced by many members of staff as they travel through the checkpoints. In spite of these difficulties, the students enjoy a rich variety of activities, including educational visits and a music programme which gives students the opportunity to try out traditional instruments and folk dancing, made possible through Bible*Lands*' funding and working together in partnership.

You can find out more about Bible*Lands* and the work of our overseas partners (including Bethany Girls' School), by visiting www.biblelands.org.uk or calling 01494 897950.