

Prayer Letter February 2009

Opportunities in Sunday school...

Back in late November, the Sunday school department (which Cynthia heads up) was asked to organise and 'do' the morning service. With only one Saturday between being asked and actually doing it, we managed to put together a family service that involved all of the children and each of the teachers. It was very well received. Cynthia also had opportunity to share a bit of what Sunday school is about (not just a glorified babysitting service!) and to ask for the parents' help in helping their children learn about the good news.

Just before Christmas, all the church leaders were invited to a picnic/meeting. This was an all-day affair. It was encouraging to hear the different leaders, from the pastors to the youth and women's fellowship leaders, share about what they'd done in the past year and what their plans are for the coming year. It also gave a larger picture of what Bishram Ministries is actually doing, not just in Kathmandu but in various locations throughout Nepal. It's encouraging to be part of something bigger!

At the moment we have around 60-65 children on a Saturday morning for about two hours. They're divided into three groups according to their ages. While having so many is obviously an enormous opportunity, there are also frustrations. Some of the teachers are studying at the Bible school and so are only around for six months to a year when they go back to their villages to run similar children's programmes there. This, too, is an opportunity but it doesn't make for long-term consistency in teachers here. Also, due to lack of teachers and space, there



Sunday school teachers



is no provision at the moment for children under five so we often have several three and four year-olds in the same class with eight year-olds. Last Saturday, Cynthia arranged for a room that has a window onto the church to be used for a crèche/nursery. Sunday school will provide some quiet toys and parents will need to watch their own children. The women's fellowship group is helping to organise this and communicate with the parents about how this will work. This will be an entirely new thing so we hope it goes well.

Running out of rice...

We think Christmas in Nepal is wonderful. It is truly a Christian celebration and the Church goes for it in a big way. A few days before Christmas, we invited carolers to our house. A group of about 20 came and sang and danced, the pastor shared a simple message and they prayed for our family. The BMS Action Team shared this special night with us and entered into the spirit



Action Team Christmas carol dancing and Christmas celebrations

by giving a perfectly respectable dancing performance. They are not quite at our standard yet (!) but we were celebrating our third Christmas in Nepal.

On Christmas Day, there was a 'bhoj' (feast) after the service. As part of the catering committee, Ian had been party to the decision to cater for around 500 people. After all, we were expecting members from a daughter congregation and relatives and friends of the main congregation. The estimate was way too low and we estimated that somewhere between 700 and 800 were there. As a consequence, more rice had to be cooked with an enforced wait for those still in line. This was the first time in history that Nepal had designated Christmas as a public holiday. We think that a number of people turned up just out of curiosity. Talking to Asangla, the church leader afterwards, Cynthia was told that seven people came to faith that day. We pray that this was repeated in other churches across Nepal.

Struggles of daily life...

We are grateful for encouragements like this. However, this feels like a season where we are struggling with some of the realities of living and working in Nepal. In recent weeks the 'load shedding' schedule escalated at an alarming rate. Up until a few days ago, we were experiencing 16 hours of power outage per day although there has been a slight reduction since then. The effect of this is crippling as it is so difficult to get anything done. This prayer letter has been in process for several weeks, waiting for the right combination of power and free time to sit and write. We have recently installed a solar backup system that gives us light during powercuts in the evening.

With hardly any electricity to speak of, pumping water into the ground tank and the roof tank becomes a real challenge. We are using well water to flush toilets to try and minimise our usage of mains water which we might be fortunate to get once or twice a week. There is a general feeling of frustration and disappointment amongst most people. Politicians have promised much, yet the reality for most people living here is very different and, sooner or later, we expect that this will spill over into demonstrations and unrest.

For some time, Ian has been experiencing some frustrations in working in the Nepali partner organisation HDCS. These are a mixture of factors and may be no more than the rewards for working cross-culturally. However, it is

true that the partner organisation is suffering from a lack of clarity for future direction and seems to be struggling to manage the projects it is currently responsible for. Whilst there are people capable of being developed into the leaders of tomorrow, they are often not given authority to make changes and decisions constantly get referred back up to the top. So without going into more details, please pray that Ian will be wise in what he says and that he does all he can to build the partner and leave the rest to God.

Please pray...

- For Bishram Ministries and all its activities
- For church leaders at our church and in Nepal to have clear vision, wisdom and discernment as they lead
- For Cynthia, the Sunday School teachers and especially the children – that Sunday School would be primarily a way of discipling teachers and children
- For those that came to church and to faith at Christmas time to continue to grow and that seeds planted would yield fruit
- For Nepal as a country—the hardships faced by many people, the government and the political situation
- For Ian, HDCS, the hospitals and especially the leadership – that God would work through all these to bring about the Kingdom here and that there would be wisdom, renewed vision and clarity of thought for the future
- And thank God for all the ways that he is at work here. May his light continue to light the darkness!

BMS World Mission supports 350 personnel working in 34 countries of the world. Together they are involved mainly in church planting, development, disaster relief, education, health and media and advocacy. If you would like to support work like Cynthia and Ian's you can make a one-off donation, or you can become a 24:7 Partner for as little as £2 per month. Visit www.bmsworldmission.org or call 01235 517617 for a 24:7 Partners leaflet, or 01235 517641 for our donation hotline.