

Prayer Letter

March 2009

Hello everybody! Just thought we'd update you with life out here in Nepal! We've been here for four months now and have been up to so much since we wrote our last prayer letter! We're now stuck into our regular programme and have had a break off for Christmas and holiday! Christmas was a great occasion and we thank our hosts, Ian and Cynthia, so much for all the effort they put in to make it special for us! On holiday we had the opportunity to see a glimpse of the Himalayas on our four-day trek, which was amazing, especially as we got up at 5.30 one morning to see the sunrise over the mountains. It was one of our only clear days and we were so lucky to have this opportunity, and thank God for this chance to see his awesome creation!

When we got back from holiday we decided to review how we felt about everything we were doing, and in this realised how we hadn't done anything to help people living on the streets specifically. This is a hard issue as you have to be so careful giving money to people. However, we realised that to do something and make mistakes is better than to do nothing! We prayed about this, that God would give us wisdom, and decided that we would go out and do a 'soup run'. We were quite apprehensive in this, as we were not sure how people would react, but God was definitely with us, and many of the people we gave to were very appreciative of the food! On a second occasion, where we went to Thamel, an area known for beggars, the flask was emptied so quickly, that we had to go out and buy bread and milk as a substitute! Please pray for us in this, that we will have the time to go out and do more runs, and that we will have wisdom in who to give to!

Three of our days each week are dedicated to teaching in Nepali schools: two government and two Christian. In each school we work in pairs, teaching children from ages three right up to 16! Three months into our work and we are now feeling settled and very much enjoying the experience. Each week has brought many new challenges, through which we have definitely grown in our teaching abilities. We're learning flexibility and on-the-spot thinking, having been thrown into a number of lessons without pre-warning and no preparation. One thing we've also noticed is how we've all become much more effective in our planning.

Our work in government schools has involved teaching English from nursery through to grade two, introducing the use of songs, games and crafts; activities which they are not normally able to do. This can be hard work at times but is very rewarding. Christmas was a particularly exciting time as it opened up the opportunity to share with the children the Christmas story for the first time, which was a great privilege.

The first term for Annie and Hannah at Kistland Christian school involved many Christmas crafts, and the responsibility of organising a nursery/kindergarten nativity for the end-of-term Christmas concert. It was a great blessing to be able to provide opportunity for the kids to make Christmas cards, and we were amazed when the teachers asked to learn too because they didn't have the expertise themselves. We did, however, struggle a bit during this time to feel we had a beneficial role in the school and felt that there was a greater need for our time to be spent in the government schools. So after Christmas we made some alterations to our programme. We now teach science one day a



week at Kistland and spend an extra day at Sisneri government school, where we teach English to the senior years, in the hope of enabling the English teacher to improve his teaching skills. Having just finished education ourselves and having no teaching experience, this is a big challenge for us both. Please pray that God will equip us with all we need and really use us to make a lasting impact. Pray also as we lead senior devotions at Kistland, where many students are not yet Christians or very new to their faith, that we may be able to encourage them in their understanding of the gospel.



Two nursery children at Sisneri School

At Good Shepherd Laura and Jo are now established maths and music teachers and have settled into the school well, and begun to build good relationships with the teachers. They are very much enjoying their work. This term Jo is organising an Easter concert, which partly involves running percussion and recorder clubs before school. Laura is also helping out and they are jointly doing drama lessons with the older children and simple songs with the younger ones. They are both very excited about this project. Please pray that Jo will have the authority she needs in the lessons and that the children will continue to enjoy all that she is teaching them. Pray also for Laura as she takes on the responsibility of preparing grade 8 for their external exams, that she will be able to think of inventive ways to facilitate their learning and put across concepts in ways that will be understood.



Holiday club at Good Shepherd school

One of the highlights of the term has been the week we spent running a holiday club at Good Shepherd school just after New Year. The week brought in 35-40 kids, from both Christian and Hindu families. We ran a theme of 'Nothing is impossible with God', looking at different miracles of the Bible and ending the week with Jesus' death and resurrection. Each day incorporated games, crafts, a puppet-narrated drama and a short talk. The week took a lot of planning and preparation, but was a fantastic opportunity that we all very much enjoyed and learnt a lot from. We have been encouraged by the response we had from the kids and feel that it was big step forward in establishing relationships at the school.

A difficult issue that we have had to face is the discipline methods used in Nepali schools, where hitting children with a stick or by hand is a common practice. Although less obvious,

this is even still evident in the Christian schools, and even harder reality to accept. We struggle to know how we can influence change, but pray that our demonstration of love for the children will have a positive impact. Please pray for continued enthusiasm, inspiration and energy; positive relationships with staff and students; effective teaching and that we would continue to know God's presence with us through all the challenges.

A truly inspirational project we are involved with is prayer tower, set up by an Indian man named Narayan, with a vision for prayer! It is a home to about 15 people, most of whom are disabled in some way, and is a place where prayer is happening 24/7. Whilst we are there we all teach different things. Annie and Hannah give English lessons, whilst Laura teaches computer skills and Jo keyboard. All of these projects are very rewarding, although difficult, and it's fantastic to be able to make a difference in these people's lives.

However, we went with the expectation of giving something to them, and have realised how much they give to us! Every week we spend two hours in prayer and worship, where we praise God and pray for the whole world! In this we notice their incredible passion and faith, and it is clear that the Holy Spirit is definitely working! Here are disabled people, living a very simple lifestyle, who are so happy, and it's all because of their amazing faith. Now that's definitely a challenge to each one of us!



Jo teaching keyboard at the prayer tower

On Friday 13 February, as part of the BMS day of prayer, we decided to have 24 hours of fasting and praying. God was really with us in this time, and gave us the energy and enthusiasm we needed, but it definitely challenged us about prayer generally, as it made it real to us how powerful it is! We are inspired by the people at prayer tower whose lives revolve around praying, and who fast every Friday – they show real passion and love for Christ.

The headteachers of both the Christian schools we help in also have incredible faith. The schools are funded totally by prayer, which gives children who can't afford an education a chance to get one. This really challenges us about how, when people have so little, they rely on God for everything, and yet, it is so easy to shut God out when we think we have all we need to solve our problems. We've realised how vital prayer is to our everyday lives and that we need to rely on God because he is the only one that can get us through!

Although the Christian community here in Nepal is small it is growing. In 2008 Nepal was declared a secular state and December saw the first official Christmas holiday celebrated – it was an exciting time!

At our church a special service was held which was packed full, people squeezed onto any space on the floor and stood in doorways. Around the room many Hindus and Buddhists could be seen and we pray that those people will be open to hearing more of the gospel.

We had invited the headmaster of Sisneri School Udeyo to come to our church service and were disappointed that he didn't come. However just a few weeks later he and his wife had attended another church that day, it was really encouraging.

The number of Christians is small but their passion is big! It is extremely difficult to separate Nepali culture and religion as they are so entwined and so for Nepali Christians it is very difficult to break free from Hindu religion whilst still keeping the culture which their whole lives revolve around. Please pray for Nepali Christians as many are disowned by their families for believing in Jesus, and so it is very difficult for them to leave their families,

friends and culture behind to follow Christ. It is amazing to see their faith and dedication and it will be mainly them who bring others to know about Jesus as they will be able to really relate to the obstacles that they face in changing religion. Often in the UK we think it is difficult to be a Christian, but to see them literally give up everything to follow Jesus is both an encouragement and a challenge. Thank God for the religious freedom we have in our own country.

Within the Christian schools there are many young Christians; they have a massive love of God and faith in what he can do. They talk openly and freely of it and that's amazing to see as many of their friends are poor Hindus but attend the school because it is the only one they can afford.

At Sisneri School we are starting to get opportunities to talk to the teachers about our faith. Wisdom as to what to say in these situations is definitely needed. Please pray that more opportunities will arise at Sisneri and that Hannah and Jo will also have similar conversations like at Shringeri. We hope that our actions will speak volumes to both students and teachers. As Christians living in a country which is 80.6 per cent Hindu and 10.7 per cent Buddhist there are many things which surround us which we struggle to understand and relate to. As part of our experience of Nepal we have visited several Hindu and Buddhist temples, where our eyes have been opened to the real spiritual poverty that controls this nation. There are shrines on nearly every street corner where people go and worship and perform many rituals.

It is difficult to watch a nation devoted to worshipping objects and idols that have been made with their own hands, especially lovely people that we work with daily. It is hard to see them worshipping the creation where we would worship the Creator. Hinduism is a very complex religion with an alleged 33 million different gods, many of which are worshipped out of fear that something bad will happen to them if they don't, as opposed to us who worship only one God because he loves us! There is a real sense that this nation is trapped and oppressed by their religions, and we ask that you will pray for freedom, so that they can know the Truth and how much God really loves them.

Give thanks for

- ◆ We now have inverters (battery powered lights) fitted in our house so dealing with the power cuts is a lot easier
- ◆ Our team relationships continue to be strong
- ◆ God is challenging us and changing us
- ◆ A great Christmas and holiday away

Pray for:

- ◆ Rain! It has been five months since we've had any. This affects electricity, crops and everyday water supply
- ◆ That the people of Nepal will have patience with the power cuts, as they are now up to 16 hours a day
- ◆ For continued energy and enthusiasm in all our projects
- ◆ Us as we prepare to go home, with all the challenges that this brings
- ◆ The concert Jo and Laura are organising at Good Shepherd
- ◆ Language, that we will be able to communicate effectively
- ◆ Opportunities to talk about God
- ◆ Safety in all that we do and continued good health