

Alan and Megan Barker

Prayer letter, May 2018

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Hello everyone

We hope when you receive this you will be enjoying lovely spring weather. We are enjoying the current climate here in Pokhara. When we were living in Surkhet, we did not look forward to the heat of May. As I write, tomorrow is predicted to be 30 degrees C rising to reaching 43 degrees C this time next week in Surkhet! Meanwhile here in Pokhara a mere 27 degrees is predicted for tomorrow and only reaching 35 degrees next week. Those top temperatures are extremes that are being predicted. We hope it will cool a little again after that.

Anyway, to more serious matters. Last time we wrote, Alan had settled into his role working between the two donor teams (health and community). He continues to build relationships at both sites and is enjoying the very varied work. For example, this week he has been discussing with one of the top palliative care specialists in the country about how INF can develop a palliative care strategy and helping her write that. The next day working with the rehabilitation team on a funding proposal to help spinal cord injury patients get the correct treatment and then overcome the stigma and social exclusion that comes from being disabled here. On another day considering how we can best help poor and marginalised communities in the remote and deprived district of Bajura and that same day preparing a report on flood relief work. He's certainly getting to know about the breadth and variety of work in which INF is involved.

Megan was enjoying getting some real Occupational Therapy experience again. However, as she was not able to obtain her medical registration and, due to other circumstances too difficult to explain in this letter, she is no longer able to have hands-on involvement with patients and so has had to take a step back. Obviously, this was a huge disappointment but lots of other opportunities have been presenting themselves and now she needs to start saying no to requests!

The most surprising activity for her— we can't see it happening in UK — is that she is helping out at the teenagers group at church. Why surprising? The groups start at 8:30am on a Saturday, the one day of the

week that there is no school, and the teenagers come! Megan is mostly with the 16-19-year olds. The rooms are always full. Leaders meet at 8am to plan and pray. After that the groups all go into church for the main morning worship service - church meets on Saturday in Nepal.



The last practice before the service

It has also been a joy for Megan to have a few opportunities to do some worship dance again recently. Once was with some of the teenagers, helping them to create a dance for their special church service. More recently with the elderly people's group that meets during the day! This was so that they could experience doing some worship dance. They seemed to enjoy it and they all got involved.

From an OT work point of view, Megan is now much more involved in preparing some strategic plans and discussions about future developments. This is a better use of her time and input in terms of the long-term value to OT in INF and Nepal. It is an honour and a privilege to be able to help at this level. She has even been working with the donor team (including Alan) on some proposals. There have also been some occasions for input as an experienced OT consultant when patients present with more complex issues, so that keeps her hand in! She has also been able to give some teaching and training to other staff, such as nurses and Gurkha Welfare officers.

Nationally we are still waiting to see quite how the new political structure of Nepal will affect everyone. It is all still very new and all are learning. So we need to be patient as it is worked out in practice, but there is still an atmosphere of hope that things will be better under this new regime. We watch and wait.



Birthday cake surprise

Personally, we are enjoying life in our home here and continuing to build relationships with our landlord and family downstairs. On Megan's birthday they came up with a surprise cake and sang Happy Birthday. Then we had to participate in the Nepali tradition where the birthday girl gets fed the cake! Actually, celebrating birthdays is a relatively new thing here in Nepal. The feeding tradition is traditionally a bridegroom to his bride and vice versa!

Our most exciting personal news is that our daughter, Gemma, is now engaged. It all happened in a very exciting weekend in our home here in Pokhara. Then they re-posed the moment by a beautiful lake, as you can see in the picture. As Silas is Swiss there will be 2 weddings, one in London on June 29th and one in Switzerland on July 7th. We all agree that Silas is a

great addition to the family and are looking forward to these special occasions.



Following the weddings, we will be on home assignment when we hope to meet many of you and catch up with your news.

We will return to Nepal at the end of August when we are hoping we will both be issued with visas and work permits and can have a more settled year ahead.

For those of you that pray please join us in giving thanks for:

- developing work roles within INF
- developing relationships at work, church and in the neighbourhood
- Gemma and Silas's happy news!

And please pray for:

- Safety in travel as we return to the UK in June and visit some of our partner churches
- Alan's visa renewal process to go smoothly
- Megan's work visa and medical registration to come through

Alan and Megan

If you would like to support Alan and Megan by prayer and committed regular giving, visit bmsworldmission.org/partners or call 01235 517617 for a 24:7 Partners leaflet.



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